

Canada's Public Health Approach for Controlling Cannabis: Unpacking the regulatory leadership challenge

A critical conversation for regulatory professionals
School of Public Policy & Administration
Carleton University
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Government
of Canada

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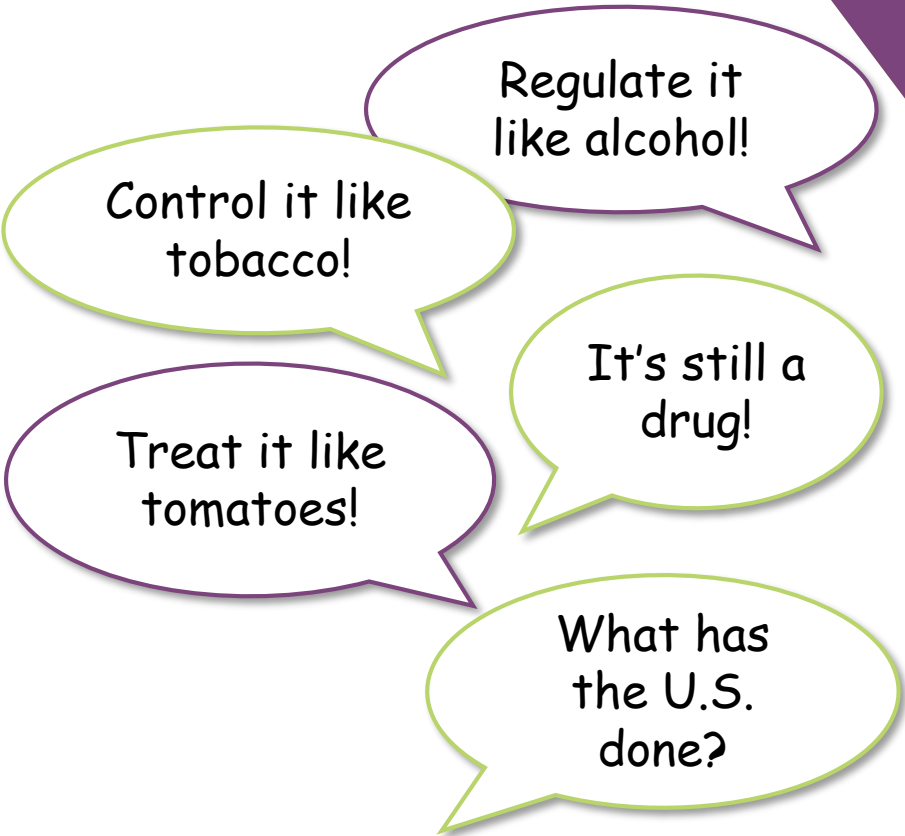
Canada 

Overview

- Key Challenges
 - **Novel** – Where do we start?
 - **Complex Operating Context** – Who do we need to engage (and how are we going to manage this)?
 - **Timelines** – How is this all going to get done in the time we have?
- Overall Lessons Learned: tactics & values
- Future Challenges...

Novel

- 1st OECD / G8 nation
- There are many analogues for how to regulate certain aspects of cannabis...
- ...the reality is we needed to establish a unique legislative framework specific to the drug, tailored to meet the government's objectives
- There was no single template or example to adapt...
- ...but rather an amalgamation of good ideas from a number of different sources



Control it like tobacco!

Regulate it like alcohol!

Treat it like tomatoes!

It's still a drug!

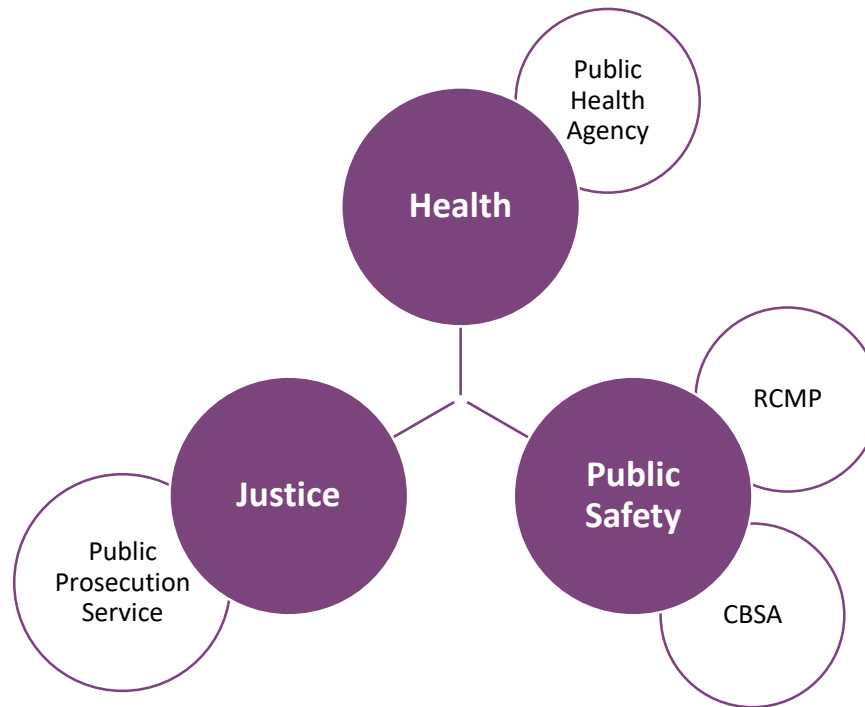
What has the U.S. done?

What helped...

- Clear mandate: legalize, regulate and restrict access to cannabis
- Expert Task Force and agreement on key principles & advice (public health approach, precautionary principle)
- Built from experience... but drew inspiration from unlikely sources
- Recognition that progress depended on timely decisions

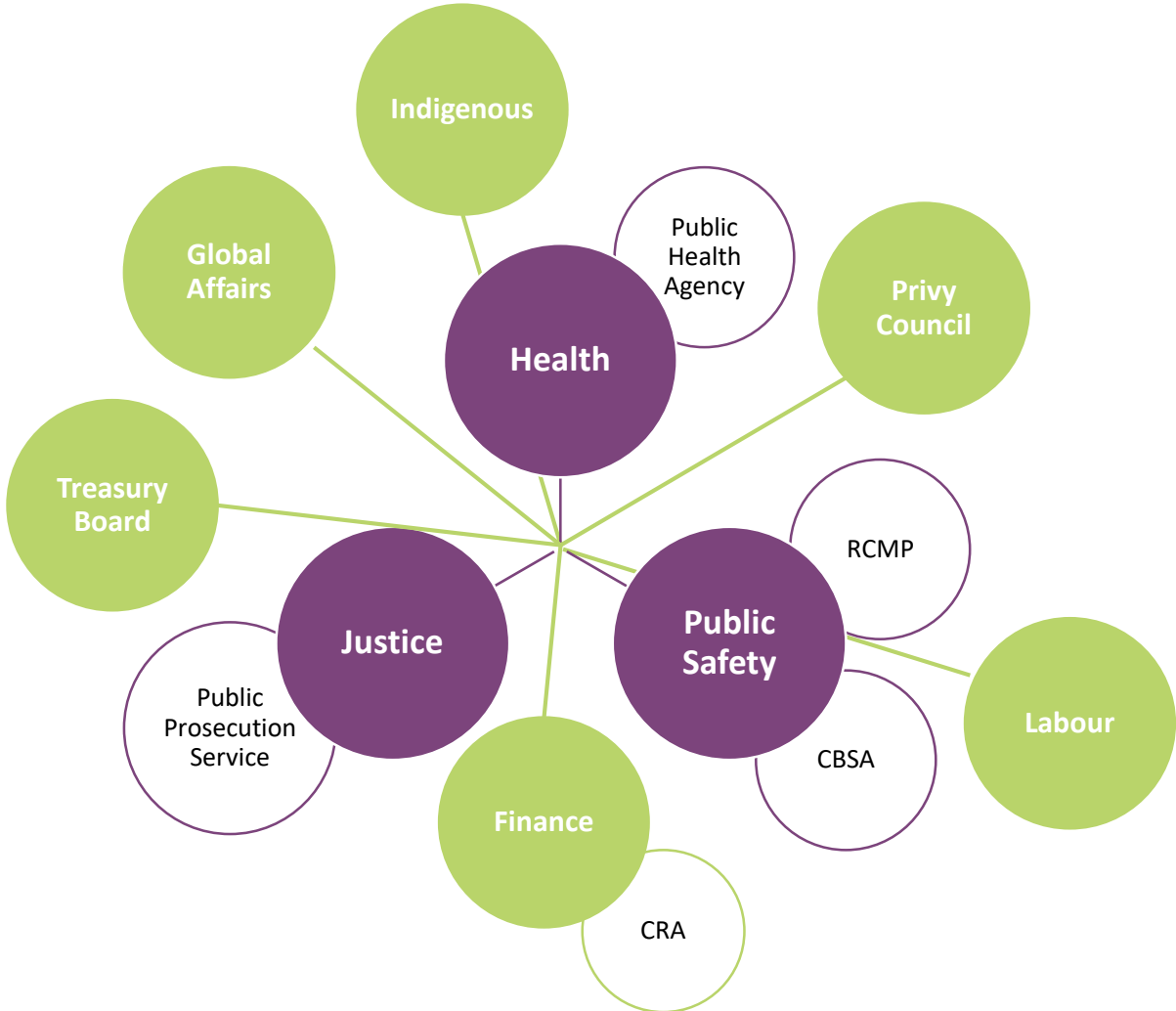
Complex Operating Context

- To begin, there were three federal Ministers mandated to legalize, regulate and restrict access to cannabis...

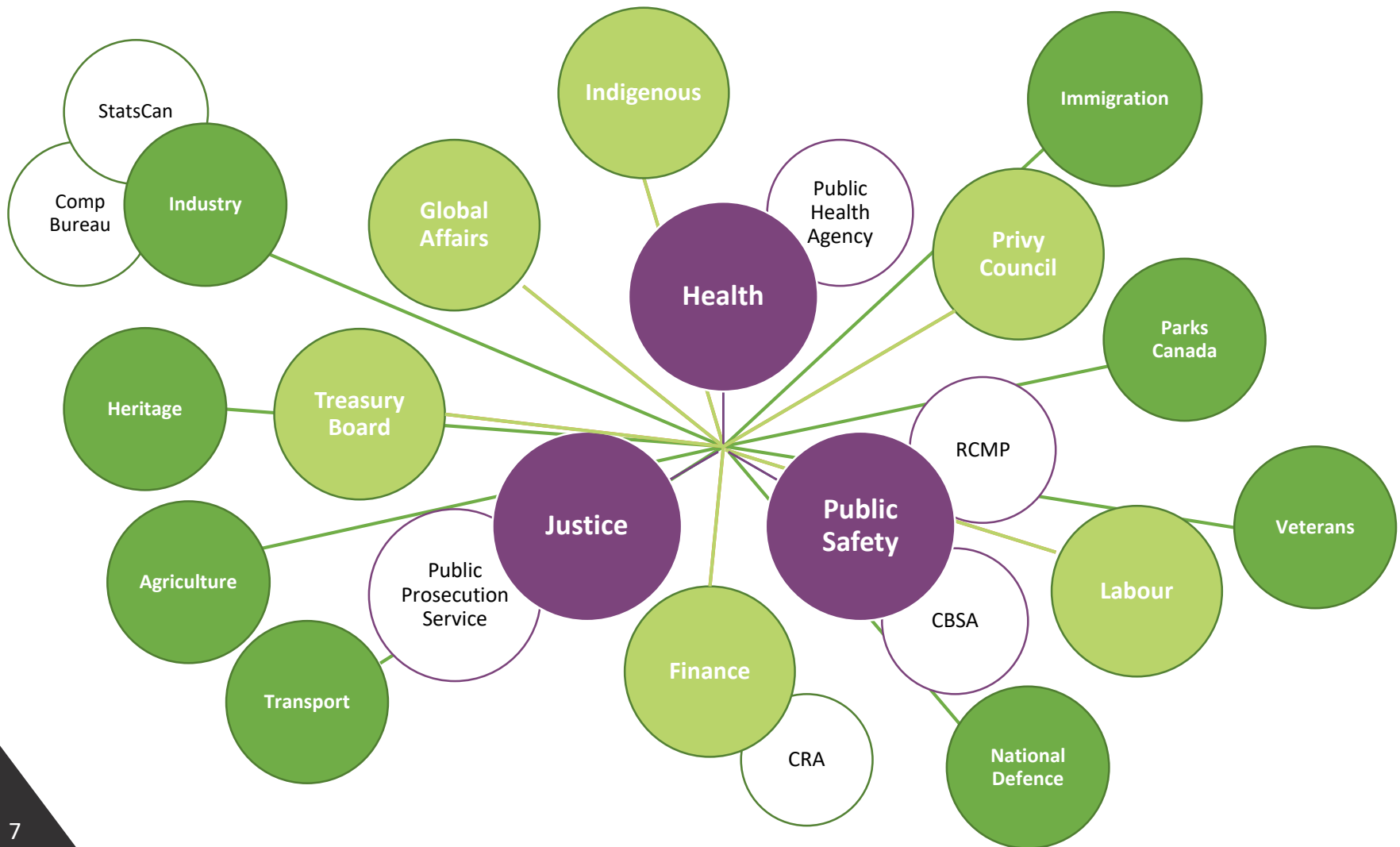


... of which are responsible for very diverse organizations, representing a range of interests

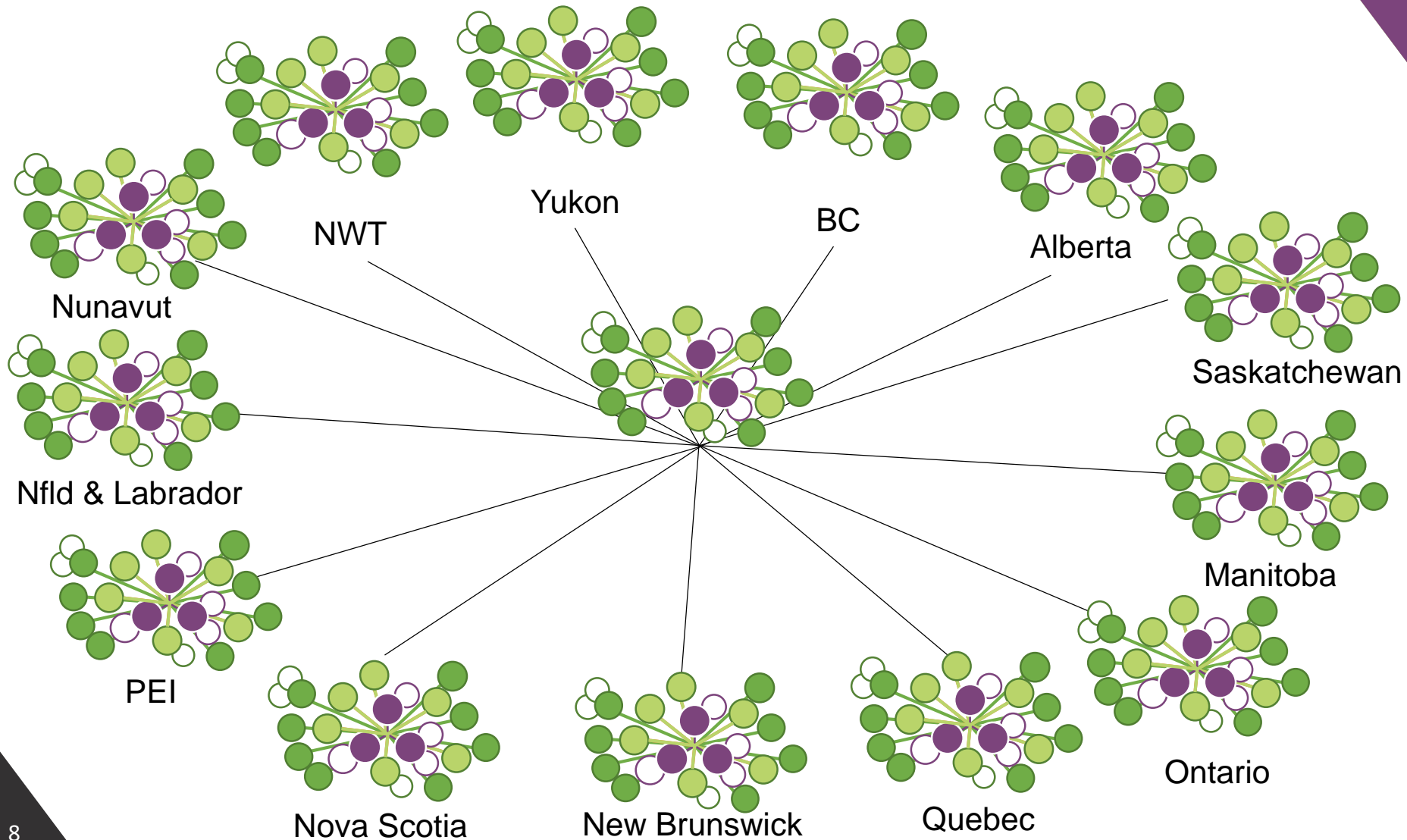
Complex Operating Context



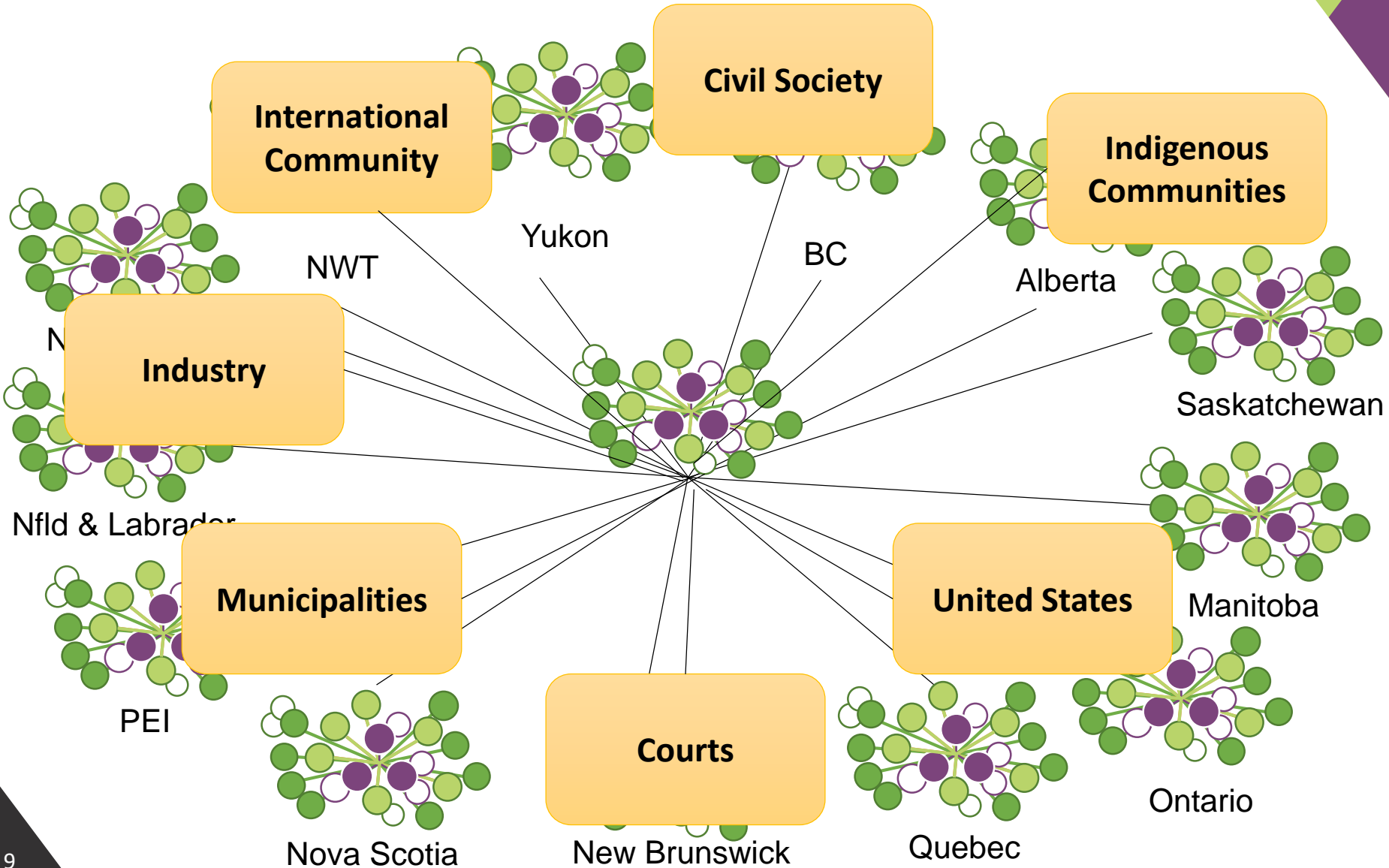
Complex Operating Context



Complex Operating Context



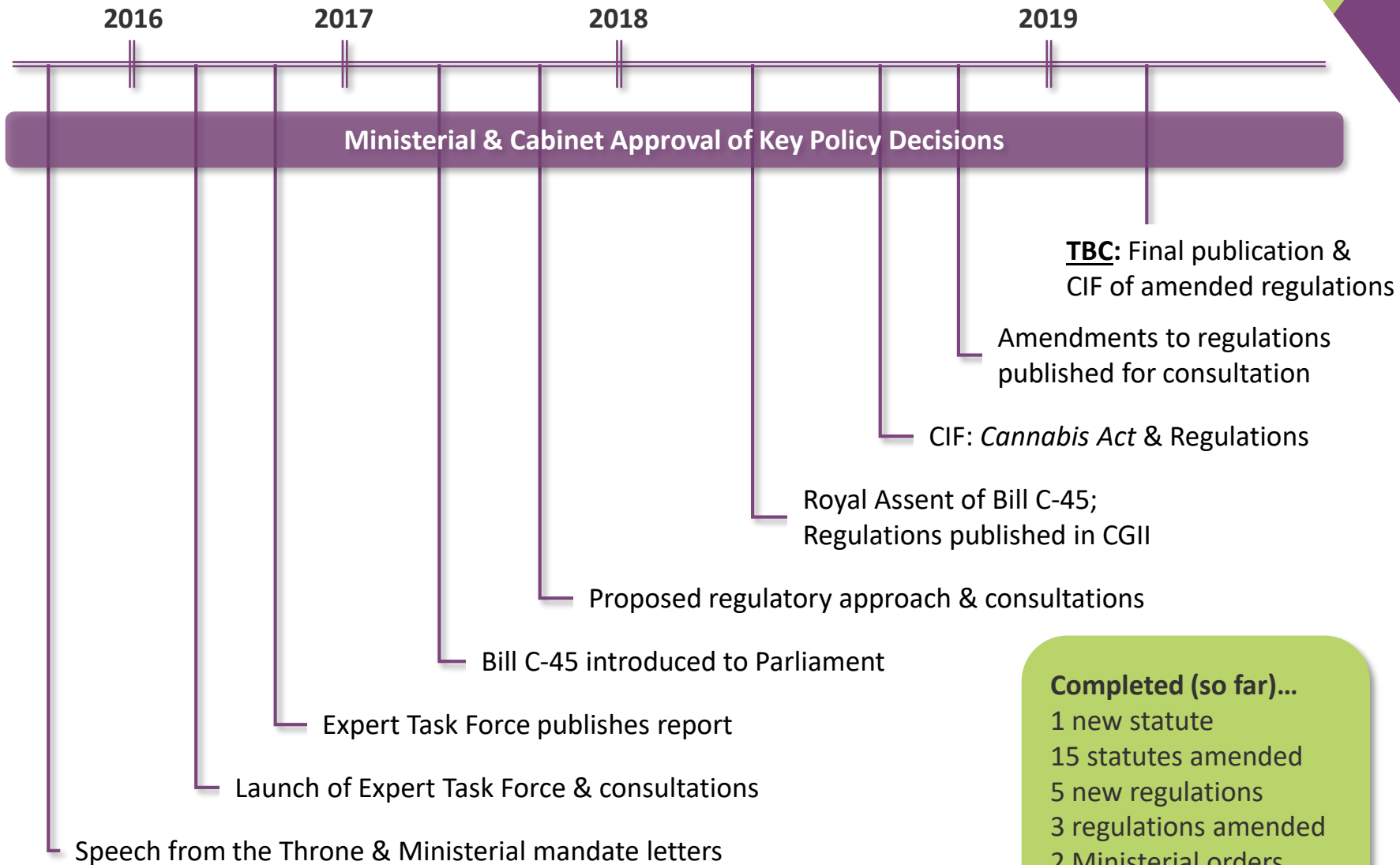
Complex Operating Context



What helped...

- Regular coordination and established lines of communication
- Relationships... building credibility and trust
- Focus on the task – clear mandate and policy principles
- Direct versus indirect engagement

Timelines



Completed (so far)...
1 new statute
15 statutes amended
5 new regulations
3 regulations amended
2 Ministerial orders

What helped...

- Prioritizing decisions – lay the foundation first
- Build in contingencies... both in policy and the framework
- Deadlines... and flexible approaches to entrenched convention and process
- Empowered people... with appropriate supports and controls

Overall lessons learned: tactics and values

- Talent
 - Find the best (HR is your friend... no seriously, they really are)
 - Prioritize diversity of experience to avoid working in an echo chamber
 - Create a fun, creative and hardworking culture
- Recruit a vast army of co-conspirators
 - Actively proselytize – a common purpose is a good motivator
 - Seek out your greatest critics
 - Share information mercilessly... avoid hoarding, above everything!
- Build credibility and trust – relationships are everything
 - Ministers, the Centre, stakeholders, governments, etc.
 - Understand the interests of those you serve and those on whom you depend
 - Have a clear plan, keep careful records, and show our math
- Keep an eye on the future and what is around the corner...

Future Challenges

- The only thing worse than growing up...
 - Evolving from “start up” to mature(ing) organization while preserving culture of agility and creativity
- Current and future operating environment will remain complex, dynamic and entirely novel
 - New legislative and regulatory framework – new for regulated parties, new for the regulator, new for the Courts
 - Nascent industry that is rapidly expanding and evolving: market forces will take time to stabilize, potentially contract, and eventually regularize
 - Shifting global policy landscape
 - Evaluating performance of the framework against Canada’s objectives – constant domestic and international scrutiny for the foreseeable future