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Engage!

Platforms for the People

Municipalities are the level of government “closest to the people,” positioned to deliver a good quality of life for all citizens.

But, many candidates in this year’s election seem to centre on one-dimensional platforms, pushing deeper community issues to the back burner.

According to province-wide surveys, the top three issues in this election are transit, taxes, and crime and public safety. Although these issues are important, they neglect to acknowledge the complexity and connectedness of local issues.

Hamilton’s mayoral candidates offer a unique perspective on community engagement, promising to make poverty reduction a top priority. Incumbent Larry Di Ianni and challenger Fred Eisenberger are supporting programs to address homelessness and poverty.

Addressing these issues today will achieve a lasting positive impact on the community’s resilience.

Our communities need dedicated and knowledgeable leaders. In order to bring about such leadership, we can either stand for office or vote for those who do.

Participating in municipal elections is important to our communities and their future.



Related Links:

- [What to look for in municipal elected officials](#)
- [The Ontario Municipal Elections Guide](#)
- [Examining social inclusion in civic elections](#)

By: Rachel Veira-Gainer

Community Vitality

Keeping a finger on the pulse of Canada's largest cities is getting easier, thanks to a new national initiative called *Vital Signs*.

This initiative, based on *Toronto's Vital Signs*, is coordinated by Community Foundations of Canada and funded by the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation.

Already, over nine communities across the country have released or are scheduled to release their reports.

Each *Vital Signs* report is an annual account of a community's quality of life. The reports track issues unique to each community, but also measure ten core indicators, such as health, housing, learning, the economy and the environment.

According to Community Foundations of Canada, the number of community foundations producing *Vital Signs* will double by next fall and is expected to keep on growing.

Monica Patten, President and CEO of Community Foundations of Canada, is enthused by this growth.

"This is an exciting first step in bringing the *Vital Signs* program to communities across Canada!"



Related Links:

- [Vital Signs reports](#)
- [A national overview of Vital Signs](#)
- [Community Foundations of Canada](#)

By: Anne Blayney

Maternal Matters in Saint John

Building momentum for a comprehensive community strategy, Saint John is focusing on supporting pregnant and parenting young women.

With help from the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative (BCAPI) created *Developing Healthy Public Policies for Pregnant and Parenting Young Women* – a project focused on young women under the age of 24.

The initiative establishes five priority areas for action, which include affordable childcare, high school completion and enhanced prevention.

These priorities aim to help not only the development of children and their young mothers, but to prevent teenage pregnancies from occurring in the future.

Already, the project has demonstrated positive outcomes. The Greater Saint John Community Foundation is supporting a mentoring initiative, a pilot for an Alternative School for Young Mothers was established, and community interest has increased.

With help from members of the community, Saint John is well on its way to providing assistance for young mothers and their children.



[Read the full report](#)

Related Links:

- [Ensuring Pregnant and Parenting Young Women Succeed](#)
- [Poverty, Homelessness and Teenage Pregnancy](#)
- [Vibrant Communities Saint John](#)

By: Susan Eckerle Curwood

Vibrant Communities Update

BC's Capital Region – On November 9, 2006, the Employer CHALLENGE and Coast Capital Savings will host a business breakfast. Business leaders will share experiences about how they are retaining staff and affecting the quality of life for their employees. Learn more and obtain registration information [here](#).

Saint John, NB – *Education to Employment: Pathways out of Poverty*, a new report developed with Vibrant Communities Saint John, outlines the challenges and opportunities of individuals with low levels of education as they attempt to improve their education and find employment. The report advocates change for the benefit of these individuals and for the City's economic health. Read the report [here](#).

Hamilton, ON – The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Prevention is holding an author's luncheon on November 14, 2006 with Brenda Zimmerman, co-author of *Getting to Maybe: How the World is Changed*. For more information about the luncheon and registration, click [here](#).

Changing the World

Creating a movement for change is a complex undertaking. Where do we start? Where are we heading? How do we overcome seemingly immovable obstacles?

As part of the Re-Imagining Leadership Symposium, keynote speaker Margaret Wheatley offered her insights on our ability to foster change.

"The world's development comes from healthy conversations," Margaret says. "Not strategic plans."

Her simple, thought-provoking ideas, also detailed in her book, *Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time*, raise some wicked questions while offering some much-needed clarity.



Admittedly, Margaret rarely proposes step-by-step processes, but felt these four steps capture the essence for propelling change:

1. Notice what you care about – our issues choose us.
2. Get started – just *do* something!
3. Learn as you go.
4. Stay together.

Step four refers to relationships built along the way, which she considers most important to changing the world.

So, follow your energy and change the world – one step at a time.

 [Margaret Wheatley's website](#)

Related Links:

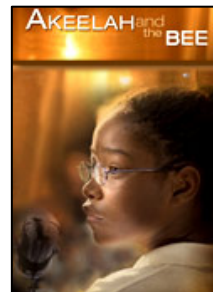
- [Re-Imagining Leadership website](#)
- [About *Finding Our Way*](#)

By: Rachel Veira-Gainer

A Community of Coaches

Full of subtle twists, *Akeelah and the Bee* (2006) is a heartwarming story about a determined girl who brings together an entire community.

Akeelah Anderson, an 11-year-old girl from south Los Angeles, has a talent for words that leads her to participate in the Scripps National Spelling Bee – the most famous competition of its kind.



In spite of objections from her mother, Akeelah's aptitude, willingness to learn and dedication allows her not only to succeed in spelling, but to rise above obstacles and unite her neighbourhood.

Through a variety of events leading to the National Spelling Bee, Akeelah embarks on a journey that bonds her family, her spelling bee instructor and her 50,000 coaches – her entire community.

I would highly recommend this movie – it is a touching story for both families and children.

Akeelah and the Bee will leave you uplifted, but reaching for three tissues or more.



[Read other movie reviews from Tamarack](#)

Related Links:

- [Akeelah and the Bee website](#)

By: Paul Born

Featured Resources

The Municipal Franchise & Social Inclusion - Dr. Myer Siemiatycki, Professor of Politics at Ryerson University and Director of the Graduate Program in Immigration and Settlement Studies, asks: Would extending the right to vote in civic elections – or municipal council and local school board positions – significantly advance democracy, civic participation and the prospects for more responsive public policy? Read the executive summary [here](#) and the full paper [here](#). [Source: Inclusive Cities Canada]

Healthful Living Through Fresher Shopping - The Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative is the most ambitious of a spate of local and state projects that represent a different model for public nutrition programs. Instead of subsidizing shoppers, the projects shift the emphasis to the private sector, offering coaching and financial inducements for grocers to go into areas they shunned for decades. Read this article from the Washington Post [here](#). [Source: HandsNet WebClipper]