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Engage!

Poverty in Suburbia

We have known for some time that Canadians have been moving from rural to urban communities in large numbers - indeed, the 2004 census reported almost 80% of Canada's population living in cities. But many urban dwellers live in suburbia where access to public transit and affordable housing options are limited and the majority of jobs are in low wage service industries.

In the US, the implications of concentrations of the elderly and immigrant populations, outmoded housing and commercial buildings in many of America's first suburbs are causing concern.

Is this an issue we face in Canada? Should we be initiating a discussion?

When we think of urban poverty in Canada we tend to think of the inner city and to see suburbanites as prosperous, at low risk of poverty and homelessness. But there are some distressing signs that not all is well in the suburbs.



[on poverty in the suburbs](#)

Related Links:

- [The Globe & Mail: Suburbia series](#)
- [Poverty by Postal Code](#)
- [One Fifth of the Nation: America's First Suburbs](#)
- [Front-Line Insights](#)

By: Susan Taylor Simpson

Apathetic or Empathetic?

Commentators today suggest that apathy is rife amongst young people, both within Canada and around the world. In a 1999 study of 1000 youth between 14-18 years of age by Impactation proves otherwise. 100% of the youth, given a chance to communicate anything that they wanted to the world, picked a social issue.

As the increasing number of youth-centered organizations attests, youth are keen to make a difference. For example, *Free the Children*, the largest network of children helping children in the world, involves more than one million youth in innovative education and development programs in 45 countries. Youth are significant supporters of the *Make Poverty History* campaign. *People and Planet*, a British organization, is entirely made up of students campaigning on world poverty, human rights and the environment.

This is only the tip of the iceberg. Youth today are actively engaged in their communities, and our world, making a significant impact. So next time you hear someone complaining about today's apathetic youth, point them to some of the exciting work of the younger members of our planet. It might even prompt them to follow their example!

Related Links:

- [Free the Children](#)
- [People and Planet](#)
- [Make Poverty History](#)
- [Impactation](#)

By: Sharalynn Krahn

From Surviving to Thriving

Families should be able to participate in every facet of modern life – sports and recreation, the arts, technology, education and citizenship. However, many families lack the financial and other resources necessary to do so. Vibrant Communities Edmonton's theory of change is built around three strategies, which together will help families increase their assets and take full part in society.

The first strategy is *family economic support* – helping low-income families to stabilize their incomes, increase their assets, and improve their abilities to save. The second is *workforce development*, increasing stability and opportunities for low-wage workers. The final strategy is *community investment*, strengthening the array of community services available to people who are earning low wages.

In concert, these three strategies will help families build economic success and enable them to fully engage in society – to move beyond merely surviving, to thriving.



[Vibrant Communities Edmonton: Building Family Economic Success](#)

Related Links:

- [Vibrant Communities Edmonton's Make Tax Time Pay Campaign](#)
- [Vibrant Communities Edmonton](#)

By: Susan Curwood

Vibrant Communities Update

Saint-Michel, QC – Centraide of Greater Montreal has issued an information bulletin on its work with Vibrant Communities in partnership with *Vivre Saint-Michel en santé*. Access the document in English [here](#) or French [here](#).

Hamilton, ON – On April 20th, the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Prevention will host a special community presentation by collaboration expert Jay Connor, who will help the Roundtable to build the multi-sector collaboration necessary to reduce and prevent poverty. Learn more about *Tackling Poverty in Hamilton* [here](#).

Ottawa, ON - The Caledon Institute of Social Policy has released a paper on low-income trends to 2004. Access the full paper [here](#) or the 2004 statistics [here](#).

Ignite the Creative Fire

Inspiration, Collaboration and Trust: The essential ingredients of any creative endeavour.



The Spark is the story of what makes the Cirque du Soleil really work. It's a behind the scenes tour of the culture, innovation, collaboration, passion and creativity of the more than 3,000 employees who create the shows. *The Spark* distills lessons from the Cirque that can be applied to everyday life both at home and at work.

This is the story of Frank, a sports marketing executive who has lost his passion for life and work, and who stumbles into a rehearsal at the Cirque while in Las Vegas. While there he meets the company's Artistic Director who invites him to understand the Cirque du Soleil way. Frank undergoes a three-week total immersion to become a member of the Cirque.

If you have ever been to a Cirque du Soleil show you will love this book. If you have never been to a show this book will send you to the ticket office! *The Spark*, like the Cirque du Soleil itself, ignites your imagination.



The Cirque du Soleil is a partner in St. Michel's Vibrant Communities initiative.

Related Links:

- [Cirque du Soleil](#)
- [Pick up your copy of *The Spark*](#)

By: Paul Born

20-Minute Makeovers

When I mentioned the possibility of us all participating in a 20-minute makeover on Friday, my colleagues' eyes lit up. And though they were slightly disappointed when I explained that no celebrity stylists were coming to give us makeovers, they all quickly agreed to head out of the office on Friday, April 21 to do a 20-minute clean up blitz at the park across the road.

20-minute makeovers are being held in a number of cities this Friday, as part of Earth Day celebrations. Earth Day is April 22nd this year, though events take place throughout the month of April.

At 2:00 p.m. Friday we'll be joining schools, community groups, office staff and university students in our community to help clean up our part of the city. What are you doing to celebrate Earth Day this year?



[Earth Day Canada](#)

By: Louise Kearney