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Engage!

Action for Neighbourhood Change



Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC), a unique learning initiative focused on neighbourhood revitalization, was formally launched last week.

“The Action for Neighbourhood Change project will allow public, private and voluntary partners to coordinate and combine resources for maximum impact,” said Honourable Joe Fontana, Minister of Labour and Housing, as he announced \$4 million for the initiative.

ANC is active in five communities (Surrey, Regina, Thunder Bay, Toronto and Halifax), helping to boost the strength of Canadian neighbourhoods. The partnership spans multiple departments and levels of government and also brings together business and non-profit resources to ensure that support to communities is comprehensive and seamless. Lead partners include United Way Canada, The Caledon Institute of Social Policy, the National Film Board, and Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement.

ANC will help communities to strengthen their ability to build healthy, vibrant neighbourhoods by building capacity and leadership at the local level, while providing better coordination of federal programs.

Related links:

- [Visit the ANC website!](#)
- [ANC brochure](#)
- [ANC: An Overview](#)
- [Partnership Profile](#)
- [Action Research & Place-based Learning](#)

By: Louise Kearney

Overcoming Fragmented Approaches

Tackling community issues such as poverty, homelessness, healthcare reform and the environment can be a heartbreakingly slow and frustrating process that is often exacerbated by the approach communities use to address the problem.

Complex community challenges defy easy solutions.

Let's take the issue of homelessness as an example. With many root causes, including unemployment, poor wages, the high cost of housing, substance abuse, and inadequate mental health services, among others, homelessness is a complex, multi-dimensional issue.

In an effort to address it however, governments, community groups, labour unions, and the private sector often choose to take on "little bits" of the puzzle (e.g. assisting homeless persons to develop job skills without addressing the lack of affordable housing or other social supports in the community). This fragmented approach avoids the tough but necessary task of working together on more comprehensive solutions.

In recent years, government has begun to place increasing emphasis on "Horizontal Management" – a systematic attempt to improve coordination and management of activities and strategies across government agencies.

While better internal collaboration among government agencies is only a part of what we need to wrestle complex problems to the ground, it is an important component and one that will pay dividends for Canadians.

Related Links:

- [Housing, Horizontality, and Social Policy](#)
- [Interview with Jacques Bourgault on "Managing Horizontality"](#)
- [The Horizontal Challenge: Line Departments, Central Agencies and Leadership](#)
- [Policy Development and Implementation in Complex Files](#)

By: Mark Cabaj

Housing Boom is a Bust in BC

Low interest rates and stable economic growth have fuelled a housing boom in Canada leading to shortages in the construction industry and long wait times for people building new homes.

In the shadow of this growth, however, are some worrisome trends. Housing costs have increased, rental vacancies are low, and rental fees are on the rise. The number of people without shelter on Canadian streets is steady, more and more families spend a disproportionate amount of their resources on housing and the waiting lists for Canada's limited pool of social housing is disturbingly long.

The shortage of affordable housing is due, in part, to the decision of senior levels of government to "get out of the business" of housing and allow spontaneous market forces to take over. With the market struggling to deliver in almost every major urban center, communities are increasingly stepping in to address the gap.

That's the case in B.C.'s Capital Region.

Faced with one of Canada's tightest housing markets, residents and organizations in the Region have worked diligently to raise public awareness about the community's housing crunch and campaign tirelessly for the creation of a Regional Housing Trust Fund – a publicly supported instrument designed to create affordable housing by co-investing in affordable housing projects.

In March of 2003, the Regional House Trust Fund became a reality when regional government and six of the region's twelve local municipalities voted to participate in the Fund, a resource that may help up to 50 families a year access affordable housing.



[on this initiative.](#)

Related Links:

- [The Quality of Life CHALLENGE](#)
- [The CHALLENGE in Vibrant Communities](#)

By: Mark Cabaj

Local Campaigns Start to Grow

Tamarack's Living Wage Learning Initiative was a huge success! All of the participating Pan Canadian Learning Community members highly enjoyed the series and it led each of them to consider a living wage campaign for their own city.

Each community chose a different path to follow but the initiative helped move them towards discussing the strategy with their local collaborations and to determine which direction they should, or could, take a local living wage movement.

For example, [Vibrant Communities Calgary](#) has chosen to start a municipal policy campaign, which will be followed by a campaign to other public, private and nonprofit sectors. They are also currently hiring a Living Wage Coordinator to help them in this process.

[Waterloo](#), [Edmonton](#), and [Niagara](#) are also considering a living wage campaign either through voluntary or regulatory approaches. Other communities pursuing related strategies such as human resources and business best practices include [Victoria](#) and [Surrey](#).

The [Living Wage Learning Initiative](#) will continue in the fall of 2005 with peer input processes held with different communities implementing living wage campaigns. Stay tuned for more learning as the initiative unfolds!



[on the Living Wage Learning Initiative](#)

Related Links:

- [Association for Community Organizing for Reform Now \(ACORN\)](#)
- [Living Wage Manual by Jen Kern](#)
- [Creating Opportunities: Using Human Resource Practices to Build Your Business and Your Community \(OP2000 HR Book\)](#)

By: Kerrie Skillen

Savouring Siestas

Bullfighting. Picasso. Flamenco. Sangria. Spain, and the Spanish people, has made many worthwhile contributions to culture and cuisine, but none more so than the siesta.

I recently returned from a wonderful trip to Spain where I completely reveled in the time each day taken for siesta - stores close, and people move slower and quieter, stopping to smell the roses or to share a meal with friends.

Guidebooks and friends warned me to reset my stomach-clock when traveling in Spain because lunch, eaten during siesta, between 1:30 and 4pm, is usually the main meal of the day. The evening meal is lighter and is served between 10 and 11pm.

I knew I had successfully moved to Spanish time when one afternoon, after relaxing for a few hours on the beach, I found a spot of shade on an outdoor patio, ordered some sangria and a Spanish omelette and spent siesta savouring my food and watching the world go by.

Here's a recipe for a Spanish omelette that takes me back to that siesta and the sun. I hope you enjoy it!



[Get the recipe for Spanish omelette \(Tortilla Española\)!](#)

By: Louise Kearney