

Social Investment in New Brunswick

ATLANTIC CASE STUDIES

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Introduction

In 1996, the Health Promotion and Programs Branch of Health Canada in Atlantic region started to focus on the determinants of health. At the top of the list of determinants of health is 'income and social status'. It is a well-known fact that those who live in poverty are more likely to suffer ill health.

The report *Child Poverty in Atlantic Canada: A Discussion Paper*¹ confirmed other evidence being published across the country. The problem of child poverty in Canada was staggering, and the problem was getting worse.

Health Canada reached out to groups who work with people living in poverty and was quickly informed that 'child poverty' is a misnomer. Children live in poor families. It is a condition that children do not control. If Canadians want to help poor children, we have to face the facts about poverty and to address the policies and conditions that influence poverty.

Even the word 'poverty' is misleading. Poverty cannot be described simply by low income levels. Ironically, some people can manage a high quality of life on a low income while others can be caught in terrible life circumstances at the same income level. Our traditional ideas about poverty, left over from our grandparents' experience during the depression, are not based on today's experience of 'living below the poverty line'. The real problem is *social and economic exclusion*.

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MARITIME CENTRE of
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HEALTH

Certain groups of people, often those who are most vulnerable, are left out. Society does not value or want them so they are excluded from mainstream society and the economy. In today's world, if you are not a player in the economy, you are in trouble.

Those who fall off that edge we all fear often have other life challenges too. Single mothers, children, youth, racial and cultural minorities, the sick, disabled, fragile seniors. These are the people who are excluded from the resources they need to maintain a reasonable standard of living. To make matters worse, society blames them for their inability to prosper.

Continuing to trace the problem of social exclusion to its roots, Health Canada worked with the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health (MCEWH) and an intersectoral reference group for the Atlantic Region. They realized that many barriers to participating in mainstream society are policy barriers. Simple policy changes could give people the boost they need to be self-sufficient, productive, and happy. Bad policy ensures they continue to be excluded.

In early 1999, a project called 'Towards Social and Economic Inclusion: Breaking the Cycle of Poverty in Atlantic Canada' was born. Each province formed a reference group consisting of community development practitioners and civil servants. Their task was to choose a theme about social exclusion and write a discussion paper to spark dialogue about public policy and social exclusion.

The project was greeted enthusiastically in New Brunswick because the provincial government had just begun a process to renew the social policy framework. The timing was perfect. In the fall of 1998, the Liberal government led by Camille Theriault established a Round Table on Social Policy Renewal consisting of 45 citizens and 17 government ministers, members of the legislative assembly (MLAs), and government officials. The government also formed a Special Cabinet Committee on Social Policy Renewal and an interdepartmental Social Policy Secretariat to support the process. Between 22 March and 5 May 1999, the Round Table hosted twenty-five community meetings on social policy renewal. More than 100 volunteers helped the Round Table members organize these meetings. They also recruited volunteer facilitators and rallied community participation. The volunteers arranged visits to transition houses, food banks, emergency shelters, health clinics, housing projects, learning centres, early childhood programs, sheltered workshops, and people's homes to provide first-hand accounts of the positive and not so positive effects of social policy.² About 23,000 copies of the discussion paper³ were circulated and 3,000 people took part in the Round Tables.

The individual members of the New Brunswick Reference Group participated in the process and collectively assumed their task of writing a paper for this project would simply be a matter of connecting with the policy renewal process and assessing the results. One member of the Reference Group, the Urban Core Support Network, had already analysed the impact of faulty social policy so there was no need to prove the need for change.⁴ The large number of citizens who participated in the provincial process confirmed that New Brunswickers needed no more evidence of the obvious.

In early June 1999, there was a provincial election. The Progressive Conservative party took power, pledging that: "Our social programs should ensure dignified and meaningful lives for those who need assistance, but also recognize the impor-

tance of providing the support and resources necessary for an environment in which New Brunswickers can work together, be self-reliant and take responsibility for their own lives".⁵

The new government had a 200-day mandate of specific promises to implement. The results of the 25 community meetings were not available to the public. There was no sign of what the next step would be. As a result, the New Brunswick Reference Group sat down on 17 June 1999 and began to write a working paper to increase understanding about how policy affects people trying to escape poverty in New Brunswick. They answered two questions:

1. What do we need to learn?
2. What information will help bring about action to change policies that keep people living in poverty?

The group worked through the summer and fall to write *Social Investment: It's Time to Invest in New Brunswick's Children, Families and Communities*.⁶ They concluded that government, communities, and the private sector need to work together more effectively. Much has been learned about partnerships. Namely, collaboration is not easy and should not be treated lightly. Partnerships require trust, effort, and commitment. The paper concluded that lucrative social investment needs to be based upon a foundation of:

- collaborative leadership
- community capacity building, and
- human financial resources.

Since the 1970s, the post-war consensus in Canada that government should support income maintenance programs and health care programs has gradually eroded. Canada's rating has slipped to tenth on the United Nation's Human Poverty Index (which accounts for social conditions including functional illiteracy, poverty, and long-term unemployment). This does not bode well for a country that expects to compete in a global economy.

We, the New Brunswick Reference Group on Social and Economic Inclusion, have decided to voice the economic arguments for including all citizens in society and the economy. If altruistic and social arguments no longer work, we reason, then perhaps the evidence of financial cost and loss in competitive advantage will stimulate policy debate.

This set of case studies and information sheets shows how government, communities, and the private sector must work together to ensure that all people are included. All three sectors have an important role in ensuring this country continues to be one of the greatest places to live *for everyone*.

Here are a few examples of the great work being done in New Brunswick. We would like to add more. Please contact us to arrange for your story to be added to this kit. This is important work that must be acknowledged and celebrated.

The New Brunswick Reference Group on Social and Economic Inclusion

Investing in Social Capital: Government's Role

When investment dollars are removed from the community (voluntary) sector what is the cost? What is the loss? If voluntary services were replaced for pay, they would contribute \$1.9 billion a year of services to the Nova Scotia economy, \$1.2 billion to New Brunswick, \$1 billion to Newfoundland, and \$230 million to Prince Edward Island. When volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses are added, the community sector⁷ contributes services equal to nearly ten percent of the total value of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Atlantic Canada.⁸

This discussion kit complements the first working paper⁹ with several case studies of community-led initiatives. Each case study is very different. Some are community/government partnerships. Some are autonomous, relying on little or no government funding. Some are hurting badly from lack of resources. Some are in full bloom. Others have served their purpose and are passing the torch to the next wave of innovators and leaders. All are an inspiration but there are troubling signs that the relentless pursuit of material well-being, an increasing time crunch, and rising stress levels are eroding the New Brunswick community sector.

In this section, we ask two key questions:

1. What is the role of government in social investment?
2. What are the barriers that governments face in carrying out this role?

What is the role of government in a Western democracy?

To govern, according to the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* is "to rule with authority, to conduct the affairs of a country."¹⁰ Within a democratic system of government, the authority to govern comes from the citizens. This authority is granted by the citizens following freely-held elections. In Canada, federal elections occur roughly every four years.

The Canadian democratic system, known as a 'Western democracy', struggles to achieve three things: "1) to check arbitrary rulers, 2) to replace arbitrary rulers with just and rational ones, and 3) to obtain a share for the underlying population in the making of rules."¹¹

The role of our governments is to conduct the affairs of the country and provinces with the authority delegated by Canadian citizens. Elected governments deter arbitrary rulers from usurping power and ensure the rights of citizens to participate in decision making. Western government institutions are built upon concepts of justice and civil society. A just and civil society assures basic liberties, guarantees the right of political participation has roughly equal value for all, and provides equal opportunity to the least advantaged.¹²

What is social investment?

Social investment has been defined as “the commitment of public funds to build social capital”. Social capital is defined as “the level of formal (public) and informal social support systems in a community.”¹³ Another explanation of social capital is “the institutions, relationships, attitudes and values that govern interactions among people and contribute to economic and social development.”¹⁴

There have been two schools of thought about how to build social capital: the trickle down theory and the social capital approach.

The trickle down philosophy was made famous by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. The belief is that if we improve the traditional measures of economic performance—Gross National Product (GNP)—the resulting wealth will be shared by all members of society. Public policies in support of competition and free-trade have, over the past two decades, indeed raised the GNP in most of the developed world, but the gap between the rich and the poor increased dramatically. The resulting wealth did not trickle all the way down.

The rationale for the second school of thought, the social capital approach, is based on the understanding that individuals, organizations, institutions, and communities that cooperate for mutual benefit will develop strong economic and social structures. Public policies in support of cooperation and collaboration will build sustainable communities and local economies. Social capital is a prerequisite for healthy public policy and a consequence of it. “Real progress requires not facile verbal agreement, but hard thoughts and ideas with high fibre content. The social capital approach promises to uncover new ways of combining private social infrastructure with public policies that work, and in turn, of using public policies to revitalize (our) stock of social capital.”¹⁵

What is the role of government in social investment?

The role of government is to govern with the authority of the citizens, to build the social capital of the country/province, to address inequity, and to reduce the gap between the richest and the poorest. The government’s role is to develop policies that balance social and economic development. It’s role is to track genuine progress and human well-being using indicators of prosperity, rather than measures such as the GNP (which were never intended to measure true progress.)

Citizens rely on government to build social capital. Citizens cannot rely on the private sector to act on the principles of a just society and to conduct the affairs of the country. Citizens trust elected bodies to govern with our authority for the good of *all* members of society and to support balanced social and economic development of all.

What are the barriers that governments face in carrying out this role?

Few want to live in a society that has a small wealthy class and a large marginalized mass of people. In fact, a growing gap between the rich and poor indicates a poorly functioning economy. Unfortunately, the growing gap has been hidden behind an illusion of prosperity.

This is the first barrier to government action through social policy. Weakening the policies instituted by previous generations of Canadians has created inequalities. The result of growing inequality or “relative poverty” is ill health for which society pays a high price. Recent research¹⁶ shows that the size of the gap and the steepness of the gradient between the richest and poorest in society is the most effective measure of health—both for the individual and for the community.

The second barrier is the power of the prosperous elite who are reluctant to share wealth through taxation and supporting social and economic programs that enhance the lives of all. This elite seems to hold significant political power which undermines Canadian social policies that took a great deal of effort to establish earlier this century. “The erosion of social capital is not due to citizen withdrawal from voluntarism and good works, but private capital’s withdrawal from any civic duty; and the consequent and steady decline in the fair distributive role of the welfare state.”¹⁷

The third barrier to government action through social policy is the rapidly developing global economy. The difference between the international companies that emerged after the Second World War and today’s transnational companies is their relationship to the nation state. In this new era, transnational companies owe no allegiance to any nation state and see the rules of national governments as inhibitors of trade and the unrestricted movement of capital. There has been sustained pressure to get government out of the business of providing service. All levels of government have downsized, rationalized and handed over key social functions to the corporate sector, including health care services, education, and incarceration. Despite a decade of program cut-backs, the pressures are stronger than ever to diminish the minimum wage, welfare rates, environmental regulations, labour codes and standards.

Is power transferring from national states to global ‘arbitrary rulers’? Are we being increasingly governed by transnationals who seem to believe they do not need national governments (but need the governments’ security forces to keep order)? Retreat from the role of a just government may result in the ultimate demise of government. If nation states cannot govern the powerful transnationals, there may be little left to govern.

This bleak scenario is not assured as long as we have a citizenry that is committed to a civil society. We still have strong associations and a strong community sector. Canadians are still committed to democracy. We believe that Canadians want their elected governments to reduce inequities, to build social capital, and to create opportunities for social investment for the economic and social development of all citizens. The role of the citizen is to keep their governments accountable for the policies and programs that promote social and economic inclusion of all.

All Canadians, rich and poor, want to experience true prosperity and well-being. Forging a new partnership between the public, private, and the community sectors to rebuild and support the social economy will revitalize civic life. What an opportunity for New Brunswick, a province of Canada whose civil society is still relatively intact! While other nations struggle for survival or face the difficult task of rebuilding, our Atlantic provinces could be the world’s model of civil

society. Preserving the environment, fostering self-reliance, nurturing community enterprise, promoting health, and growing the arts and culture sector could top the list of priorities. New Brunswick can show how it is done.

Community Enterprise Development

Monquarters at Work (MAW), Bath

In 1995, residents living in rural subsidized housing realized that the best way to achieve self-sufficiency was to become financially independent and regain their community's respect. They envisioned an umbrella organization that would develop community enterprises to employ its members. Their aim was achieved when Monquarters at Work (MAW) was established in the village of Bath, New Brunswick.

MAW's first enterprise, Born Again J.E.A.N.S. (BAJ), was launched by five women and established in a building constructed and owned by MAW. Beautiful used fabrics and denims are collected and transformed into unique bags, quilts, and jackets. These attractive one-of-a-kind items have been test-marketed for two years, most recently at the Atlantic Craft Trade Show, where buyers praised their originality, design, artistry, and workmanship. The future of this fledgling enterprise appears to be viable. Three of the women have since moved on, but the two remaining partners are there for the long-haul. Nobody in Bath calls them 'welfare bums' anymore.

MAW and its manufacturing enterprise, BAJ, are basically one organization, administered by a volunteer board made up of the two partners, a facilitator, a business person, and a clergyman. It has been funded sporadically by governments and provincial wage subsidy programs to provide an income for the partners. Three provincial departments (Agriculture and Rural Development, Human Resource Development and Housing, and Labour) provide a small operating grant (a total of \$4,500 per year for three years).

A contract employee of the Department of Municipalities, Culture and Housing (MCH) initiated MAW and facilitated its early development. The facilitator worked closely with the non-profit housing residents who grew confident and competent as they developed and operated their new enterprise. The facilitator's contract was terminated within a year because her work was deemed to be economic development rather than social. Therefore it was not part of MCH's mandate. This left a big hole in the organization, but a private benefactor (the facilitator's mother) enabled this function to continue on a volunteer basis.

Strengths as a Social Investment

Collective administration. MAW is operated entirely by a board of directors which includes its partners and representatives from the community. Decisions are based on consensus.

We're trying to do something with our lives. Some people, they have a lot to give but no opportunity to give it. So we're lucky.

*Dorothy O'Donnell,
Partner
Born Again J.E.A.N.S.*

*They learned to work
and worked to learn.*

Grassroots control. Members have controlled MAW from the outset. Their pride of ownership is very strong—so strong, in fact, that interest expressed by other members of the community has remained mostly untapped.

Community support. Donations of fabric and supplies have come from the general public, third sector organizations and informal private sector contacts, MAW's 'extended family'.

Interdepartmental collaboration. Most financial support from the province was obtained through the political route of meeting with MLA's and ministers. In this way, MAW/BAJ has overcome the 'silo effect' and worked jointly with several departments.

Asset-based development. When the group first gathered, they made an inventory of their business skills. BAJ was selected as an enterprise concept because of the specific artistic and sewing abilities of one individual. With her talent as the anchor, the other members of the group identified niches where their own skills and interests could contribute (sewing, management, accounting, sales, etc.)

Experiential learning and development. A group of people traditionally dependent on government support programs experienced success while undergoing a process of personal transformation. They learned to work and worked to learn.

Sustainable results. Whether or not BAJ becomes a viable business, the partners have achieved their goal of self-sufficiency. They now have the skills and confidence to enter the workforce. Another achievement is the community's attitude shift. The partners are now included and valued by the community instead of excluded. The local people realize that every community member has something to offer.

Empowerment/autonomy. Running their own organization has given the partners a sense of competency and belonging, making them even more willing and determined to go further. They realize that patience, determination, and hard work pay off.

Challenges

Lack of consistent core funding. Small non-profits are always stretched to the limit. The search for project funding to keep afloat is constant. MAW was fortunate to obtain a funding commitment from the previous government, but will be hampered by a lack of administrative support in its ability to obtain equipment, hire new employees, and find new markets. These tasks are too demanding of time, skills, and money to be done indefinitely by volunteers (even those with generous mothers!).

Lack of understanding of the importance of the facilitator. This work requires a facilitator from outside the area, someone who is not personally involved in complex community dynamics. The facilitator acts initially as a catalyst; then, as the participants reach for more responsibility, the facilitator becomes a coach and a link to other resources. The balance of power is transferred from the facilitator to the participants. This is a difficult function to describe and even harder to quantify, so it is often assumed that there is no need for a facilitator, that things will just happen by themselves. They won't and they don't.

*This is a story for
everyone who's said (or
thought) that they
couldn't do it, weren't
smart enough, didn't
have the money, or
thought it was too late.*

Lisa Gregoire

Lack of government awareness and interest. No level of government has apparently yet grasped the potential of community enterprise development as a tool to help people acquire skill and confidence leading to self-sufficiency, inclusion, and wellness. Community economic development (CED) is 'nobody's baby' because it combines economic and social goals.

No place to connect to government except politically. There is no department whose mandate includes community economic development for marginalized people, so it's a silo to silo search for support. It should not be necessary to convene three ministers and the premier for the sake of \$4,500 per year.

No discernment between wise investment and spending. CED is not the traditional mode of government operation. Economic departments are viewed as earners while social programs are seen as spenders. This is a fallacy. Investing in social development has economic benefits while many investments in economic development are not lucrative. Some spending is an investment that pays dividends while the stock value grows. Other spending is simply that—spending.

The success of MAW/BAJ demonstrates social investment as a means of helping people move from dependency to self-sufficiency, becoming healthier, happier, and more productive in the process.

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Community Health

Saint John Community Health Centre

When you step through the front door of the Saint John Community Health Centre (CHC), you instantly feel safe and welcome. The CHC was the brainchild of a dedicated group of health service providers and social advocates who were determined that the community improve its health and well-being. Adopted by the Atlantic Health Sciences Corporation (AHSC), the CHC continues to demonstrate its worth by expanding its activities and outreach every year. Centrally located at St. Joseph's Hospital, the CHC reaches far beyond its walls to include many Saint John residents who find the formal health care system inaccessible, ineffective, or uncomfortable.

CHC provides three types of services:

1. **Support to individuals.** This support includes consultations with the CHC health team (nurse, social worker and dietician), access to information, professional advice and counselling, assistance in accessing other resources, and the human connection so necessary to good health. Teens walk in without appointments for health, social and personal services. The CHC nurses go outside to provide services at Romero House (soup kitchen) and the Salvation Army.
2. **Group development.** Activities include education programs, workshops, and self-help groups. Participants are primarily teens, women, and people with special health needs who find information and 'extended family' support. Programs cover a wide range of topics, including self-esteem,

The CHC Food Purchasing Club was featured in the February issue of The Atlantic Cooperator newspaper. Club members pay \$5 a year and volunteer five hours. Each month they pay \$15; their money is pooled to purchase nutritious food which they receive near the end of the month.

People leave with their dignity intact. It is not a food bank... It's not a charity. It's real action that is helping people... it's like a big social event, like forming a big family. Once people work as a volunteer, they want to do it all the time.

*Pam Coates
Coordinator*

anger management, stress management, tutoring, job preparation, and health education. There are also specific medical and social support groups and self-help groups such as the Food Purchasing Club.

3. **Community action.** CHC participates with other community partners to address issues which affect health outcomes, such as poverty, unemployment, nutrition, family violence, teen pregnancy, and youth development. CHC is involved in such initiatives as the Community Economic Development Project and the Community Loan Fund, the Urban Core Support Network, and a variety of networks and coalitions of churches, social action groups, and health organizations.

Investment Value

Tracking results. CHC recorded 22,000 person-contacts/visits in 1999. These included 10,168 health services clients (up 46% over two years), and 12,000 participants in education and developmental programs and initiatives based at the Centre. Such growing numbers demonstrate the appeal of the CHC.

Contribution to the local economy. Established in 1996, CHC is guided by a 15-member Community Advisory Council, a staff of nine, and a large contingent of community partners, volunteers and committees. Core funding is provided by AHSC and the N.B. Department of Health and Community Services. The ability of CHC to leverage funding makes it a lucrative social investment. Last year, the CHC injected an additional \$300,000 into the local economy through project funding, foundation grants, and business/community contributions. Fourteen new jobs were created. All services are free of charge.

Community ownership. Because CHC evolved from a grassroots initiative, it is firmly rooted in the community, which, through the Advisory Board, ensures that it is responsive to community needs.

Collaborative leadership. It is an authentic partnership between government departments, non-profit agencies, and community groups with shared objectives

Grassroots involvement. It has broad community support in the form of volunteers and funding.

Lifelong learning. CHC emphasizes learning and development on an individual, family, and community basis. It helps people to build their own capacity for making decisions and taking action which will enhance their health and wellness.

A physical presence. It has a building, making effective use of an existing structure; it is a real place to go with real people there to provide help and information.

Sound administration. It is well managed and accountable to its funders, while maintaining its flexibility to respond to community needs.

Population health approach. The focus is on health outcomes—fostering a healthy population by addressing the determinants of health.

Challenges

Public attitudes. Most people still think of 'health' in terms of being treated when they are sick, not keeping themselves well. The CHC is trying to turn the tide toward making people aware that there is much they can do to prevent illness and to promote good health. But this is a long-term approach and a hard sell to a public which expects the medical system to 'fix it'. CHC works hard to encourage public investment in health promotion and other components which contribute to wellness, such as steady employment, proper nutrition, adequate housing, and personal safety.

Traditional government structures. Governments are organized in 'silos' by category. Each category is the responsibility of some department (e.g., hospitals, schools, jails, cities, jobs, fish, trees, potatoes, money). However, there is no department responsible for people or community development. Working from the perspective of bottom-up rather than top-down, CHC tries to facilitate a holistic approach to community-based services where communities have more input in identifying their needs and taking more responsibility for the outcomes. This cannot be done, however, without substantial resources from governments. An integrated community-based approach to health and wellness depends upon government leadership, support, and structural changes.

Using the principles of health promotion and community development, the Centre seeks to engage all sectors in activities which raise awareness of health issues and how they can be addressed by individuals, families, and the community. It's both a haven and hub for activities that strengthen and enrich the community.

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Social Development

Saint John Human Development Council

The Human Development Council (HDC) is a community social planning agency which is unique to New Brunswick. HDC serves its region in many ways. It serves as a link to the community, providing information on available services, through directories, an INFO-line, and a newsletter. It serves as a catalyst for developing new community initiatives, such as the Learning Exchange, Housing Alternatives, the New Brunswick Committee on Literacy, and the Community Health Centre. These initiatives as well as others, now operate independently, having either spent an incubation period within HDC or benefitted from its leadership role. HDC is currently fostering new initiatives as part of its community economic development strategy: the Community Loan Fund and the development of community enterprises. The support and access to resources provided by HDC are crucial to the success of these major projects.

HDC mobilizes the community to discuss and plan around social issues through workshops and forums. Its network includes agencies, government and non-profit service providers, churches, tenant groups, labour unions, aboriginal people, and the private sector. Developed over many years, the network connects

Imagine being given \$39,000 and transforming it into \$280,000 (and then some) in one year. Pretty healthy return. You would think investors would be lining up to get a piece of the action. They probably would be, if the numbers were generated in a mutual fund or a business.

*Editorial on the
Human Development
Council*

*11 February 2000
Times Globe*

economic and social interests in a collaborative environment where debate and discussion can happen on any social issues. HDC also supports the development of coalitions dealing with issues such as services for youth and poverty. It works with the Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative and the Urban Core Support Network; membership in the latter includes agencies and individuals living in poverty. Strong grassroots involvement contributes to HDC's credibility and effectiveness.

Investment Value

Contribution to the local economy. The 16-member working Board of Directors, representing a cross-section of the community, typically contributes over 1,000 volunteer hours each year. Established in 1979, it is currently funded primarily (since its inception) by the City of Saint John (39%), the United Way of Greater Saint John (16%), and the N.B. Department of Family and Social Services (35%). In 1999, HDC leveraged over \$275,000 into the community, creating five full-time positions and four short-term jobs to facilitate solutions to pressing problems. In addition to its major funders, HDC receives support through memberships and the sale of publications, as well as specific project funding from various sources. Its value in social investment is clear.

Leveraging a wide spectrum of resources. HDC looks beyond the city, United Way, and the province to tap into external funding and expertise. Its track record of attracting project funding speaks to its ability to prepare sound proposals and presentations.

Collaborative leadership. HDC collaborates with many organizations and sectors of society to address community issues. HDC has a record of developing and incubating local initiatives. It is largely responsible for the high degree of cooperation among local organizations and agencies and their ability to get beyond issues of 'turf' to focus on community issues.

Trusted, skilled management. Effective administrators have contributed greatly to the stability and enhancement of the organization. HDC has achieved a reputation for integrity, expertise, and project management. HDC recognizes the importance of a sound organizational structure and clearly defined goals which enhances accountability.

Community capacity building. HDC is a welcoming environment for volunteers on its Board, committees and coalitions. Its various areas of involvement (e.g., health, housing, literacy, teen pregnancy, poverty, and employment) attract people with different interests and backgrounds. Many civic leaders and activists have benefitted from their experience as HDC volunteers.

Knowledge of broad social issues as well as local dynamics. With its national and provincial contacts, HDC is always aware of current issues and policies, while keeping an ear to the ground to understand what is happening at the community level.

Challenges

Uncertain core funding. HDC currently operates with a core staff of three, working only four days a week, due to past funding cuts. Although the current partnership of funders has been supportive, there is increasing competition for

decreasing resources. This year, the City of Saint John questioned its involvement in social development issues, slightly decreasing its support, with possibly less funding in the future. If HDC had to rely only on project funding and donations, its effectiveness would be greatly limited and fundraising would sap precious resources from the organization's core work.

Support from government for innovative approaches. It is difficult to dialogue with senior levels of government about new initiatives for social development which have originated from the community, particularly when they overlap social and economic realms.

Lack of understanding of the importance of the facilitator. HDC often acts as a facilitator in bringing groups together although many do not recognize or understand the importance of this function. It is not easy for the public to 'see' what the HDC does. Therefore its level of public awareness and support is not closely correlated with its value.

The Human Development Council (HDC) promotes and coordinates social development, working towards a more balanced quality of life. Just as Enterprise Saint John plans for economic development, the Human Development Council brings an integrated approach to social issues. HDC channels resources to make Greater Saint John a strong, healthy sustainable community.

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Eliminating Family Violence

Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research

The idea for a research centre dedicated to the collaborative study of family violence and violence against women emerged out of the necessity for prevention. The Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research was established in 1992 to undertake research which would offer practical ways and means to end family violence. The Centre achieves its mandate of action-oriented research coupled with public education on family violence by:

- building and sustaining partnerships among academics, government policy makers, community practitioners, and survivors;
- obtaining useable and policy-oriented research results;
- disseminating these results widely; and, where possible,
- following through with policy and action.

The twenty research teams of the MMF Centre are as diverse as educational and religious institutions, rural communities, the workplace, immigrant communities, family law, aboriginal communities, and the military. These teams research violence against persons with disabilities and foster children, and the role of substance abuse in violence. The teams provide relevant and useable knowledge about family violence and violence against women.

Examples of Research

1. Our Dating Violence team recently released the results of a large anglophone and francophone province-wide survey to the national media. The survey discovered that four percent of teen-aged boys and 19 percent of teen-aged girls have been victims of sexual aggression by the age of 14. The team conducted follow-up focus groups at several schools to discuss interventions that might be effective in reducing the incidence of sexual aggression amongst teens.
2. Our Religion and Violence team has distributed its findings to church groups throughout the Atlantic region. This information makes these congregations more conscious of abuse of women and enables clergy and other church workers to become more aware of and responsive to the needs of these abuse survivors.
3. Our Creating Peaceful Learning Environments team has carried out conflict resolution, peer mediation, and anger management interventions in New Brunswick schools that will have long-lasting impacts on children's behaviour.
4. In collaboration with the New Brunswick Coalition of Transition Houses and the Department of Health and Community Services, the Transitions of Women in Abusive Relationships team has designed a new monthly reporting form that will provide more valid data on the use of New Brunswick transition houses.
5. Our Violence Against Immigrant and Visible Minority Women research team organized focus groups in immigrant communities throughout New Brunswick. The groups discussed barriers that inhibit immigrant women survivors of violence from accessing the justice system. The team subsequently sponsored workshops to distribute the information obtained in the focus groups to practitioners who provide services to abuse survivors.
6. Our Family Violence and the Workplace team mounted a national conference in May 1997 called 'Cutting Deep: Workplace Stress and Family Violence in a Climate of Downsizing'. The event attracted chief executive officers, human resource managers, union and employee representatives, and researchers from across the continent. Many people who attended the conference took ownership for the first time of the idea that workplace managers can help employees who are abuse survivors.

Supportive research community. The stable nature of the MMF Centre's research teams has enabled the service providers, activists, government employees, and academics from a range of disciplines to develop a solid understanding of one another's work in family violence over a sustained period. The Centre's network meetings, research days, and workshops are catalysts for fostering appreciation amongst research team members of the complexities of family violence and of how the work each academic and practitioner functions in the broader context of the work of others.

Education. The Centre offers ten-course program aimed at individuals who encounter family violence through their work and are seeking to broaden their knowledge and skills in this field. Increased knowledge and skills in family

violence enables frontline workers to do their jobs better and decreases the 'revolving door' syndrome, whereby survivors are not helped the first time they use a service and return to the system again and again.

Collaborative leadership. In the pursuit of answers to family violence, members of community-based, grass roots organizations, government agencies, and university faculty must collaborate closely at every stage of the research process. To realize our philosophical goals of action, partnership and collaboration, there must be community representation on the research teams and within the decision-making bodies of the Centre itself.

Community members have an unmatched wealth of experiential knowledge on issues of family violence in Atlantic Canada communities. Therefore, collaborative input is critical to identifying and defining the needs and problems of communities. All research at the Centre is action oriented, directed at producing positive change. Community members' input is critical at every stage, especially at the action and implementation stages of the research process.

Research as an Investment in Prevention. The Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation has completed its endowment fund campaign to support the operation expenses of the Centre. The Foundation will manage and administer an endowment fund of \$2.5 million for at least ten years. Funding from the endowment began with the 1998 fiscal year. The Foundation is committed to the continuing operation of the Centre.

The Centre's network meetings, courses and workshops foster appreciation among research team members of the complexities of family violence. The stable nature of the Centre's research teams enables service providers, activists, government employees, and academics to develop a solid understanding of one another's work in family violence over a sustained period of time.

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Community Development

Urban Core Support Network

The Urban Core Support Network (UCSN) has been in existence in Saint John since 1994. We partner with individuals and organizations to help alleviate poverty in our community. We focus on public awareness and joint efforts to identify and to address barriers experienced by people living in poverty. Our local organization has 32 members who represent community agencies, individuals living in poverty, churches, and government departments.

Some of our activities have included:

- organizing and hosting a national UCSN conference in 1995
- organizing the first Atlantic Canada conference for poor people in 1996
- establishing a Food Purchasing Club
- supporting the development of a Community Loan Fund

*Its my Bible, I take it
everywhere I go across
the country.*

Senator Ermine Cohen

- organizing an event to recognize the United Nations Day to Eradicate Poverty
- participating in the N.B. government Social Policy Community Roundtable
- organizing the local Social Policy Renewal Process meetings
- organizing an information event on the anniversary of the federal House of Commons commitment to end child poverty

In 1997, we were successful in receiving project funding from Status of Women Canada and the Sisters of Charity to look specifically at the many issues and barriers faced by women who live in poverty. The UCSN published a discussion paper, *Responding to the Voices of Poverty*, based on the experiences of people living in poverty as well as individuals who work for non-profit and government agencies. The paper identifies several barriers, including specific government policies.

Building on the information in the discussion paper, UCSN developed a workshop that provides participants with the opportunity to experience what life is like for people who live in poverty. The workshops are co-facilitated by the UCSN Coordinator and six women from UCSN who live in poverty. This educational tool has been extremely effective in raising awareness, dispelling myths, and helping to better understand the impact of poverty on our community. More than 600 participants, including staff of various government departments (provincial and federal), community agencies, students at the high school, community college and university levels, church groups, Senators, members of Parliament and members of the Legislative Assembly, have completed twenty-nine workshops. By helping participants to better understand some of the barriers these women face, our community can move toward finding more long-term solutions.

Strengths

Inclusive process. From early on in its history, the membership of UCSN have been clear that people living in poverty must be full participants in identifying the issues and developing and implementing strategies that will bring about change. The diversity in membership has led to significant learning and an appreciation of what each member has to offer. This process has been particularly meaningful to members who are living in poverty. For some, it has been a rare time in their lives where they have felt included, equal, and valued. For co-facilitators of workshops, it has meant an opportunity to show leadership and to feel appreciated for their contribution. UCSN also continues to hear (both formally and informally) people's concerns about policy and program issues.

Working with government. UCSN has worked hard to build relationships with people at various levels of government. Through this process UCSN has developed a credibility in the community which has led to special meetings to discuss policy concerns with cabinet ministers as well as senior staff responsible for policy and programs of various government departments.

Community collaboration and commitment. UCSN has brought together many people, agencies, and organizations around the issue of poverty. They have played a lead role in bringing the issue of poverty to the forefront in Saint John. There has been a significant interest from the community in hosting workshops, which provides participants an opportunity to better understand the difficulties

*I felt the frustration of
trying to survive in the
system when life keeps
handing you bad news.*

Workshop Participant

faced by many living in poverty. When people have an appreciation of the complexities of living in poverty, they are better able to work toward alleviating poverty.

Resource to the community. This year (2000) saw the third printing of the *Responding to the Voices of Poverty* discussion paper that has helped to inform, educate and activate our community. Groups across the country have requested copies of the paper. UCSN is well known and often called upon for information and expertise that will assist people in understanding that poverty is an issue that affects everyone. UCSN has made a presentation to the Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative and continues to be represented at their regular meeting.

Challenges

Raising community understanding of poverty. Recent statistics show that unemployment and income assistance levels are down; the economy is on the upswing, yet higher numbers of people in Saint John are living in poverty. There continues to be more emphasis placed on economic development while interest in social development is hit or miss. To reach a balance between social and economic development would mean that our community, government, and business leaders would recognize that poverty goes beyond a lack of financial resources. If we are to address this issue, we must realize that living in poverty can often mean a lack of opportunities, personal barriers such as low self-esteem and fear, social stigmas and pressures, as well as inappropriate policies.

Relationship with government. While UCSN has had some success in developing good working relationships with government, there are many barriers preventing true collaboration. Governments tend to work in isolation and if they consult at all with community, it often happens after they have developed policies and programs. There is no clear avenue for community groups to discuss concerns and ideas with government, and each agency or organization is on their own when it comes to trying to access government.

Continued funding. UCSN has had a good working relationship with Status of Women Canada and have been successful in developing partnerships with other funding sources in the community. However, most of these sources are project based and cannot provide funding for core budgets. Poverty is an issue which will not be addressed within the timeline of a project. If we are to reduce the level of poverty in our community, it will require an effort from all sectors and sustainable funding.

Our Future

UCSN will continue to work to create an environment that encourages inclusion, promotes a balance between economic and social development, and fosters increased community awareness of the devastating consequences of poverty. UCSN remains committed to the challenge of removing barriers faced by people living in poverty and, in particular, to work with government to design programs and policies to help people improve their living circumstances. The popularity of the poverty workshops and the ongoing requests will ensure that participants personally experience the difficulties faced by many in our community. Members of UCSN are also exploring other ways to respond to poverty and new tools that would help to raise awareness and commitment to this serious issue. One project

It really is difficult to get ahead when there are so many obstacles.

Workshop Participant

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now underway is the collection of stories, poetry and/or sketches which depict life for women living in poverty for publication in booklet form. Building and strengthening relationships with the business community will also continue to be a priority for UCSN.

Teen Resource Centre

Saint John Teen Resource Centre: A Proposal

If there is one group in our society which is falling through the cracks in our social institutions, it is youth. Faced with stressed-out parents and overburdened and under-resourced teachers, youth are opting out in increasing numbers—and their destinations are limited. Flight is one option—to the streets, or into escape mechanisms such as alcohol, drugs, gangs. Another alternative is to hunker down, live through it, and try to get on with personal growth. But where can they turn for help? A teen resource centre is one possibility.

Teens—like all of us—need to belong somewhere. They need friends and mentors, and a place to go when they're down and when they're up. They need to find a purpose in life, one with meaning and responsibility. But they need help in this search.

The Community Health Centre Saint John has become a magnet for teens since its opening. It quickly became clear apparent that regular social service channels were not meeting young peoples' needs. Thus was born the proposal for a Teen Resource Centre (TRC). A steering committee consisting of youths and a variety of community partners began planning for such a Centre. Youth have been involved from the outset. The proposal describes the TRC as a health-enhancing and cost-effective means to positively support the development of teens through shared learning and resource integration. It has the potential to serve as a model for all communities.

The TRC provides a one-stop shopping approach to services, supports, and education. Existing services will be co-located under one roof securing new resources where gaps exist. TRC intends to offer in-house and outreach services and programs focusing on health, self-development, work readiness, and recreation for youth in Greater Saint John. While youth (14–18 years) are the primary target group, the Centre will also offer prevention programs for 10–13 year olds, and job readiness/career development programs for those 19–24.

In the proposal, service organizations, funders, and youth form the membership of a Community Board of Directors responsible for the Centre's operation. A Youth Advisory Council guides the planning and implementation of programs and activities. The contributing service organizations, while maintaining control of their own program areas, seek to achieve integrated and coordinated services. The TRC takes a health promotion approach, dealing with all aspects of life—social, emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual. All youth would be welcome, and all services would be free.

Proposed programs include self-development (e.g., self-esteem, suicide prevention, stress and anger management); recreation and community services (e.g., lounge, music, art, sports, volunteering); work readiness and career development (e.g., tutoring, employment counseling and training); and health services (e.g., nutrition, addiction counseling, walk-in consultations, medical assistance). There is evidence that existing teen health centres are a viable community means of reducing the rates of major health determinants, including teen pregnancy, substance abuse, school drop-outs, youth violence, suicide, juvenile crime, and their associated costs.

Strengths as a Social Investment

Fully inclusive process. From the outset, youth have been involved in the design and planning of the centre. They are full partners with the high schools, community organizations, government, and business, and are involved in all committee working groups and a Teen Advisory Council.

Community support. The concept of the TRC is organic, having come from the community itself as a perceived need. Its support reflects the widespread concern about the lives and future of our young people.

Holistic approach. Only at the grassroots level can all service providers and other interested parties together offer integrated programs and opportunities. The 'one-stop shopping' concept overcomes the frustrations of the traditional 'silo' approach of service provision, increasing accessibility and effectiveness.

Non-traditional solutions. Whether a teen needs health, education or personal support, the centre starts where he/she is. It encourages each person to build on his/her strengths and to discover and develop his/her potential. This enables teens to set economic and social goals for themselves and to achieve the success which motivates them to go on. There is great flexibility in the process of growth and learning, in terms of speed, content, and results.

Challenges

Getting up and running. Because TRC involves so many community partners and crosses so many jurisdictional lines, the logistics of organization and development are complex and tedious. This involves balancing the interests of all partners to create a strong coalition to support the Centre.

Complicated funding arrangements. For the reasons cited above, many resource questions remain to be answered. These include location, operational costs, core funding, and staffing.

Engaging youth with the community-at-large. Many youth believe that nobody cares about them. They experience limited support, discrimination, and negative stereotyping. They feel isolated and alienated. Many adults, busy earning a living and engrossed in their own concerns, think youth are old enough to look after themselves and should do so. It is difficult to bring these groups together around common goals. Society must recognize that youth have a valuable contribution to make and can be responsible members of the community.

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Nearly one-quarter of the population of Greater Saint John is between the ages of 10–24. One in three youth between 15 and 24 lives in poverty, one of the highest rates in Canada. Saint John has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the country, substance use and abuse is increasing, and more students are dropping out of school and into the justice system. The TRC has the potential for involving 22,885 youth between the ages of 10 and 24. As one teen commented, “If you build it, we will come!”

Community Development in the Acadian Peninsula

Centre de Bénévolat de la Péninsule Acadienne Inc./ The Volunteer Centre of the Acadian Peninsula , Inc.

The Volunteer Centre of the Acadian Peninsula, Inc. (VCAP), a non-profit organization incorporated on 6 October 1981, promotes and encourages volunteer work, analyzes the social and community needs of the Acadian Peninsula region, and works toward the development of resources in response to identified needs.

From the start, the Volunteer Centre has served the community of the peninsula in various ways. Be they children, youth, people with special needs, or the older population, the VCAP attempts to meet each group’s particular needs and is always searching for improvement in the quality of life of each individual. Paid personnel supported by more than 400 involved volunteers work on this task. On a structural level, the VCAP has become over the years an umbrella organization for several programs and services:

Training workshops in the area of volunteer work;

The daily welcome centre responds to the needs of the elderly who have lost some of their independence by encouraging the improvement and/or the preservation of biological, psychological and social functions which are necessary for everyday activities;

Sunshine Friends (AmiSoleil) aims to respond to the basic needs of families and/or individuals in the areas of food and clothing;

The Family Resource Centre of the Acadian Peninsula aids the parents of children between the ages of 0 and 6 by offering specially suited services;

The Transition (Le Passage) intervenes in crisis situations concerning children with the authorization of the Department of Family and Community Services in anticipation of the necessary procedures regarding the biological family or regarding residential arrangements for children;

The hot meal program (Meals on Wheels) comes to the aid of elderly persons who have lost some of their independence;

The Youth Services Network (88) offers to the youth of the Acadian Peninsula the services of a street worker;

The guidance counselor program comes to the aid of children under guardianship, living independently or with special needs, in accordance with the Department of Family and Community Services;

Family Services of the Acadian Peninsula offers clinical services (individual, family and/or group therapy), employee aid programs, social assessments, program against spousal abuse, and numerous workshops and training sessions;

The relief/helper program offers services at home for persons falling under the criteria for the New Brunswick Strategy for long-term health care;

Support program for organizations in the area of secretarial work.

The VCAP also acts as a support in many of the socio-economic sectors of the Acadian Peninsula. The organization collaborates with various participants, government agencies, and community groups on programs dealing with research, training, social environment analyses, etc. The Volunteer Centre of the Acadian Peninsula is geared to be a resource for the community.

Translation from the French: Alice Cotton

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Literacy

Community Academic Services Program (CASP)

In 1990, Premier Frank McKenna's office set up Literacy New Brunswick Inc. (LNBI), a private charitable organization. LNBI is responsible for raising and administering the funds necessary for community-based literacy initiatives such as the Community Academic Services Program (CASP). It also has the mandate of increasing the public's awareness of literacy issues and creating a positive image for the literacy programs it offers.

The N.B. Department of Education is a partner in the CASP endeavour and sponsors literacy coordinator positions within each N.B. community college. The staff coordinate and supervise the local CASP programs and provide them with curriculum materials, facilitator training, and liaison with LNBI. The N.B. Department of Human Resources supports CASP by offering assistance with child care and transportation costs to some learners. They also refer clients to local CASPs and help promote the program to others. Likewise, Human Resources Development Canada also provides referrals and contributes to the funding of CASP.

At the local level, a community committee administers CASP. LNBI provides each committee with sufficient funds to cover the net salary of a facilitator. However, the committees are responsible for raising funds to cover other costs, e.g., employee deductions, classroom space, heat, lights, phone, furniture and equipment, supplementary curriculum materials, and photocopying. These committees register as an employer with Revenue Canada, maintain a bank account, keep financial and payroll records, and submit employee deductions.

The private sector contributes to this partnership through donations, and a significant portion of the CASP budget comes from corporate sponsorship. Businesses across the province have also helped to increase awareness of illiteracy (and the profile of CASP) through fundraising and promotional events.

Strengths as a Social Investment

Collaboration. CASP is one of the strongest examples of collaboration that exists within New Brunswick today. It's flexible, local, and provides services to far more learners than past programs ever reached.

Accessibility. Before CASP, upgrading had primarily been offered by community colleges, where space was limited and learners were expected to attend on a full-time basis. People living in rural communities had to travel to the nearest college and this was often a barrier to participation. CASP has overcome this obstacle through its community-based approach. In 1990, nine cities/towns of New Brunswick offered upgrading classes. Ten years later, CASP provides literacy services to more than 130 communities.

Private sector support. The private sector has been very supportive of this initiative and has contributed in many ways. Without its support, CASP could never have achieved what it has in such a short time. Private sector involvement has increased the profile of literacy in New Brunswick, making the public more aware of not only the difficulties, but the solutions to this problem.

Community support. Yet it is perhaps the community itself who has been the most avid supporter of CASP. Hundreds of volunteers and dozens of community organizations have given their time, energy, and resources to make this concept come alive. It is largely because of their commitment to this cause that CASP has become so successful.

Challenges

Lack of clear policy. As CASP is a grant and not a contract, there are few written guidelines that specify who is expected to do what. If one looks for a paper trail or clear lines of accountability, there is likely little to discover. There is one document called *New Brunswick's Literacy Portrait* which suggests some guidelines that each program should follow, however, the language is vague and does not clarify issues of accountability.

Misrepresentation While the CASP handbook states that CASP is 'community-owned', this is somewhat questionable. While it is true that the community does all the work at the local level and are the direct service providers, within the confines of their grant with LNBI they have little authority. They are the registered employer with Revenue Canada but cannot hire, fire, or discipline staff without the approval of the regional literacy coordinator. This has serious repercussions if a committee and the provincial literacy coordinator do not share concerns about a facilitator.

Salaries. When CASP was first established, salaries for facilitators were over \$16 per hour. However, in 1992/93 they were reduced \$11.50 and have remained at that level. Facilitators receive no benefits (health, dental, pension) and go from one contract to the next—never quite sure just how long the position will last. They must work flexible hours, including evenings and weekends. They have

total responsibility for program delivery and often work in less-than-desirable conditions. They do the assessment of learner needs, develop curriculum, evaluate progress, and deal with a transient high-need target group. They must incorporate life skills and personal development opportunities into CASP lesson plans and activities, and often find themselves dealing with the life crisis of a student.

This is a lot to ask for little pay and no benefits. It is not unusual for facilitators to become disenchanted and move on to other work. A high facilitator turnover rate makes it difficult to maintain consistent, high quality programs and is disruptive to the CASP learners.

Facilities/equipment. The community committee is responsible for finding ways to support all other aspects of the CASP program except for the net salary of the facilitator. This means that many CASP classrooms end up in church basements, community halls, or other spaces where the environment may not be highly conducive to learning. Many have poor lighting, worn desks and equipment, no phones, or inadequate heating systems.

Curriculum. When a CASP program is originally established, they are provided with one complete set of curriculum materials. No new materials are provided thereafter. Facilitators must photocopy or erase the student handbooks each time they are used by a new learner. A CASP committee can buy additional materials, but they are limited by the funds they can raise.

The curriculum has an American flavour and little in the way of Canadian content. Some of the workbooks are outdated so many facilitators develop their own learning tools which results in a high level of inconsistency from program to program.

Monitoring and Evaluation. LNBI, the governing body, does an excellent job of raising funds and promoting literacy initiatives. However, less effort goes into evaluation of the programs themselves. The criteria for success outlined in the CASP handbook states that facilitators are to measure success based on the learner's ability to work independently, increase self-esteem, become more involved in the community, increase commitment to life-long learning, and attain personal goals. Only one of the seven criteria relates to the completion of an academic level and yet evaluations focus on this single criterion. LNBI must put in place more mechanisms to track holistic personal development of the learners.

There are also questions about the process used to assess academic progress. CASP programs do not test learners when they begin. As the curriculum varies from program to program, it is difficult to measure exactly what they are learning. While facilitators gather some information, recording what page each student is at in each series of books from month-to-month is not necessarily an indicator of how much the student has retained.

By reducing barriers to participation, CASP has reached thousands of New Brunswickers who might not have had other opportunities to learn and upgrade their skills. It has also helped to enlighten the public about the depth of the literacy problem and to remove some of the myths surrounding literacy.

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