

# **Towards a New *Social* Deal for Cities and Communities in Canada**

prepared for:

**'Building a New Canada: Meeting the Civic Challenges of Social Inclusion'  
A National Conference Convened by *Inclusive Cities Canada*  
Gatineau, Quebec  
November 28, 2005**

by:

**Michael Bach  
Executive Vice-President  
Canadian Association for Community Living**  
[mbach@cacl.ca](mailto:mbach@cacl.ca)

**November 2005**

## **Introduction**

First, I would like to congratulate *Inclusive Cities Canada*, the civic panels, and the funding partnership led by the Laidlaw Foundation and Social Development Canada for making this initiative happen. You have put on the agenda both social inclusion and social infrastructure as part of the Government of Canada's New Deal for Cities and Communities. And as someone who represents a national federation<sup>1</sup> trying to advance a local-to-national agenda for social and economic inclusion of 750,000 of the most marginalized of Canadians let me say your leadership is welcome indeed. I see this conference as an opportunity to build on your work to date and outline steps for building a national movement and alliances for the next phases of a New Deal for Cities and Communities.

## **Outlining the New Deal and the Need for a New *Social* Deal for Cities and Communities**

The question for this session of the 'Building A New Canada' Conference is: "How can the New Deal for Cities and Communities strengthen the social infrastructure of cities and communities?" I think the clearest answer is we don't know yet because we don't yet have any agreements for the "social dimension" of the New Deal. Most of the bilateral Federal-Provincial/Territorial Gas Tax Transfer agreements – which are seen as one of the main instruments of the New Deal – imagine future discussions and agreements to advance social cohesion and social infrastructure, but that is as far as they go.

Let me clarify what I mean. I think we need to distinguish the vision and broad framework of the New Deal, from the funding mechanisms and agreements established to date. The vision is clear – as stated by the Government of Canada:

The New Deal is an opportunity for the citizens of Canada to rethink the way that Canada and its cities and communities are shaped, to ensure that Canada will be a world leader in developing vibrant, creative, inclusive, prosperous and sustainable cities and communities.

The New Deal Vision has four dimensions or pillars – economic, environmental, social, and cultural sustainability. The agreements put into place to date and that are consolidated so far under the New Deal focus mostly

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<sup>1</sup> The Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) is a national federation of 13 provincial/territorial and over 400 local Associations for Community Living, with 40,000 members nationally. CACL's mission is to advance the full citizenship, human rights, and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. CACL is an active member of Inclusion Interamericana, the regional federation of sister organizations in the Americas, and of Inclusion International, the International Federation of over 200 national family-based associations with a mission to advance the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities globally.

on the environmental and economic dimensions – the gas tax transfers for infrastructure to promote environmental sustainability being the primary one.

One of the starting points for my remarks today is that the current agreements and programs under the New Deal (including GST/HST rebate for municipalities - Increase to 100% from 57%; Agreement On The Transfer Of Federal Gas Tax Revenues Under The New Deal; Public Transit Agreements; and increasing the flow of dollars to smaller communities and First Nations under the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Program) are not designed or intended as social infrastructure programs. We may be able to capture some social reinvestments as a result of new revenue at the municipal level, but the current arrangements are not designed to do so (if that were the case there would be reinvestment agreements with the federal government, and a system for shared reporting on social investments). I think we need to see these as early but important steps for the New Deal that begin to address its environmental and economic dimensions. They need not be the model entirely for the kinds of arrangements we need for the other dimensions outlined in the vision of the New Deal – the social and cultural dimensions.

I also want to say at the outset that I think our job here is not simply to read off the potential social implications of the current funding arrangements, though of course investment in new infrastructure that promotes environmental sustainability and helps expand economic productivity has all kinds of social implications. I think our task is to conceive of what a New *Social* Deal for Cities and Communities should look like along with the arrangements and agreements to put that deal into place – just like we need to be looking at the arrangements for a New Environmental Deal, New Economic Deal, and New Cultural Deal.

Let me also say at the outset that CACL strongly supports the expanded mandate of the New Deal – from its initial formulation as a New Deal for major cities only, to a New Deal for Cities and Communities. Like others, I am aware of the economic arguments for investing in the ‘alpha’ and ‘beta’ megacities that ‘cluster’ economic actors in ways that enable city regions to become key nodes in the expanding networks of economic globalization. I agree this is essential for Canada’s economic prosperity and for building a tax base to help fund investments in social infrastructure and a more active role for Canada in international aid and development. I also agree that Canada’s major cities have unique issues to confront – like the scale of immigration to Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, for example; the growing ethno-racial-cultural and economic divides in these cities where difference comes to mean inequality and marginalization; and the transportation infrastructure requirements that are of direct national economic importance.

However, I also believe that investing in Iqaluit and other communities in the North, and relatively small cities and communities in Atlantic Canada, and

elsewhere is just as essential for Canada's economic, cultural, environmental and social well-being and sustainability as investing in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and the Edmonton-Calgary corridor. I also believe that the megacities of the new global economic order are not isolated ventures – they exist only as nodes in ever-expanding networks and flows of knowledge and values with other megacities globally *and* with smaller cities and communities. That many smaller cities and communities will go through profound restructuring as a result of this emerging global order is without doubt – all the more reason to make sure we have a New Deal that addresses the unique needs of major cities and their relation to smaller cities and communities.

So in my remarks today I want to focus on the question: “What agreements and arrangements are needed to deliver on the social dimension of a New Deal for Cities and Communities? What could these look like?” And I want to do so from the perspective of people with intellectual disabilities and their families who want to be active, welcomed, contributing members in Canadian society; recognized and valued as people who fully belong in the cities and communities we are building. My hope is that as we create momentum and alliances for a New Social Deal for Cities and Communities in Canada we do so from the perspective of the diverse groups who are excluded from so many of the benefits and opportunities their local communities should provide. So I bring to this dialogue but one of the many perspectives I think is essential for striking a New Social Deal for cities and communities in Canada.

As a way of identifying what we need from social infrastructure investments under a New Deal I will reflect on concrete and practical efforts by our Association for Community Living federation and partners across the country to build new, and transform existing, social infrastructure to make it more inclusive of people with intellectual disabilities. We have been doing so in many ways, but I think lessons learned from the “Community Inclusion Initiative” are instructive for how we might build a New Social Deal for Canada.

### **The Community Inclusion Initiative**

The goal of the Community Inclusion (CI) Initiative is to *build the capacity that communities require to successfully include people with disabilities in ways that promote their roles as full citizens in society*. Since its inception in 1997, this collaborative initiative with Provincial/Territorial Associations for Community Living has reached over 500 communities across the country, engaging 850 community partners, and 350 local, provincial/territorial, and federal government partner departments.

The Community Inclusion Initiative was launched in the context of a broader recognition in the disability sector, and indeed across governments and civil society, that an inclusive Canada that fostered full citizenship for all people was an imperative. This growing commitment to full citizenship, as reflected in the *In*

*Unison Accord*,<sup>2</sup> provided a rationale for new ways of thinking about community capacity building to enable people with disabilities to become more fully included and participate in Canadian society.

The Initiative has been successful in reframing “community inclusion” from an issue seen originally as being owned by the “community living community” to one that more correctly speaks to issues of *full citizenship, human rights and equal participation for all people*.

In early 1996 – 97, an initial proposal to guide national, provincial/territorial and local action - and to provide a CI Initiative design and structure - was set out in *A National Plan to Promote the Economic Inclusion, Full Participation and Citizenship of Canadians with an Intellectual Disability*.

- A collaborative arrangement and funding agreement was reached between the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL)<sup>3</sup>, People First of Canada, and Human Resources Development Canada (now SDC) and specified the significant role to be played by provincial/territorial and local ACLS, P/T People First chapters, and provincial/territorial governments.
- The CI Initiative began with a series of regional consultations and planning meetings with partners in the previous NSIPD deinstitutionalization process, families, individuals, ACLs, People First organizations, and community and government organizations. These meetings enabled the identification of relevant community issues as articulated by local community stakeholders.
- Two major barriers to achieving inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities were been identified: *isolation* and *poverty*.
- Activities within the CI Initiative focus on 1) strengthening of supports for individuals and families and 2) increasing community capacity. Specific efforts focus on one or more of four identified themes areas: *facilitating and enriching personal relationships; strengthening supports for families; facilitating employment; and enabling citizenship*.
- Much of the success of the initiative can be attributed to its unique funding and delivery structure. Funds are not allocated to provinces and territories based on a population model but rather a formula that was collaboratively

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<sup>2</sup> This Accord, signed by the federal and provincial/territorial governments (excluding Quebec which expressed commitment to the principles of the Accord), committed governments to advancing the full citizenship of Canadians with disabilities by investing in disability supports, employment opportunities and reform of income programs.

<sup>3</sup> The Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) is a national federation of 13 provincial/territorial associations and over 400 local associations for Community Living. Our mission is to advance the human rights, inclusion, and full citizenship of people with intellectual disabilities. CACL is an active member of Inclusion Interamericana, the regional federation of sister organizations in the Americas, and of Inclusion International, the International Federation of over 200 national family-based associations with a mission to advance the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities globally.

developed by all stakeholder groups. The structures of the CACL and People First federations were significant assets to the initiative given that each has a national body, with P/T counterparts, and hundreds of community based local chapters.

Based on the successful outcomes of the initiative a model for community engagement has emerged, and comprises the following elements:

- Local community based initiatives
- Provincial/territorial NGO capacity
- National NGO capacity
- Provincial/Territorial Government partnership
- Federal Funding Leadership
- Participatory Accountability and Evaluation Process

**Case Example: Community Inclusion and Public Education**

One of the priorities for the Initiative at the national level is advancing inclusive public education – which the civic panels for the Inclusive Cities Initiative also identify as one of the major elements of social infrastructure that needs to be addressed to build more inclusive communities. Their reports, and the summary report prepared by Peter Clutterbuck, Marvyn Novick and Christa Freiler, point to the fact that public education curriculum, culture, programs, and facilities are not as inclusive as they need to be, and that schools are not designed to be the meeting ground and resource that they could be for their communities.

A public education system that helps build and transmit societal values, social cohesion, cultural identities, knowledge, and skills is just as important for children and youth with intellectual disabilities as it is for other Canadian children and youth. Because of its central role in the physical, intellectual, cultural, and social development of children and youth it represents foundational social infrastructure for cities and communities. Yet it is to a great extent failing children and youth with intellectual disabilities as it is certain other groups. Between 40 and 50% of children with intellectual disabilities are outside of the regular classroom, despite evidence that shows heterogeneous classrooms benefit children with special needs without undermining performance of higher achieving students. Research also shows that inclusion in regular classrooms benefits children with disabilities to a much greater extent than children separated in segregated classrooms and schools – in terms of rates of school completion, participation in post-secondary education, employment, community participation and incomes. Research also shows that having children and youth with intellectual disabilities generates among their peers tolerance, understanding of diversity, and recognition of our essential interdependence.

For the CACL federation and our partners, transforming this aspect of community social infrastructure is essential if communities are to become places where people with intellectual disabilities are to be given a fair and equal chance, places where all belong.

As we have been tackling the challenges of transforming public education, I think we have learned some helpful lessons, and we continue to learn them, for broader efforts at building socially inclusive infrastructure in cities and communities.

I do not have the space here to outline in detail our agenda and strategies for transforming public education. But let me share a few examples to give you a sense of what we are doing – and how local city and community transformation is connected to investments at provincial/territorial and national levels.

Like other areas of social infrastructure in cities and communities, public education systems cannot be made fully inclusive in one fundamental systemic reform. Research by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development into comparative national trends in inclusive education could find no single set of national-level policy/program factors that led to inclusive education. This is consistent with our ‘on the ground’ experience. While legislation, policy and program provide an essential context for change, leadership and capacity to change classrooms and schools is taken one teacher at a time, one principal at a time. The same is true for building inclusive childcare programs, recreation programs, etc. The ‘challenge of change’ in building inclusive cities and communities is indeed local-to-national, and at the local, it can come down to changing one program, one classroom at a time. Conceiving of a change process this complex is challenging enough, let alone structuring a set of policy and program incentives to put it into place.

A couple of vignettes to make this complex process visible and concrete (not that we have it all worked out, by any stretch of the imagination)...

A couple of weeks ago I was in Belleville, Ontario – a smaller city on the scale of cities – to participate in a community wide planning meeting on inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities in the regular school system. The event brought together students, parents, the Superintendent of Education, school board trustees, directors of education, teachers, principals, school psychologists and psychometrists, community agencies, advocacy groups. The aim was to consider how to begin shifting to a more inclusive system for the community. This was an impressive event and there is a sense of goodwill and shared belief of the importance of making the shifts now imagined in that community. The efforts of individual teachers and principals in that community now have a community context to support their efforts and make them more systemic.

That event was inspired by a National Summit on Inclusive Education – convened by CACL in November 2004, in partnership with the Canadian Teachers Federation, the Canadian Home and School Federation, and the Canadian Education Association. The Summit was attended by students, parents, provincial/territorial associations for Community Living, representatives of the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, some deputy ministers of education and government education officials from many provinces. It opened with a keynote address by Dr. Paul Cappon, just finishing his tenure as Director-General of the Council of Ministers of Education. The day after his keynote to our Summit, he formally launched, as its first CEO, the new Canadian Council on Learning which will report to Canadians on learning opportunities and outcomes – early childhood to post-secondary and lifelong learning. Some teachers and principals from Belleville had attended the Summit and decided they needed to begin transforming the education system in their own community.

The National Summit grew out of conversations initially held with the Nova Scotia Teachers Federation which had passed a policy resolution in 2002 withholding continued support for inclusive education because of a lack of resources. CACL and our provincial/territorial associations decided we needed to begin a dialogue with teacher federations to address this issue – as a parent-based association we know we won't change education systems on our own – we need teachers and principals to lead the way. Out of a nationwide consultation process with community representatives and teacher federations – listening to the issues teachers are facing in teaching to ever growing diversity in their classrooms – we fashioned a National Summit.

And now, just last week in Ottawa, the Canadian Teachers Federation hosted a major conference on inclusive education – which it committed to do as a follow up to our Summit one year ago. They expanded the focus beyond disability to address issues of anti-racist education, anti-homophobic education, inclusion of First Nations and Aboriginal students, and inclusive education for children and youth with disabilities. This conference enabled further dialogue among our provincial/territorial representatives at the Conference and teachers, principals, and teacher federation representatives – to build relationships and make plans to advance change in education systems in cities and communities across the country.

The conference was also the place where some of our local parent leadership (developed in part through the CI Initiative) met Stephen Lewis in an intense exchange in the public questioning following his keynote address to the over 600 conference delegates. He spoke of the importance of assuring full inclusion of all children in regular classrooms, and transforming curricula to reflect the histories and experiences of marginalized groups – afro-Canadians, gay and lesbian students, aboriginal and First Nations students. He also said



that we should do everything possible to make sure children with disabilities can be in the regular classroom, recognizing that sometimes this just isn't possible. Three parent leaders, who had gone through local parent leadership development programs under the Community Inclusion initiative – stood up, tentatively, full of passion and emotion, to challenge him on this last point. Through a number of exchanges the parents affirmed that in their experience with their own children with disabilities if teachers are supported and if we structure classrooms appropriately, and if we have the curriculum modifications students need, then there is no reason a child has to be out of the regular classroom even if he or she has significant or 'profound' needs. Through the dialogue Stephen Lewis changed his mind. His final statement at the keynote session was that he agreed – if we could collectively support teachers to teach to the diversity of all students in the classroom, then there is no reason a child would have to be pulled out of a classroom simply because of his or her disability. And he stated, that would be ideal.<sup>4</sup> Advocates can change international opinion-leaders' minds (Stephen Lewis, identified by *Time* magazine as one of the world's 100 most influential leaders fits the bill), and we can use that credibility to help change minds and strategies in local settings.

Through the past few years our provincial/territorial Associations for Community Living have undertaken various efforts in transforming local public education systems. In Ontario, Community Living Ontario has developed resources to assist school communities to go through a process to reflect on the culture of inclusion in their own school and to develop a plan to strengthen it – not only for students with disabilities, but for all students. This tool is now being used in over 100 schools in Ontario and new school boards are joining this process as we speak. The New Brunswick Association for Community Living has been working closely with the Department of Education, which has taken the leadership to host a provincial Summit on Inclusive Education in Spring 2006. As a result of community efforts for inclusive education in British Columbia by the BC Association for Community Living and other inclusive education groups, the BC federation of teachers is investing 1/3 of the court-ordered fine of \$500,000 imposed on the union for its 'illegal strike' earlier this year, in a community partnership to advance inclusive education in school systems in the province.

There are many other examples I could share, but I illustrate these, and the connections between them, simply to make my point: Building local social infrastructure takes efforts at many levels – among governments and civil society – local-to-national-even international. Some of the biggest challenges are within civil society. We need capacities to stay focused on actual places

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<sup>4</sup> This is not to suggest that no student should ever get individualized attention and assistance outside of a class for time-limited and very specific purposes – tutoring, cultural, religious reasons. It is when only children with disabilities are pulled out, or educated primarily in segregated settings that the different treatment becomes discriminatory and marginalizing.

like Belleville, but create opportunities for the players in Belleville to come together and engage not just locally but provincially and nationally as well with teacher federations, other civil society groups, governments, and opinion leaders. We need to share knowledge on best practices between communities, and mobilize social capital nationally to create a context for change locally.

### **Lessons Learned from the Community Inclusion Initiative**

From our experience in this initiative, we have identified some key elements for building socially inclusive communities:

- *Organizational leadership and capacity*
  - To continue efforts at community change and to focus on affecting change at a community systems level (primary, secondary, post-secondary education, early learning and childcare, settlement, housing, recreation) it is critical that organizational leadership remain stable. Capacity must be built and sustained in voluntary sector organizations – local-to-national. Short-term, project specific funding often drains capacity rather than builds it. A different funding regime for the voluntary sector is required if it is to realize its potential in building inclusive cities and communities.
- *Utilization of social capital*
  - Community inclusion happens where social capital has been accrued in the form of partnerships created within community and with cross sectoral organizations, the development of a shared knowledge and values base, and the establishment of a relationship of trust among and between these partners.
- *Building systemic capacity.*
  - Enhancement of inclusionary practices is often stymied by policy and practice frameworks that do not support inclusion or actually create exclusionary practices. We also need investments in policy change at the local, provincial/territorial, and federal/national levels.

### **Framing a New Social Deal for Cities and Communities in Canada**

Based on our experience in building inclusive social infrastructure in cities and communities across Canada, I want to suggest some elements for a New Social Deal. I see these as pieces that need to be in place if we are to have some success in achieving the scale of change needed to build social infrastructure that responds to and accommodates the increasingly diverse identities and needs in Canadian society and does so in a way that advances social inclusion and cohesion.

In the following table, I identify in the first column what we know, based on our experience, are key starting points and building blocks for building social inclusion and social infrastructure. Based on these building blocks, I suggest in the second column corresponding arrangements and mechanisms for a New

Social Deal for cities and communities to advance needed social cohesion, inclusion, and social infrastructure.

I provide these suggestions as a way of illustrating the policy directions we could pursue if we take the social dimension of the New Deal seriously, and think through its policy implications. Further analysis, different social standpoints and perspectives, and focused dialogue would certainly enhance, revise, and add to this list below.