



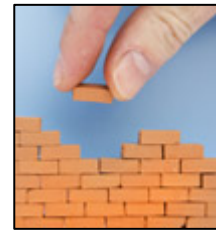
View Engage online at: <http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/newsletter/engage.htm!>

Engage!

Why is it So Tough to Get Ahead?

Metcalf Innovation Fellow John Stapleton launched a new report in December 2007 called: *Why is it so tough to get ahead? How our tangled social programs pathologize the transition to self-reliance.*

Stapleton writes that social assistance recipients live with disincentives. “The more they earn, the more they lose in benefits; when they tell the truth, they are punished.”



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The report outlines a series of recommendations for policy solutions that can be taken right away to eliminate some of the barriers thrown up by multiple subsidies and program policies.

Stapleton calls attention to the need for a new governance model that enables governments to forge policies and procedures in a coordinated way so that the transition to self-reliance is a healthy, supported process for people.

It's a call that resonates with communities across Canada. For instance, Vibrant Communities Saint John has made several recommendations to the provincial government about policy barriers to people exiting poverty and how these policies might be changed.

 [Download the report here](#)

Related Links:

- Access Saint John's recommendations [here](#) and [here](#).
- [Register to see Stapleton present his findings at Opportunities Waterloo next week](#)
- [Why a Job Doesn't Pay](#)
- [The National Post reports on Canada's welfare trap](#)

By: Louise Kearney, with files from the Metcalf Foundation

Learn to Include, Include to Learn

How can community collaborations facilitate the meaningful participation of low-income individuals in leadership structures and activities – both in grassroots groups and at more formal roundtables?

A three-part tele-learning series in March and April will tell the stories of three initiatives that are building the capacity of low-income leaders.



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Residents and partners of the Quality of Life CHALLENGE in BC's Capital Region; Saint John, New Brunswick's Neighbourhoods in Change initiative; and Missouri's Step Up to Leadership program will share their experiences of the challenges and opportunities of inclusive leadership.

Do you know francophones who would be interested in this subject? Simultaneous translation between English and French will be provided for all three calls.

Learn to Include, Include to Learn is offered through Vibrant Communities, a national network of communities working towards poverty reduction. This is the first time that Vibrant Communities tele-learning will be open to the general public.



Don't delay - [click here to register for all three sessions!](#)

Related Links:

- [Quality of Life CHALLENGE initiatives](#)
- [Learn about Crescent Valley one of the neighbourhoods where Vibrant Communities Saint John works](#)
- [Step Up to Leadership](#)

By: Brenda Doner

A Living Wage City

The City of Calgary may soon require employers who deal with the City to pay a wage that meets its booming living costs.

In April, the City of Calgary votes whether to include a living wage policy in its procurement policy and code of conduct for suppliers. Vibrant Communities Calgary calculates that would be a minimum of \$12 an hour for workers.

“We’re thrilled by the amount of attention this initiative is getting. So many groups have come out in support of it,” says Jordan Hamilton of Vibrant Communities Calgary.

“The Calgary Foundation’s Vital Signs report highlighted a living wage as the area most in need of attention.”

The most persuasive argument, says Jordan, is that tax dollars should not subsidize employers.

When employers pay wages that leave workers and their families in poverty, government and community agencies end up paying for resulting costs, such as subsidies, income support, and increased health and crime prevention.

 [Visit Vibrant Communities Calgary’s Living Wage webpage](#)

Related Links:

- [Why and how can Calgarians support a municipal living wage policy?](#)
- [What are Calgary’s Vital Signs?](#)



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Jorge Salcedo

By: Brenda Doner

Vibrant Communities Updates

Niagara, ON - Opportunities Niagara’s Job Bus initiative has received funding for the Region of Niagara for one year. Read how the Job Bus provides wheels for workers [here](#).

Saint John, NB - Vibrant Communities Saint John has several recommendations for the provincial government about policy barriers to people exiting poverty and how these policies might be changed. Read about their recommendations [here](#) and [here](#).

Victoria, BC - The Quality of Life CHALLENGE recently brought together employers and the community to discuss how employers could tap into a hidden labour market – people with barriers to employment. Read an update on their [Labour Market Dialogues](#).

Learning 2.0

Traditional learning methods, such as lectures and workshops, are important when building a community of practice. But, new ways of learning collaboratively are all around us and we cannot help but join the movement.

After all, collaboration is at the heart of how we work at Tamarack. Convening with community leaders at the [Communities Collaborating Institute](#) inspired us to harvest the power of our growing learning community by tapping into each other's knowledge base and experience.



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Learning circles are a great way to connect with others on key issues in an intimate and participatory setting. We've invited small groups to gather each month by telephone and online to share their thoughts, experiences, questions and resources related to an issue.

Some learning circles use the Peer Input Process, and others are benefiting from a workshop format. Most are connecting in an online community to help collect the valuable ideas and resources being shared.

We're still exploring the possibilities of learning in this way, and we're always open to suggestions.



[Explore Tamarack's learning circles and read what others are saying!](#)

Related Links:

- [Why give learning circles a chance?](#)
- [Brenda considers the role of technology in small groups](#)
- [What is the Peer Input Process?](#)

By: Rachel Gainer

The Bucket List

If you knew you had little time left to live, what would you want to do, see and experience? What would appear on your "bucket list"?

The Bucket List tells the tale of two terminally ill patients (Carter and Edward), faced with their final days. Although these men were initially strangers leading two very different lifestyles, a powerful friendship emerges.



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Understanding that the end is near, Carter begins to create his "bucket list" – a list of things he wants to do before he "kicks the bucket." Intrigued, Edward adds to the list, infuses the idea with energy (and finances), and the two are off to fulfill their dreams.

Together, they begin to understand the important of their journey, slowly realizing they've always had what is *really* important – family and fellowship.

Recognizing what we have, instead of searching for more, can be transformative and turn hopelessness into hope. This is a valuable lesson for Carter and Edward, but also for anyone faced with a challenge – a friend, a co-worker and even a community.

Even when all hope seems lost, there may just be a bucket list overflowing with possibilities.



[Visit The Bucket List online](#)

Related Links:

- [Scott Cameron treasures his family's love and longevity](#)
- [Rachel Gainer sees hope in a simple gesture](#)
- [More Tamarack movie reviews](#)

By: Laura Zikovic

Featured Resources

An Income for all Canadians - Imagine an income policy that eliminates the need for social programs and lifts more than 1.5 Canadians out of poverty. A recent article from The Star proposes a self-funded, guaranteed income program supported by our current tax system. Read the article [here](#). [Source: The Star]

Subsidy Systems to Meet the Needs of Families - Many childcare subsidy agencies are redesigning their policies to better meet the needs of families and reflect the dynamic nature of low in-come families. This report from the Urban Institute is an overview of policy research findings. For more information, click [here](#). To download the full report [here](#). [Source: Urban Institute]