

Engage!

to create vibrant communities



Beautiful Thinking for June

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This month we profile new innovations in financing aimed at attracting capital to address Canada's most pressing challenges and highlight fifty practical policy ideas for creating more equitable opportunities for all. We also take a closer look at Ontario's profoundly altered labour market system and some model practices to make it better. We share our excitement in President Obama's newly created Council on Community Solutions; bring news about upcoming workshops in asset based community development and resilient leadership; and, recognize an Abbotsford grant program that is igniting community spirit. Finally, we offer an inspirational reminder of the power of words.



~ Paul Born

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Featured Articles

SOCIAL BENEFITS AND FINANCIAL RETURNS [By: Jamie Gamble]



Conventional models of financial support for social-purpose activity focus on charitable donations, government grants, and fee-for-service transactions. There is some exciting new thinking taking shape in Canada that is driving towards new possibilities for attracting capital to address society's pressing challenges.

Traditionally, we have thought of socially-oriented investing as avoiding investments in companies with poor social or environmental practices. Impact investing puts capital into investments that combine a positive social impact with a

financial return. This is social finance. The idea of social finance emerged over the last decade largely in the U.K and the U.S., and we are now seeing interest in it here in Canada.

In *Words and Actions: Creating a New Narrative for the Community Sector*, McConnell Foundation President, Tim Brodhead emphasizes the need for new social finance tools in Canada. He says, "Looking ahead, it is

clear that the traditional ways of funding community organizations - government grants and contributions, and individual, corporate or foundation donations - will not suffice to meet the challenges we face. Governments are again in deficit-cutting mode, and in Canada private donations cannot grow enough to compensate for public funding cuts.”

Some Canadian examples of financial innovation that are emerging include: a private foundation that has put some of its endowment capital into an interest-generating loan that lets a non-profit advance its mission; several Canadian investment funds now focus on social purpose businesses; and, many voluntary sector organizations have made a social enterprise part of their strategy for sustainability.

These early adopters are complemented by the efforts of leading Canadian thinkers from the government, investment community, and voluntary sector who, through *The Task Force on Social Finance*, have identified the kinds of regulatory and institutional support that would strengthen and grow this emerging marketplace. In December 2010, the Task Force published *Mobilizing Private Capital for Public Good*, a Report that explores how best to strengthen Canada’s emerging social finance marketplace and identifies seven key actions “that Canada needs to undertake, in parallel, to mobilize new sources of capital, create an enabling tax and regulatory environment, and build a pipeline of investment-ready social enterprises.”

The Task Force’s recommendations include developing an “impact investing” marketplace that would diversify revenue sources for public benefit activities; and, providing an option for institutional or individual investors seeking to achieve a public benefit as well as personal profit from the use of their capital.

Tapping into private capital can help to “connect the best people and the most innovative ideas” to the scale of resources needed to address our most complex social problems. This will require new kinds of infrastructure, policies, and support, and above all, new ways of thinking.

Related Links:

- Read [Mobilizing Private Capital for Public Good](#) by the Task Force on Social Finance
- Download the [Summary Report](#)
- View socialfinance.ca’s [guide to social finance](#) for some good examples of social finance at work
- Access [The Canadian Social Enterprise Guide](#), 2nd edition
- Visit www.socialfinance.ca - for the latest thinking about social finance

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50 ACTIONABLE IDEAS FOR CANADIAN PROSPERITY [By: Sandra Lopes]



Canadians imagine their society as one which allows anyone with drive and ambition to reach his or her potential, regardless of socio-economic, religious or cultural background. But good public policy - grounded in community input - is needed to make this vision a reality. Maytree, a foundation that promotes equity and prosperity through leadership, recently published a report entitled *Charting Prosperity: Practical Ideas for a Stronger Canada* which outlines more than 50 practical policy proposals developed by its partners and grantees for realizing this vision. The policy ideas it promotes include:

- Making refundable the caregiver and infirm dependant tax credits;
- Creating a \$2 million learning fund (over five years) to promote cross-community exchange for poverty reduction;
- Adopting a national action plan to combat human trafficking;

- Ending the low-skilled temporary foreign worker program; and
- Eliminating processing fees for refugees

Using an approach that Alan Broadbent, Chairman of Maytree, calls the “essential I’s” of public policy: Ideas, Investments and Instruments, these practical proposals are ready to be implemented by policymakers. Each recommendation includes details about why it is important, what specific investments should be made and what needs to happen for the change to be implemented.

Related Links:

- Download and read [Charting Prosperity: Practical Ideas for a Stronger Canada](#)
- Watch the [Charting Prosperity webinar](#) with Alan Broadbent, Chairman, Maytree and Sherri Torjman, VP, Caledon Institute of Social Policy
- Visit the [Maytree Foundation](#) website
- Find more ideas for creating a [civil society](#)

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Ideas We're Following...

ONTARIO'S LABOUR MARKET: IT'S OURS TO FIX [By: Colette Murphy]

“Advertise a seminar on labour market dynamics or workforce development and chances are that only academics will respond. But ask people what a good job means to them or about their career aspirations for their children, and they will respond in ways that show how essential a job is, not only for financial security, but also for emotional well-being and one’s sense of self-worth.”

Thus begins a new report by Metcalf Foundation Fellow Tom Zizys, [Working Better: Creating a High Performing Labour Market in Ontario](#), that describes a profoundly altered labour market system. Illustrations of the labour market’s failure to adequately meet its core purpose include:

- Job seekers who cannot find work in their chosen fields, being forced to compete against over-qualified candidates or are limited to short-term, insecure roles;
- Employees are stuck in dead-end jobs with little pay, no loyalty, no job security, no room for advancement and an unclear career path forward;
- Employers aren’t getting the people they need; aren’t keeping the ones they’ve got, and have low levels of productivity.

This paper connects the dots across a series of challenges resulting from the transformation of our labour market system. As Tom notes, “Employers are saying that there’s a skills shortage and yet we have one of the most highly educated workforces in the world. This “skills mismatch” is just one aspect of what he refers to as the “dysfunction” in the system. Also notable is the over-emphasis in our employment services on the deficiencies of the individual job-seeker, when the more pressing issues are navigating a fragmented labour market and maintaining a career path in a world of precarious work.

Most troubling is the trend toward growing polarization between those at the top of the jobs market in the knowledge economy, and those at the bottom in entry-level jobs. As the report notes, where there was occupational mobility there was social mobility. Without this crucial dynamic, we’re left with growing inequality, social exclusion and a down-draft in our collective quality of life.

Working Better highlights that while we do not have control over some of the changes taking place in our labour market, we do have choice about how we respond. There are model practices both within sectors, organizations, and industrialized countries around the world we can draw on to build a better labour market

system for everyone. The report calls for a collaborative, multi-stakeholder engagement to build a new vision for good jobs that support individual and community well-being.

Related Links

- Download [Working Better: Creating a High Performing Labour Market in Ontario](#)
- Listen to [Matching Skills with Jobs](#) an interview with Tom Zizys on CBC Radio
- Learn more about the [Metcalf Foundation](#) from their website
- Find more resources on [Employment and Economic Security](#)

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OBAMA ESTABLISHES COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS COUNCIL [By: Paul Born]

President Barack Obama has established the White House Council for Community Solutions to “provide advice to the President on the best ways to mobilize citizens, nonprofits, businesses and government to work more effectively together to solve specific community needs.”

The Council is made up of leaders from non-profits, corporations and foundation and has three key functions: enlisting leaders in the non-profit, private, and philanthropic sectors to make progress on key policy goals; providing strategic input and recommendations to help the federal government promote greater innovation and cross-sector collaboration; and, honouring and highlighting those making a significant impact in their own communities.

In speaking about the Council, the President said, “I’ll be asking Melody Barnes, who is our director of the Domestic Policy Council, and our innovation team to lead this process, traveling across the country to discover and evaluate the very best programs in our communities. And we won’t just be looking at the usual suspects in the usual places. We won’t just be seeking the programs that everybody already knows about, but we also want to find those hidden gems that haven’t yet gotten the attention they deserve. And we’ll be looking in all sorts of communities -- rural, urban, and suburban -- in every region of this country, because we know that great ideas and outstanding programs are everywhere -- and it’s up to us to find them.”

I was recently invited to visit with Melody Barnes and spoke with her there about the new Community Solutions Council. The visit was a bit surreal as it took place in the West Wing on the White House grounds. Ms Barnes was articulate and enthusiastic about the work and ideas of the Community Solutions Council but stressed it they had only just gotten started. She was eager to learn about the work of Tamarack in Canada and I was able to provide her with a copy of my book, [Community Conversations](#) and also [Evaluating Vibrant Communities](#) the 10-year evaluation of Vibrant Communities Canada.

It is exciting to think that Obama, someone who is deemed as one of the most powerful people in the world, was once a community developer who believes deeply in the power of community solutions. Tamarack will continue to follow the work of this Council and will update you of its progress both in Engage! and through upcoming tele-learning seminars. We also hope to have a member of the Council speak at our 2012 Communities Collaborating Institute.

My summer wish: Imagine if Canada also considered such a national commitment and created a Parliamentary Council on Community Solutions?

Related links:

- Visit the White House [Council for Community Solutions](#) website
- Learn more about the Council for Community Solution’s [Youth Listening Tours](#)
- Read the [press release](#) announcing the Council for Community Solutions
- Find more resources on [community engagement](#)

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FOSTERING LEADERSHIP & THE DEVELOPMENT OF VIBRANT COMMUNITIES [By: Sylvia Cheuy]

Strong communities know their assets and are skilled at linking them together in new, innovative ways. Strong communities also require leadership, which is a commodity that can be actively cultivated and renewed. If you are curious about how to strengthen either of these complementary skill-sets, you'll want to take advantage of two upcoming learning opportunities.

This June, Peter Kenyon, director of Australia's Bank of I.D.E.A.S. (Initiatives for the Development of Enterprising Action and Strategies) shares his expertise and inspiration in building strong communities through a series of Ontario-based workshops being offered in partnership with the [Rural Ontario Institute](#). In these workshops, Peter will share his understanding of how to engage residents in the betterment of their community using the philosophy and practice of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD).

ABCD is a process and approach which identifies and harnesses community assets to create positive change. Using techniques such as appreciative inquiry and a focus on assets, resources and possibilities, ABCD builds engagement and collaboration to help communities create a more sustainable, vibrant future from within.

Those interested in developing their capacity to lead community change will be interested in being part of the Summer Leadership Institute being held on Vancouver Island from July 24th - 29th. This year's week-long residential adventure, Leadership Renewal: The Resiliency Factor, explores the relationship between leadership and resilience, building the capacity to adapt and flourish in times of stress or strain.

Related links:

- Find more about [Peter Kenyon's ABCD workshops](#) with the Rural Ontario Institute
- Download [Bank of Ideas' Community Asset Audit](#)
- Visit the [Bank of Ideas](#) website
- Visit the [Summer Leadership Institute](#) website for more on resilience & leadership renewal – early bird deadline: June 15th
- Find additional resources on [community asset building](#)

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IGNITING NEIGHBOURHOOD SPIRIT [By: Kylee Swadden]

Sometimes, the only thing stopping a great idea from becoming reality is a little bit of capital. Abbotsford's newly launched Neighbourhood Action Grant program is aimed at changing that. These grants, offered by Vibrant Abbotsford, support residents wanting to effect positive change in their own neighbourhood. Projects can include area beautification, making safer walking areas, developing workshops like healthy cooking on a budget, or a cultural education program to name a few.

Another aim of this grant program is to help foster community connections between neighbours. Therefore, each grant application must include letters of support from at least five other residents in the applicant's area. This helps to foster neighbours to work cooperatively together, and encourages the building of strong relationships between neighbourhoods throughout the city. '

[Vibrant Abbotsford](#) collaborated with the city of Abbotsford to ensure this project is as effective as possible. The city has developed a Neighbourhood Spirit contest, where community-minded Abbotsfordians can win a block party BBQ, entertainment tickets or a Safari Kids Zone pass. This contest runs in tandem with the grant

program, and its ads promote the availability of the grant funds as as a potential financial resource for those with ideas that lack available funding.

The Neighbourhood Action Grant program, which began on May 1st and runs until July 31st, has already generated some very interesting applications and inquiries. Its organizers are eager to see how the seeds of neighbourhood innovation will blossom throughout the community.

Related links:

- o Learn more about Abbotsford's [Neighbourhood Action Grants Program](#)
- o Visit the [Vibrant Abbotsford](#) website
- o Find more resources on [Action for Neighbourhood Change](#)

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THE POWER OF WORDS [By: Sylvia Cheuy]

There are many ways to say the same thing and the words we use reveal - and also influence - our thinking. This video shows the power, and difference, that our choice of words can make.



Related Links:

- o Find more [innovative ideas on Tamarack's website](#)

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Vibrant Communities Across Canada Updates

- o **Vibrant Abbotsford: Living Wages and Neighbourhood Grants**
[Vibrant Abbotsford](#) has calculated that [the living wage for Abbotsford is \\$16.47](#). That's the minimum wage per hour required for a two-parent, two-child household in which both parents are working 35 hrs/week and 52 weeks/year.

Vibrant Abbotsford joins many other communities across Canada who using the living wage concept, known as an affordability index in some communities, to demonstrate that minimum wage levels, when compared to living costs, often keep people in poverty, rather than lift them out of it. Vibrant Abbotsford is calling on the City of Abbotsford to pay all its staff and contracted employees a Living Wage. For more on living wages, visit [Canada's Living Wage Resource Centre](#), or Vibrant Communities' [Living Wage Community of Practice](#).

Vibrant Abbotsford is also offering [neighbourhood action grants](#) to build civic participation and local leadership by helping residents transform their ideas into actions. [More>>](#)

o **Vibrant Calgary: Bus Fares, Suites and PechaKucha**

Vibrant Communities Calgary added concerns about [increased school bus fares](#) for low income families to its interest in [Affordable Transportation](#). VC Calgary is also keeping track of the action (or lack of it) on [secondary suites](#) as an affordable housing solution for Calgarians.

Meanwhile, Dan Meades of Vibrant Communities Calgary (and many others) lent their talents to the Calgary version of a global fundraising effort to help rebuild Japan, called [PechaKucha](#). Want help to pronounce it? This [Muppets video](#) can help. Get the latest on the Calgary event by following the twitter feed at [#yycpkn](#). [More>>](#)

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From Seekingcommunity.ca

- o [Do We Exclude?](#) by Donna Jean Forster-Gill [More >](#)
- o [Courage: Telling the Story of Who You Are with Your Whole Heart](#) by Laura Stavro-Beauchamp [More >>](#)
- o [Community: Beware it Might be Counterfeit or Just Another Commodity](#) by Bruce Watson [More >](#)
- o [Tortillas at Dawn](#) by Joyce Hollyday [More >](#)

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About Engage!



Engage! e-magazine is published by [Tamarack - An Institute for Community Engagement](#), to bring you inspiration, ideas, and resources to envision and create vibrant communities. We would love your ideas to help us improve our new format. Please send comments to: paul@tamarackcommunity.ca. *Photo used in top banner courtesy of Carl Hiebert.*

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Tamarack - An Institute for Community Engagement
5 Father David Bauer Drive, Suite 106, Waterloo, ON
Tel: (519) 885-5155 | Fax: (519) 885-4454

Email: tamarack@tamarackcommunity.ca | Web: <http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca>