Inclusive Cities Canada:
A Cross-Canada Civic Initiative

Background Paper and Project Overview, Phase 1

<u>Project Overview</u>

Inclusive Communities Canada (ICC) is a project of five community and regional social planning councils across Canada, in collaboration with the Standing Committee on Social Development of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM).

The goals of *Inclusive Cities Canada* are:
- to strengthen civic capacity to create and sustain inclusive communities for the mutual benefit of all people
- to ensure that work at the local civic level is acknowledged as being critical to a national urban strategy and that community voices of diversity are recognized as core Canadian voices.

The initiative connects partners in five urban areas across Canada, the cities of Vancouver and North Vancouver; the City of Edmonton; the city of Toronto; the city of Burlington; and the Greater Saint John Area of New Brunswick, in a multi-year project that will have the following two phases of development:

Phase 1: November 2003 to April 2005

<u>Mobilize community leadership and shape public policy</u> through the establishment of *civic panels* that will conduct local social inclusion audits/inquiries, which will identify civic policies, capacities and practices contributing to inclusive communities, with a particular focus on youth and families with children, vulnerable individuals and groups, and populations of diversity.

<u>Begin to develop cross-Canada knowledge networks</u> on strengthening social infrastructure and promoting public policy to advance social inclusion, including a website and working paper series on best practices and policy perspectives.

Phase 2: May 2005 to March 2006

Build strategic horizontal alliances both *within* and *across* urban communities in Canada (i.e. a Cross-Canada Civic Alliance on building inclusive cities).

Inclusive Cities Canada is based on the understanding that social inclusion benefits all members of the community: those who are vulnerable for reasons of poverty, racism, or fear of difference, for example, as well as the broader community that benefits when *all* people are able to participate as valued and contributing members. Inclusive communities do not just reduce exclusion: they recognize and value diversity; nurture human development and civic engagement; and promote cohesive living standards and adequate community supports.

Under the direction of a National Steering Committee, *Inclusive Cities Canada* builds on previous collaborative work between the Laidlaw Foundation, the FCM and regional social planning councils. The federal government's Social Development ministry provides multi-year core funding, with supplementary start-up funds from the Laidlaw Foundation.

Positioning the *Inclusive Cities Canada* Initiative

In the last few years, the concept of social inclusion has received significant attention in the Canadian social policy field. Concern in the 1990s about growing social and economic disparities, regional divisions, and cultural diversity generated studies on the social cohesion of the country (Jenson, 1998; Senate Committee, 1999). A fuller appreciation of the complexity of poverty broadened the debate to consideration of the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion, which had been a direction pursued in the European policy community for a number of years (Barata, 2000; Cushing, 2003).

A policy focus on social exclusion allows for more comprehensive treatment of the interdependent factors that distance, marginalize and deny social and economic well-being to parts of the population. It also contributes to a sense of empowerment of neglected political constituencies. A social exclusion perspective, however, leads to more sophisticated strategies for selectively addressing the deficiencies and needs of disadvantaged segments within the overall population. It does not necessarily address itself to the structural source of inclusion or the question of what people are being included in. Hence, social inclusion was seen as benefiting excluded or marginalized groups with little impact or benefit for the rest of society, other than providing the resources for more targeted supports.

There was some previous and ongoing work in several different fields pushing policy thinking towards a more robust conceptualization of social inclusion as indicated by the following.

Disability Field. Since the 1980s, the field of developmental disabilities, has promoted "community inclusion" for people with disabilities, internationally but with real strength in

Canada. "Community inclusion" became more than just physical and social integration supported by service systems. Rather, it was and is seen as communities welcoming people with disabilities as individuals of worth and value and with positive contributions to make to the quality of community life, when they are properly supported in the community.

Human Development Field. Also in the 1980s, Amartya Sen, the architect of the United Nations Development Programme, began to challenge the prevailing ideology for international development based on human capital and economic growth models, which promoted investment in the development of the skills and capabilities of people for reasons of improving economic productivity. He argued for an approach to human development that respected the right of everyone to personal development and growth and the opportunity to contribute to society, regardless of the anticipated future economic return on their efforts. Sen's concept of well-being is based on people having "the capability to lead worthwhile lives" (Anand and Sen, 1994).

Population Health Field. The population health approach emerging internationally from the health promotion movement of the 1980s, again with strong Canadian leadership (Ottawa Charter, 1986), is grounded in the notion that many social, environmental, cultural and physical "determinants" contribute to the health of individuals and communities. As Janet Guildford writes, *"The overall goal of a population health approach is to maintain and improve the health of the entire population and to reduce inequities in health between population groups."* (Guildford, 2000)

In this context, work in Canada on social inclusion in the last few years has tended to push beyond strictly eliminating exclusionary conditions. Examples include:

The Laidlaw Foundation. In 2000, the Laidlaw Foundation began to explore the concept of social inclusion as a possible strategic and conceptual focus of its Children's Agenda program (Freiler, 2000). The Foundation organized and conducted community soundings across Canada to develop the "Building Inclusive Communities and Cities" program in its Children's Agenda (Clutterbuck, 2002). Laidlaw tested community leaders' understandings of social inclusion, and as a result of these findings and its further deliberations produced a conceptual framework of social inclusion resting on five cornerstones (Freiler, 2003):

- *Valued recognition* – Conferring recognition and respect on individuals and groups.
- *Opportunities for human development* – Nurturing the talents, skills, capacities and choices of children and adults to live a life they value and to make contributions both they and others find worthwhile.
- *Involvement and engagement* – Having the right and necessary supports to make or be involved in decisions affecting oneself, family and community, and to be engaged in community life.
- *Proximity* - Sharing physical and social spaces to provide opportunities for

interactions, if desired, and to reduce social distances between people.

- *Material well-being* – Having the material resources to allow children and their parents to participate fully in community life. This includes being safely and securely housed and having an adequate income.

The Laidlaw Foundation followed up this important first initiative by working with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to test interest in urban communities across Canada on the idea of a cross-urban strategy for building inclusive communities, leading to the Inclusive Cities Project funded by HRDC (Clutterbuck and Novick, 2003).

The Population and Public Health Branch, Health Canada. In the Atlantic and Ontario Regions, Health Canada has supported policy and community practice work on social inclusion using a population health approach. In Atlantic Canada, it has supported research focusing on the participation of low-income people and specific low-income populations such as single parents in planning and decision-making initiatives on poverty reduction. The Atlantic Center for Excellence for Women's Health has taken the lead in creating accessible educational materials on social and economic inclusion, framing inclusion as "*welcom[ing] individuals and groups that society has previously left out into the planning, decision-making, and policy development processes in their community. Inclusion empowers them by offering the opportunities, resources and support they need to participate.*" (MCEWH, 2000) The Population Health Research Unit at Dalhousie University has created *An Inclusion Lens Workbook* for use by governments, NGOs and communities to identify barriers to inclusion in policies, legislation, programs and practices (Shookner, 2002).

In Ontario, Health Canada is concluding in March 2004 an eighteen month funding program, *"[t]o demonstrate how communities can mobilize and develop healthy public policies and practices that foster social and economic inclusion, and thereby, improve the conditions needed for good health."* (PPHB Ontario Region, Strategic Plan, 2000). PPHB has supported the Social Planning Network of Ontario (SPNO) and social planning councils in five regions across the province to develop and implement the *Closing the Distance* Project. This Project makes a clear distinction between social inclusion and exclusion as follows: *"Social and economic EXCLUSION is based on the reality that a variety of conditions exist and interact to exclude or 'leave out ' people in many groups and sub-populations in our society. People experience inequality and get pushed to the margins of society in many ways. Social and economic INCLUSION focuses on these inequities as an issue of 'closing the distance' between sub-groups and the larger society."* (Clutterbuck, 2002).

Addressing the interests of vulnerable populations in five regions of Ontario in this Project, local leaders are mobilizing their communities for transformative change at the centre, which would be more inclusive to the excluded but would also benefit the overall health and well-being of the larger community. Health Canada in Ontario is also supporting other provincial organizations through its Social and Economic Inclusion Initiative (Ontario AIDS Network, Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse, Children's Prevention Coalition/ Children's Nutrition Prevention Coalition).

Canadian Association for Community Living. From 1997 through 2002, the CACL joined with HRDC and People First of Canada in a Community Inclusion Partnership Initiative that reached 500 communities across Canada *"to strengthen their capacities for including and supporting people with an intellectual disability and their families in all aspects of community life."* (Roeher Institute, 2002). This approach clearly emphasized supported and valued participation of people with intellectual disabilities in community life as opposed to just service development and delivery for their successful integration into the community.

Social Development Partnerships, Human Resources Development Canada. The Inclusive Cities Project is one of a number of major projects funded by HRDC under the Social Inclusion Stream of Social Development Partnerships. Like the ICP, all of these projects are launching themselves in this period. Examples include CAMPAIGN 2000 working to reduce child poverty and the Canadian Community Economic Development Network focusing on the creation of a Pan-Canadian Community Development Learning Network made up of *"practitioners from rural, northern, Aboriginal and urban disadvantaged communities that are using multi-faceted strategies to overcome barriers to social inclusion and economic self-efficiency."* The conceptual development and approaches taken in the name of social inclusion in these initiatives will become clearer as these HRDC funded projects get underway.

In light of the preceding, *Inclusive Cities Canada* is assuming a distinctive position to make a contribution to the development of a social inclusion framework into policy and practice. *ICC* starts with an understanding that social inclusion:

- demands the reduction of economic, social and political inequities within the population, not only for reasons of social justice for the excluded but also as an essential condition for the social, economic, and cultural well-being of the whole population;

- centres a collective commitment both to sharing common values and principles of social citizenship and to respecting and accommodating diversity within the population;

- recognizes, values and supports the contributions of all community members to the economic, social and cultural life of society; and

- reflects, in both the substance and the process, positive change in policies, programs, systems, institutions, and organizations.

In the Canadian context, *Inclusive Cities Canada* is also distinctive in its approach to building inclusive communities in the following ways:

- It brings together partners made up of both elected municipal officials and

community leaders in the voluntary sector not only at the local level but at the cross-national level as well.

- It will develop a common approach to identifying inclusive policy and practice in four urban centers, which reflect the full range of diversity of community life in Canada.

- It will engage local leadership in the application and testing of indicators across a set of "inclusion dimensions" that encompass the lived experience of urban community members (civic audits/inquiries).

- It will report the results of its inquiry/audit to its participating municipal councils and local/regional publics in order to promote action for building more inclusive communities.

- It will connect learning from its intensive community studies in the four urban areas into a national forum for the development and promotion of policy frameworks to strengthen social infrastructure and to build inclusive communities across Canada.

Scan of Other Relevant Work on Social Exclusion and Inclusion in Urban Environments

There is other important work being done directly or in a related way on social exclusion/inclusion with an urban focus in Canada and internationally.

Many initiatives focus primarily on social exclusion and barriers to social inclusion with a resulting emphasis on highly selective strategies targeted at specific populations. Some of the material, however, is relevant to and provides some insights for *ICC's* interests:

Significance of Urban Focus. There is a growing recognition of the value of "place" in terms of urban environments in framing supportive public policy. Globalization and social change are creating more complex and diverse local settings within which people experience daily life. Public policy and planning approaches must become more sensitive to this phenomenon. The Local Governance and Promoting Social Inclusion Project at the University of Queensland is doing both theoretical and case study research in this area. It is re-conceptualizing local action based on the notion of "network governance" in which an "engaged state" supports a set of strategic and purposive relationships among local organizations and sectors in the public, market and non-profit spheres. (Jones, Reddel, and Smyth, 2002; Boorman and Woolcock, 2002; Brown and Walsh, 2001**).**

Starting with "Lived Experience". Following naturally from sensitivity to the diversity of localities is the notion that inclusive policy and practice must become more grounded in the "lived experience" of communities. More research and development initiatives are recognizing the importance of qualitative research generated by reaching out to people in

communities for their accounts, testimonies, and experiences of exclusion and inclusion. The need for a stronger connection between community experience and policy development at the front end and throughout the policy and program planning process is becoming accepted wisdom (City of Edinburgh, 2002; Usherwood and Linley, 1998).

Achieving a Shared Vision Among Diverse Stakeholders. A number of initiatives focus on supporting multiple and diverse stakeholders to create a shared vision of urban life and strategies for achieving the vision, which is consistent with the approach of ICC. Vital Communities, sponsored by the Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement with funding support from the McConnell Foundation, engages low-income people, local community organizations, businesses and governments in a community planning and program development process to reduce poverty (HYPERLINK "http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca" www.tamarackcommunity.ca). The World Bank and UN-Habitat combined to launch a global network of cities and international development partners (e.g. CIDA in Canada) to employ a similar approach labeled City Development Strategies to reduce poverty in Asian and African cities. WHO takes a similar approach in Europe through a European Healthy Cities initiative (HYPERLINK "http://www.euro.who.int/healthy-cities" www.euro.who.int/healthy-cities).

Accommodating Diversity within Commitment to Collectively Shared Values and Principles. Respecting and accommodating diversity within a common framework of shared values and principles is a major challenge in a social inclusion framework, especially in a highly multi-cultural and multi-racial society. Britain is dealing with these pressures and a report on The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain stirred some controversy on traditional notions of "Britishness" (Parekh, 2000). Parekh and others have begun to challenge mainstream and dominant national cultures towards framing higher order, shared value systems and more inclusive identities, such as principles of humanity and citizenship rather than nationality and race (Amin, 2002). This discussion is very relevant to the ICC, given the issue of cultural and racial diversity in several of the participating urban areas.

Focus of Civic Audits: Five Dimensions of Inclusion

Inclusive Cities Canada supports a structure and process for conducting Civic Audits that will assess the strength of civic assets (i.e. degree of development, under-development, or absence) in the participating urban areas along the following five dimensions:

Diversity - How well do public institutions, such as local government, the police and justice system, and public education, provide valued recognition and respond to diverse groups in the population?

Human Development - What opportunities exist for children and youth to develop their talents, skills and capacities to contribute to the community?

Civic Engagement - What are cities and communities doing to promote active participation in local government, community organizations and civic life?

Living Conditions - Are there significant differences in levels of income, decent jobs, safe neighbourhoods, and the availability of affordable housing among city residents?

Community Services – How well is your city served by important public services such as health care, crisis, and transportation services?

Community Focus Groups and Common Areas of Inquiry

Local partners conducted 10 to 12 community focus groups of about 8 to12 participants to provide valuable qualitative information for the civic audit, as well as to identify areas that require further research.

Focus group participants acted as key informants who reflected the social and cultural diversities of the partner cities and communities. They provided strong insights from a wide range of experiences and perspectives, which were explored more fully through a series of local soundings.

A trained facilitator employed a structured process that provided an opportunity for both individual and collective input. Participants were asked to identify what positive changes were needed at the policy and practice levels. The local civic audit reports will integrate the contributions of the community focus groups, local soundings, relevant statistical research, and key informant information.

Dimensions of Inclusion and Common Areas of Inquiry

Dimensions of Inclusion	Cross-Canada Common Areas of Inquiry		
Diversity	Local Government	Publicly Funded Education	Policing & Justice System
Human Development	Early Childhood Education	Publicly Funded Education	Recreation/Arts/Culture
Civic Engagement	Local Government	Public Spaces	Community Capacities
Living Conditions	Income &Employment	Housing	Community Safety
Community Services	Health care	Crisis Services	Transportation & Mobility

Local Soundings

In addition to the community focus groups, informal local soundings were held in all the partner cities to provide greater focus and understanding of issues facing diverse populations. The questions for local soundings are below:

Describing the realities of exclusion
How do people in this group or community feel left out? Or, that they do not belong or are not part of the community? How do they experience exclusion or being "put at a distance" from others in the community?

Identifying the sources of exclusion
Why do people feel left out? What do they say is the cause of their exclusion? What do they point to as the problems?

Framing indicators or benchmarks of inclusion
How could the people affected feel that they were part of the community? What would give them a sense of belonging and recognition? What would have to change in the way that they experience life in the community and larger society?

Suggesting action to create inclusion
Where change should happen to make inclusion real in people's lives? What kinds of

action are needed? Who is responsible for making these changes? (e.g. leaders, organizations, governments, institutions – propose examples that tie back to their explanations of the causes of exclusion).

Next Steps: Civic Audit Reports and a National Symposium

Civic Panels will produce *civic audit reports* early in 2005 with policy and practice recommendations and a description of what works and what doesn't.   A cross-Canada report will be the focus of a national symposium in May of 2005 to develop and promote policies to strengthen social infrastructure and build inclusive cities nationwide.

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