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● ● ● ● Beautiful Thinking for January ● ● ● ●

## Dynamic & Thriving Communities Needed

*“Just as we know that strong kids need good schools and strong parents – strong parents and families need the support of engaged, dynamic and thriving communities in order to be at their best,”* says Deb Mathews, Chair of the Cabinet Committee on Poverty Reduction and Minister of Children and Youth Services in Ontario.



Ontario now has an official poverty reduction strategy. It is unique in how it plans to harness the power of communities, working collaboratively across sectors, in order to address poverty. This is the first such definitive strategy in Canada.

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The report was influenced by the success of strategies promoted by United Ways, Community Foundations and Vibrant Communities Canada and is committing \$5 million a year to advance this work.

The report highlights the example of the Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction that, as a community, made a collective decision to make Hamilton “the best place to raise a child.”

Research in other jurisdictions has shown that involving people in the revitalization of their own neighbourhoods should be a critical component of any poverty reduction strategy. Strong communities can be an extremely positive influence on the health and economic prospects of the people who live in them.



[Read chapter 2, \*Stronger, Healthier Communities\*](#)

### **Related Links:**

- [Read the full report, "Breaking the Cycle: Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy"](#)
- [Read about Vibrant Communities Canada](#)
- [Check out the Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction initiative](#)

By: Paul Born

## **Seeking Community in Chaotic Times**

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It's a new year at Tamarack and we're all excited about exploring the breadth and depth of seeking – and finding – community.

These are times of massive change fueled by financial uncertainty, environmental destruction, terrorism, globalization, war, and a world food crisis. These are chaotic times - and they are causing people to feel disconnected, afraid and alone.



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Justin Horrocks

In times like this it is natural to reach out to each other for security, sense making and belonging. Many years of not really needing each other, relying on government intervention, and embracing individualism and consumerism have left us without the skills or resources for living in community. Our neighborhoods are not designed for connection. Television and other individual pursuits have stripped us of the skills to play together. "Professionalization" of learning and caring has blunted our ability to learn together – to need and embrace each other.

Many people are seeking to remedy this situation and, in this age of globalization, they are going local. People are rediscovering themselves and each other. Over time, as we seek deeper connection, we will relearn the skills of community.

The 2009 tele-series is intended to help you on that journey.

By seeking community we can learn to develop deeper connections with our families, friends, and neighbors. By working together to make our families, neighborhoods, communities and the world great places to live, for all, we will find purpose, belonging, security and fulfillment.

The series will engage participants in developing a better understanding of the purpose and value of community, in both their own lives and the lives of those they serve. It will help community development professionals to better understand its importance in social change strategies.

Participants will gain inspiration and information about opening to community and making conscious choices about the kind of community they desire. They will deepen their ability to connect to the people they care about including family, friends, neighbours and the people they work with.

Join us in 2009 as we explore *Seeking Community in Chaotic Times*.

 Register now for the first free tele-learning on January 20, when Paul will talk with guests about the importance of community in our lives and work!

#### **Related Links:**

- [Visit Tamarack's \*Learning Centre\* for resources on community capacity building and related issues](#)

By: Paul Born



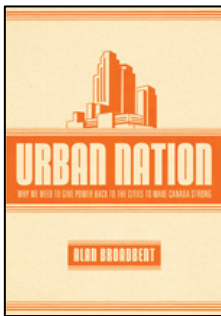
## ***Urban Nation* by Alan Broadbent**

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Alan Broadbent of the Avana Capital corporation and the Maytree Foundation, has founded and sits on the boards of Canada's leading social institutions. Alan is also the co-founder and Chairman of the Board of the Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement.



Alan is passionate about cities and his new book *Urban Nation* provides a prescription for harnessing their potential.



The book's essential premise is that Canada has become an urban nation, but is attempting to manage incredibly complex social and infrastructure needs according to rules set out in 1867, when the country's largest cities were little more than towns. He makes an interesting distinction between two phases of urbanization. With industrialization in the mid-20th century, all cities –large and small - expanded rapidly. From the 1980's however, growth has been concentrated in the largest cities, particularly Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. He argues that these cities have distinctive needs and require new resources and ways of thinking if they are to sustain their leading role in the economy.

Part of the book's appeal is that the many themes and arguments in the book are brought together in a very accessible format, making it a kind of primer about urban issues in Canada.

The Winnipeg Free Press writes "Broadbent has provided the blueprint for every civic, provincial and federal politician to potentially alter Canada for the better. . . . Broadbent has literally put his and other people's money where his mouth is, investing in making Canada's cities more livable for everyone."

Thoughtful and provocative, *Urban Nation* ignites controversy among politicians and passion among citizens and action groups eager for practical urban reform solutions.

▶ [Read the Table of Contents and introductory chapter here](#)

▶ [Urban Nation: Give Power Back to Cities online seminar](#)

## **Local Solutions for a Global Crisis**

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In 2009, communities will have two choices. They can hunker down to watch helplessly as decisions are made by business, governments, education institutions, foundations and others who are fending for themselves. Or they can mobilize a coalition to engage in a search for creative solutions, says Judith Maxwell, former head of the Economic Council of Canada and Canadian Policy Research Networks.

Speaking to community foundation leaders in Montreal recently, Tim Brodhead, president of the McConnell Family Foundation, pointed to a gap in community leadership: "There is a hunger today for community leadership," he said. "Somebody has to look at the big picture across the community. We must create the capacity to address the deeper systemic issues."

Only a few Canadian cities have formed community-wide coalitions whose goals are to deal with the root causes of economic decline. Two examples are the Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction, co-convened by the city and the Hamilton Community Foundation, and the Toronto City Summit Alliance, chaired by Boston Consulting's David Pecaut.

▶ [Download the full article](#)

▶ [Read Judith Maxwell's \*Globe and Mail\* Columns on the CPRN website](#)

## **Community: More Fun Than TV!**

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Of all the forces that are eroding community, Robert Putnam claims that television is the greatest threat. That may be true, but if television is our main competition and we're losing, we're doing something terribly wrong. It shouldn't be difficult to make community more compelling than television.

Cesar Cala, a community activist in the Philippines and now in Calgary, told me, "The problem is those GD activists." "GD activists?" I inquired. "Yes," he said, "the grim and determined."

We all know those sour activists who act like civic engagement is their cross to bear. They love to complain. Who would want to get involved with them? The key is to make community life fun again. As my friend Jeff Bercuvitz says, "Why have a meeting when you can have a party?"

There is no substitute for community in addressing street level social issues, says community development specialist Jim Diers, in a manual entitled *From the Ground Up: Community's role in addressing street level social issues*, written for the Canada West Foundation.

Rather than simply moving problems to another neighbourhood, some communities seek to reintegrate those who have been marginalized as prostitutes, drug users, and the homeless. Sometimes it is these labeled people themselves who take the initiative to mitigate the problems. The only long-term solution is the prevention made possible by building strong and inclusive communities.

People will get involved to the extent that the effort is fun, shows results, utilizes the gifts that everyone has to offer, and starts where people are – their network, their passion, their block, says Diers.

 [Read the full report](#)

 [More information on Jim Dier](#)

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**Engage!**  
to create vibrant communities

*Engage!* is published by Tamarack to bring you inspiration, ideas, and the skills you need to envision and create vibrant communities. Learn more [here](#).