

Social Investment: It's Time to Invest in New Brunswick's Children, Families and Communities

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With resources provided by the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health and the Health and Programs Branch of Health Canada, the New Brunswick Reference Group on Social and Economic Inclusion came together to write a paper that expresses concerns about the impact of federal and provincial government policies on children, families, and communities. The N.B. Reference Group is made up of representatives from government and community with a wide range of experience.

We decided not to describe the problem. Instead, check the bibliography. These complex issues are well-described by others. In particular, we recommend the paper written by the Urban Core Support Network in Saint John, New Brunswick entitled *Responding to the Voices of Poverty: Are we up for the challenge?*

The New Brunswick Reference Group sought solutions but quickly realized that we needed a new way to talk about "child poverty" and the host of social issues implied in those two words. What we want to do in this paper is argue that wise government "spending" is really an investment. Investing in children and families will pay future dividends.

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HEALTH

This paper argues for a transformation of government policy into “healthy public policy”. We argue that provincial and federal governments need to re-orient policies and programs in support of locally-based sustainable community development.

We want to spark dialogue. What is the role of government in today’s world? What are the social and moral responsibilities of the private sector in this global economy? Is a healthy economy not the result of a healthy society? How can the private, public, and non-profit sectors work together more effectively?

Read on. We want to know what you think.

Executive Summary

Is Canada Slipping Backward?

As New Brunswickers prepare for the new millennium, those who keep an eye on social trends cannot help be concerned. There are strong indicators that Canadians may no longer have the best quality of life in the world. Canada’s rating has slipped to 10th on the Human Poverty Index which factors in social conditions including functional illiteracy, poverty and long-term unemployment.¹

Social investment has not been a priority and the growing costs are evident. For the past decade, Canadians have concentrated their energy on fiscal stabilization at the expense of social equality. Canadians are aware of the costs of poverty but there has been no significant policy response. Since 1989, when the House of Commons unanimously passed a resolution stating their intention to “seek to achieve the goal of eliminating child poverty by the year 2000”, the situation has worsened. More than 1.4 million Canadian children now live in poverty, the highest number in our history.²

A recent analysis of the statistics and trends in the Atlantic region showed that:

- child poverty is increasing
- children in families headed by a female lone parent are more likely to be poor, and this tendency is increasing
- the rate and depth of poverty for Aboriginal children is even more severe than for children in general
- there has been a lack of available statistical information on the status of Black and visible minority children
- there is a lack of statistical information on out-of-the-mainstream youth (street kids), but the information available indicates that their needs are acute and their numbers are growing.

The evidence does not look good. Our experience working in New Brunswick communities corroborates national and regional trends. The most recent political era in New Brunswick saw economic growth but social development suffered

cutbacks in funding, a movement to centralize services, and the withdrawal of government support from the non-profit sector (i.e., charities and community-based groups).

Millions of dollars that used to flow to community organizations in the Atlantic provinces dried up yet there is a bigger need than ever to deal with the impacts of poverty. The government has reduced support to those living at risk with an expectation that the community will take up the slack.

Social Exclusion

This is a different kind of poverty from that experienced during the Depression. Some call the impacts of this poverty “social exclusion”. Social exclusion is a process whereby individuals or communities are excluded from the economy. Society does not value or want them. These people—single mothers, children, youth, fragile seniors, the sick, disabled—are excluded from the resources and opportunities which are considered the norm in society. No matter how hard they try, the barriers to mainstream society are too strong to breach. To add insult to injury, we blame them for their inability to break through the wall.

So we are poised at the brink. As Canadians and New Brunswickers, do we give up and let the fates of globalization determine the future? Do we let Canada become a third world nation? Or do we roll up our sleeves and develop healthy public policy to shift the course (just as our grandparents and parents did earlier in this century)?

A Healthy Economy Requires a Healthy Society

Many believe that the negative impacts of globalization are the unavoidable price that we must pay to have a healthy economy. Whose evidence do we believe? The economists or Bay Street investors? Economists seem to agree there are three key measures to a healthy economy: (1) productivity, (2) income distribution, and (3) employment. An economy is not healthy unless the people are employed, productive, and enjoying a good standard of living.

These three fundamental measures of a healthy economy as defined by economists are not so very different from the measures valued by citizens and sociologists. Therefore, if economic goals mirror social goals, why should Canadians accept social upheaval as a necessary by-product of globalization? Instead of accepting the costs of an unstable global economy as a necessary evil, we should start investing in our social economy. It is time to invest in communities, families, and children. If social arguments are not persuasive enough, then how about the economic arguments?

What Happens When We Don't Invest in the Social Economy?

Here are some of the costs we are already paying:

- Federal expenditures on the criminal justice system have reached almost \$10 billion annually.

The impact of poverty is pervasive. Health problems associated with poverty are well-known. They include a greater likelihood of low birth weight, inadequate nutrition, infant and childhood death, long-term disability and injury, psychiatric disorders, and poor school performance. The hardship of poverty increases family stress, and reduces the ability of families to cope, which in turn threatens the emotional health of children... Where a community or a neighbourhood is struggling with poverty, the healthy development of its children and youth are at risk—from inadequate housing or recreation and loss of hope.

*Turning Points
Health Canada, 1997*

-
- The cost of victims' pain and suffering, lost productivity and other life-long consequences of crime on people and communities may run in the range of \$35 to \$46 billion annually.
 - The annual costs of violence against Canadian women is \$4.2 billion.
 - It costs up to \$100,000 a year to incarcerate a juvenile offender.
 - Crime costs us more than we spend on educating our young people.
 - The famous Perry Preschool Program in Michigan showed that a \$5,000 investment in early childhood education turned over \$28,000 in dividends to society.

We all know that prevention pays. A stitch in time save nine. Heavier investment in prevention strategies encourages people to get help before they have a crisis, instead of because they are having a crisis. Yet policies and programs in the public and private sectors still do not set prevention as the highest priority. The bias towards treatment at the expense of prevention must change because we can't afford unnecessary treatment anymore.

Social Investment

Social investment is the investment of trust, time, attention, respect, wise policy-making, resources, and money to enable people and communities to realize their talents and full potential. Social investment puts prevention and health promotion at the highest priority because it has a high return on the dollar. Social investment benefits the majority of citizens. Social investment strengthens the economy.

The dividends from wise social investment benefit *everyone*, including the private sector. Social investment is equitable. It is an investment in the rich and the poor, the able and the challenged, the young and the old. Social investment is an investment in society that will ultimately strengthen the economy.

New Brunswick citizens realize that out-dated policies should be transformed into "healthy public policy". Maybe globalization has reduced the power of government, but citizens still want their government leaders to be effective facilitators of public debate and collaborative action. It is time to review and amend social policy.

Three Foundations for Healthy Public Policy in New Brunswick

We recommend that social investment in New Brunswick be built upon a foundation of:

- collaborative leadership among community, government, and the private sector
- community capacity building
- investment in human and financial resources.

Collaborative leadership

In a civil society, elected officials from all three levels of government must be champions of participatory democracy, particularly at the local level. The recent Social Policy Renewal process is an example of an open, yet protected arena for public dialogue. To be collaborative, Canadian public servants must redesign the machinery of government around the citizen rather than expect the citizen to fit into government, with its maze of departments and programs. Citizens must be active participants in the achievement of social goals.

Collaborative leadership is no small shift. The vision and skills of senior bureaucrats will determine how successfully government does business with communities. Governments will require new instruments of governance and approaches to policy development.

Community Capacity Building

Investing in communities through capacity building means thinking and acting positively. Rather than starting with an analysis of the “problem”, the process begins with mapping assets and identifying opportunities. Government leadership focuses on strategies of coaching, encouragement, and belief that communities can pull together towards a shared goal.

At all levels, we must learn the difference between governing and managing. Organizational dysfunction within government, community, and private organizations often traces back to lack of trust (or worse, trustworthiness) and lack of respect for peoples’ abilities to do their job without interference.

Human and Financial Resources

There is nothing wrong with making a financial contribution to help cover operational costs of community organizations. The non-profit sector cannot mobilize volunteers or manage effectively without core funding. Core funding is the lifeblood of an organization. The non-profit sector needs dollars and in-kind assistance from the public and private sectors to sustain community work.

Short-term intermittent funding prevents strategic, effective action. We need better tools for targeted grant-making that turn attention to the ROTI (return on taxpayer’s investment). Strategic investment in community organizations should actually reduce dependency. Private and public investment can help community organizations leverage investments from other sponsors such as foundations, agencies, and local citizens.

It’s Time to Engage in a Dialogue

We brought fiscal spending under control so we would not pass on unnecessary fiscal debt to our children. We must now renew social policies so we do not pass on the costs and consequences of poverty, ill health, illiteracy, and crime to our children. It is time to sit down together and work out concrete strategies for investing in children, families, and communities in New Brunswick.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to spark debate about ways in which government and communities can work together to overcome the barriers that keep low-income people down and out in New Brunswick. This paper outlines concrete strategies for social investment.

Today, many people are excluded from the economy. Their work, and presumably their purchasing power, is not needed. If you are excluded from the economy, you are excluded from society as well. While economists assure us that the labour market will eventually adjust, just like it did at the turn of the century, others can't help but wonder: "But what if it doesn't?"

Angus Reid, the Canadian sociologist and pollster, has been fretting about this possibility. "What if humans will no longer be needed?" he asks. Horses used to be everywhere, providing a critical source of power and labour in the economy, but the steam locomotive, the tractor, and the automobile replaced them. After they outlived their usefulness to humans, they started to disappear. Mr. Reid wanted to believe the labour market will eventually adjust to technological change but then he discovered that economist Wassily Leontief, winner of the Nobel Prize, believes that:

The world of humans as the most important factor in production is bound to diminish in the same way that the role of horses in agricultural production was first diminished, then eliminated by the introduction of tractors.³

"Social exclusion" is a process whereby individuals or communities are excluded from the resources and opportunities which are considered the norm in a society. In rural and urban New Brunswick, those excluded may experience isolation, discrimination, racism, lack of access to services, marginalization from decision-making and/or a low quality of life.

The New Brunswick Reference Group recognizes that the impact of technology, globalization, and many other factors leads to social and economic exclusion of communities, families, youth, and children. Out-dated public policies lead to "social exclusion" which is what happens when people or areas suffer from linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health, poverty, and family break down.⁴

Surely New Brunswickers want a society that includes all people (youth, children, people with disabilities, seniors). Surely their contribution to society is not worthless or meaningless. The hidden social and fiscal costs of exclusion are too high.

To ensure that those facing barriers to full participation in the economy are not excluded, we need "social investment". Social investment is the investment of trust, time, attention, respect, wise policy-making, and money to enable people and communities to realize their talents and full potential. Social investment puts prevention at the highest priority because it has a high return on the dollar. Social investment benefits the majority of citizens. Social investment strengthens the economy.

Governments do have room for choice, and much depends on our politics and the values that citizens bring to political life.

Keith G. Banting

The goal of this paper is to present some of the sobering evidence and promote dialogue among New Brunswick citizens and policy makers about how social policy in New Brunswick can be transformed to strengthen the social economy. This paper represents our collective thoughts. Our concerns are based on first-hand experience which are validated by Canadian researchers who are carefully asking tough questions, gathering data, and making sense of the changing world around us.

This paper attempts to answer the following questions: What is social investment? Why should we invest in children, families, and communities? Where should we invest our time, talents, and resources? What are the strategies for reducing poverty? What are the building blocks upon which we can build a stronger economy?

Winds of Change

Exciting Times...

It's exciting times in New Brunswick. After ten years of provincial policy focused on economic development and building the self-esteem of its citizens, the province is confident and self-assured. Fifty-two heads of state of the francophone countries of the world recently flew into southeast New Brunswick to partake of New Brunswick hospitality (September 1999). Heads turned. The world admired the land, the sea, and the different cultures that thrive together.

The federal government finally has a surplus to manage: tax cuts? or new spending? These are the big questions of the day. At a Canadian premiers' meeting in August 1999, the rest of Canada was impressed with New Brunswick's new premier who helped forge a consensus on a balanced approach for "better competitiveness through the combination of reduced federal taxes and full restoration of the Canada Health and Social Transfer Program to fund social programs like health care and post-secondary education."⁵ The federal government is consulting the country about a "national children's agenda" and there are rumours that the Canadian budget for the year 2000 will be the children's budget.

New Brunswickers are riding high with pride and enthusiasm. The economy clicks along. In not too many days, the clock will strike twelve, and a new millennium will begin. A 1,000 year epoch will be completed. Fresh winds of change are blowing.

...Yet Worrisome Times

The most recent political era in New Brunswick saw growth and change in some sectors of the New Brunswick economy, most notably in the high technology and communications fields.⁶ But all of the changes have not been positive for the non-profit sector. Not just in New Brunswick this period featured:

A child is born in New Brunswick on New Year's Eve 1999. What lies ahead for this millennium child? Is she born at risk? Will she be surrounded by two active parents, a supportive extended family, a caring community? Unto us a child is born.

No one knows where the six billionth baby was born. What lies ahead for these babies of the millennium? What quality of care and nurturing can New Brunswick children expect to receive during the next six precious formative years? Will their schooling meeting particular needs? Will their parents be affluent enough to supplement education with the music, arts, dance, and sport no longer offered through public education?

- cutbacks in funding,
- a movement to centralize services, and
- the withdrawal of government support from the non-profit sector (i.e., charities and community-based groups).

Advocates were enthusiastic about the effects of New Brunswick's economic policies. New Brunswickers welcomed relocating companies and jobs to New Brunswick, as well as the fundamental shift to a knowledge-based economy. The province had to become more competitive in the global market place, but critics feared that the new jobs would be low-wage and unstable, with little promise of long-term sustainable benefit for the province. Others pointed to the questionable ethical and fiscal strategies of tax incentives to attract firms to the province which included lower worker's compensation rates and lower benefits to workers.⁷

Not every community in New Brunswick has experienced a "miracle". The Acadian Peninsula is experiencing a social and economic crisis: fishery problems, negative impacts of globalization on the regional economy, the exodus of the youth, illiteracy, and seasonal employment. This rural economy depends on the service sector which in turn creates a necessary dependence on social programs. The forestry and fishing sectors are as reliant upon employment insurance as the seasonal workers they depend upon. Cuts to employment insurance have brought about a loss of income in the order of \$250 a month for each person receiving benefits. Some cannot qualify at all. As these universal programs are reduced bit by bit, the disparity between the regions hit hardest (e.g., Acadian Peninsula) and the rest of the province becomes more striking because citizens depend on transfer payments (e.g., employment insurance and income support) to support themselves during the periods when industry does not need them.

The much larger forces of "globalization"—the increasing integration of international markets for goods, services, and finance—cause all of these pressures felt locally. Economic borders are dramatically opening. Multinationals organize production on global strategies. New information systems, telecommunications, and computer-assisted design and manufacturing are transforming production. Fewer workers are needed, and those who remain require greater skills. In Canada, international trade is growing more rapidly than interprovincial trade. We are deeply dependent on the international market, particularly the United States. Apparently, no other OECD country is as dependent on the market of a single country. Most spread the risks more broadly.⁸

Post-Deficit Fatigue Takes Its Toll

One strategy pursued by the federal government to reduce the federal deficit was to cut social spending. The expectation seemed to be that the non-profit sector would take up the slack. But government also cut its funding to registered charities so charities were hard hit by cutbacks too. The Canadian Centre of Philanthropy estimates that for every 1% cut in government grants and transfers to charities, a charity needs a 5.8% increase in individual donations to maintain budgetary levels.⁹ Those donations have not been flooding in. Community leaders are tired. Volunteers are weary.

The Non-Profit Sector: Weary, Disheartened

Millions of dollars that used to flow to community organizations in the Atlantic provinces dried up but there was no diminishment in responsibilities of community groups left to deal with increasing poverty and such problems as youth crime, housing, and teen pregnancy rates.

During the past several years, provincial and federal governments have withdrawn contributions to the core administration costs of the non-profit sector. This sends a message to communities that government does not value the work of the non-profit sector.¹⁰ Government expects community organizations to be completely independent, raising funds to cover staff salaries, rent, and overhead expenses.

While this shift has had some positive effects (partnering, doing more with less), it is also taking a toll. Without staff, volunteers cannot be mobilized; funds cannot be raised; the core work is severely limited. Some organizations give up and fold. Others are being hounded by Revenue Canada who has found a new sector to audit.

Monies that actually flow from government coffers into the non-profit sector come with so many strings attached that community organizations are sometimes tempted to shun them. Special projects often weaken the organization's capacity to carry out its central work. Only a small percentage of government funding (if even that) can be spent on overhead.

There was a time when government respected the non-profit sector's commitment to the public good and favoured organizations such as the Victorian Order of Nurses for out-sourcing contracts. No longer. Today, the non-profit sector competes head-to-head with private sector businesses and this is changing the sector fundamentally. While it may be time for the non-profit sector to restructure, hopefully the "third" sector will gain from the mistakes of the private and public sectors' re-engineering experience rather than weaken.

To many community groups, it feels like decisions are made in government corridors without consultation with the groups most affected. The lack of government interest in investment frustrates community organizations with innovative and entrepreneurial ideas. "Partnering" with government to achieve shared goals is rarely easy and requires extra resources that organizations don't have. The value of the time and effort spent negotiating approval for a project can be greater than the value of the money sought.

The Family: Worried, Excluded

At the family level, there are also concerns. Cutbacks have hurt the poor and disadvantaged the hardest. When music disappears from the school, families with disposable income will find a private music teacher. When health services become harder to access, the more affluent families will pay for alternatives. The more affluent you are, the more you can immunize yourself against cut-backs in social services. People do not experience the effects of cutbacks equally. The outcome of downloading hurts the poor, both directly and indirectly.¹¹

The problem of child poverty in Canada is staggering. The poor are really poor. The problem is getting worse.

Canadian Institute of
Child Health

Will the baby born on New Year's Eve grow up in poverty? If so, the baby faces many barriers to living a full and happy life.

Government continues to offer social programs but it is not always clear whether they effectively address the real needs of their clients.¹² Recent studies have shown that changes in social programs are not meeting the needs of people with disabilities, single mothers, and aboriginal communities.¹³ Critics, including economists, point to the need to revise programs—design, implementation and evaluation methods—so that impact and effectiveness can be shown.¹⁴

Government: Retreating? Or Ready to Face the Challenges?

Increasingly, the ethics of altruism and of interdependence are expected to replace the current ethics of individualism and social security of the past twenty years. There seems to be an assumption that the State no longer needs to intervene directly because communities are expected to regulate themselves and work out their own problems. Collective action and self-sufficiency have become the new forms of social protection. Rather than being in the foreground, the State has retreated to become the claims officer of last resort. Government seems to want the private sector and community initiative to ensure the security of its citizens without providing the requisite policies, incentives, and resources.

Mounting discontent in New Brunswick exerted pressure on the previous government to revisit social policies and the delivery of social programs. It was time to renew the social policy framework which government has not significantly revised for years. In the fall of 1998, the government established a Special Cabinet Committee on Social Policy Renewal and an interdepartmental Social Policy Secretariat. A consultative process rolled out. People put aside their cynicism and participated in meetings held all over the province. There was hope that government would balance its attention to social and fiscal policy.

Then there was an election. The social policy review process stopped and the new government pledged that: “Our social programs should ensure dignified and meaningful lives for those who need assistance, but also recognize the importance of providing the support and resources necessary for an environment in which New Brunswickers can work together, be self-reliant and take responsibility for their own lives”.¹⁵

We agree. It is time for action. Now is the time to prevent the gap between the rich and poor from growing.

Poverty: A Loss of Future Social Capital

There are few issues on which opposing political parties and disparate interest groups agree, but one whose gravity has society’s unanimous recognition is that of poverty and its effects on children. Children and youth represent the future of Canadian society, and their status today will affect their future performance as citizens and leaders.

Poverty effects all aspects of children's health. One cannot separate the health and well-being of children from the health and well-being of their parents and family.¹⁶

The Canadian Institute of Child Health described the situation bluntly six years ago:

The problem of poverty in Canada is staggering. The poor are really poor. The problem is getting worse. Poor children do not share the same level of health as children who are not poor.¹⁷

Poor children have poorer health than other children.¹⁸ Poor children are more likely to be born prematurely; to have a low birth-weight; and to have a greater risk of physical, emotional and social disorders. They are more likely to be hyper-active, to exhibit emotional and conduct disorders, and to have trouble with the law.

Poor children leave school sooner, and receive less education overall, than other children. The school drop-out rate of poor children is double that of non-poor children.¹⁹

Poor children face greater risks to health and safety as a result of living in unsafe environments. Their homes are more likely to need major repairs and to lack safety features like smoke alarms. Poor children are also more likely to live in children's aid facilities or foster care.²⁰

Poor children engage in riskier behaviours. They are more likely to smoke, take drugs or have a drinking problem. They are less likely to use birth control, and as a result, teenage girls from low-income families are five times as likely to become pregnant as girls from higher income families. Teens from poor families are also less likely to use condoms as protection from sexually transmitted disease.²¹

A recent analysis of the statistics and trends²² showed that:

- Child poverty is increasing in the Atlantic region.
- Children in families headed by a female lone parent are more likely to be poor, and this tendency is increasing in the Atlantic region.
- The rate and depth of poverty for Aboriginal children is even more severe than for children in general.
- There has been a lack of available statistical information on the status of Black and visible minority children.
- There is a lack of statistical information on out-of-the-mainstream youth (street kids), but the little information available indicates that their needs are acute and their numbers are growing.

In 1989, the Canadian House of Commons unanimously passed a resolution to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. A decade later, statistics reveal that our country has not only failed to meet this goal, but that levels of child poverty increased and indicators of social equality deteriorated. More than 1.4 million Canadian children now live in poverty, the highest number in our history.²³

I believe child poverty is the great social policy challenge of this generation.

Paul Martin
Minister of Finance
January 1997

Poverty is a great enemy to human happiness; it certainly destroys liberty, and it makes some virtues impracticable and others extremely difficult.

Samuel Johnson

Children live in poverty when their parent(s), caregiver(s), and hence families cannot provide for them adequately. Often the very presence of children increases the likelihood of poverty when the social structures are not in place to support families or when jobs do not provide adequate wages. We must not isolate “child poverty” from the social conditions that create it or divert our attention from poverty in general.

Poverty in Canada “has a woman’s face”. In 1994, Canadian women’s average earnings for full-time work were 70% of men’s, a figure which has not changed significantly for decades.²⁴ In New Brunswick, in 1994, women working full-time earned 64% of the earnings of men, only two percentage points more than in 1971. In a 1996 report, the New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women pointed out that if “progress” continues at this rate, it will take approximately 400 years for women’s full-time remuneration to reach parity with men’s.²⁵ This is disheartening enough, but full-time earnings, however unsatisfactory, are not the luxury of many women in the workforce.

Demographic shifts are affecting the workforce in which many more mothers work outside the home. Women are more likely to work part-time than men and be concentrated in low-wage occupations. The proportion of the labour force that is female has risen from 13% in 1911 to almost half today.²⁶ The women’s labour force participation rate is 69% nationally and 54% in New Brunswick.²⁷ The profile of the working woman has also changed in the past several decades. Women who work are now likely to be mothers, married or single, working to support their families.²⁸

The National Council of Welfare²⁹ identifies three major groups of poor women in Canada:

- single women under 65 (40% are poor),
- single women over 65 (45% are poor), and
- single parent mothers under 65 with children under the age of 18 (The poverty rate for this group is 61%, and an even higher 74% in the Atlantic region).³⁰

When women are poor their children are poor. There is a symbiotic relationship between parenthood and workforce barriers. Comparable changes in women’s domestic roles and perceived responsibilities have not accompanied the huge social changes that have occurred in labour force characteristics in this century. Women’s unpaid contribution to the world’s economy is estimated at \$11 trillion, a figure which forces us to confront the fact that “Fully recognizing women’s economic contribution will completely change all the socio-economic premises on which we have erroneously founded our gender relations.”³¹

Canada has made some progress in recent years in recognizing and measuring the value of women’s unpaid work. The 1996 census for the first time asked questions about unpaid work done in the home. A recent study in Canada found that women assume a greater total workload than men but still assume a smaller share of paid work.³² With the current demographic shift towards an older population, the position of women as the bearers of the greatest burden of unpaid work is not likely to improve soon.³³

Will our New Brunswick New Year’s baby be born to a single mother? In the Atlantic region, 74% of single parent mothers under 65 with children under the age of 18 are poor. In 1996, there were 29,435 lone-parent families in New Brunswick, 24,595 of which were headed by women, an increase from 21,995 in 1991.

Women and the people they care for are facing a heavier workload in an atmosphere of diminished resources and lower tolerance for poverty. Marilyn Waring points out that “to refuse to recognize (women’s) economic production and reproduction as work, is a fundamental and universal breach of human rights.”³⁴

Poverty affects society and weakens our economy. Poverty affects the health and future of all our children.

Young people... are the next generation of prospective parents, many of whom will soon be entering into periods of family formation. The economic hardships experienced by young people, unable to secure sustaining attachments in the labour market, are seeding the next generation of child poverty in Canada.³⁵

So do we value our children or not? Are we willing to invest in our more fragile human resources or not? Will dollars invested now, pay dividends in the future? If yes, where do we invest? What policies, programs, and enterprises are wise investments?

Social Investments Pay Healthy Dividends

A Healthy Economy Requires a Healthy Society

Even though Canadians have balanced the federal budget, a strong feeling remains that “economics”, not social goals, should dominate all federal policy decisions. But whose economic theory are we buying into?³⁶ Economists seem to agree that there are three key measures to a healthy economy: (1) productivity, (2) income distribution, and (3) employment.³⁷ An economy is not healthy unless the people are employed, productive, and enjoying a good standard of living.

Productivity is the country’s ability to raise its output per worker. The importance of productivity is not so much to help our international competitiveness. Increasing productivity is the best means of improving the standard of living. Not many understand productivity. Economists themselves are mystified why productivity growth—which grew so well in the 1950s and 1960s—slowed to a crawl thereafter.³⁸

Income distribution. The goal is to have a reasonable distribution of income levels. An unhealthy economy has a few rich at the top with a lot of poor at the bottom. While some may not consider income distribution an important public policy issue, economists can show us examples where changes in income distribution have had a bigger impact on peoples’ lives than any deliberate public policy action.

Poverty will affect the health of New Brunswick’s New Year baby. The health and well-being of the baby cannot be separated from the health and well-being of its parents and family. The less money people have, the less likely they are to be healthy.

For the economy, the important things are productivity, income distribution, and unemployment. If these things are satisfactory not much else can go wrong, while if they are not, nothing can go right. Yet very little of the business of economic policy is concerned with these big trends.

Paul Krugman

Employment and Unemployment. High unemployment means that productive workers are not being used. This prevents the economy from performing as well as it might. Why do we care about unemployment? High unemployment breeds persistent poverty. Canadians do not want to build a society which does not quickly draw young people into the work world. Canadians value work. (In fact, Canadians are *addicted* to work.³⁹)

These three fundamental measures of a healthy economy defined by economists are not so very different from the measures valued by sociologists. So if economic goals mirror social goals, then what are the arguments against investing in communities, families, and children? Has it simply become the fashion to deride government investment in social goods because government's credibility has faded in recent years? Do Canadian citizens really believe that the government wastes *every* tax dollar it spends?

Donald Savoie explains the hysteria about government spending:

Thirty years ago, the public sector could do little wrong and everyone was clamouring for a larger role for government in society. The private sector, meanwhile, could do little right, continually confronting charges of greed, corporate welfare bums and of being poor corporate citizens with little, if any concern for the public good. Today, it is the direct opposite. The private sector, it seems, can do no harm and government is generally regarded as incompetent and wasteful.⁴⁰

What is "Social Investment"?

Social investment is the investment of trust, time, attention, respect, wise policy-making, resources, and money to enable people and communities to realize their talents and full potential. Social investment gives prevention and health promotion the highest priority because they have a high return on the dollar. Social investment benefits the majority of citizens. Social investment strengthens the economy.

Which is the best investment? A tire factory or a new school? Who will benefit? Which will provide the best return on investment to all citizens? Some argue that government investment crowds out the more legitimate private investment. Others argue a school built with tax dollars yields more value to the economy than the tire plant built with private (and public) funds. The school may be the better investment because it will produce educated young people who can bring their skills and output to the economy. A high-quality education system educating generations of productive citizens produces a healthier society. Research proves that education levels are a determinant of health.⁴¹

The dividends from wise social investment benefit *everyone*, including the private sector. Social investment is equitable. It is an investment in the rich *and* the poor, the able and the challenged, the young and the old. Social investment is an investment in society that will ultimately strengthen the economy.

If four millennium baby's mother is poor, he or she is more likely to be born prematurely; to have a low birth-weight; and to have a greater risk of physical, emotional and social disorders. Our child is more likely to be hyperactive, to exhibit emotional and conduct disorders and to have trouble with the law.

Why should taxpayers insist that government be responsible for social investment? Should the private sector not take on its fair share in a global economy which emphasizes privatization and deregulation? There is one economic reality that cannot be ignored: the private sector does not invest in public goods. Put simply, government collects tax dollars to invest in defence, health, education, and roads because the private sector does not invest in something that they cannot charge for directly.⁴²

Government, with its ability to bill taxpayers, can invest in all the public services that everyone, including the private sector, depends upon. These social investments will pay back returns in the form of reduced crime, reduced violence, an improved standard of living, equity, and better health.

The Costs If We Don't Invest

We all know the cliché that *an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure*. Yet this is not reflected in our approach to national and provincial budgets. "One dollar 'saved' today simply represents several dollars of spending delayed."⁴³

Dollars saved now by reducing transfer payments to programs for single parents, for example, will later need to be redirected towards the programs and services to rehabilitate youth who have turned to criminal activity as a result of the conditions of their childhood. Ross cites a more concrete example:

It is ironic that while we piously speak about the need and urgency to bring down the fiscal deficit because we do not want to burden future generations, we don't consider the "social deficit" we are passing on as services and programs, and social assistance benefits are slashed. One child in neo-natal intensive care costs the health care system \$8,400.00 a week. If the child is there because the mother was malnourished and the baby was low birth weight, how much money did we save by depriving the mother of a level of social assistance adequate to feed her properly during her pregnancy?⁴⁴

If money talks, then perhaps we should examine the evidence. We pay directly for social inequity when it bounces back to us in the form of crime and violence. How much?

The Cost of Crime

Federal expenditures on the criminal justice system have reached almost \$10 billion annually. Ten billion dollars represents only a portion of the costs of crime. The National Crime Prevention Council estimates that the cost of victims' pain and suffering, lost productivity and other life-long consequences of crime on people and communities may run in the range of \$35 to \$46 billion annually.⁴⁵

Here are some more examples of the costs of crime:

- In Canada it costs \$40,000 - \$80,000 each year to keep one adult in a correctional institution.

Determinants of Health

- Income and social status
- Social support networks
- Education
- Employment and working conditions
- Social environments
- Physical environment
- Personal health practices and coping skills
- Healthy child development
- Genetics
- Health services
- Gender
- Culture

If our baby is raised in poverty, the child is more likely to leave school sooner, and receive less education overall, than other children. Will the child have access to programs that address particular learning needs and disabilities? the school drop-out rate of poor children is double that of non-poor.

- It costs up to \$100,000 a year to incarcerate a juvenile offender.
- The estimate of \$46 billion, the total cost of crime in Canada, does not include white collar crime.⁴⁶

In other words, crime costs us more than we spend on educating our young people. Crime costs more than twice what we spend on supporting unemployed people through the Employment Insurance program. It is more than the government of Canada spends on pensions for seniors (\$15.8 billion), the child tax benefit (\$5 billion), the Canada Assistance Plan (\$7.4 billion), and child care (\$5.5 billion) combined.⁴⁷

The National Crime Prevention Council learned that well-designed social development programs can prevent crime and be cost effective. Thirty years of evaluation of the famous Perry Preschool Program in Michigan showed that a \$5,000 investment in early childhood education turned over \$28,000 in dividends to society.⁴⁸ Crime prevention experts agree that “the cost of current approaches to controlling crime is so high and the success rate of current approaches to reducing crime is so low that it is fiscally irresponsible not to look at alternatives.”⁴⁹

The Cost of Violence

The annual costs of violence against Canadian women is \$4.2 billion. A 1995 study estimated the selected economic costs of three forms of violence against women—(1) sexual assault/rape; (2) women abuse in intimate partnerships; and (3) incest/child sexual assault—in four policy areas: health/medicine, criminal justice, social services/education, and labour/employment.⁵⁰

The report distinguishes between state, personal, and third-party costs of violence against women. State costs include such things as incarceration of people convicted of rape, child molestation, or assault. Personal costs include loss of income due to hospitalization or other treatment for injuries sustained in a sexual assault or transportation and accommodation costs. Economic costs to third parties include the expense of sheltering a friend who has been abused, or an insurance firm’s expenses covering benefits or claims of a women who experiences violence.

While the report shows the effect of violence on government, institutions, and business, the global picture is incomplete, so that only partial estimates are possible. The partial estimated annual costs of violence against women in four policy areas are:

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Social services/education | \$2,368,924,297 |
| Criminal Justice | \$871,908,583 |
| Labour/employment | \$576,764,400 |
| Health/medical | \$408,357,042 |
| Total | \$4,225,954,322 |

These costs are divided among the state (87.5%), the individual (11.5%), and third parties (.9%).

Will our New Brunswick baby be abused? Poverty is one of the major contributing factors to the violence experienced by children. In the hierarchy of industrialized countries, Canada's child poverty ranks second to other nations. In Canadian cities, one out of every three children is raised in a home with an income below the poverty line. In rural areas, the rate is one in five. Poverty itself constitutes a form of violence, but that violence is compounded by the particular pressures of living in a society that values consumption and material wealth.

Myths and Misconceptions

Myth: The Community Should Solve All its Own Social Problems

There seems to be a new mentality in which community spirit is seen as the answer to social problems, as if there was no longer any point in developing social security programs. Yes, citizens should take responsibility for the collective well-being of their fellow citizens, but should government expect Canadians to do it on their own? Strong voices in support of globalization would lead us to believe that the traditional social programs can simply be replaced by co-operation, human warmth, family life, and community spirit.

The new discourse of social economy makes use of the slogan “the government is all of us,” a phrase which creates confusion and which releases our elected representatives from their responsibility to govern, namely, protecting citizens from certain risks, protecting people and families who are incapable of providing for themselves, and promoting well-being and social justice. We all are responsible for contributing to a civil society, but government leadership is critical.

Myth: There is Huge Army of Volunteers Waiting for Instructions

There is a misconception that people are only too happy to contribute their time, interest, and money into solving social problems, a reality which may apply in certain cases, but cannot be applied generally. One would also have us believe there are local service groups which are ready to sponsor and sustain activities such as literacy courses, there are corporations which are ready to make donations because they want to do their part in solving social problems, and there are support networks which one may join to get assistance. Maybe in some places but rural and urban New Brunswick are lacking these bootstrap resources.

The Challenges We Face

With Whom Does Responsibility Lie?

The first question which comes to mind in speaking of social investment is to know with whom the responsibility lies of solving social problems: the individual, the family, the community or the government? It is a question of balance, of shared responsibility with each group having a part to play.

Survival First

We cannot disregard the fundamental needs of people. We can define social well-being in general as earning security, the protection of children, employment opportunities, housing, care of the elderly, etc. However, needs vary from one family to another and from one community to another. Therefore, programs should be adapted to the conditions of people, not the reverse. We must first respond to the most essential needs. It is useless to speak of lasting development if one cannot survive even in the short term.

In New Brunswick, the overall percentage of children under 18 living in low income families is 21%. Those living in lone-mother families is 74%. The basic income assistance rate for a family of three in New Brunswick is \$775, which annualizes to \$9300, well under the low-income cut-off (LICO) for a family of three which is \$22,000. For a single mother with one child in the workforce, it takes 73 hours of work per week at the minimum wage to reach the LICO.

Language and Culture

A community in the minority must struggle constantly to preserve its language and culture, and it must proceed with vigilance and prudence. For example, the Acadian Peninsula was, until recently, the only region of the province where a person speaking only French (a unilingual Francophone) could attain the position of regional director of Health and Community Services. When the region incorporated the Chaleur region, this position became bilingual. This means that today a unilingual Francophone can no longer be a regional director (in this particular department) in any part of the province; the same is not the case for unilingual Anglophones.⁵¹

When the millennium child living in poverty becomes a teenager in the year 2013, he or she will engage in riskier behaviours. The teenager is more likely to smoke, take drugs or have a drinking problem. He or she is less likely to use birth control, and as a result, teenage girls from low-income families are five times as likely to become pregnant as girls from higher income families. Teens from poor families are less likely to use condoms as protection from sexually transmitted disease.

Rural Isolation

The rural regions of the province present another considerable challenge. Rural life in the proximity of a big centre is not the same thing as rural life near a small urban centre. Citizens of rural regions are sorely tested by transportation problems, isolation, and exodus. Even those who come in from outside the region find themselves doubly penalized because they must spend a considerable amount of time on the road when they make house calls or go to meetings.

Equity

Another challenge consists of insuring the equality not so much of resources, but of results. In order to guarantee equal chances and equal results, the division of resources cannot be equal, but must be asymmetrical according to need. In other words, we must assign resources on the basis of need and not equally across the whole province. In the area of social investment, the question that must be answered is how to create social programs which insure equal chances for everyone in a context of renewal, continuous change and profound transformation of the environment.

Youth at Risk

Young people between 16 and 19 years old present yet another considerable challenge. Many young people feel the effects of the financial stress of their parents. In fact, they are living with adult problems. Some are also victims of abuse or rejection, or see violence at home every day. There is at this time a real deficiency, in the sense that no protection service is offered to young adults, after their adolescence (16 years old) and before their majority (19 years old).

The Impact of Social Exclusion on Families

When families are excluded from the economy, the burden is excessive. Families feel guilty, insecure, vulnerable, and powerless. The expectations which weigh on them are too high, like an elastic band stretched to its limit. Many families live in fear and anguish, and consequently are difficult to contact or help.

Holes in the Safety Net

The obsessive pursuit of deficit reduction has seemed to be a fiscally responsible course of action and few have argued that the reduction of national debt is not necessary. However, when government diverts money from social programs in favour of deficit reduction, and if tax relief benefits only the wealthiest, the effect is merely a reshuffling of the financial burden. And the Canadian provinces are hit hard by the shuffle because social spending—health and education are the big ones—is mostly their responsibility. A large proportion of New Brunswick’s provincial purse goes into social spending.

There is a growing number of rural people who are at risk of becoming marginalized: victims of the black hole of employment insurance; those who are insolvent and locked out; those whose houses have been put up for sale; those who have been deprived of electricity, water and facilities, who sleep fully dressed and who keep warm by candle light; those who are victims of economic exploitation, having given up their property and gone from being owners to lodgers in their own houses, etc.⁵²

Impact of Cuts to Services

On the bureaucratic level, not only are fewer services available because of the cuts, but it is more difficult to gain access to those which remain. Citizens have to actively search out the agency or organization responsible for providing the service they need. New public programs are often set up on a temporary basis and are not sufficiently funded, and, most of the time, they are more oriented towards acute crises than towards chronic ones.⁵³

So Where Do We Invest Our Time, Taxes, and Energy?

So where do we invest? There are no sure investments with quick payback. As in any good investment portfolio, strategies must be diverse and chosen for steady long-term gain.

When it comes to investing, it is factors like leadership, wisdom, long-term thinking, management, effectiveness, and adaptation to change that matter the most. The initiatives that exhibit those traits are the ones we want to invest in. Canadians don’t mind investing their tax dollars wisely.

Strategies to Reduce Poverty

There are no easy solutions to poverty. It is a multi-faceted problem that requires a combination of healthy public policy and diverse community-based approaches. Sherri Torjman explains that:

There is a lack of statistical information on out-of-the-main-stream youth, but the information available indicates that their needs are acute and their numbers are growing. Given today’s trends, there is a chance that our millennium child could wind up on the streets.

*When justice prevails,
charity is not needed.*

Ralph Nader

Community approaches to poverty reduction do not regard individuals as “clients” who need assistance. Nor do community approaches consider poverty alleviation an end in itself. Instead, it must be a subset of broader economic development actively pursuing market-based strategies, often geographic and sector-specific, that exploit market niches. Community initiatives build on the ideas and strengths of individuals, and recognize their ability to apply unique talents, creativity and hard work to improve their lives.⁵⁴

Key Interventions for Poverty Reduction⁵⁵

| Meeting Basic Needs | Removing Barriers | Building Skills | Promoting Economic Development |
|---|--|--|---|
| Physical Security | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food • housing & utilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • child care | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • life skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • job creation/ retention |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clothing • clean water & sanitation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work-related costs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • language training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-employment |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protection from violence & abuse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health-related costs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • literacy/ numeracy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access to capital |
| Health/Mental Health | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health care services • early child development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disability-related costs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • job search | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technical assistance |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-esteem & support | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • counselling & mental health services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • skills accreditation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • academic upgrading | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • substance abuse services | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • job training | |

What is encouraging is that some of these strategies listed above are underway in New Brunswick. Provincial policy and community-based approaches are active in all four intervention areas. However, New Brunswick policies and programs tend to focus on the individual, with little corresponding investment in communities.

It is difficult for the individual to pull his/her self up by the boot-straps if the community is not similarly striving to be prosperous and sustainable. New Brunswick needs a re-orientation of provincial and federal policies that aims to support locally-based community development as well as individual-focused support, e.g., provincially-funded early childhood initiative (individual) and the federally-funded family resource centres and pre-natal nutrition programs (community).

Removing the Barriers

The new Conservative government's platform expressed particular concern about removing barriers to employment.⁵⁶

Most people want to work and earn a decent living. But sometimes, in its attempt to help people, government creates financial barriers and disincentives that discourage people from working.

We (the N.B. Conservative Party) believe the option of earning a living through work should always be more beneficial than receiving social assistance benefits. Social assistance programs should be designed to encourage and assist able individuals to enter the workforce not discourage them. At the same time, we want to make sure the working poor and families in need are not disadvantaged by taking away assistance. We will remove barriers and disincentives to work by reviewing all social assistance and related programs to remove those barriers and disincentives that discourage people from finding full and part-time work that will help bring greater dignity and satisfaction to their lives.⁵⁷

Yes, we agree and we hope that government will involve the community and those affected in reviewing social assistance and related programs. This is an opportunity to work collaboratively to strengthen community and government relations.

Together, government, communities, and the private sector can review past performance and see how effective programs have been. A lack of formal evaluation makes it hard to really know how well interventions are working. How well matched are the public policies to community approaches? Are programs designed properly? Are programs effective? How do we measure "effectiveness"? What are the results of efforts to partner between government and community? How can we build on what works well?

The Foundation

We recommend that social investment in New Brunswick be built upon a foundation of:

- collaborative leadership among community, government, and the private sector,
- community capacity building, and
- human and financial resources.

Collaborative Leadership

Civic Engagement

Canadians are struggling to be active citizens but we want better democratic mechanisms to facilitate participation.

In a civil society, elected officials from all three levels of government must be champions of participatory democracy, particularly at the local level. Even though municipal councils are mandated to look after “sidewalks and sewers”, this does not prevent them from encouraging or facilitating collaborative community planning processes. Community action starts locally and we need our local elected officials to pay attention to social issues.

On one hand, elected officials are rightfully concerned about open dialogue that may put them at risk of forfeiting their political careers. On the other hand, fear of having comments misconstrued by the media is no excuse for excluding citizens from public policy discussions.

The Social Policy Renewal process organized by a secretariat and community leaders from across the province provided an open yet protected arena for dialogue in many communities throughout the province. While it was not perfect, it was a step in the right direction. The high participation rate spoke for itself.

From Controlling to Collaboration: When Government Wants to be Partners

The private, public, and non-profit sectors must work together. To be collaborative, Canadian public services will have to change in fundamental ways in order to meet the following challenges. Government agencies must learn to:

- integrate diverse policy fields around broad social goals or outcomes
- redesign the machinery of government around the citizen rather than expect the citizen to fit into government, with its maze of departments and programs, and
- enlist citizens as active participants in the achievement of key social goals.⁵⁸

Senior Leadership Within the Civil Service

Collaborative leadership is no small shift. The vision and skills of senior bureaucrats will determine how successfully government does business with communities.⁵⁹ Governments will require new tools and instruments of governance and new approaches to policy development, planning and evaluation, co-ordination among partners, and engagement of citizens.

At the *minimum*, this new collaborative approach should include:

- a broader vision of policy
- sensitivity training for civil servants
- co-ordination across policy fields and jurisdictions

-
- agreement on key goals or outcomes across departments and jurisdictions
 - an effective way of assessing whether the right outcomes have been selected
 - a method of assessing whether desired outcomes are being achieved
 - the co-ordinated delivery of programs and services, and
 - effective means of engaging citizens.

Deputy ministers and directors must take the lead in transforming government practices between:

- citizens and their governments,
- federal, provincial, and municipal governments, and
- central agencies and line departments.

Communities Embracing Change are Impatient, Engaged, and Risk-receptive

When the government provides all the services and has all the answers, the unintended result can be that communities are encouraged to be dependent on the expertise of the “professionals” who do things for their clients and communities. These communities tend to be patient, waiting for the funding to come through, and compliant, following all the rules to get the money.

Communities willing to invest in the future display the opposite attributes. They are impatient and engaged. They engage in strategic planning and action. They would rather act than wait. They are risk-receptive rather than risk-averse. They would rather beg for forgiveness than approval. Strong communities are good initiators rather than good followers.

Power Dynamics

We have to create safe places for dialogue and planning for action. If there is fear of repercussion, people will not be open. Recently in Moncton, John McKnight⁶⁰ suggested that government agencies should sit back from the table in a supportive role because communities are so used to giving up power and responsibility to government. Communities realize that they have become meek and complacent. Elected officials and bureaucrats blanch at the thought of a public dialogue with advocates. So both hold back.

One way for government to engage citizens is to *provide support* and resources rather than *provide services* and keep control over communities. Collaborative leadership is facilitative and enabling. It encourages self-reliance. There is more listening and less talking. There are more requests to help rather than announcements: “I’m here to help”. Sometimes leadership means patiently watching mistakes being made instead of rushing to intervene too soon.

Healthy Public Policy

Healthy public policy is a term to describe policies that are transformed by concern for health, equity, and achieving results. In the next millennium, policy makers must try to integrate policies in order to improve health, reduce inequities in health status, and make more efficient use of public resources.

We are not just talking about “health policy”. Through our growing understanding of the determinants of health, healthy public policies cut across sectors: justice, education, income tax, unemployment insurance, and social assistance. And not just government policies, healthy public policy must include the actions of organizations within the private and non-profit sectors.

Building Community Capacity

Investing in communities through capacity building means thinking and acting positively. Rather than starting with an analysis of the “problem”, the process begins with mapping assets and identifying opportunities. From there, strategies and investments are designed around the community’s strengths. With a clear vision of building a just and caring society where everyone has the opportunity to participate and contribute, social policies can be renewed to ensure that all government business supports that vision.

This contrasts with the more familiar approach that starts with a lengthy “needs assessment” or detailed analysis of threats, problems, and weaknesses.

Government leadership focuses on strategies of coaching, encouragement, and the belief that communities can pull together towards a shared goal. Government allocates resources in recognition of the impact of downloading onto communities.

Shrewd communities have the capacity to deal with various levels of government. They can talk intelligently about policy and enjoy engaging in dialogues about “what is a civil society?” or “how would our community look differently in a civil society?” “Community capacity building” is really about debating and learning from one another.

Empowerment vs. Micro-management

At all levels, we must learn the difference between governing and managing. Community boards of directors must learn to plan, devise policies, and set targets, trusting their volunteers and staff to implement them. Elected officials should focus on vision, values, and policy, expecting the bureaucracy to make it happen. Senior bureaucrats create the rules, programs, and limitations but refrain from micro-management. Front-line staff need the training, trust, and flexibility to do their work within the parameters set out by legislation and program guidelines.

Healthy public policy is any course of action adopted and pursued by a government, business, or other organization to improve health and reduce inequities in health.

John Millar

Trust and Trustworthiness

We need the “thinkers” and the “doers”. Too often these roles are reversed. Community boards are consumed with details. Senior managers try to control from above. Organizational dysfunction within government, community, and private organizations often traces back to lack of trust and respect for peoples’ abilities to do their job without interference.

Emphasis on Prevention Rather than Treatment

Why are health care costs going up? Why are some youth having troubles? Perhaps we didn’t provide enough family support when they were babies. Perhaps we don’t invest enough in health promotion and crime prevention.

Heavier investment in prevention strategies would encourage people to get help before they have a crisis, instead of *because* they are having a crisis. We would base social policy programs and services on a population health approach that recognizes the broad determinants of health.

Capacity to Learn; Commitment to Innovation

Shrewd communities look for ideas and resources from outside. They are never too proud to borrow someone else’s good idea. Successful groups actively seek best practices they can try out. They are committed to innovation. They know how to adapt ideas to local conditions.

Human and Financial Resources

Communities need money to make things happen. However, social investment is more than financial. It is the investment of trust, time, attention, respect, and policies that enable people and communities to realize their full potential. Social investment puts prevention and health promotion as the highest priority because it has a strong long-term return on the dollar.

Flexible Funding for Community Organizations

There is nothing wrong with making a financial contributions to help cover operational costs! This is the life-blood of an organization. Organizations cannot mobilize volunteers or manage effectively without core funding. Project funding may detract from the mission and actually breed inefficiency by encouraging an organization to move in the wrong direction.

Strategic investment in community organizations should actually reduce dependency. Private and public investment can help community organizations leverage investments from other sponsors such as foundations, agencies, and local citizens.

The question is: How do funders measure their return on their dollar? Understandably, funders have no interest in funding dysfunctional organizations whose track record cannot guarantee results.

Investing in People

People need to be able to work for a living wage. The economy cannot thrive if people have no disposable income. Henry Ford realized that his workers needed to be able to make enough to buy a car. The private sector must not forget this lesson in its rush to compete globally.

Regardless of their ability to participate actively in workforce, we need to pay attention to the life-long needs of people whose capacity is somewhat limited by their age, body, or mind.

Investing in Leaders

Successful organizations (public, private, or non-profit) have exceptional leaders. At the community level, volunteers, board members, and staff must have those special qualities that lead to community success: immense energy, commitment, diplomacy, tact, patience, as well as the ability to forge consensus and handle conflict. The managers are good analysts, strategists, and communicators with a clear relationship with their boards and volunteers.

Investing in Training

These traits are not inherent. We need resources for training. Community leaders need access to leadership training, capacity-building tools, strategic planning, conflict resolution, and a host of other skills. New Brunswick has a pool of skilled community development trainers, but there is no mechanism to help communities access their expertise and services.

Investing in Strategic Planning

The capacity to think, analyze, and plan strategically is a hallmark of success. Successful organizations believe in the value of research upon which to base their planning and evaluation. When organizations have their own house in order, i.e., a clear mission and plan for action, they are in a better position to sit down with their community partners from the private, public, and community sectors to combine efforts. In a global economy, the communities that survive may be those who can most effectively “collaborate to compete”.

Creation of Appropriate Structures at Each Stage

As the process evolves, the organizational structures must change too. The successful community organizations and partnerships adapt to change, always retaining their local nature and always ensuring that mechanisms for accountability and representation continue. Even when organizations outgrow their usefulness, wise community leaders recognize that the work is more important than the organization. Form follows function.

Transition of Power to a Younger Generation of Leaders

Just as we are coming to expect a new type of leadership at the provincial and federal levels, community leaders are also making a similar transition. Older leaders take up roles as mentors and guides, developing leadership skills in the next generation rather than managing the community alone. Shrewd communities accept and acknowledge women in leadership roles. Research shows that women are as involved in their communities as men but their under representation as recognized leaders sometimes results in perceptions that women are not very influential.⁶¹

Accountability

During the 1990s, “doing more with less” seemed to be the sole indicator of success. Now, we want to measure the return on investment.

Rather than just talking about accountability, we want to measure the real results—both quantitative and qualitative.

Currently, government agencies continue to demand that community groups perform all manner of evaluations, report writing, and busy work to justify the money spent. Unfortunately, the short-term nature of granting periods does not permit meaningful evaluation. Nor does intermittent project funding allow community organizations to invest in long-term strategies.

Perhaps provincial governments need to recall the good old days of accounting to the federal government prior to the Canada Health Act. To get their 50 cents back on every dollar spent on health and education, the provinces had to submit elaborate accounts as per eligibility guidelines. Welfare worked the same way. The red tape proved so onerous and counterproductive that in 1977 the federal government agreed to provide the provinces with block payments (CHST) to be spent in accordance with a set of principles enshrined in the Canada Health Act. While the arrangement has never been perfect, the provinces were happier with this accountability mechanism. They could at least spend the money within parameters and standards set by federal government with the freedom to vary services to meet diverse needs. Metering out annual blocks of money, the federal government could now get better control of its finances.

Are there effective mechanisms that encourage results rather instead of punishing with red tape? The federal government has initiated some federal action on this front. Ed Broadbent recently chaired a panel on accountability and governance in the voluntary sector and the panel’s report⁶² helped instigate the federal government to form cabinet committees of senior government and representatives from the voluntary sector⁶³ to look at:

- government-community relations
- building community capacity
- the regulatory framework affecting the non-profit sector.

Measuring Return on Investment

When government views itself as a funder, it is primarily concerned with re-distributing money. If government viewed itself as an investor, the process of grant-making would focus on what happens *after* the grant. Instead of tying creative strings and knots to the funds, government grant makers would be more concerned about earning a return on their dollar. Instead of the *process* of funding, their attention would focus on *results*.

We need better tools for targeted grant making that turn attention to the outcome of monies spent in the non-profit sector. Here is where we really need the mindset of the private sector. Following up to find out the ROTI (return on taxpayer's investment) would replace fussing with contracts.⁶⁴ Instead of buying service, government would be intent on buying change.

Conscious Civic Transformation

Sustainable community development is really about transformation of people. The community is in the driver's seat. The community is aware of its collective strengths and opportunities and has a plan to invest in them. There is evidence of community pride. There is emphasis on quality in business and community life. There is a participatory approach to community decision making. There is hope for the future. There is a preference for investing time, talent, and taxes in children and families and community.

Next Steps

Canadians must make a crucial decision. Should we ask our representatives in Ottawa to invest the surplus in the social economy in order to reap long-term dividends: healthier babies and children, safer communities, and higher education levels? Or do we cut taxes and trust that people will invest those dollars in the Canadian economy to achieve the same results through stronger competition, higher employment, and productivity?

In New Brunswick, we urge the public, private, and non-profit sectors to invest wisely in:

- collaborative leadership among community, government, and the private sector
- community capacity-building
- human and financial resources.

We believe that New Brunswickers seek a civil caring democratic society. We want to ensure that global forces do not increase the gap between the rich and the poor.

New Brunswickers want to engage government, communities, and the private sector in a dialogue about social policy change. Citizens want to transform outdated policies into "healthy public policy". Maybe globalization has reduced the power of government, but citizens still want their government leaders to be effective facilitators of public debate and collaborative action.

The very idea of broadening one's loyalties and affiliations beyond the narrow confines of the market place and the nation-state to include human species and the planet is revolutionary and portends vast changes in the structuring of society.

Jeremy Rifkin
The End of Work

It is time to sit down together and work out concrete strategies for investing in children, families, and community in New Brunswick.

We brought fiscal spending under control so we would not pass on unnecessary fiscal debt to our children. We must now renew social policies so we do not pass on the costs and consequences of poverty, ill health, illiteracy, and crime to our children.

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