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Engage!

Collaboration - it's the law!

"This is a new way for Ontario health organizations to work - big time!" says [Cheryl Faber](#), Senior Community Engagement Consultant for the North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network.

Since March of 2006, Ontario health care organizations have been required, by [legislation](#), to engage their communities. Cheryl participated in the Communities Collaborating Institute in October, 2007.

She explains health groups' interest in collaboration: "The top down approach of senior managers making decisions wasn't working... and the money is not there for silo-driven approaches - the change needs to be on a system level with all players participating in decision making."



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It's a new way of working for everyone.

"In a health world," says Cheryl, "A lot of what we do comes from evidence-based practices, research, and outcome-driven processes. But, collaboration requires time to build trust and credibility with our stakeholders before we can get to outcomes."

Cheryl is excited about working this way, but worries about the impact on groups.

"Over the past year, the pace has been ultra-fast. We have to make sure we don't burn out our stakeholders. They are busy running their own organizations at the same time we are asking them to plan with us and think about how their work impacts the larger system."



Learn more about Ontario's Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN)

Related Links:

- Learn more about integrated health networks and community development processes in [Vancouver](#) and [Calgary](#)
- Recommended Article - [Linking System Design to System Performance](#)

By: Brenda Doner

Does Being Poor Make You Ill?

"Yes," says Dennis Raphael, author of *Poverty and Policy in Canada*.

Evidence from Canada and other countries supports the notion that the socioeconomic circumstances of individuals and groups are equally or more important to health status than medical care and personal health behaviours, such as smoking and eating patterns.



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Low-income Canadians have higher mortality rates, shorter average lifespans, and higher incidences of diabetes, heart attacks and other health issues than do middle- or high-income residents.

Yet, both health promoters and the media almost always deal with health as a personal issue.

Personal responsibility for health and well-being is emphasized, and social accountability for health determinants all but ignored.

The prevailing opinion is, if you're unhealthy, it's your own fault – it's not a societal issue.

Raphael asserts that, to create a healthier Canada, what is needed is not to change people's behaviours or lifestyles, but, rather, to engage in major political and economic change to transform society and eliminate health inequities.



Access Dennis Raphael's recent presentation on the Social Determinants of Health

Related Links:

- [Read the Public Health Agency of Canada's report on the Social Determinants of Health](#)
- [Check out the World Health Organization's Commission on the Social Determinants of Health](#)

By: Susan Eckerle Curwood

Evolving Leadership

Saint John is renowned for its innovative approaches to community issues.

Vibrant Communities Saint John's (VCSJ) goal is to assist 800 households and reduce the region's poverty rate from 27 percent to 16 percent by 2010.



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Among many successes, VCSJ has assisted 1,715 households with access to education and 502 with help in keeping the heat on.

In November 2007, I was privileged to witness the evolution of leadership at the strategic planning session of VCSJ.

Women who were previously quiet have become willing to speak out and to be heard. Relationships in the community have shifted from distrusting and skeptical to open and compassionate.

Profound transformations in Saint John neighbourhoods occurred through courageous local leadership, along with the stewardship of [Gail Taylor](#).

Thus far, 113 households have become involved and are orchestrating needed innovations, establishing priorities and setting homegrown solutions in motion.

With this growing leadership there is not a challenge that the citizens of Saint John cannot tackle together!

Related Links:

- [Learn more about VCSJ's efforts to enable strong neighbourhoods](#)
- [Crescent Valley: A Community in Motion](#)
- [Read how VCSJ is keeping the lights and heat on in Saint John!](#)

By: Kathleen Kevany

Vibrant Communities Updates

Surrey, BC – Vibrant Surrey has issued its inaugural report, *Moving Toward Solutions*, a bi-annual update on innovative poverty initiatives in Surrey. Check it out [here](#).

Waterloo Region, ON – Opportunities Waterloo Region has initiated a relationship between a rural women's craft group and the Seven Shores Trading Company, which has agreed to market their wares. Learn more about this socially responsible enterprise by visiting the Seven Shores website [here](#).

Edmonton, AB – Want to know what's happening at Vibrant Communities Edmonton? Read the most recent VCE newsletter [here](#).

The Community Tool Box

The Community Tool Box (CTB) bills itself as the world's largest resource for free information on essential skills for building healthy communities.

Launched in 1994, the CTB is a service of the Work Group for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas, and offers over 7,000 pages of practical guidance in creating change and improvement.

Subjects in the CTB include leadership, group facilitation, designing appropriate community interventions, cultural competence, spirituality, and the arts and community building.



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Sue Levesque, Community Relations Manager at York University's Office of University Events and Community Relations, used the CTB when embarking on a strategic planning process.

"It provided me with a template for a strategic plan and a sense of its typical components which I modified to suit our needs," says Sue.

Sue has recommended the CTB to others, with this caveat, "All of our work is context-specific, but the CTB provides a great starting point."



Use the CTB now!

Related Links:

- [Solve a problem](#)
- [Access databases of best practices](#)

By: Louise Kearney

It's Play Time!

Video games pack power.

This is evident every time a gamer calls out with excitement, anger or fear in reaction to game play.

Imagine what would happen if we could refocus that adrenaline and harness that power to aid in solving complex issues like alleviating poverty,



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educating and inspiring global change, and fostering leadership.

Luckily, someone's already doing just that.

Games for Change is a movement and community of practice that is dedicated to using video games as an informal learning tool for social change.

One such game is PeaceMaker. It asks players to take on the role of a Palestinian or Israeli leader and to navigate situations that arise in the real world conflict while taking into consideration the pressures facing the other side.



The Peres Centre for Peace is distributing 10,000 copies in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Another popular game is the UN World Food Program's internet game, Free Rice. For each correct click to a vocabulary question, the website donates money to buy 10 grains of rice. Since its October 2007 launch, Free Rice users have clicked to donate over 7 billion grains of rice (enough to feed 50,000 people for seven days).

In a world that is so 'plugged in', perhaps this is one way we can make an otherwise extracurricular activity become a social change advantage.

 [Play the games!](#)

Related Links:

- [Play Free Rice](#)
- [Learn more about Games for Change](#)

By: Laura Zikovic

Featured Resources

Leading by Example - In this report from the Public Policy Forum, 50 prominent Canadians talk about the federal public service and why leadership matters. Key themes include the importance of effective relationships, the need for high-quality leadership and the impact of leadership on organizational culture and workplace well-being. Download the paper [here](#).

Exploring the Looming Leadership Deficit in the Voluntary & Nonprofit Sector - This paper examines the dimensions of the leadership deficit as it relates to employees in senior positions within organizations. Basing their discussion on American and emerging Canadian studies, the authors remind us that we need to be concerned about the leadership deficit and leadership turnover within the voluntary and nonprofit sector. The authors not only give us a context for leadership development, but they also provide a range of ideas and approaches on how to both encourage and support existing leadership while dually accelerating the development of a new generation of leaders. Access the article [here](#). [Source: The Philanthropist]

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