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Engage!

A Better Community for \$5 Million

In their popular song, "If I had a million dollars," the Barenaked Ladies sing about all of the weird and wonderful things they would buy, including Kraft Dinner, tree forts and chesterfields.

If you won the lottery, what would you do?

Typical daydreamers might reply, "Pay off my mortgage." "Buy a new house." "Pay for my children's education."

Would your first response be to use your newfound wealth to create change in your community?

In light of the holiday season, we are interested in knowing how those engaged in community work would make a difference. We're asking the question, "If I had \$5 million to make my community a better place, I would..."

We've had some interesting responses so far, including an idea to help those with low income survive unaffordable emergencies, and a revamping of the traditional 12 days of Christmas.

Now we're putting the question to you. Tell us what you'd do to make your community a better place this holiday season. Please send your thoughts to [Rachel](#) and we'll share your stories in the next issue of Engage!



[Read the ideas we've received so far!](#)

By: Louise Kearney

Blogging Canada

Canada has a lot to offer when it comes to community development research and resources.

Suzanne Morse, President of the Pew Partnership for Civic Change, recently recognized Canada's contribution to community development in her blog, *Smart Communities*.



For an entire week, Suzanne reflected on substantive concepts and resources such as the communities agenda, place-based public policy and civic engagement.

Suzanne's reader-friendly blog offers short reviews about key documents, as well as interesting personal reflections on what she considers to be the Canadian perspective.

She raises a number of important questions that invite readers to engage in community development work from a unique perspective.

What are the different vocabularies used by community development workers? What is Canada's response to federalism?

Although *Smart Communities* barely skims the surface of community development research in Canada, Suzanne's blog highlights a number of well-known, valuable resources in a quick and efficient format.

 [Read Suzanne's daily blog featuring "What's going on in Canada!"](#)

Related Links:

- [About Suzanne Morse](#)
- [The Pew Partnership for Civic Change](#)

By: Rachel Veira Gainer

A New Chapter

National sponsors and representatives from 14 communities recently gathered to celebrate the first four years of Vibrant Communities and to plan for the next phase of the initiative.

Participants were inspired by keynote speakers Senator Landon Pearson, Honorary Chair of Vibrant Communities, and Tim Brodhead, President and CEO of The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation.

Since 2002, members of Vibrant Communities have reduced poverty for more than 16,200 Canadians.

More than 600 partners from the government, business and voluntary sectors and more than 100 low-income leaders have engaged in the work at the local level. And, more than \$3.4 million local dollars have been leveraged.



We look forward to welcoming more communities to the network. At least another five communities are expected to become Trail Builders, testing comprehensive and collaborative poverty reduction strategies.

Planning for the first Vibrant Communities National Conference, May 14-17, 2007 in Waterloo, Ontario is underway. Mark your calendars today!

 [Reflecting on Vibrant Communities 2002-2006](#)

Related Links:

- [Vibrant Communities Brochure – July 2006](#)
- [Explore the first poverty reduction strategies undertaken by Trail Builders*](#)
- [Preliminary experiences of the Vibrant Communities Trail Builders*](#)

**Due to file size, these resources may take a moment to download.*

By: Susan Eckerle Curwood

Vibrant Communities Update

Waterloo Region, ON – Opportunities Waterloo Region recently hosted a visit from participants in the Canada School of Public Service's Direxion Leadership Development Program. Direxion's goal is to instill the competencies and self-management skills necessary for public service modernization. Learn more [here](#).

Hamilton, ON – Hamilton's One Book, One City project is engaging the arts community in poverty reduction work. The project began on November 28, 2006 and will culminate in May 2007 with a month of events entitled "Arts Speak About Poverty." Learn more [here](#).

Abbotsford, BC – Vibrant Abbotsford is engaged in actively learning about what motivates low-income volunteers. Learn more about the volunteer work being done by low-income residents in British Columbia [here](#).

Reading to Leading

Leadership is one of the key components in the field of social innovation. In fact, socially innovative work calls on everyone to be a leader – leaders who are collaborative, experimental, constantly learning and evolving.

With community work's organic nature, there is no single, perfect leadership style, just as there is no single, perfect leader.

Instead, there are a wealth of leadership ideas that are available for us to explore that will help us in our journey to become better leaders.

At Tamarack, we are always seeking new leadership ideas. Paul Born recently compiled a list of his favourite books on leadership that share wisdom, motivation and technical advice.

Paul's favourites point us to a number of inspirational authors that have been fundamental in shaping Tamarack's approach to leadership. Their ideas will invigorate, intrigue and inspire you in your work.

More importantly, these books will challenge you to think about your own leadership role in new ways.



Read Paul's list of favourite leadership books

Related Links:

- [Getting to Maybe with Frances Westley](#)
- [Paul Born's leadership resources](#)
- [Changing the world by re-imagining leadership](#)

By: Anne Blayney

Take the Lead

When I saw the previews for *Take the Lead*, I wrote it off as another silly dance movie. But, I was wrong.

Antonio Banderas stars in this drama inspired by the true story of Pierre Dulaine, a dance teacher and competitor who volunteers his time to teach ballroom dancing to a diverse group of inner-city high school students in New York City.



The movie has a predictable plot but the predictability is countered by the vibrant, creative performances of the cast and the knowledge that this film is based on reality.

Classroom and dance movies like *Take the Lead* exist for a reason. In the joy of expression and the energy of performance, there is something that connects us.

The students in *Take the Lead* learn some valuable lessons together about respect, sharing space and caring for each other.



[Read the full review here](#)

Related Links:

- [Take the Lead website](#)
- [Dancing Classrooms](#)
- [More Tamarack movie reviews](#)

By: Louise Kearney

Featured Resources

The Future of Think Tanks in Canada - CPRN makes the case that Canada's foundations should step up to the plate and support think tanks more vigorously. Read the report [here](#).

Destination: UP - Viewing youth who live in foster or group homes as competent community builders is easier to do in Nova Scotia. Read this story [here](#).