

**Aboriginal Labour Market Integration and the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour
Market Strategy: An Application of John Kingdon's Policy Stream Theory**

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ABSTRACT

Within Saskatchewan, Aboriginal labour market integration has been consistently low, especially in comparison to non-Aboriginal peoples. In 2007, the Government of Saskatchewan created a Labour Market Commission to view labour market trends and challenges, with a focus on improving Aboriginal labour market integration. In 2009, the Commission developed an aggressive policy initiative called the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy. One of the main objectives of the policy was increasing Aboriginal labour market integration in Saskatchewan.

The Commission spanned across two different governments, beginning under the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party government and ending under the Saskatchewan Party government. Despite being well received by a majority of invested stakeholders, the Saskatchewan Party government did not implement the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy, and the Commission was subsequently disbanded. It is the objective of the thesis to explore the evolution of the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy to examine why the issue of Aboriginal labour market integration gained traction, how policy makers intended to address it and why this Strategy was ultimately not implemented.

John Kingdon's policy stream theory will provide the theoretical framework for the analysis. Kingdon's policy stream theory suggests policy development flows through three distinct streams: the problem stream, the policy proposal stream and the political stream. The thesis will use these streams to examine the development of the Strategy and conclude that Aboriginal integration was focused on for economic reasons, rather than solely improving overall quality of life, and that the Strategy was rejected by the Saskatchewan Party government on partisan grounds.

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Chapter One: Background and Organization

1.0 Introduction

Increasing Aboriginal labour market integration has been an ongoing public policy problem in the Saskatchewan labour market. Based on the 2001 Canadian Census, Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan were employed at a rate of 42 percent, in comparison to non-Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan who were employed at 66 percent (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009, 11). Over the next five years employment statistics remained nearly stagnant with the 2006 Census showing Aboriginal employment in Saskatchewan at a rate of 46 percent and non-Aboriginal employment at a rate of 66 percent (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009, 11).

In 2007, the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party government appointed a commission to design an ambitious policy initiative aimed at improving Aboriginal labour market integration. Established as an advisory board to the Government of Saskatchewan for labour market issues, trends, and strategies, it was the job of the Labour Market Commission to design the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy (Labour Market Commission Annual Report 2008, 8). Created through Bill 34, an Act of the Provincial Legislature, the *Labour Market Commission Act* became effective on February 7th 2007, granting the Commission its administrative powers (Labour Market Commission Annual Report 2008, 9).

The Labour Market Commission was unique in its design as it was the first commission in Saskatchewan to involve multiple stakeholders, including appointed representatives from business, labour, training institutions and government, to address labour market issues (Labour Market Commission Annual Report 2008, 9). Created under Bill 34, the *Labour Commission Act*, Chapter L-0.11 came into effect February 7, 2007 (Saskatchewan Labour Market Commission 2009, 9) to create a labour market strategy that advised the government on sustainable economic growth, creating a well-educated workforce representative of the

population, improving business competitiveness, promoting and enhancing of the quality of life for all current and future residents of Saskatchewan, and increasing Aboriginal labour market integration (Labour Market Strategy 2009, 5). Additionally, the Strategy demonstrated how to build strong lines of communication that helped coordinate labour market supply and demand exchange of information between business and labour (Labour Market Strategy, 2009, 2). This put the Strategy in a position to demand a responsive and adaptive labour market where all participants worked together to improve the standard of living for all residents in Saskatchewan.

In 2007, the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party lost the provincial election to the Saskatchewan Party. Once in office, the Saskatchewan Party government asked the Commission to wrap up early and deliver the Labour Market Strategy sooner than originally expected (Interview, 2014). Supported by experts among business, labour, First Nations and Métis communities, and institutional training systems, there were high expectations for the 2009 Labour Market Strategy. In 2009, the Government of Saskatchewan tabled the Strategy. After some time, the government decided that the Strategy would not be implemented, despite a consensus among stakeholders that the Strategy held the potential to significantly improve the rate of Aboriginal integration into the Saskatchewan labour market as well as address additional labour market problems. In subsequent years, the Saskatchewan Party government has implemented many of the Strategy's recommendations. This thesis aims to understand the evolution of the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy to examine why the issue of Aboriginal labour market integration gained traction, how policy makers intended to address it, and why this Strategy was ultimately not implemented.

1.1 Analytical Framework

John Kingdon's policy stream theory provides the theoretical framework for the thesis. Kingdon's policy stream theory is outlined in his book *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*

(2011; first published in 1984). As will be detailed in Chapter 2, this theory argues that public policy processes and outcomes are highly influenced by problems, policy proposals and politics. These three areas are referred to as policy streams in Kingdon's theory. It is these streams that explain the developmental paths policies embark on prior to their completion.

Kingdon's policy stream theory will be applied to the Labour Market Commission's creation of the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy, providing a framework to explain how Aboriginal labour market integration became an issue deserving a major policy response, the shape this response took, and why the policy initiative was ultimately abandoned by the Government of Saskatchewan. The problem stream will analyze how decreased Aboriginal labour market integration came to be identified as a "problem" warranting such a significant response in 2007, especially given the fact that Aboriginal underemployment existed for many years preceding the strategy. The proposal stream will discuss the components of the Labour Market Strategy, including its proposal for improving Aboriginal employment and how it would assist with labour shortages. The political stream will examine the influence that elected officials and party politics played on the fate of the Labour Market Strategy, and will analyze how political partisanship affected and eventually led to the non-implementation of the Strategy. Lastly, the thesis will apply Kingdon's ideas regarding policy windows to explain when and how all the policy streams lined up to allow the Strategy to develop and ultimately to fail.

Kingdon's framework is appropriate for this thesis for a number of reasons. First, it has gained recognition as one of the top policy creation theories. Sarah Stachowiak, from the Center for Evaluation Innovation, calls Kingdon's theory "a global theory... that represents a more encompassing worldview about how policy change happens" (Stachowiak 2013). Additionally, James Thurber, Distinguished Professor at the School of Public Affairs in Washington, D.C., endorses Kingdon's book as "an outstanding teaching tool about the policy process" (Kingdon 2011, 7).

The second reason is Kingdon's focus on pre-policy development in the problem identification stream. Kingdon's unique inclusion of the problem identification stream allows the thesis analysis to take into account pivotal behind-the-scenes policy factors and processes that other analytical frameworks might overlook. Further, Kingdon's theory focuses on the development of a policy from the beginning, which includes the initial identification and definition of a problem, the creation of proposed policy solutions to address the problem, and the impacts the political environment can have on a problem or policy. Using Kingdon's theory, the thesis presents an opportunity for a step-by-step understanding of the policy development stage through a viewing of the Labour Market Commission and its creation of the 2009 Labour Market Strategy.

It is important to acknowledge criticisms of Kingdon's theory. Professor Gary Mucciaroni (1992) raises concerns with Kingdon's conceptualization of the relationship between policy streams, as he feels there is more interdependence among policy streams than originally suggested by Kingdon. While Kingdon (2011) states that the policy streams are independent and only interact once they have merged, Mucciaroni disagrees, suggesting that Kingdon "overemphasizes the separate internal dynamics within each stream, while undervaluing the linkages among the three variables" (1992, 473). For example, Mucciaroni suggests a policy could succeed even though the political timing is not right if the problem stream is overpowering, offering an example of how policy streams may be more interdependent than originally stated by Kingdon. In response to such criticisms, Kingdon recognizes that "connections between the problems, policy streams and participants [within the problem stream] surely do sometimes attempt to solve problems [within the proposal stream], and that the development and content of proposals are driven by their conceptions of the severity and type of the problem", but defends that "policy proposals are also often developed for reasons other than to solve a given problem.... and it is often true that another problem comes to be pressing, and the proposal originally developed to solve Problem A is transported to solve Problem B" –

leaving the process random and the streams independent (Kingdon 2011, 228). Additionally, Kingdon explains that while there may be cases where the streams join and influence each other, refusing to distinguish between the problem and policy streams would prevent us from understanding that each has its own origins and dynamics, making it difficult to understand what happens in each case and why various couplings occur (Kingdon 2001, 228). Within the thesis, the separation of policy streams is reflected in the reality of how the Labour Market Strategy was created.

Another criticism focuses on the applicability of Kingdon's theory to other institutional environments. Professors Exworthy and Powell (2004) raise concern that Kingdon's theory might be designed for application only at the national level. The concern is that it may prove difficult for application at other levels of government, since opportunities and influential stakeholders at other governmental levels differ from those at a national level, and accordingly need adjustment. They speak to the need to "pull Kingdon off the Hill" and identify the institutions at a local level that serve the same functions that Kingdon's Washington, D.C.-based institutions play (Exworthy and Powell 2004, 265). Extending this critique, there may be some concern that Kingdon's policy stream theory, which has historically been applied to the United States, is applied in this thesis as the theoretical framework to explain the development of a Canadian policy. This thesis demonstrates that Kingdon's theory can be applied to both Canada and a sub-national level of government. Because Saskatchewan's provincial institutions are not as dissimilar to the American national government as are American local governments, the institutional environment critique does not preclude the application of Kingdon's theory to the Saskatchewan case. Although by no means identical, Saskatchewan's Legislative Assembly can be seen as a parallel to Congress as they both perform legislative functions, and key government decision makers within policy development are represented in the Legislature, as they are in Congress. Additionally, as Kingdon stresses the role of the executive branch in the United States,

the executive role is performed in Canadian governance by provincial cabinets. While the United States and Canada have different governing systems, there are sufficient similarities in their institutional structures for policy development to allow the application of Kingdon's model to the Canadian context.

1.2 Methodology and Limitations

To answer the research question, primary document analysis and key informant interviews were conducted. Key primary documents analyzed for the thesis include labor market consultation documents, progress reports leading up to the creation of the Strategy, and the *2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy: Right People, Right Place, Right Time*. Along with primary documents, interviews were an essential collection method for information.

Interviews were conducted with former members of the Labour Market Commission, those closely involved in the Strategy creation process, elected politicians as well as business and industry leaders – all of whom were involved in the policy making process during the creation of the Strategy. Additionally, several interviewees employed within the Saskatchewan political sector spoke on the current government's approach. To ensure a fair partisan balance, a combination of representatives from the Saskatchewan Party and the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party were interviewed.

Interview data was used to understand different perspectives surrounding the creation of the Strategy. The interviews focused on possible driving factors behind the creation of the Strategy, information about the Labour Market Commission's creation of the Strategy, and why the Strategy was never implemented. The format of these questions allowed me to adapt Kingdon's three policy streams easily. To ensure confidentiality, interviewees remain anonymous in the thesis.

The interview process used the snowball sampling technique to reach out to members of the Labour Market Commission and those closely associated. First, this process required the selection of a few individuals based on their association with both the creation and development of the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy; this list was formulated by viewing the Labour Market Commission consultation documents. Original interviewees were asked to suggest further respondents, and based on their recommendations an additional list of interviewees was formulated. They, as the previous interviewees, were also knowledgeable about the Labour Market Strategy. A total of ten individuals were interviewed between May 15, 2013 and June 1, 2015. The interview data collection process received an ethical waiver from the University of Saskatchewan Ethics Review Board.

The research methodology is not without limitations. Since the secondary literature available is limited, the information pool is limited to the original documents and informed personnel. Individuals' recollections of events may be incomplete or inaccurate as the information dates back to 2009 and earlier. Additionally, it is important to note that since interviewees were close to the development of the Labour Market Strategy they may have a biased view due to their vested interests.

As this thesis presents official statistics on Aboriginal labour market engagement (specifically Canadian Census data from 2006, with a focus on off reserve Aboriginal employment statistics), it is important to note that some statisticians consider official data on Aboriginal employment to be incomplete. The issue is that on-reserve statistics are exclusively about the First Nations population, whereas the Aboriginal population living off reserve is almost equally split between the Métis and First Nation populations (Elliot 2009). According to Sask Trends statistician Doug Elliot, this makes it difficult to know whether statistical differences between the on-reserve and off-reserve populations are describing socioeconomic characteristics in relation to jurisdiction and First Nation governance, or geography, or Aboriginal identity, or a combination of these

factors (2009). Notwithstanding this concern, Sask Trends Monitor suggests Census statistic sources still continue to supply the best data (Elliot 2009).

It is important to define the terminology that will be used throughout the thesis. The thesis uses the term Aboriginal to refer to individuals who self-identify with the Aboriginal peoples of Canada; this includes First Nations, Métis, or Inuit (Statistics Canada 2013). Unemployment rates refer to the percentage of labour force participants that do not hold jobs, including workers that have been laid off, and are continuing to look for work elsewhere (Horstein and Rhodes 2013). The participation rate represents a rate for a particular group, which is the total labour force in that group, expressed as a percentage of the total population in the group (Statistics Canada 2009). The labour force population only includes those 15 years and older (Statistics Canada 2009). The labour market is defined as a market in which the forces of supply and demand jointly determine price (the wage rate) and quantity (the number of people employed) (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009, 2). A labour market is balanced when there is neither excess supply of nor demand for labour (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009, 2).

1.3 Thesis Relevance

The thesis informs the discourse on public policy development by exploring the evolution of a Saskatchewan initiative, the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy. With limited literature available about the Strategy and the reason why it was not implemented, this thesis offers original information on the Strategy based on interviews with past commissioners and elected government officials. By doing so the thesis aims to offer a chronological record of the Labour Market Commission and its creation of the Labour Market Strategy.

Drawing on original information from interviews with Labour Market Commission members and elected political officials, the thesis offers information that has not previously been available in public literature. Further, interview data offers invaluable information, such as how

Saskatchewan politicians and many policy makers marketed the importance of decreased Aboriginal labour market integration, and how/why the Commission was disbanded following a change in government. Since interviewees remain anonymous, information gathered through interviews is in depth and detailed as anonymity allowed interviewees to speak freely. This information is valuable because it offers background information on public policy development in Saskatchewan. For example, when the Commission was dismantled and the Strategy not implemented there were very few answers given by the government. By conducting interviews and gathering original information, the thesis was able to explore what was happening behind closed doors, including ideological tensions, and the desire for the Saskatchewan Party to separate itself from policies created by the New Democratic Party. This was not public knowledge, but was confirmed by multiple interviewees.

Conducting interviews also helped identify driving factors behind the creation of the Labour Market Strategy. While the Strategy cited economic stability, looming labour shortages, and an improved quality of life for Aboriginal peoples as the driving factors behind its creation, interviewees offered different information. For example, many interviewees cited looming labour shortages in 2007 as the main driving factor rather than the other reasons, suggesting that it took prominence over addressing Aboriginal quality of life/labour market integration. This implies that the need for economic sustainability in Saskatchewan was a higher concern than the need to address the ongoing issue of increasing Aboriginal labour market integration. As this information differs from publicly available literature in the Strategy, it demonstrates how the interviews were able to offer a different side of policy development, and one that is not always seen by the public.

The use of John Kingdon's policy streams as the theoretical framework is also instrumental in providing readers with a detailed chronological development of the Saskatchewan-based policy initiative. As the thesis views the policy development processes used by the Government of Saskatchewan to address economic stability and Aboriginal participation in the labour market, all

policy streams are considered. First, through the analysis of the problem stream, the thesis explores how an issue is defined as a problem that gains political recognition, offering insights to the question of what allows a problem to be considered a large-scale issue that requires policy attention. Next, Kingdon's proposal stream examines how the Government of Saskatchewan addressed the "problem" of Aboriginal labour market integration. As the proposal stream represents the area where policies are generated, debated, revised and put forward for serious consideration (Kingdon 2011), the thesis explains to readers the different sections of the Strategy and how they were shaped to achieve their desired outcome. Next, the analysis of the political stream offers insight into policy decision making processes within the Government of Saskatchewan. The focus on the political environment - which is the government and its institutions and legislation, and the public/private stakeholders who operate and interact with or influence that system (International Consortium, 2015) - allowed the thesis to view the decision to not implement the Strategy. Within the political stream, the thesis offers readers multiple interviewees' statements describing partisanship as the main reason the Strategy was not implemented. This information is valuable, as it comes from those involved with or associated with the Strategy, and offers a glimpse into the Government of Saskatchewan's decision to not implement the Strategy and instead implement similar recommendations through other programs. Based on interviews conducted, the consensus suggests that the Saskatchewan Party wanted to distance itself from the policies of the previous government. While this is not uncommon, it was not a reason given publicly by the government; this confirms the importance of gathering original data via interviews. Lastly, the thesis discusses policy windows to view how the policy streams came together to allow the Commission to develop the Strategy.

1.4 Thesis Organization

The thesis is laid out in three chapters. Chapter One explains the purpose of the thesis, the methodology, the theoretical framework, objectives and limitations. Chapter Two applies

Kingdon's theory to the creation of the Labour Market Commission and evolution of the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy. In doing so, Chapter Two explains how decreased Aboriginal labour market integration came to be defined as a problem, how the Labour Market Strategy proposed government should respond to the problem, and how political factors affected the Strategy's fate. Chapter Three concludes the thesis by summarizing the findings, wrapping up the analysis, and identifying areas for additional research.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework Application

2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to apply Kingdon's policy stream model as the theoretical framework of the thesis. Through application of the problem stream, the chapter examines how lower Aboriginal integration into the labour market came to be defined as a problem by government and many policy makers. The chapter argues that anticipated labour shortages is one of the primary reasons the government defined low Aboriginal labour market participation rates as a problem. Through application of the proposal stream, the chapter examines why the Labour Market Commission saw Aboriginal labour market integration as a means to reduce looming labour shortages in Saskatchewan. The chapter argues that the Commission perceived the Aboriginal population as a large demographic already present in the province, thus reducing the need to recruit labour from outside the province and reducing the need for additional infrastructure to support new provincial residents. Through application of the political stream, the chapter examines why the Strategy was not implemented, and argues that one of the reasons the Saskatchewan Party government abandoned the Strategy was partisanship. Lastly, the chapter uses policy windows to demonstrate how opportunities for political action on given initiatives arise (Kingdon 2011, 166); specifically, how Aboriginal labour market integration came to be addressed within the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy.

2.1 The Problem Stream: Theory

The problem stream explains how specific issues come to be defined as a problem in need of redress, and why particular issues, rather than the multitude of other issues that could also warrant attention, garner a response. Kingdon states that fairly often problems come to the attention of governmental decision makers not through some sort of political process, but because some more or less systematic indicator simply suggests that there is a problem (2011,

90). The indicator offers objective information to policy makers, who subjectively interpret the information to decide if it suggests a problem. As economic indicators, especially expenditures and budgetary impacts, are monitored closely, they often serve as important indicators for policy makers (2011, 94).

Issues and objective indicators become defined as subjective problems through the process of agenda setting. The agenda, as Kingdon perceives it, is any issue that policy makers and government are paying close attention to at any time (Kingdon 2011, 3). The process of agenda setting is how an issue reaches policy makers' and a government's attention. Kingdon's theory states that agendas can be set by many ways, such as a change in widely respected indicators, gradual accumulation of knowledge among specialists in a given policy area, fads or political processes (Kingdon 2011, 3). For example, a rise in medical care costs can impact the size of the United States Medicare budget, propelling health care reform onto the government's agenda (Kingdon 2011,17).

2.2 The Problem Stream: Application

Despite years of high Aboriginal unemployment rates, and years of economic indicators showing a vast unemployment gap between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of the province, the Government of Saskatchewan did not take significant steps to address the problem of Aboriginal integration into the labour market until the creation of the Labour Market Commission in 2007. This suggests that another factor, besides mere interest in Aboriginal employment, was at play. By applying the problem stream, this section argues that Aboriginal integration achieved "problem" status in 2007 because many policy makers were focused on addressing another problem, looming labour shortages. To present this case, the section below will demonstrate how low Aboriginal labour market integration caught the attention of many policy makers, and explain how looming labour shortages impacted the need to address it.

Statistical indicators documenting low Aboriginal integration into the Saskatchewan labour market caught the attention of many policy makers. As demonstrated in Table 2-1, Aboriginal unemployment in Saskatchewan had been consistently higher than non-Aboriginal unemployment. Table 2-1 shows these high levels of Aboriginal unemployment and the large gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal unemployment in Saskatchewan, which dates as far back as 2001. For example, in 2001 Aboriginal unemployment was triple the rate of non-Aboriginal unemployment. It is labour market statistics such as these that served as indicators to Saskatchewan policy makers in 2007. Not only did these statistics demonstrate that there was a problem with the equality of labour market integration among demographics, they also brought attention to the large gaps in employment rates between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of the province.

Table 2-1:
Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Unemployment Rates in Saskatchewan (2001-2011)

	Aboriginal Unemployment Rate (%)	Non-Aboriginal Unemployment Rate (%)
2001	23.0	6.3
2006	18.2	5.6
2011	16.9	5.9

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006.

One of the criticisms about Aboriginal labour market statistics is the inconsistent non-separation/separation of First Nation and Métis populations. Table 2-2 offers a further breakdown of the 2006 Canadian Census employment rates with Métis peoples as a separate category. As seen in Table 2-2, Métis peoples still experience high rate of unemployment, in comparison with non-Aboriginals. It is important to offer a breakdown that splits the categories

to show more than just unemployment and employment. Table 2-2 views the eligible working population, the over 15 category, and those who are employed, or unemployed (which can be someone in the process of looking for work). These numbers allow the reader to further understand the percentages in Table 2-1.

Table 2-2:

Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Employment Levels (2006)

	Non-Aboriginal	First Nations	Métis	Total Aboriginal (First Nations and Métis)
Employed	452,805	20,490	21,605	42,095
Unemployed	20,015	6,785	2,600	9,390
Not in Labour Force	202,115	28,335	11,480	39,815
Population Over 15	674,935	55,610	35,685	91,295
Employment Rate, 2006	67%	37%	61%	46%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006.

Despite the employment gap between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, and despite the related poor quality of life for Aboriginal peoples and provincial expenditure concerns identified, the Government of Saskatchewan did not take steps to address the ongoing problem until the creation of the Labour Market Strategy. This suggests another factor, in addition to concern about Aboriginal employment, was at play. This thesis argues that Aboriginal integration finally

achieved “problem” status in 2007 because many policy makers were focused on another problem: looming labour shortages.

Between 2006 and 2007, Saskatchewan entered an economic boom. During this time, personal expenditures, investments, and government expenditures increased (Gingrich 2009, 13). Rich in wheat, barley, lentils and chickpeas, Saskatchewan was, and still is, a major exporter, and an important player in the international trade field – making it a strong economic player when it comes to exporting crops (Globe and Mail 2009). Yet as stated by University of Regina Professor Paul Gingrich, Saskatchewan was in the process of moving from an economy highly dependent on agriculture to one that was increasingly diversified with employment and production in agriculture, services and minerals (Gingrich 2009, 13). Additionally, the success and growth of Saskatchewan’s non-renewable natural resources contributed highly to Saskatchewan’s economic performance (Campbell 2012). Among the most prominent resources were potash, oil and uranium (Globe and Mail 2009). As stated in the Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy, further establishment of the manufacturing and service sector, research and development facilities, and a competitive tax system were what helped Saskatchewan’s economy transition into an increasingly stable position (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009, 6). It was the economic success of these new sectors that helped Saskatchewan transition from a “have-not province” to a “have-province” (Campbell 2012).

Prior to and after, the economic boom created a need for policy makers to address Aboriginal labour market integration. In a paper released by Painter et al. (2000) at the University of Saskatchewan, it was reported that Aboriginal peoples had the worst chronic unemployment rates in North America, and argued that if they continued to experience the same rates of under-education and underemployment there would be significant social and economic consequences (Painter et al. 2000, 31). Specifically, the report argued that “if Aboriginal unemployment continued to increase over the 50 year forecast period, the need for and cost of government social

assistance would continue to increase” (Painter et al. 2000, 39). They also cautioned that “if the Government of Saskatchewan [continued] to share the cost of Aboriginal social assistance with the federal government at existing federal/provincial proportions, by 2045 the proportion of the Saskatchewan budget going towards Aboriginal social assistance would be 6.7 percent, compared to 2 percent in 2000”, rising to 11.4% of its budget if the province ever had to bear the full responsibility for funding Aboriginal social assistance (Painter et al. 2000, 40). Many policy makers recognized that this was not a sustainable choice for Saskatchewan. This rationale for addressing Aboriginal labour market engagement focused on the province’s economic interests, as opposed to quality of life for the province’s Aboriginal peoples.

Policy makers viewed monetary and budgetary indicators to help gauge the importance of increasing Aboriginal labour market integration. In this case, indicators took the form of a potential rise in societal costs. It was argued that the government could save \$500 million annually if the level of labour market integration of Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginals were equal (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009, 11). The savings would be a result of by decreased spending in the Social Services Ministry, the Justice Ministry and the Corrections Ministry (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009, 11). With the potential to save \$500 million, this indicator served as a motivator for addressing the problem of Aboriginal labour market integration as it had the potential to free up a large sum of money in the government’s budget instead of potentially adding more costs to the social assistance programs.

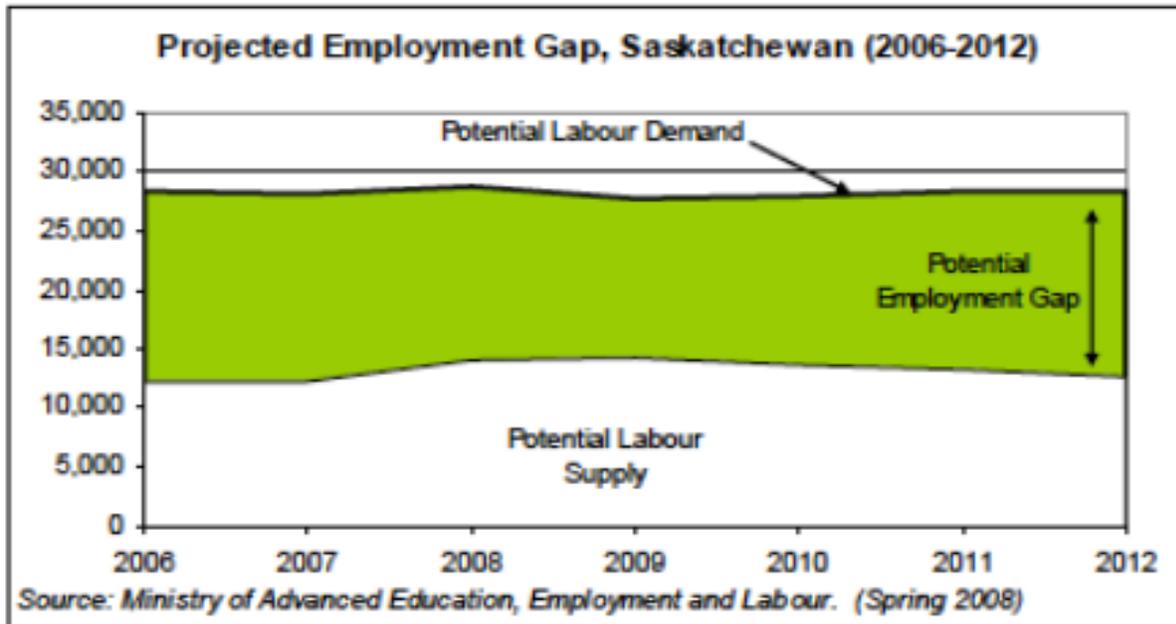
Along with quality of life concerns and economic issues, looming labour shortages were a strong indicator to many policy makers. This occurred as Saskatchewan’s economic growth resulted in corresponding growth in the labour market and provincial employment grew while unemployment dropped. By 2008, Saskatchewan’s unemployment rate was at 4.1 percent, compared to the national unemployment rate of 6.2 percent (Enterprise Saskatchewan, 2009).

Exacerbating the need for additional workers was the lingering effect of outmigration and the retiring baby boomers. Over the previous decade Saskatchewan had experienced a decrease in population, with a net loss of 46,000 people due to interprovincial migration (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009, 6). At the same time there were increased retirement rates from the baby boomer generation. In 2007, Saskatchewan had Canada's highest proportion of seniors with a rate of 15.4 percent of the population (CBC 2007). The Saskatchewan Plan for Growth suggested that the multitude of baby boomers retiring furthered the need to work aggressively on filling job vacancies (2012, 17), as the Government of Saskatchewan was estimating that, between 2006 and 2011, nearly three-quarters (73.5 percent) of all job openings would be the result of attrition, signaling that the labour market could possibly dwindle in size as the baby boomers retired (Labour Market Agreement 2008).

In 2006, the Canada-Saskatchewan Labour Market Agreement used historical growth rates to forecast the need for 13,000 to 15,000 additional workers in Saskatchewan's labour market over the coming years to soften the impacts of looming labour shortages. As seen in Figure 2-1, between 2007 and 2008 this figure increased to 25,000-30,000 additional workers, with Saskatchewan reaching the highest peak for a potential employment gap in 2008. Also between those years the potential labour demand reached an all-time high. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Labour Market Commission was created during that period, in the midst of looming labour shortages. Figure 2-1 is also a good example of the fluidity and reactivity in the Saskatchewan labour market, as multiple factors such as retiring baby boomers and Aboriginal labour market integration affected the labour demand and availability supply.

Figure 2-1:

Projected Employment Gap, Saskatchewan (2006-2012)



Source: Saskatchewan Labour Market Commission, 2009.

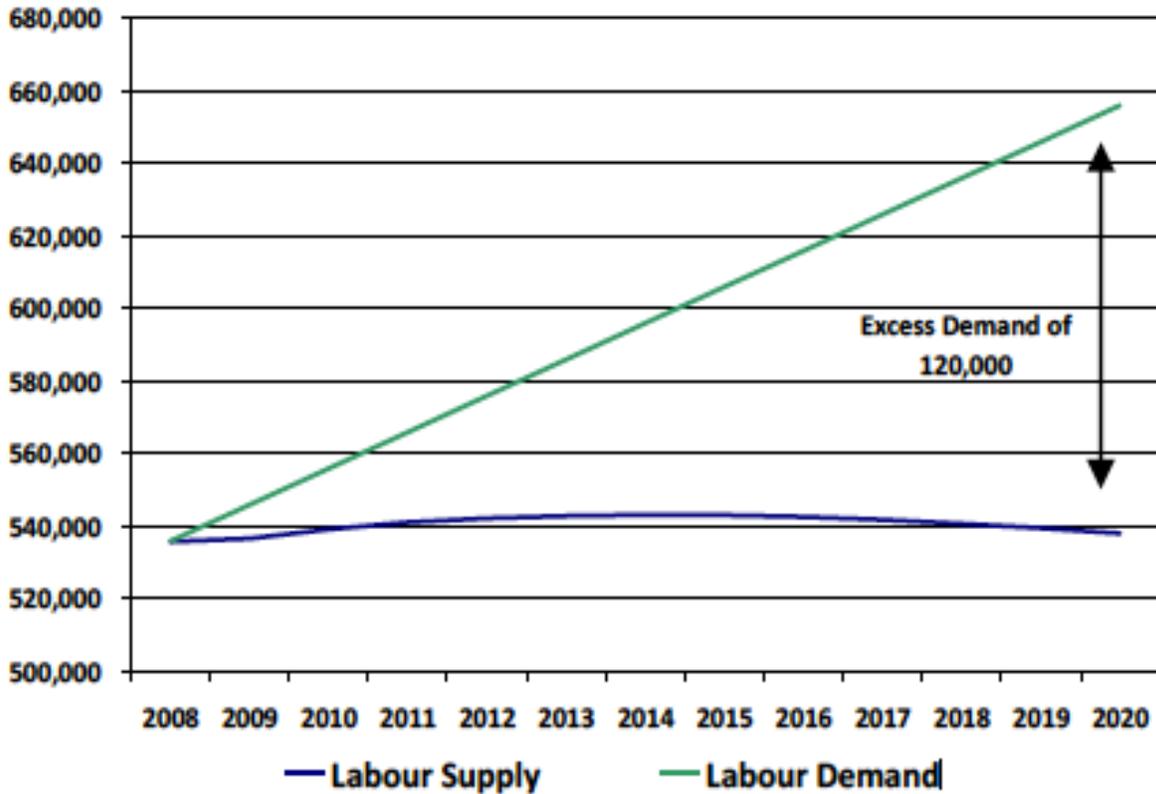
In 2008, the Labour Market Commission analyzed the labour market again and forecasted that Saskatchewan actually required 120,000 more workers to help counteract labour shortages from 2007 until 2020 (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009, 7). Figure 2-2 shows the labour demand and supply in Saskatchewan from 2008 until 2020. Further, Figure 2-2 shows the Saskatchewan population and the required amount of labour needed to address looming labour shortages.

Without the addition of 120,000 workers to the labour market, it was argued, labour shortages would threaten not only the stability of Saskatchewan's economy but its potential for future growth (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy, 2009, 4). As demonstrated in Figure 2-2, Saskatchewan required a steady increase of workers from 2008-2012 to balance the labour market and reduce impacts of looming labour shortages. These numbers served as economic

indicators, convincing many policy makers that addressing labour market participation was an urgent matter, as the need for additional workers had grown extensively between 2006 and 2008.

Figure 2-2:

Saskatchewan Labour Demand and Supply Scenario



Source: Saskatchewan Labour Market Commission, 2009.

Original interviews with those associated with the Labour Market Strategy allow for an in-depth understanding of the assortment of reasons behind the decision to focus on Aboriginal labour market integration in the 2007 Labour Market Strategy, and appear to confirm that it was the combination of provincial labour market needs and Aboriginal peoples' well-being that drove the focus on Aboriginal labour market integration. One interviewee stated that the necessity for policy makers to address the high unemployment rates among Aboriginal peoples in 2007 came

from the desire for “growth in the Saskatchewan economy but the [employed] population couldn’t support the growth plan.... policy makers needed to have a particular perspective as there were gaps between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals and it wasn’t acceptable” (Interview 2014).

Frequently, interviewees noted the social relationship between employment and wellbeing, opining that the Commission was not only motivated by the economic significance of Aboriginal underemployment, but also by a moral interest in improving the quality of life for Aboriginals. A common response was that the Labour Market Strategy had to focus on Aboriginal integration because it was “the right thing to do”. One interviewee stated the need “to draw from the unemployment pool and improve Aboriginal peoples’ quality of life” (Interview 2014). As articulated by another, “it was the realization that this was the right thing to do, socially and economically; it got the message through to peoples’ heads” (Interview 2013). Yet another stated, “all around we need to go beyond politics and policies, and do what is right and can make the most difference, in this case it is furthering Aboriginal integration into the labour market” (Interview 2013).

To summarize, based on many policy makers’ concerns, the threat of looming labour shortages highlighted the importance of the problem in the Saskatchewan labour market, which is why there was a focus on increasing Aboriginal integration into the labour market. Since Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan had the lowest participation rates in the labour market, increased integration was focused upon, as it would help reduce looming labour shortages.

2.3 The Proposal Stream: Theory

The policy proposal stream examines the process of choosing a policy solution to address identified problems. Within this stream Kingdon explores where the idea driving the policy solution emerges from and how it is chosen. First, Kingdon uses the idea of “policy primeval

soup” to suggest that ideas within policy proposals are never fully scrapped, but instead dumped into a “mix” where they wait on the luck of natural selection and consideration of relevant criteria to reemerge, or be chosen (Kingdon 2011, 117). Kingdon argues that ideas within this “mix” are not stagnant, but instead are tested out on policy makers and the public to soften them up to a specific idea (Kingdon 2011, 117). Further, as ideas become prominent and then fade, there is a long process of “softening up” that they must go through (Kingdon 2011, 117). This is seen when ideas are floated, bills introduced, speeches made, proposals drafted, then amended in response to reaction and floated again (2011, 117). Overall, this model is referred to as a Garbage Can Model, in reference to the multitude of floating ideas and potential policy proposals that constantly gather participants and resources (Kingdon 2011, 84). Kingdon suggests that this model emphasizes how various problems are perceived simultaneously within government at any given time, and solutions inapplicable to one problem are often disregarded and reemerge later – sometimes to address a completely different matter (Kingdon, 2011, 86).

Kingdon states that the key to understanding the process of the “policy soup” relies on understanding the conditions under which ideas survive (2011, 124). First, in order for an idea to be successful it must be technically feasible, which requires advocates of a proposal to delve deeply into details and technicalities, gradually eliminating inconsistencies, and attending to the feasibility of implementation, specifically the actual mechanisms by which an idea would be brought into practical use (Kingdon 2011, 131). If anyone is to consider the idea as a viable option it must also be considered possible, and have the majority of its “kinks” ironed out, as policy makers want to adopt an idea that can be shaped easily; the idea should not create more problems for implementation than the issue at hand. Second, the idea must have value acceptability within the policy community. The policy community represents those actors inside and outside government that influence policy. While not all policy communities share the same values, they do tend to see things the same way and have common approaches to problems

(Kingdon 2011, 133). When Kingdon uses the term “values” he includes ideology, but focuses on the broad spectrum of values and principles that appeal to the public (2011, 136). The two values that most often offer a make-or-break deal are equity and efficiency; a potential idea must satisfy both (Kingdon 2011, 136). Lastly, the idea must have minimal anticipation of future constraints (Kingdon 2011, 137). Kingdon states that, “some ideas fail to obtain a serious hearing, even among specialists, because their future looks bleak, while others survive because specialists calculate that they would meet [these] future tests” (2011, 138). Kingdon lists budget constraints and public acquiescence as the most common future tests that can impact the potential future of an idea (2011, 138). When an idea has all of the former qualities, more often than not it is strongly considered.

2.4 The Proposal Stream: Application

Saskatchewan’s rapid economic growth warranted a new governmental approach to dealings within the labour market. By 2008, Saskatchewan had the fastest growing economy of all Canadian provinces with 4.4 percent growth, putting Saskatchewan ahead of the national average of 0.5 percent growth (Government of Saskatchewan 2009). With a multitude of issues, along with ideas for addressing them, Saskatchewan had to focus on which ideas deserved the most attention. This section will discuss the Labour Market Commission and its focus on increasing Aboriginal labour market integration as a tool to reduce potential labour shortages.

With ongoing issues in the labour market, the government established an independent commission, the Saskatchewan Labour Market Commission, to research and recommend a new labour market approach. The Saskatchewan Labour Market Commission was established as a corporation under the *Labour Market Commission Act* in February 2007. In order to create an efficient and nonpartisan Commission, members from both political parties were appointed to the Commission. The Lieutenant Governor in Council made appointments, with the objective that

the Commission would reflect the population in diversity, academia and industry (Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly 2007). Appointments by the Lieutenant Governor in Council followed strict guidelines. Membership was dictated by section 4 of the Act.

Membership

4 (1) The commission consists of not more than 19 members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

(2) The Lieutenant Governor in Council shall appoint as members:

(a) five individuals, at least one of whom must be of First Nations or Métis ancestry, representing labour in Saskatchewan, chosen in consultation with the organization the most representative of labour in Saskatchewan;

(b) five individuals, at least one of whom must be of First Nations or Métis ancestry, representing business in Saskatchewan, chosen in consultation with the organization the most representative of business in Saskatchewan;

(c) one individual from each of the Dumont Technical Institute, the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology and a college or regional college as defined in *The Regional Colleges Act*;

(d) one individual from the social economy;

(e) the deputy minister of the department; and

(f) not more than two other individuals.

(3) The organizations mentioned in clauses (2)(a) and (b) shall endeavor to nominate a diverse group of individuals in terms of:

(a) gender;

(b) age, including youth;

(c) ethnic diversity;

(d) geographic areas of Saskatchewan; and

(e) economic sectors.

Adequate representation from industry, business and other relevant stakeholders was considered essential to the success of the Labour Market Committee, as all sectors of the labour market would be assessed. Lastly, the Commission was deemed independent; it would not be an agent of the Crown (Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly 2007). With few constraints upon the Labour Market Commission, it was the objective that feedback would be in-depth and thorough, as well as nonpartisan.

With Commission members from a variety of backgrounds, including but not limited to policy making and human resources, the Commission was a mix of committee member resources and ideas about how to effectively address the challenges occurring in the labour market. With varied expertise, resources, and education, each Commission member brought a unique perspective on what they thought the problems and solutions were in their sector. Part of the process of ensuring all sectors of the labour market were considered included revisiting older labour market policy approaches and ideas within different stakeholder sectors to assess their relevance. This included, but was not limited to, the idea of increasing Aboriginal labour market integration, as it was a policy issue floating in the “policy soup” since the early days of the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party government. As an issue on the political agenda for years, it was once again revisited and incorporated into the 2009 Labour Market Strategy.

Before the 2009 release of the Strategy, the Commission released the 2008/2009 Labour Market Commission Annual Report. In the report, the Commission stated that the province was in fact experiencing labour shortages for the first time (Labour Market Commission Annual Report 2008, 12). Additionally, the report expressed economic concerns as the labour shortages were occurring prior to the anticipated retirement of Saskatchewan’s 171,500 working baby boomers (Saskatchewan Labour Market Commission Annual Report 2008, 12). With potential results of shortages including project cancellations, escalated costs as wages rose in competition for labour, decreased competitiveness due to rising costs, reduced productivity as hiring standards declined,

business closures, and increased taxes resulting in inflation, the Commission released its plan to solve the issue (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009). In attempt to reduce the impacts of labour shortages, one of the primary objectives the Commission would focus on was increasing Aboriginal labour market integration.

There were multiple reasons for focusing on Aboriginal labour market integration. One interviewee stated it was “a public policy move to ensure the labour market was more inclusive, and [ensure] that employment barriers would be less hindering to Aboriginals attempting to enter the labour market” (Interview 2013). Another said addressing the low level of Aboriginal participation in the Saskatchewan labour market “was the right thing to do on the public policy front, and the economic front” (Interview 2013). In its written documentation, the Commission stated that Aboriginal labor market integration was a natural choice for two reasons. The first reason was the proximity of Aboriginal peoples, since they already lived in the province and had an increased likelihood of saying if they were employed (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009). Additionally, within the Workforce and Workplace Enhancement section (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009), the Strategy emphasized increasing employment levels among Saskatchewan residents, and stated that economic growth should depend on the development and utilization of the talent that resides within provincial borders (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009). This put the focus on Saskatchewan’s Aboriginal peoples and their integration into the labour market, as it was unlikely that Saskatchewan would achieve full development of its provincial labour supply without them, and increased Aboriginal integration had the potential to add 20,000 workers to the labour market (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009, 12).

The second reason stated by the Commission was that tapping into the Aboriginal population would decrease additional stress on Saskatchewan’s infrastructure, services and programs, which a rapid influx of immigration would do (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009). Recruiting through interprovincial migration and immigration would put a large strain on

infrastructure in major cities such as Regina and Saskatoon, particularly if population growth was sudden (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009, 5). The Labour Market Strategy predicted that the addition of new workers from out of province would be like adding a city of 200,000-300,000 people to the province, since families and spouses would most likely migrate with workers to Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009, 5). This had the potential to increase the populations of Regina and Saskatoon to 300,000 - 350,000 people (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009). This degree of sudden population growth in a short time would put strain on provincial infrastructure and government services (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009). Focusing on Aboriginal labour market integration over immigration was easier since Aboriginal peoples were already living in Saskatchewan, wanted to work, and were likely to stay. This would make their employment an “easier” transition with less stress on provincial structures and services (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009).

In addition to the potential for infrastructure strain, there was a practical reality that the province was limited in its ability to recruit immigrants. As one interview respondent explained, “during 2008 the Government of Canada was recovering from recession, during that time they put a cap on immigration [federal skilled worker program] with the desire for provinces to retain, not import” (Interview 2015). This made the focus on integrating Saskatchewan’s Aboriginal population essential, as the Government of Canada had barriers in place with respect to increasing the workforce through immigration (Interview 2015). Therefore, there was agreement among all members of the Commission that the Strategy would focus on the Aboriginal population - the single largest demographic not fully participating in the labour market - first, before immigration and interprovincial migration (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009).

In summary, the Strategy argued that improving Aboriginal integration had the potential to add 20,000 Aboriginal peoples to the labour market, helping reduce looming labour shortages (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009, 10). Additionally, this would reduce the pressures

associated with population growth that relying on immigration to fill job vacancies would have created, such as increased strain on infrastructure and government services (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009, 5).

Lastly, it should be noted that while the main task of the Labour Market Strategy was the “attraction and retention of highly skilled individuals”, there were other objectives of the Strategy (Saskatchewan Labour Market 2009, 4). For example, the Strategy emphasized the need to provide information, up to date statistics, and comprehensive analysis of labour market trends to residents and the government on labour market demands, and business access to relevant labour market information so as to design and manage their labour needs (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009). Inadequate levels of education were also identified as a large barrier to the success of those trying to enter the labour market, and so the Labour Market Strategy recommendations included a focus on educational institutions and their duty to ensure that Saskatchewan’s grade 12 students had reading, math and science skills that exceeded the national average as a minimum benchmark (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009). By focusing on students about to either enter the labour market or attend post-secondary institutions, the Commission aimed to reduce the need for future efforts to deal with high levels of unemployment.

2.5 The Political Stream: Theory

Flowing independently of problems and policy proposals is the political stream. This stream is composed of public moods, pressure group campaigns, election results, partisan or ideological distributions and changes in governments (Kingdon 2011,145). More directly, the political stream has a large focus on the decisions of politicians and those with the authority to make laws and choose how, and which, problems are addressed (Kingdon 2011, 145). This section will discuss important components of the political stream and how they work within the stream.

The political stream uses the word “political” broadly, allowing the political stream to include actions outside the government sectors such as the public’s mood and opinion of government, all of which are very important to political motivations and governing bodies (Kingdon 2011, 145). The first concept within the political stream is the “national”¹ mood (Kingdon 2011, 147). The national public mood, which will be referred to as the public mood, refers to the attitudes, preferences and ideologies of the electorate, along with social movements (Kingdon 2011, 146). As stated by Kingdon, changes in the mood involve attitudes toward government, which affect government’s success in making new proposals (2011,147). In contrast, the public mood can also constrain issues, moving some to the back burner indefinitely (Kingdon 2011, 147). Governments use this “climate of thought” to inform their political agendas, as public opinion often becomes a driver of policy through the government’s desire to please the electorate (Kingdon 2011,149).

Since the public mood can affect election results, party fortunes, and the receptivity of governmental decision makers to interest group lobbying, a simple shift in the public mood can cause some proposals to appear more viable while others are killed (Kingdon 2011, 149). Kingdon states that dealing with the public mood is not an easy task as the public mood changes from time to time in discernible ways (Kingdon 2011, 146). This is why sensing the mood is important in the political realm. Kingdon states the process of sensing public mood primarily works in two ways: elected politicians judge their constituents’ mood from communications with the public, and nonelected officials sense the public mood from what they hear from politicians (Kingdon 2011, 149). It is important to know when a large group of people are thinking along the same thought pattern as this has the ability to impact the political stream.

¹ John Kingdon uses the word national mood to refer to the mood of the public at any given time. In the thesis the mood will be confined to the public mood within the province of Saskatchewan.

The second component within Kingdon's political stream is events occurring within government, which the thesis will refer to as political events. Kingdon (2011, 153) notes that some of the most important events include incumbents changing priorities, personnel change, and administrative change. These events are important because they have the ability to change the agenda. For example, if an incumbent changes priorities or government personnel change, they bring new priorities to the agenda (Kingdon 2011, 153). Further, if a change in government occurs, we often see a shift in ideologies, and the government's agenda will often take a new direction. The example Kingdon (2011, 153) uses describes the American election of 1964 as an instrument to show how a turnover of congressional seats enabled the Johnson government to push its desired policy aims. Kingdon (2011, 154) uses this example specifically, as he states that the most powerful turnover effect are from a change of government, since elected officials are at the very top of the list of actors in a democratic policy making arena.

2.6 The Political Stream: Application

This section will consider political events relevant to the creation and release of the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy, with particular attention to the public mood and the government change. In applying Kingdon's political stream, the thesis suggests that the 2007 Saskatchewan election, the New Democratic Party's association with the Strategy, and partisan considerations appear to be one of the main reasons that the Strategy was not implemented.

The public mood in Saskatchewan during 2007 showed discontent with labour market trends. This discontent was especially loud in the business sector, which feared labour shortages would negatively impact the sector, as businesses were already having trouble filling jobs with skilled workers (Interview 2014). Dr. C. Emery, an economics professor from the University of Calgary, writes that "the predictions in the media and think tanks during this time altogether sounded alarming; Saskatchewan, with its emerging economy, potentially faced a labour shortage so

severe it could drastically hobble the province's ultimate economic potential" (2013, 1). Further, since Saskatchewan had experienced an economic boom associated with its increased exportation of natural resources, the province required sufficient labour to ensure the economic boom kept going (Emery 2013, 3). If the problem was not addressed, the province could expect project delays, escalated costs, decreased competitiveness and business closures (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009, 7).

Another concern was the lack of Aboriginal integration into the labour market. As demonstrated by newspaper articles written in 2007, Saskatchewan had more at stake in integrating its Aboriginal population into the workforce than did any other province in Canada, and no province west of Ontario had experienced such a poor record in achieving this goal as Saskatchewan (Leader Post, 2007). In an interview with a member of the Labour Market Commission, the respondent stated, "a looming demographic [Aboriginal population], if left unchecked could impede future growth" (Interview 2013). With labour shortages and businesses putting pressure on the government to offer a solution, Saskatchewan was threatened with impeded economic development. The Aboriginal Human Resource Council (AHRC) was also putting pressure on the government. The head of the AHRC, Kelly Lendsay, was very vocal that the Council was displeased with the lack of Aboriginal labour market integration. Even further, the Council was displeased with the lack of information exchange between employers looking for workers and Aboriginal peoples looking for employment, expressing that "any kind of attempt at reversing it [was] not happening urgently enough in Saskatchewan" (Leader Post, 2008).

The second component of Kingdon's political stream is political events. This section will use information from key interviews and excerpts from Hansard to explore how government decisions and government changes impacted the Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy. This will be done by discussing political involvement in the Labour Market Commission by both

parties, the impact of the 2007 Saskatchewan election, and reasons behind the Strategy's non-implementation.

The New Democratic Party created the Commission to initiate accountability for labour market issues and to increase the effectiveness of Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board, the board formerly responsible for labour market issues. Established in 1994, the Board was developed to address the changing nature of Saskatchewan's labour market (Labour Market Commission Annual Report 2009, 9). However, after consulting with stakeholders in the province, the Board decided a more formal organization that was inclusive of stakeholders was required to provide strategic advice to the Government (Labour Market Commission Annual Report 2009, 9). Further, according to one interview respondent, the desire of the New Democratic Party was to provide a "government approach only, instead of having multiple [unorganized/arranged] partnerships" (Interview 2013). They perceived benefits to integrating the Board's prior work into one all-inclusive strategy development process, as the presence of industry representatives on the Commission would relieve the need to consult with each industry separately. By having those in the labour market funnel information to their sector representative, the Commission would be effectively informed on what the different sectors in the labour market needed.

When the idea of creating a Commission was first introduced by the New Democratic Party, both parties were in agreement and the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party government was not met with opposition from the Saskatchewan Party (Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly 2004, 541). Rather, as stated by Mr. Wayne Elhard of the Saskatchewan Party during the second reading of Bill 34, *The Labour Market Commission Act*, the Saskatchewan Party supported the Commission's approach with the Strategy.

They had representatives who came together and said look we've got a labour issue in this province... So they took the initiative to come together and hammer out what this particular Commission might look like.

(Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly 2006, 541)

I think the idea is appropriate and is probably worth pursuing. And as a matter of fact, because of the importance of this subject matter to the future of this province, I would suggest, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the House take this opportunity to move this piece of legislation forward to the committee.

(Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly 2006, 541)

In the 2007 Saskatchewan election, the Saskatchewan Party defeated the New Democratic government. When the Saskatchewan Party formed government, the Commission had not released the Strategy but had completed the research and the majority of public consultation with various sectors of the labour market (Interview 2014). Under the Saskatchewan Party government, the Labour Market Commission spent months continuing work on the creation of a labour market strategy. It was not until months later that the Saskatchewan Party government demanded that the Commission “wrap up” (Interview 2014).

When the Commission handed the Strategy over to the Saskatchewan Party government, it was not well received (Interview 2013). A member involved with the Commission explains: “The input and advice [of the Labour Market Strategy] was ignored by the government [Saskatchewan Party]; they acted on their own instead of following the Labour Market Strategy. It was a - thank you, but we got this - response” (Interview 2013).

Ultimately, the new government tabled the Strategy rather than implementing it. As one interview respondent described it, when the Commission handed the Labour Market Strategy over “it was left on the shelf to collect dust, nothing was done with it” (Interview 2013). This was disappointing and surprising to both the invested stakeholders and the Commission

members. The statement below, offered in an interview by a professional from the Saskatchewan business community, speaks to and epitomizes that sentiment:

Saskatchewan had a majority government and if anything was going to be done it was in their ability to have it done. The New Democratic Party agreed with it, and put the ball in motion. All they had to do was keep it going, they could have made a difference but they did not. This was a bad public policy decision, could have been more and better.

(Interview 2013)

In addition to not implementing the Strategy, the Saskatchewan Party government moved a motion to eliminate the Commission by introducing two bills. First, the *Labour Market Commission Amendment Act*, Bill 46, was introduced on October 28, 2008 (Labour Market Commission 2008, 1411). This bill reduced the Commission from 19 members to 11 members, and changed the method with which Commission members were appointed (Bill 46, 2008). This amendment also removed the legislation's requirement for government to consult with business and labour in the appointment of the business and labour members to the Commission (Larry Hubich Blog, 2009). The bill also introduced Enterprise Saskatchewan, the agency to replace the Commission (Bill 46, 2008). The second bill was the introduction of Bill 106, *The Labour Market Commission Repeal Act*, on November 4, 2009 (Saskatchewan 2009, 3442). This bill decommissioned the Labour Market Commission, with all of its assets and liabilities transferred to Enterprise Saskatchewan (Bill 106, 2009).

Enterprise Saskatchewan was similar to the Commission. It had objectives that were complementary to the Commission's, which raised the question of why the Commission had been dissolved. Enterprise Saskatchewan had a similar format to the Commission, as it maintained a collaborative approach with stakeholder representatives from diverse sectors.

Arguably, the creation of Enterprise Saskatchewan allowed the Saskatchewan Party government to address similar issues as those identified by the Commission in the Strategy. A major difference was that it did not come with the New Democratic Party brand. During interviews, many respondents stated that one of the main reasons the Strategy was not implemented appeared to be partisanship as opposed to dissatisfaction with the content (Interviews 2014-2015). As quoted by one interviewee, “the Saskatchewan Party did not want to implement it [the Labour Market Strategy] and have the New Democratic Party look good, [this was a] political, ideological issue” (Interview 2013). Another went so far as to say “the [Saskatchewan Party] government took the 2009 Labour Market Strategy and then put their name on it, [they] stole it” (Interview 2013).

The New Democratic Party caucus expressed a similar opinion. MLA Deb Higgins gave voice to this view in the Legislature:

When this Sask Party was elected, well it [the Labour Market Commission/Strategy] had NDP attached to it. It was an NDP initiative so it had to go.

(Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly 2009, 2638)

Mr. Speaker, it’s absolutely ridiculous that, purely for a political decision, we have dismantled the Labour Market Commission. We have discounted the work that this group of dedicated people have done over the last number of years and we are delaying progress in the province of Saskatchewan purely for a political decision.

(Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly 2009, 3586)

In rebuttal to critics, the Saskatchewan Party government quoted high costs as the reason for dismantling the Labour Market Commission. Ken Cheveldayoff, Minister Responsible for the Labour Market Commission, stated that the Commission was a large expense, and its functions would be better performed at a lesser cost by Enterprise Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly 2010, 496); this argument was put forward despite the fact that the 2009

Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy was already written. During an interview with a former Commission member, the member stated that the reason the Saskatchewan Party government gave for the dismantling of the Labour Market Commission, and non-implementation of the Strategy, seemed incomplete (Interview, 2014). Further, they said if high costs were the main concern, and if the Saskatchewan Party government had no intention of using the Strategy, it was off-putting to have the Commission continue its work after the change in government, including finalizing the Strategy and going through the process of approval, which no doubt was expensive (Interview 2014). Additionally, since the Commission had completed the Strategy along with its recommendations, there was worry by Commissioners that the work would be lost within the new entity (Saskatchewan 2009, 2239). After investing time and effort into creating the Strategy, the Commission wanted to see outcomes. While the Saskatchewan Party government stated that the functions of the Commission would still be performed under Enterprise Saskatchewan, many were skeptical. Speaking in the Legislature, Mr. Cam Broten of the Opposition New Democratic Party voiced their concern of addressing labour market issues in Enterprise Saskatchewan:

When it is one of the many, many sector teams that are operating within Enterprise Saskatchewan, it is not clear that to me — it has not been expressed to me — that the advice given by the Labour Market Commission would indeed be influential, that it just wouldn't be lost in the paper and the multiplying sector committees that we see occurring through Enterprise Saskatchewan.

(Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly 2009, 2339)

Enterprise Saskatchewan ran for two years (Saskatchewan 2012, 154). At that point its responsibilities were transferred to the Ministry of Economy (Saskatchewan 2012, 154), with the exception of labour market concerns/issues, which were shared with the newly developed Labour Market Task Force (Saskatchewan, 2013, 182). It is important to note that the dismantling of

Enterprise Saskatchewan could suggest that both methods were ineffective. While the thesis does not believe this to be true, it is important to consider alternative arguments.

Kingdon states that a change of government has a strong impact in the policy-making arena (2011, 154). In agreement with Kingdon, the thesis argues that one of the reasons the Saskatchewan Party government dismantled the Commission and did not implement the Strategy was for partisan reasons associated with the change in government. More specifically, the Saskatchewan Party government did not implement the Labour Market Strategy because of its association with the New Democratic Party government (Interview, 2013).

While it is not uncommon for governments to distance themselves from their predecessors, doing so is not without policy consequences. One of the results of the non-implementation of the Strategy and dismantling of the Commission was the end of the concerted effort to solve labour market issues by stakeholders outside of government² (Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, 2014). Further, meetings between labour, businesses, training institutions and sector groups ended when the Commission was dissolved and when Enterprise Saskatchewan was later closed (Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, 2014). When they stopped meeting, the sharing of information and project outcomes was reduced significantly (Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, 2014). Lastly, the attention on increasing Aboriginal integration into the labour market was stalled until the Saskatchewan Party government decided how it would brand its own approach to the issue.

Overall, the political stream demonstrates how the political environment can impact policy development, especially in the midst of a change in government. The Saskatchewan Party government's decision to not implement the Strategy does not mean that Aboriginal labour

² This comment applies only on a province-wide scale, as the Northern Labour Market Committee does meet regularly to address labour market issues in the north.

market integration was unimportant to the government, but rather that the government would use an alternative approach to ensure the Strategy was not associated with the policies of the previous New Democratic Party government.

2.7 Policy Window: Theory

The policy window represents the opportunity for advocates to push a policy proposal (Kingdon 2011, 165). Occurring after the policy streams align, the policy window represents the success or failure of a policy. This section will explain how policy streams align and view how windows open and close.

The moment policy streams conjoin is referred to as “coupling” (Kingdon 2011, 172). While Kingdon states that problems or policies by themselves can structure the governmental agenda, individual streams are not sufficient by themselves to impact the decision agenda, this can only occur when all three streams are joined (2011, 178). The example Kingdon uses to describe this process is urban mass transit (2011, 172-73):

- First, urban mass transit was proposed as a traffic management tool and as a solution to a traffic congestion problem.
- Second, the policy proposal stream defined urban mass transit in a specific way to gain public attention and momentum: as the way to solve the country’s energy problem.
- Third, the proposals are constantly in the policy stream, but then suddenly become on the governmental agenda because they can be seen as solutions to a pressing problem or because the politician finds the sponsorship expedient

As demonstrated above, when the agenda changes, “solutions are coupled with problems, proposals linked with political exigencies and alternatives are introduced” (Kingdon 2011, 173).

Policy windows represent the moment the policy streams align and produce the opportunity for a launch (Kingdon 2011, 166). As the windows stay open for short periods, and occur only once the streams have coupled, policy makers are constantly on the watch for open policy windows (Kingdon 2011, 166). Kingdon states these windows often open up because of a change in the political stream, such as a change of government or because of a shift in the public mood (Kingdon 2011, 168), although other reasons outside the political stream, such as the rise of a pressing problem or a tragic event, may also open a window (Kingdon 2011, 169). Once a policy window opens policy makers must be strategic in their moves, to ensure they get their idea across before the window closes. While an idea's time comes, it also passes.

Policy windows close for numerous reasons. The most common reasons include when participants feel they have not addressed the problem with a policy decision, participants failing to get action, the event that opened the window passing from the scene or, lastly, the personnel that aided in opening the window changes (Kingdon 2011, 169). Timing is everything with policy windows. As Kingdon states, "the longer people live with a problem, the less pressing it seems. The problem may not change at all, but if people can live with it, it appears less urgent" (2011, 170).

2.8 Policy Window: Application

The three policy streams aligned when looming labour shortages threatened Saskatchewan's economic success, and increasing Aboriginal labour market integration had the potential to add 20,000 workers to the market. With an urgent economic problem, and a proposal that had a high level of technical feasibility because the alternative was relying on immigration, which would put additional stress on the provinces' infrastructure, the policy window opened.

In order for the policy streams to align policy makers must find solutions that can be attached to a problem. However, they also need to be aware of the trends and the importance an idea can

have. In regard to the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy, Aboriginal labour market integration was the ongoing problem, but it was a hard sell to the public, as resolving the problem did not offer the general public a direct benefit. However, Saskatchewan experienced an economic boom in 2007, and looming labour shortages threatened the province's economic vitality. While there were other benefits to increasing integration, such as improved quality of life for Aboriginal peoples, it was the province's economic success that became the focus.

The policy window opened up when the New Democratic Party created the Labour Market Commission, with the intent of producing a labour market strategy. The problem was labour shortages, the solution was increased Aboriginal integration and the politicians were backing it – therefore aligning the streams. However, the policy window closed after the 2007 Saskatchewan election. With a change in government, the Saskatchewan Party government wanted to distance itself from the policies of the New Democratic Party. The Labour Market Commission and Labour Market Strategy were among such policies, and both were eliminated. As described in Kingdon's policy theory, government changes often lead to policy windows closing and the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy was no exception.

2.9 Conclusion

It was the objective of the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy to mitigate looming labour shortages by, among other steps, increasing Aboriginal labour market integration. However, the Strategy was scrapped when the Saskatchewan Party government won the election and broke ties with the previous government's policies.

The thesis used John Kingdon's policy streams to explain the evolution and demise of the Strategy. Through the application of the problem stream, the thesis examined how decreased Aboriginal labour market integration came to be defined as a problem deserving policy attention. Drawing on literature and interviews, it argued that Aboriginal integration was defined as a

problem and achieved problem status because many policy makers at the time were focused on another problem, looming labour shortages. Aboriginal labour market integration was framed as a way to solve labour shortages. Through the application of the proposal stream, the thesis examined how the Labour Market Commission decided on the policy ideas within the Strategy to increase Aboriginal labour market integration. In the section, it was argued that increasing Aboriginal labour market integration was chosen because Aboriginal individuals were likely to stay in the province if employed as well as the belief that it would address the real concern, labour shortages. Lastly, through the application of the political stream, the thesis viewed the impact of the public mood and political events occurring during the Commission's creation of the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy. In this section, it was argued that the Saskatchewan Party government did not implement the Strategy because it was originally a New Democratic Party initiative, and after the election the Saskatchewan Party wanted to cut ties with the previous government's policies. Overall, while the policy window opened briefly, the Strategy failed when the policy window closed after the election.

Chapter Three: Conclusion

3.0 Introduction

The objective of the thesis was to apply John Kingdon's policy stream theory to the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy. By viewing the three streams of policy development – the problem stream, the policy proposal stream, and the political stream - the thesis examined the Strategy. The main areas of research included: how Aboriginal labour market integration was defined as a problem, why Aboriginal labour market engagement was selected as a key strategy to address looming labour shortages, and what effects the 2007 Saskatchewan election had upon the Labour Market Strategy. By viewing each individual stream the thesis was able to view the development and breakdown of the Commission and Strategy, and then use Kingdon's theory to explain how the Strategy ultimately failed. This chapter will summarize the thesis's findings and contributions, discuss subsequent events, and identify areas for future research.

3.1 Thesis Findings

Using Kingdon's policy development theory, the thesis analyzed the development and demise of the Labour Market Strategy through the lens of three streams: the policy stream, the proposal stream and the political stream.

The problem stream argued that low Aboriginal labour market integration was a problem for decades; it was only when the province faced the threat of looming labour shortages that the issue was defined as a policy problem. Further, it was the combination of indicators continuously stating that Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan were the single largest group not actively participating in the labour market and indicators suggesting the province would experience labour shortages that finally brought the issue to the forefront.

Through application of the proposal stream, the thesis argued that one of the reasons that the Labour Market Commission and the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy identified increased Aboriginal labour market integration as a solution to looming labour shortages was because the Aboriginal population was in close proximity and would not cause additional infrastructure stress that immigration would. While investing in Aboriginal labour market integration may have been a hard sell for the government, focusing on the Aboriginal population to fill the jobs that would potentially affect the provincial economy was an easy sell, as negative economic consequences would affect everyone directly.

Next, the thesis applied the political stream and argued that the change in government during the 2007 Saskatchewan election led to the non-implementation of the Strategy. Further, as the government coming into power, the Saskatchewan Party wanted to rebrand and separate itself from the previous government's policies. Since the Strategy was a New Democratic Party government initiative, the Saskatchewan Party government decided it would address labour shortages and Aboriginal integration into the labour market in its own way, through policies such as the Saskatchewan Party 2007 Platform and the Saskatchewan Plan for Growth: Vision 2020. Therefore, one of the main reasons was not implemented appears to be partisan considerations.

Lastly, the thesis argued that the policy streams aligned when the New Democratic Party created the Commission to address labour market issues. With political and stakeholder backing, when the Commission identified the need to increase Aboriginal labour market integration to address looming labour shortages the policy window opened. However, the window closed when the Saskatchewan Party defeated the New Democratic Party in the 2007 Saskatchewan election. Kingdon states that this is not uncommon for governments, as a change in governments often opens the floor for new ideas and policy directions. This was seen with the non-implementation of the Strategy and dismantling of the Commission.

3.2 What Happened Next

In 2012, the Saskatchewan Party government planned to release a new Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy. It was expected that this strategy would continue the legacy of the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy, as it used recommendations from that Strategy, along with an expanded plan on how to implement them (Interview, 2014). The group designing the policy was the Saskatchewan Labour Market Task Force, a group launched by the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce in 2011 for the purpose of developing a Strategy.

Similar to the Commission, the Task Force brought together key stakeholders in the labour market to communicate, share information, and again, create a new Labour Market Strategy for the province (Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, 2014). In 2013, the Saskatchewan Party government requested a stronger role in the task force, stating government should co-chair this Strategy (Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, 2014). However, as the Strategy was reaching its final stages of development, progress stalled as the Task Force waited for the provincial government to approve the release of the new Strategy (Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, 2014). As of October 2015, the government has not released the new Strategy, and stated “they prefer to continue moving forward with a new labour market group” despite the fact that the 2014 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy had been developed by the Task Force and the government and was ready to be released (Chamber of Commerce 2014). Further, the government said it would be not be a part of the new labour market strategy group and would “remove the Saskatchewan Party from any conflicts that result from them being part of a process that advocates recommendations directly towards themselves” (Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce 2014). As of December 2015, this situation has not changed, and no further reports or strategies have been released by either party.

3.3 Where We Are Today

The focus on furthering Aboriginal labour market integration is an objective the government continues to address in the present day. This section will discuss the current Aboriginal labour market statistics and then move to discuss how the Government of Saskatchewan is working to further integrate Aboriginal peoples into the Saskatchewan Labour Market and reduce looming labour shortages. While analysis of the current state of affairs is beyond the scope of the thesis, the programs identified offer a general overview of what the current government is doing and what programs have been created.

While Aboriginal labour market integration has witnessed positive gains, concerns about labour supply still remain. In the summer of 2014, the Saskatchewan Construction Association released a report in their magazine *We Build* arguing that the province needed to focus on matching supply and demand within the labour market, as they continued to work through a shortage in skilled workers (Folk 2014, 16). The Association also noted concerns over the skill shortages, as they have consistently been identified as threat to the competitiveness of Saskatchewan's construction sector (Folk 2014, 16).

Aboriginal labour market integration in Saskatchewan has seen consistent improvement over the years. As seen below in Figure 3-1, the 2015 edition³ of the Labour Market Bulletin demonstrates that there has been overall employment growth for the Aboriginal population of Saskatchewan. When the Labour Market Commission began addressing Aboriginal labour market integration in 2007, the Aboriginal unemployment rate was 18.2% (Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy 2009). As seen below in Figure 3-1, as of 2014 Aboriginal unemployment is now at a rate of 9.1%. While Figure 3-1 states that it is a decrease of 0.9% from December 2013, it is certainly a large improvement over the rates in the early 2000s.

³ Which uses statistics from December 2014

Figure 3-1

Saskatchewan Employment Levels (2015)

Main indicators – Saskatchewan		
Unemployment, employment, and participation rates		
	December 2014	Y/Y change
Total population (15+)	847,000	
Unemployment rate	3.1	-0.4
Participation rate	69.5	0.5
Employment rate	67.4	0.8
Aboriginal population*	74,200	
Unemployment rate	9.1	-0.9
Participation rate	63.1	-2.7
Employment rate	57.3	-1.9

Estimates are based on three-month moving averages (see Glossary for more information).

Y/Y: the change between December 2013 and December 2014

*the Labour Force Survey excludes those living on-reserve

Source: Employment and Social Development Canada, 2015

With consistent improvement of Aboriginal labour market integration, the Government of Saskatchewan switched its sole focus from Aboriginal employment to a broader focus on Aboriginal education. This began with the creation of the Joint Task Force on Aboriginal Education and Employment, a co-operative approach between the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the Government of Saskatchewan. Guided by the 2009 Labour Market Strategy, the Joint Task Force worked in similar fashion as the Strategy as it created a research report that offered recommendations and strategies to continue increasing Aboriginal education rates, and correspondingly employment. The rationale behind the Joint Task Force was creating

an engagement and review process that would inform long-term collaborative actions aimed at eliminating the education and employment gaps (Joint Task Force 2013). The government has reported success from the implemented recommendations of the Joint Task Force. For example, in the education sector, the government created a \$150,000 partnership between the Yorkton Tribal Council and the school division, formed in response to a recommendation from the task force (Saskatchewan, 2014).

Another focus within the Joint Task Force was providing Adult Basic Education to the Aboriginal population. While Aboriginal peoples were not the sole recipients of the Adult Basic Education program, they represented 65 percent of those attending (Ministry of Economy 2015). The Adult Basic Education program also created a Workplace Skills program that taught on-reserve programming⁴ exclusively for Aboriginal peoples, with the objective of providing adults the opportunity to develop skills needed to obtain entry-level or semi-skilled employment (Ministry of Economy 2015). Implementation of this program was based on supportive feedback from industry, which stated that employers could not hire Aboriginal peoples because they did not have sufficient education (Interview, 2015), and on the recommendations of the Joint Task Force. So far the on-reserve program has been successful, with a continued rate of 60 percent of those enrolled graduating (Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit 2011, 7). In 2015 the Government of Saskatchewan added an additional 200 seats in the Adult Basic Education program, bringing the total to 8,780, along with a \$25.6 million dollar investment in 2015-2016 to assist in eliminating wait lists for the program (Saskatchewan Provincial Budget 2015-2016, 16).

⁴ Muskoday First Nation, Shoal Lake Cree Nation, Lac La Ronge Indian Band, Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation, Cowessess First Nation, Okanese First Nation, Standing Buffalo Dakota First Nation, Kahkewistahaw First Nation, and Nekaneet First Nation (Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit 2011, 13)

Along with educational programs, skilled work programs have also been developed. For example, a pilot program called the Northern Career Quest Mining Project ran from January 2013 until April 2015 (Northern Career Quest 2015). Over the two-year span, enrolled Aboriginal peoples participated in training to obtain employment in the mining sector in Northern Saskatchewan (Northern Career Quest 2015). Such programs seek to build and support skilled employees and direct employment opportunities and pairing with mining companies such as Cameco (North Career Quest 2015).

I anticipate the Government of Saskatchewan will continue to focus on mitigating looming labour shortages and improving employment opportunities of Saskatchewan's Aboriginal population. This has been demonstrated in 2015 by the investment of \$210 million dollars towards programs targeted primarily for First Nations and Métis organizations and individuals (Saskatchewan, 2015). Some of the 2015-2016 Saskatchewan Provincial Budget initiatives aiming to help Aboriginal and First Nations groups include:

- \$5.1 million in ongoing funding for initiatives that respond to the Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis people;
- \$30.8 million in funding targeted at Adult Basic Education and Provincial Training Allowance Programs; and
- \$74 million in gaming agreement transfers to First Nations and Métis organizations

Overall, the government reports that it is working towards the goal of putting Aboriginal peoples on an equal footing with non-Aboriginals in terms of education, skilled experience and employment opportunities.

3.4 Areas for Further Research

Future research on Aboriginal labour market integration, looming labour shortages and labour market strategies should consider gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal education rates, why governments continuously struggle to find skilled workers and why governments continue to invest in labour market strategies they do not release.

The Joint Task Force on Aboriginal Employment and Education states, “First Nations and Métis people have not accrued the same or equitable benefit from the education systems for various systemic reasons, both historical and social, and as a result, have not been able to benefit from the economic opportunities existing and created” (Joint Task Force 2013, 14). As the Joint Task Force treats educational attainment as a stepping-stone to achieve employment, the gap in educational attainment⁵ rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples is an area that should be focused on. A great step in that direction is the implementation of the Adult Basic Education programs on and off reserve. Such programs show a strong potential for increasing Aboriginal labour market integration rates, and currently the programs have served 4500 people through, with a long waitlist of those looking to enter the program (Interview 2015). While this thesis did not look at the educational side of employment it is an area that could be studied.

Another area that could be expanded upon is the issue of labour shortages in the province. While the thesis examined the labour shortages from 2006 to the release of the Labour Market Strategy, Saskatchewan remains in a position where it requires skilled labour. As of 2015, the provincial population is close to 1.1 million, a large increase from 10 years ago when it was 976,000 (Statistics Canada 2015). However, the province continues to need more workers. This is especially true in the construction sector: the 2014 Saskatchewan Construction Association’s report stated that the association feared the loss of competitiveness within the construction sector

⁵ High school graduation rates, for example

if the sector is unable to fill open positions. Further assessment of the labour market supply and demand for workers in the construction sector would be an interesting and topical area of research, as Saskatchewan has recently begun a lot of construction projects such as the new Mosaic stadium, the Legacy Project potash mine, the Regina Bypass, and 18 joint-use schools, while the Saskatchewan Party government has created a Crown corporation called SaskBuilds to improve and coordinate public sector capital planning.

The last area that could use further research is the 2013 Labour Market Strategy, and the potential future Strategy. As stated earlier, the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce and the Government of Saskatchewan came together to write the second Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy. Once the strategy was written, the government backed out and said they wanted to pursue this work in a different way. However, as of October 2015, there has not been any progress on a new labour market strategy, and the one devised in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce was never released. Research should focus on why the Saskatchewan Party government is investing in labour market strategies but not ever implementing them, as the next strategy will be the province's third in six years.

3.5 Final Words

In conclusion, the need to further integrate Aboriginal peoples into the Saskatchewan labour market will continue to be highlighted until statistics reveal that employment rates are at near parity to non-Aboriginals, the economy is sustainable and not in need of more workers, and Aboriginal peoples experience a higher quality of life. As a public policy issue that also encompasses a moral aspect, increasing Aboriginal labour market integration will continue to be highlighted within the problem, proposal and political streams of government. While progress has been made in the present to support further integration of Aboriginal peoples into the labour

market, the government still has some way to go to ensure that Saskatchewan's Aboriginal population is adequately represented in the labour market for social and economic reasons.

This thesis is instrumental in explaining the development of the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy and how it aimed to use Aboriginal labour market integration to address looming labour shortages. Through the application of John Kingdon's policy stream theory the thesis was able to offer a behind-the-scenes account of the Commission's development of the Strategy. In doing so the thesis was able to offer an in-depth examination of specific events such as how the government matched problem with solutions to gain the most support possible and how a government change can change policy directions.

Since literature available for the thesis was limited, the thesis utilized interviews with those associated with or knowledgeable of the Labour Market Commission or Strategy. Interviews were able to gather valuable information as the thesis offered anonymity in exchange for individual's account of the development of the strategy, Aboriginal labour market integration and labour shortages. Further, some of the information gathered from the interviews had not previously been revealed publicly. It offered the thesis essential building blocks to understanding more of the Strategy.

It is my desire for readers to read the thesis and have a deeper understanding of the policy process in Saskatchewan. With the application of John Kingdon's policy streams, the thesis takes the often opaque process of policy development and breaks it down to help readers understand the focus of the problem stream, the policy proposal stream and the political stream. By using these streams, the thesis was able to offer a picture of the Labour Market Strategy and how it used Aboriginal labor market integration as a means to address looming labour shortages.

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Appendix 1

Development of the 2009 Saskatchewan Labour Market Strategy

