

# Strategies for Social Justice: Place, People and Policy

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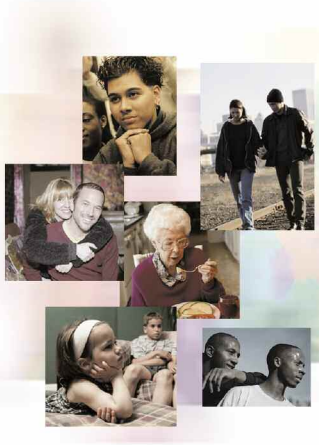
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In 2001, CFC began to explore the role community foundations could play in advancing social justice issues in Canada. Since then, with support from the Ford Foundation and the Atkinson Charitable Foundation, we have been deepening our understanding of how community foundations might help to “level the playing field” for all Canadians by tackling the root causes of social problems. This paper was written to provide an overview of the key social justice issues in Canada.

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# Canada's Social Justice Challenge

## Why social justice?

Canada has many words for social justice. Political speeches use expressions like 'equal opportunity for all', 'a just society', and 'our people are our greatest resource'. Whatever expression we use, the underlying motive is to ensure the full participation of all citizens in the economic, social and political life of the nation. There are many reasons to pursue such a goal, and they tend to evolve over time.

- One focus is on *maintaining social order*. Bismarck discovered in the 19th century that poor men make poor soldiers, and therefore built the first version of the welfare state. Paris discovered the social order challenge in 2005, when millions of young people whose parents immigrated to France in the post-war years rebelled against the lack of economic opportunity and dignity in their lives. Here in Canada, the arrest of 17 young Muslims in Toronto has given impetus to concern about national security.
- Another focus is the *sustainability and health of communities*. After World War II, governments were determined to avoid another Depression. They built Canada's social safety net (including education, pensions and health insurance) to ensure a better life for a wide cross-section of Canadians. It was therefore strongly supported by the middle class. However, as the quality of public services has diminished in the last decade, middle and higher income groups have begun to invest in private alternatives. As a result, they resist paying taxes in support of the public systems which serve all Canadians.
- In coming years, as the elderly population grows and labour shortages begin to emerge, the focus will be to ensure that all *citizens can contribute fully* to the economy and society in order to sustain economic growth and support the growing population of older people who are not working but need services.

Even though the term itself is rarely used, "social justice" is the underlying purpose in a wide range of public policies and in the ongoing public debate. And Canada has a vibrant community of charities and foundations who give voice to the needs of vulnerable people. These organizations have the capacity to spearhead progress in achieving social justice, working in partnership with business, labour, education and governments. Their dedicated efforts will be

greatly needed in the future because powerful economic, social and political forces are working to undermine social justice principles.

On that note of optimism and concern for the future, I want to explore with you the challenges and the opportunities we are likely to face in the next few decades, and then suggest strategies to meet them head on. First the challenges.

### What has changed?

Canadians take pride in the commitment to fairness and sharing established in the post-war years. But that social model is now under severe stress from three forces – intense international competition, the changing role of government, and new patterns of human settlement. Together, they create new economic and social risks for Canadians. The rules of economic success have changed, creating new winners and new losers.

In the 1990s, the top 20% of families reported income gains of 7 to 16%, while the bottom 20% of families saw little change in their income after tax and transfers, meaning that their purchasing power was falling. The losers fall into five distinct groups: lone parent families, recent immigrants, people with disabilities, Aboriginals and older individuals (aged 45 to 64). In all five groups, the impact of racial and gender barriers is pervasive.

### Increasing competition

Globalization of trade and investment, combined with new communications technologies, has intensified competition in recent decades. These competitive pressures have encouraged Canadian employers (public and private) to make their payroll costs more flexible – through variable compensation for well-qualified employees and a shift to casual and contract arrangements for lower skill workers. In effect, they are shifting more market risk to their workers.

Well-qualified workers in management and professional occupations enjoy good pay and benefits, job security and chances for promotion, and they can look forward to long years of comfortable retirement when they reach their 60s. But to control payroll costs, employers are cautious about adding to their ranks. This restricts access to good jobs for younger, qualified workers, forcing them to make-do with contract or temporary jobs despite all their investment in education.

Another route to managing payroll costs has been to outsource production and services to lower cost producers either in Canada or abroad. Initially, this affected lower skill jobs, but even mid-level jobs in technology and administrative support are now moving offshore.

The overall effect is to break the old career pattern of starting at the bottom of the ladder and working one's way up to a senior executive role. There is no longer a direct line of promotion from low-pay to high-pay positions. People have to zig-zag from one employer to another and most pay for their own training to gain mobility in jobs and incomes.

Meanwhile, low-income Canadians have become a contingent work force. They work mainly in the service sector, especially in retail trade, food and accommodation, and personal services. They experience increasing economic insecurity through low earnings, unpredictable working hours, lack of supplementary health benefits and limited access to training. At a time when unemployment rates are at record lows, and there is much talk about labour shortages, Ron Saunders<sup>1</sup> reports that about 2 million adult Canadians are working for low pay (less than \$10 an hour) and living from job to job. Only 13% have access to supplementary health benefits (compared to 77% of well-paid workers). In these situations, one worker cannot support a family.

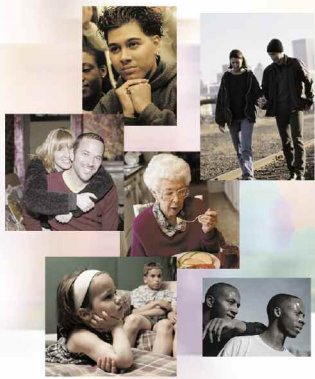
### Changing role of government

Meanwhile, governments have also been contributing to economic insecurity as they have redefined their responsibilities to reflect fiscal constraints and new political ideas about the role of the state. They too are shifting risk back to families and individuals.

Eligibility rules for provincial social assistance benefits have been tightened to encourage people to work and to restrict access mainly to people with disabilities and lone parents with young children. Welfare case loads have dropped by almost 600,000 since 1995 – for two reasons: employment opportunities increased and eligibility rules were tightened. However, 1.7 million Canadians still depended on social assistance as their only source of income in 2004.

Even lone parents are expected to work after their child reaches the age of two, and benefit payments for a lone parent fall well short of the income required to cover basic food, shelter, clothing and transportation needs (ranging from 48% of the Statistics Canada low-income threshold in Alberta to 70% in Newfoundland and Labrador).

<sup>1</sup> See "For Further Reading", page 17.



At the same time, long-established programs, such as Employment Insurance, have become more targeted, forcing Canadians to meet tougher eligibility requirements to qualify for help. In Toronto and Ottawa, for example, only 22 to 23 % of working people would be eligible for EI if they were laid off. In addition,

- Minimum wages have not been increased in line with inflation, so that workers lost about 15% of their purchasing power over the 1990s.
- Investments in key public services like health care, public transit and public education have not kept pace with demand.
- Responsibility for other public services such as home care supports and some forms of skill training have been turned over to private producers – either business or non-profit organizations, where clients must pay for the service.
- Social housing has been turned over to private developers, who find it unprofitable to build new supply. Non-profits have been trying to fill the gap but are constrained by high capital requirements and regulatory barriers.
- Most provinces do not provide publicly-financed home care or drug insurance, leaving citizens to pay for their own or do without.
- Treatment and support services for adults with mental illness fall far short of the need. Governments have closed most of the large institutions, with the idea that these people would be better off in community care. Those who cannot find adequate and sustained care end up in homeless shelters or in prison. Corrections Canada reports a dramatic increase in the number of inmates requiring mental health services.

Overall, then, governments have been shifting responsibility back to families and individuals – forcing them to make choices about whether to buy services, produce their own, or to do without. For many at the low end of the income scale, the only choice is to do without. The result is that food banks and homeless shelters now report a new clientele – the working poor.

Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the cutbacks in government social programs have actually produced substantial fiscal savings for two reasons. First the increased economic and social insecurity is creating higher costs for policing, justice, and health care, and second, tax collections are reduced because so many workers are unable to achieve the standard of living for which they were educated.

## New patterns of settlement

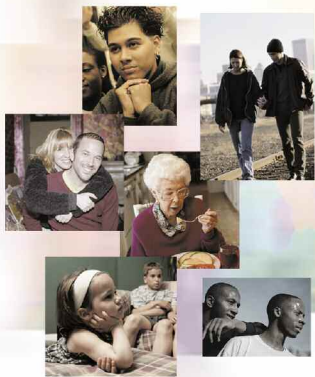
Finally, patterns of settlement have changed in complex ways. Major cities are more racially mixed; rich and poor are living more separate lives; and rural and urban populations are heading in opposite directions.

Living in major cities is expensive because of the high cost of housing and transportation, with the result that well-to-do people tend to live in the best of neighbourhoods, with access to the best of services. The mixed neighbourhoods of the past have been transformed as older housing has been upgraded, housing costs have escalated, and many families have moved to the suburbs. Areas where housing is cheap (and of poorer quality) become the only option for more vulnerable people, such as new immigrants, Aboriginals and lone parents. They congregate in neighbourhoods where housing is overcrowded, public services such as schools and health clinics are overtaxed, and environmental quality and personal safety are more likely to be at risk.

This spatial segregation of city living space into poor or well-off neighbourhoods generates the problem of “*poverty by postal code.*” It adds new layers of complexity to the challenges people face in escaping poverty and making a better life for their families. And, because different income classes do not attend the same schools, or walk the same streets, there is less day-to-day contact. This in turn leads to fewer opportunities for mutual support and eventually to a lack of empathy.

These pressures have intensified because population growth has been concentrated in big cities – over 80% of Canadians now live in urban settings. While many have moved from rural settings, it is immigration that is changing the ethno-cultural mix of these cities. According to Statistics Canada projections, over half the population of Toronto and Vancouver will be racially visible by 2017.

The immigrants arriving since the early 1990s have been much better educated than earlier arrivals, but they have not been able to match their economic success. In fact, one in three *recent immigrants* who are racially visible end up in low-wage jobs. A Statistics Canada study reports that the low-income rate among recent immigrants has risen from 25% in 1980 to 36% in 2000, even though the more recent group have much higher education and skill than their predecessors. The study points out that poverty rates have been falling for native-born Canadians (particularly the elderly) and rising rapidly for recent immigrants, especially in Vancouver and Toronto.



The majority of *Aboriginal Canadians* now live in cities as well – with the highest concentrations in western cities. But, having left the reserves, they end up in the poorest neighbourhoods because of their low education and high unemployment rates. A recent report on *Work Opportunities for Saskatchewan Residents* reports that about 70% of the Aboriginals in the province have less than a high school diploma (some adults are therefore returning to school). But even those with university education face challenges in finding a good job. The result is that about 39% of adult Aboriginals who live off-reserve are not working. The average income of Aboriginals over 15 years of age was \$16,000 in 2001, compared to \$27,000 for non-Aboriginals in Saskatchewan.

*Lone parent women* are especially vulnerable to poverty and exclusion. These women have a high probability of working in low paid jobs (22% of women who work earn low wages compared to 12% for men), and yet they have the extra costs of supporting their children.

In contrast to the congestion and growth in the cities, *rural areas* are losing population, especially youth. This makes it more costly for governments and business to deliver services locally, leading them to consolidate schools, hospitals and offices in larger centres. Rural citizens therefore have to travel long distances to get to school, work, visit the doctor or a bank. Smaller towns and villages are facing a downward spiral as they lose their ability to offer opportunities to their young people and are unable to attract new business or new population. Even former regional centres such as Thunder Bay, once the transportation hub for east-west freight movements, have lost their commercial *raison d'être* and are becoming increasingly concerned about economic decline.

The combination of youth moving to cities and the retirement of the baby boomers means that some parts of Canada are already aging quickly (Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador, for example). In general, the elderly tend to be concentrated outside the city centres – in smaller communities adjacent to cities or even further away in more distant rural areas. Already, the stresses of an aging population are evident (as many families discover when an older relative suddenly needs extra help). Serious gaps are emerging in the community-based social and health care systems which support older Canadians.

## Summary of what has changed

Overall, the global forces of international competition, the changing role of government and the new patterns of human settlement produce new social and economic risks for Canadians. These new risks include: greater job insecurity, low wages, a less effective social safety net, poor neighbourhoods with a high concentration of poor people and declining rural centres. All of them are real threats to social justice. People can fall into the trap of poverty and despair despite their best efforts to earn a living and look after their families. In most cases, it is not a trap of their own making. And the people who are most vulnerable to the poverty trap are women and racially visible Canadians.

But why can they not escape these situations? Statistics Canada has tracked workers in low-wage jobs for five years, and found that about half will exit poverty within five years. People usually make their escape by one of two routes – forming a family (for lone parents) or sending a second or third person out to work. But even this achievement may not be sustainable. Many of these people will fall back into poverty if their employment is interrupted or if the family separates.

Meanwhile, Statistics Canada has estimated that between 30 and 50% of these workers remain caught in the trap of low wage work for five or more years. And many of them seem to face multiple barriers to participation in work. They may have health limitations or personal responsibilities (caring for family members, for example) which hold them back, or they may need to acquire new skills. The most innovative social interventions in the past decade have focused on the whole person or the whole family – offering responses to many of the barriers that hold them back.

In short, Canada faces a long list of “wicked” problems – problems that are complex, deeply-rooted, and for which many different authorities hold part of the solution. To address them, we need to cross the boundaries of government departments and levels of governments, bringing solutions from public, private and non-profit sectors, and build consensus across barriers of class, gender and race.

Voluntary organizations are often the first to respond when they see problems emerge. Calling on their capacity to engage citizens as volunteers and to mobilize community efforts, they have created food banks and shelters for homeless people. In short, they work for social justice on the front lines.

But these community groups have financial and operational limits. They cannot mobilize all the resources needed to bring about systemic change – change in public services, employment practices, labour standards, social program design, or in the way cities and communities function.

To bring about broad social change, citizens and their leaders need to make common cause, building broad coalitions to achieve common goals. They must raise public awareness, reshape the public discourse, and mobilize resources to address the root causes of economic and social insecurity. This will require action within communities as well as on a provincial or national scale.

### Addressing root causes

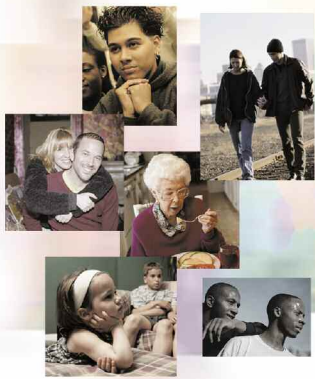
To overcome the root causes of growing social injustice, Canadians need to address issues of place, policy and people. In every case, the non-profit sector is likely to be one of the lead actors in making change happen.

*Place-based* change is needed to enable communities to overcome complex challenges and to enhance the overall quality of life for their citizens. But even these local issues often require resources from outside the community. *Policy* change is needed to reform inappropriate public policies and to change the mandates and operating rules of public institutions. Here the need for action is more likely to be province-wide or nation-wide. *People* change is needed to design interventions to give individuals the resilience to cope with a world where economic and social risks are rising. Here the challenge is to link organizations across communities.

### Place-based change

Urban and rural communities in Canada face profound changes in response to the flows of migration and economic activity toward the larger cities. Some cities are struggling to manage growth, other communities, typically the smaller ones, need to manage decline.

Local governments are poorly equipped to handle these issues. They lack the necessary political and financial clout because of constitutional limitations and they lack the policy expertise. Case studies of successful community change show that broadly based community-wide coalitions can work effectively with local and senior governments to address “wicked” problems.



In a CPRN study of *Cities and Communities that Work*, Neil Bradford reports on 11 case studies of communities in Europe and North America, where the goals ranged from economic development to environmental clean-up to renewing distressed neighbourhoods. He found that the common building blocks for the successful community-wide coalitions were to:

- Recruit a local champion as leader,
- Ensure equitable participation by business, labour, neighbourhood groups, charities, foundations, education leaders and so on,
- Build partnerships with financial intermediaries and governments at all levels,
- Foster creativity through risk-taking, pilot projects and other experiments,
- Be accountable – set targets, measure progress, and report often.

The power of the community-wide coalition is its ability to bridge across sectors. It can also force linkages between disparate functions such as land use, social programs, transportation and environmental hazards. This enables the coalition to address deeply rooted political, economic, or social barriers to change, to access diverse sources of talent, money and power, and to generate agreed solutions which require joint action. In short, it enables a community to learn together and to build respect and trust where it did not exist before. It is the essence of capacity-building, and can therefore enhance problem-solving skills which will benefit the community for years afterward.

One example of this is the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, led by senior business executives working with representatives from the community and three levels of government. The Council offers internships to well-qualified immigrants as well as mentoring and a website showcasing organizations that excel at bringing immigrants into their work force. Of the 226 people who have completed internships, 87% have gained full-time employment, and most were hired by their host organization.

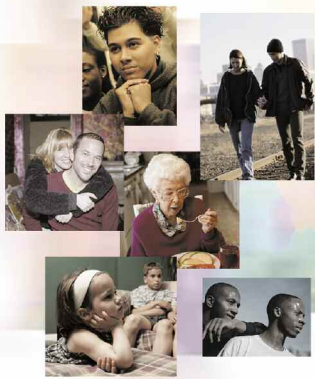
Local coalitions can address local problems, but even they rely upon the big levers of social, economic and tax policy wielded by federal and provincial governments. There is a powerful synergy between place-based policy and the broad, universal programs such as public education, pensions and health insurance that provide essential social and economic supports to all citizens.

## Policy change

Most of the current social policies in place in Canada are rooted in a 1960s mindset, when the foundations of the social safety net were put in place. That is the decade when federal and provincial governments agreed to establish Medicare and the pension system, for example. The retirement income system, based on a mix of public and private saving, was designed to reduce poverty among the elderly which averaged over 40% of elders at the time. The package of reforms has been a sustained success – cutting poverty among the elderly to less than 10% in recent years. Those reforms took political will which seems to be lacking these days, when poverty rates average 18% for children under 15, 28% for visible minorities and 34% for Aboriginals.

Since the 60s, governments have been revising and retuning income security legislation for the non-elderly (and the associated regulations) sometimes to adjust to the changing circumstances of Canadians, more often to try to reduce the overall cost to the state. But there are only so many ways to repair an old car – eventually there is no option but to buy a new one. Governments are handicapped by social legislation which is beyond repair. This is one reason why they find it so difficult to respond to the most urgent needs of vulnerable people or the communities they serve.

The story of the National Child Benefit (1998) shows that it is possible to overcome this legacy by going back to first principles to design a new model for government action. In this case, federal and provincial officials made a decision to integrate their supports for families with children. To do so, they established new principles, new operating rules and a new benefit structure for families with children to achieve three goals: to harmonize their programs, reduce child poverty, and help families to make successful transitions from welfare to work. The NCB combines federal and provincial programs. Provinces agreed to invest more in social services for children, while the federal government introduced two new income transfers. The first is the Canada Child Tax Benefit which transfers \$1,208 (in 2004) per child per year to families whose incomes are less than \$35,000, and the second is the National Child Benefit Supplement of \$1511 per child for the poorest families (with incomes below \$22,000). The value of both benefits is phased down as family income rises. Early assessments of the program conclude that these income transfers help to explain how many lone parent women have been able to escape poverty over the past few years.



It took a constellation of forces to make the NCB happen. For years, Advisory Committees and think tanks had developed the case for change based on a sound research foundation. By the mid-90s, several provinces (Ontario, B.C. and Saskatchewan) were convinced that a new model of support was needed. They wanted to innovate, but needed federal cooperation. The federal government, after the draconian cuts to social transfers in 1995, was open to an initiative that would mitigate some of the effects of the cuts and make better use of the money it was already spending on families with children.

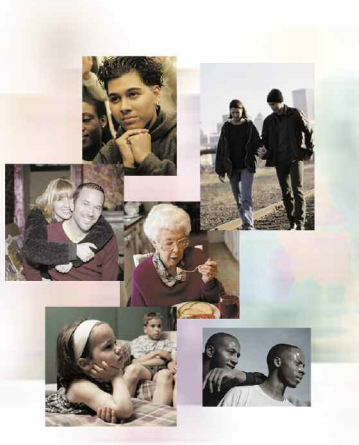
This led to the formation of a federal-provincial working group to design a new approach. The result is regarded as a major success story for many families in low income, even though the provincial contributions to social services have fallen short in two ways: first, six provinces chose to reduce the value of social assistance paid to families with children who received the Supplement, leaving welfare recipients worse off than before; and second, the majority of provinces have not expanded social services to the degree expected.

Could such a joint federal-provincial agreement happen again in other areas like social housing, Employment Insurance or Social Assistance, where programs fall far short of meeting the needs of Canadians? The fractious relationship among governments today suggests that they are unlikely to spontaneously move to reform policies. In fact, federal politicians have a tendency to refuse to consider policy options that would require cooperation with the provinces, and both levels of government take unilateral actions which can have negative implications for the other's programs. This means that the catalyst for change has to come from outside government.

One recent example of an external catalyst is the community-wide coalition for Sustained Poverty Reduction in Calgary convened by the United Way. Through joint research and intensive consultation, the coalition is systematically breaking down policy and procedural barriers which block access to public programs. It is also building a province-wide coalition to develop innovative solutions to the shortage of affordable housing.

Going beyond the immediate issues of social programs for needy Canadians, there are many national issues crying out for more attention from civil society. Some examples which are national in scope include:

- energy conservation,
- managing Canada's water supply,



- recognition of immigrants' foreign credentials,
- income security for working age adults (the Toronto City Summit Alliance has led the way on this with its *Time for a Fair Deal* report),
- the financing of higher education,
- labour market training issues from literacy to adult education to skills acquisition,
- the supply of affordable housing, and
- effective community care systems for people with mental illness and physical disabilities and for the elderly.

In most cases, some good research has already been done. But much remains to be done to fill the gaps, to build a broad consensus about the way forward, and to persuade governments and other actors in society to put the ideas into action.

### People-based change

The central goal of people-based change is to give people the resilience to cope with the risks they are likely to face in life and to access help when it is needed. The most promising directions for these activities will be to a) focus on the whole person (or the whole family), b) strive for early interventions which will open new pathways for personal development, and c) invest in cross-agency and cross-community learning about ideas that work.

#### *Focus on the whole person and the whole family*

Rigorously controlled studies of interventions treating the whole family show a dramatic improvement in the self-reliance of families with children. For example,

- McMaster researchers found that a woman with young children suffering from depression could get off welfare and be self-reliant if she received treatment and her children were given regular access to recreation. Many of these women were able to leave welfare and become self-supporting. This concept is now being replicated by a Families First Edmonton demonstration project involving a government-non-profit partnership.
- Aboriginal Head Start programs have discovered that engaging young mothers in their child's child care program improved both parenting and work-skills, leading to higher chances of success for both parent and child.

- In the United States, a recent study offering treatment for mothers experiencing post-partum depression contributed enormously to the development of the infant.

### ***Strive for early interventions to open new pathways for growth***

There has been much good research and innovation in social programs in Canada in recent years, as social agencies (voluntary and public) have struggled to address new challenges. But many of the innovations have not been implemented and others have not been scaled up to serve the needs of others. For example,

- If *Pathways to Education* in Regent Park in Toronto can enable young blacks to complete high school and go on to higher education, there are many other places where the model should be replicated.
- If anger management counselling for parents and 5-year-olds has a life-altering impact on the children – lower rates of teen delinquency and doubling the rate of high school completion – then every school should have the budget (\$2000 per child) to offer this intervention. (Richard Tremblay, Université de Montréal)
- If construction companies can train low-skill Aboriginals for good jobs in the building trades in Saskatchewan, then other industries can tap into the supply of willing workers as well.

### ***Invest in cross-agency and cross-community learning***

Canada is full of small but promising projects which have demonstrated success in meeting social justice goals. What is missing is effective knowledge transfer within the voluntary sector. More systematic exchange among agencies and people facing similar challenges can stimulate innovation across the country. Many communities are searching for better models of intervention to achieve social justice goals in order to:

- Ensure that immigrants have the necessary tools to succeed in the labour market – including language training, credential recognition, job opportunities, and social networks,
- Help families to ensure their children are “ready to learn” by age 6,
- Enable adults to acquire new skills and work habits and gain good work experience,
- Develop leadership skills for civic activities,
- Foster civic education and participation,

- Create a forum where a minority group can find its voice and issue a call for action.

The Tamarack Institute's Vibrant Communities program provides a model for shared learning on people-based change. It is building capacity in 15 communities across Canada to reduce poverty through grassroots collaboration. The core principles of Vibrant Communities are:

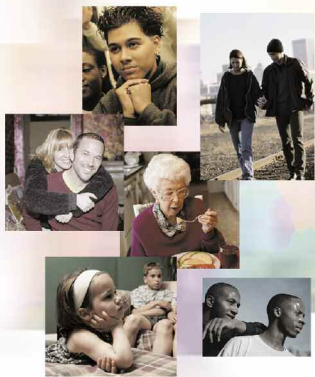
- A focus on community asset-building and community learning,
- Involving the people who are part of the problem (including those who have experienced poverty first hand) to enable them to become part of the solution,
- Emphasis on strengths and assets rather than deficits,
- A focus on outcomes, and
- Linking the leaders in the 15 community projects together so that learnings can be distilled and shared across Canada.

### The role of the non-profit sector

Foundations and charities will be central to Canada's success in building a more inclusive society. Each has unique assets in addressing the root causes of social injustice.

Most charities have a mandate to contribute to the reduction of poverty and to act in the public interest. Their position of trust in the community offers remarkable access to elites to contribute time, expertise and money. Their grassroots connections enable charities to identify and respond to the needs of vulnerable people. Their chronic lack of money and resources makes them resourceful in solving problems, but also prevents them from scaling up successful initiatives to serve a wider group of clients. Their preoccupation with day-to-day operations inhibits their ability to broadcast new ideas to others, and the constant competition for funds can inhibit their will to collaborate with other social agencies.

Thus while individual charities are often the best incubators for social innovation, they do not have the financial or operational clout to bring about systemic change on their own. They become most effective when they play a leading role in building alliances to drive the kind of large scale initiatives outlined above to achieve place-based, policy and people change.



Foundations have rather different assets. While their strategies are diverse, they too have a position of public trust and the opportunity to invest for the benefit of future generations. They also have a unique power to convene diverse leaders from across the community or the country, and thus to become catalysts for systemic change at a national, provincial or local level. They can also dedicate their granting programs to strengthen the role of charities. They can for example,

- Sustain the success stories with strategic investments. Social entrepreneurs with great ideas have to invest far too much time in annual fund-raising, demonstrating their merit to funders and to governments over and over again. Good ideas that work should be able to attract multi-year funding, subject to performance review after an interval, such as five years.
- Foster inter-agency collaboration. When vulnerable people face multiple barriers, they will likely need support on several fronts – health, housing, recreation, training, counselling etc. It may be more efficient to create a coalition of social agencies that work together to provide these supports, and thus take advantage of existing strengths in the community.
- Convene cross-community dialogue and host emerging alliances. What many communities need is an opportunity for open dialogue to break down the barriers across sectors, ethno-cultural groups, and socio-economic classes. People who never meet to share perspectives on an issue will never get a chance to engage in joint problem-solving. And as a result, they will be unlikely to make a commitment to join the battle for greater social justice.

## Conclusion

Powerful economic, social and political forces will be working against social justice in coming years – increasing competition, new patterns of human settlement and changing roles for government. Yet Canadians have the potential to address the root causes of injustice through cross-community dialogue and collaborative action. Together, they can adopt strategies for systemic change for places, for people and for public policy.

Governments will have to be part of the process and part of the solution to social injustice. But they are not well placed to lead the charge. The initiative will have to come from civil society – from Canadians who care enough to enter into an open dialogue with fellow citizens about: what the most important problems are; who can help solve them; and how to mobilize their energy.

Charities and foundations are likely to be the lynch-pins of these civil society efforts to mobilize citizens to address the *big* issues – the barriers which prevent Canada from ensuring the full participation of all citizens in the economic, social and political life of the nation.

**For further reading:**

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