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Engage!

Collaborating with Business

Despite a nearly twenty-year career in business, Garry Loewen says he underestimated the potential of the business sector to help address social issues and assist in renewing marginalized communities.

Loewen, who has started and led four organizations in the inner city of Winnipeg since leaving corporate Canada, says, "There is huge scope for business to play incredibly powerful roles in communities."

His latest publication, *Collaborating with the Business Sector to End Homelessness in Toronto*, was developed by Tamarack in association with the City of Toronto.



Written primarily for non-profit organizations and multisectoral collaborations who are working to improve their community's capacity to bring about social change, the guide identifies how collaborating with business can enhance social change outcomes and provides tips on meeting the challenge that such collaboration creates.

It also offers inspiring stories of contributions businesses have made to social change initiatives and supplies some practical tools for engaging the business sector.

"Some of my colleagues are reluctant to engage with business," says Loewen. "They're afraid that they will have to compromise their values to do so."

"But we all share common space, and a common humanity. Many business people care deeply about the social well-being of the community around them, and have much to contribute to making it stronger."

Collaborating with the Business Sector helps to show the way for more of that to happen.



[Access this guide now!](#)

Learn More:

- [Engaging Business in Local Efforts to Reduce Poverty: A Vibrant Communities learning series](#)

By: Louise Kearney

Poverty - A National Concern

Across the country, interest in poverty reduction strategies has sprouted like the grass this spring.

A federal parliamentary committee, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA), is holding hearings on the federal contribution to reducing poverty in Canada. You can read [transcripts of past hearings](#), and more hearings are planned for May and June.



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Some provincial governments, like [Quebec](#) and [Newfoundland and Labrador](#), already have poverty reduction strategies, while others, like [Nova Scotia](#) and [Ontario](#), are starting to build them.

In response to the Ontario government's interest, over 60 provincial and Toronto-based organizations and individuals have joined to form the [25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction](#). Their goal is to reduce poverty rates by 25 percent in five years.

Ontario communities involved or interested in Tamarack's Vibrant Communities will gather at the end of May for cross-community learning. One goal of this [Face to Face Forum](#) is to explore opportunities for networking and leverage of community level initiatives in light of the consultations on a provincial poverty reduction strategy.



[Access an annotated list of poverty reduction coalitions and organizations](#)

Learn More:

- [25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction](#)
- [Vibrant Communities Face to Face Forum](#)

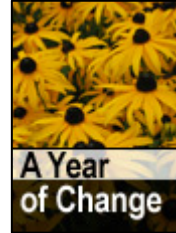
By: Brenda Doner

A Year of Change

In 2001, the members of Opportunities 2000 – a multisectoral effort to reduce poverty in Waterloo region – assumed a task many collaborations must face. It needed to renew its mission, membership and approach to tackling a complex issue (in this case poverty) while trying to “keep the wheels” on the important day to day work of helping the community.

A Year of Change, from the Caledon Institute, explores the struggles and triumphs of that year. The people involved share their often varied perspectives on:

- Moving forward amidst frequent changes in staff, community leaders and partners.
- Weaving together outside expertise with the knowledge and energy of local leadership.
- Working through debates about the merits of the collaboration “doing projects” versus supporting the efforts of others in the community.
- Finding the right balance between completing the tasks required to shape a new direction for a collaborative group (e.g. visioning, research, priority setting) and concrete activities that strengthen community.



Opportunities Waterloo Region emerged out of the renewal year. So, too, did a number of important learnings and questions navigating the tricky waters of reinventing collaboratives to adapt to dynamic conditions and the inevitable changes in the leadership, resources and structures that follow.



[Read *A Year of Change*](#)

Learn More:

- [See what's new at Opportunities Waterloo Region](#)
- [Access more community stories from Caledon](#)

By: Mark Cabaj

Vibrant Communities Updates

Calgary, AB – On Monday, April 28, Calgary City Council approved a motion to direct City staff to develop a variety of Living Wage policies for the city and the financial implications by January 2009 - a step towards adopting a Living Wage policy for its staff and suppliers. Vibrant Communities Calgary's [Living Wage Action Team](#) has been leading the campaign.

Waterloo, ON - Regional councillors directed staff to research the impact of living wage policies on Waterloo Region; recommendations are due in June. [Opportunities Waterloo Region](#) (OWR) is a key player. On May 27, Cheryl Rose of [Social Innovation Generation](#) will facilitate a discussion on the Waterloo regional/community poverty prevention and reduction plan, as part of OWR's Community Conversations series.

Niagara, ON - In August 2008 Opportunities Niagara will "train the trainer" on the Step Up to Leadership curriculum that is designed to build the capacity of low-income leaders. The curriculum, developed in Missouri, USA, was recently featured in Tamarack's [Learn to Include, Include to Learn](#) tele-learning series. Contact [Opportunities Niagara](#) to register for the workshop or for more information.

Towards the Tipping Point

Community leaders are increasingly citing examples of integrated planning that leads to more sustainable, resilient communities. In an attempt to go beyond another session of local planning processes, Canadian leaders gathered in British Columbia to convene the [Whistler Forum for Leadership & Dialogue](#).

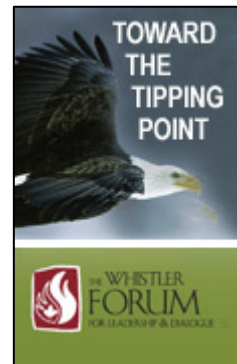
Discussions were deeply rooted in a sense of place, and participants were committed to local sustainability, social inclusion and economic prosperity.


Deliberations were informed by recent reports (see *Learn More* below) that address the integration of disparate community players finding common ground to joint action. The agenda focused on three goals:

1. Advancing the growing body of knowledge and collaboration.
2. Identifying best practices, frameworks and tools to accelerate collaborative planning.
3. Fostering the synergies of cross-sectoral thinking and leadership.

The result was a report of its own, *Finding the Tipping Point: Aligning the Canadian Communities Agenda*, recommending an eight-fold path forward with vigorous collaboration between government, civil organizations and First Nations.

By taking actions on these next steps, participants at the Whistler Forum believe we can move toward the tipping point for vibrant and sustainable communities.



 [Read the Report](#)

Learn More:

- [From Restless Communities to Resilient Places](#)
- [Shared Space: The Communities Agenda](#) – Podcast and online material
- [Looking Down the Road, Leadership for Changing Communities](#)

By: Rachel Gainer

Sustenance for Collaborative Leadership

"Eating is not merely a material pleasure. Eating well gives a spectacular joy to life and contributes immensely to goodwill and happy companionship. It is of great importance to the morale." - Elsa Schiaparelli, Italian designer (1890-1973)



As we were planning for the Collaborative Leadership retreat, there were endless discussions at Tamarack about food.

Food is an important part of what happens at every learning retreat we host. We know eating well is not just a material pleasure. As Schiaparelli said, good food contributes to goodwill and companionship.

When I think back to any good event that I have ever been a part of, I remember the food. If the food was bad you can bet that people are going to remember that too!

And so we agonize over what we should serve and how the food will be received. We want to sustain these leaders on their learning journey and help them to be content and energized. In the end, if the food is a hit, we know the event will be successful too.

Some of the highlights from the 2007 Communities Collaborating Institute menu are being eaten at Collaborative Leadership, including the wonderful cinnamon buns that everyone raved about! We have also picked up fresh apples from our local farmer's market for crunching on through the day, and fair-trade, organic chocolate for afternoon pick-me-ups.

 [Have a recipe that sustains you? Let us know! We're always on the lookout for good food!](#)
[Email Leisa.](#)

Learn More:

- [Check out some recipes taste-tested in the Tamarack kitchen!](#)

By: Leisa Nichol

Featured Resources

Connecting Communities - 2007 was a busy year for Tamarack! We held our second sold-out Communities Collaborating Institute, developed a vision for a new online presence, hosted the Communities Collaborating for Impact tele-learning series, and more. Learn more about how Tamarack and Vibrant Communities are growing in this recently released annual report. [Download the report here.](#)

Drivers of Economic Mobility - Changes in economic status over time are the product of individual decisions and characteristics, family relationships, and broader economic and social trends. In a series of reviews written for the Pew Economic Mobility Project, Urban Institute and affiliated researchers summarize and evaluate the literature on drivers of economic mobility. [Learn more here.](#)