CREATING SHARED PROSPERITY |
CITIES THAT LEAD, SUCCEED

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WHAT IS SHARED PROSPERITY?

Shared Prosperity means we eliminate poverty, we include everyone and we achieve our collective potential. Making economic and social participation easier for one group makes it easier for everyone: This is the essence of Shared Prosperity.

Introduction

Canada is an urban society. Four out of five Canadians live in city-regions; 27 municipalities are home to two- thirds of the country's population [*Conference Board of Canada 2007*]. Cities' mix of businesses, government bodies, institutions and talent pools create synergies, encourage innovation, and generate new products, services and markets.

Conversely, recent trends toward greater income polarization and growing pockets of concentrated poverty in Canada's municipalities are of great concern. These factors affect municipalities' capacity to attract new people and investment. They restrict the ability of all residents to fully participate in their communities' economic and social life.

The good news is that municipalities of all sizes can transcend the ills of poverty by adopting a vision of shared prosperity. They can use their policy levers and leadership position to create environments where people enjoy a high quality of life, innovation thrives and a robust social infrastructure leads to economic and social benefits for all residents.

The impetus for change may come from within city hall. Councilors and staff can research successes achieved in other jurisdictions and bring them forward for consideration. Municipal administrators may suggest new initiatives and build support for their ideas among elected officials. Well-organized individuals and groups might make recommendations that lead to change. At other times, the loss of a key industry or the growth of new or existing ones can exert pressure on municipal revenues and services. Often, an emotional connection to poverty – through personal history or the experiences of family, friends or even strangers – becomes a powerful driver of change.

All of us want to build the conditions that will allow future generations to succeed. While cities may be constrained by federal and provincial funding structures, they have plenty of room in which to work. New ways of ascribing the value of municipal investments clearly demonstrate the reach and heft of municipal decisions. For example, 'Calgary's Low-Income Transit Passes were recently shown to demonstrate a social return on investment of $16 for every dollar invested.

This paper uses input and examples from a pan-Canadian network of municipalities striving to improve quality of life – as inspiration for municipalities and citizens to consider how they too can build a prosperity agenda.

Cities Reducing Poverty Municipalities (as of April 2014) Introduction

- City of St. John's via Vibrant Communities St. John's, NFLD
- City of Charlottetown via Women's Network PEI, PEI
- Charlotte County via Vibrant Communities Charlotte County, NB
- City of Montreal via Vivre St. Michel en Sante and RQRI, QC
- City of Windsor and Municipality of Essex via Pathway to Potential Windsor-Essex, ON
- Municipality of Chatham-Kent via Prosperity Roundtable of Chatham-Kent, ON
- City of Brantford and County of Brant via Brant-Brantford Roundtable on Poverty, ON
- Region of Waterloo, ON
- City of Hamilton, via Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, ON
- Regional Municipality of Halton, via Halton Roundtable on Poverty, ON
- Cities of Burlington, Oakville, Milton and Halton Hills via Halton Roundtable on Poverty, ON
- Regional Municipality of Niagara, ON
- Region of Peel via Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy, ON
- City of Peterborough via Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network, ON
- City of Kingston via Kingston Poverty Reduction Roundtable, ON
- City of London via London Child and Youth Network, ON
- City of Thunder Bay via Poverty Free Thunder Bay/Lakehead Social Planning Council, ON
- City of Guelph and County of Wellington via Guelph-Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination, ON
- County of Huron via Huron Anti-Poverty

- Initiative
- County of Simcoe, ON
- United Counties of Leeds and Grenville, ON
- City of Winnipeg via Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council, MB
- City of Saskatoon via Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership, SK
- City of Calgary via Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative and Vibrant Communities Calgary, AB
- City of Lethbridge via Vibrant Lethbridge, AB
- City of Medicine Hat via From Charity to Investment in Medicine Hat, AB
- City of Red Deer via Central Alberta Poverty Reduction Alliance, AB
- City of Edmonton via Edmonton Task Force for the Elimination of Poverty, AB
- City of Grande Prairie, AB
- City of Abbotsford via Vibrant Abbotsford, BC
- City of Victoria via Community Social Planning Council of Victoria, BC
- City of Surrey via Vibrant Surrey, BC
- City of Revelstoke, BC
- Government of the Northwest Territories
- Government of Nunavut

The Cost of Poverty

Poverty results from both systemic causes, such as inadequate levels of income support, and personal causes, such as severe and prolonged disability. The Association of Ontario Food Banks estimated that poverty costs Canada between $24 and $30 billion every year [*Laurie 2008*]. These costs break down as follows:

- $7.5 billion is attributable to increased health care spending. Chronic stress, poor nutrition, inadequate housing, lack of access to primary health care and unstable social environments all take their toll. People in the lowest income quintile use almost twice as much health care as those earning more; 20 per cent of total health care spending is attributable to income disparities.

- Costs to the justice and police systems incurred by individuals living in poverty are estimated to cost Ontario alone between $0.25 and $0.6 billion.

- $3.1 billion to $3.8 billion could be added to extra income tax revenues if child poverty were eliminated.

- $8.6 billion to $13 billion is the estimated loss to income tax revenue to poverty experienced each year by the federal and provincial governments across Canada.
Vibrant Communities Calgary's 2012 report *Poverty Costs: An Economic Case for a Preventative Poverty Reduction Strategy for Alberta* puts the annual poverty price tag in that province between $7.1 and $9.5 billion:
  - $1.2 billion in health care costs
  - $560 million in costs attributable to crime
  - $473 million – $591 million in intergenerational costs

  - $4.8 billion – $7.2 billion in lost economic opportunities for people living in poverty [*Briggs and Lee 2012*].

A similar report in Saskatchewan, *Poverty Costs*, showed a very similar break down in the 3.8 billion that poverty costs Saskatchewan each year.

The two principal costs of poverty cited by these organizations – health care and lost opportunity – may not look like traditional areas of municipal activity. Upon closer inspection, municipal efforts in the areas of transportation, recreation, homelessness and housing are already improving the health outcomes and financial outlook of their citizens.

As the following examples illustrate, municipalities are using both their policy levers and leadership capacity to directly benefit their most vulnerable citizens. Affording all people chances to make the most of their health, energies and talents benefits the entire community. Making economic and social participation easier for one group makes it easier for everyone; this is the essence of shared prosperity.

Charting a Course for Shared Prosperity

The notion of creating shared prosperity is not new in Canada. Since the 1990s, municipalities across the country have been bringing together representatives of local government, business, nonprofit organizations and people with lived experience to create local poverty reduction and community revitalization plans. Between 2002 and 2011, Vibrant Communities – a learning community sponsored by the Tamarack Institute, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and the Caledon Institute of Social Policy – shared and multiplied poverty reduction successes among its members.

After 2011, Vibrant Communities was re- envisioned by the Tamarack Institute and the 13 original participating communities as Vibrant Communities Canada: Cities Reducing Poverty. It has since grown its membership to 43 municipal regions. By 2016, its goal is to bring an additional 57 members into the fold. It is envisioned that 100 municipalities with multi-sector roundtables actively focused on reducing place-based poverty will make a significant impact to reduce poverty for 1 million Canadians.

Local governments have a unique and important role in building communities that matter. They shape the conditions that attract people and capital and ensure funding is used effectively to build attractive and sustainable communities that offer opportunities to all residents. A municipality's services, programs and facilities form a social infrastructure upon which people rely to earn a living and raise their families.

Intentional planning for shared prosperity allows municipal governments to review their traditional areas of activity with a view to developing and maximizing the talents and contributions of their citizens.

RESULTS OF 13 VIBRANT COMMUNITIES OVER 10 YEARS

Individual and Household impacts
- *202,931* individuals and households have received *439,393* benefits from Vibrant Communities efforts including increases in income, access to food and shelter, and skills and knowledge

Community Engagement
- Over *3,800* businesses, government departments, voluntary sector organizations, voices of experiences and citizens are engaged
- *4,349* media stories, reports and learning events about poverty

Community Innovations
- *256* poverty reducing strategies and projects are currently completed or in progress
- *62* examples of new mechanisms to facilitate multi-sector collaborations are active
- *10* strategies have altered the way poverty reduction efforts are funded

Policy Change
- *57* strategies have expanded community involvement in the policy making process
- *53* strategies have produced substantive policy changes in areas such as transportation and housing

Learn more at:
http://vibrantcanada.ca/resource-library/vibrant-communities

Municipal Levers

Local governments have a unique and important role in building communities that matter.

Though Canada's federal and provincial governments control the majority of the policy levers that influence prosperity, the full benefit of those policies cannot be realized without coordination at the city-region level.

Municipal leaders have the advantage of understanding local needs. They decide how to invest finances, deploy staff, modify procurement practices, boost local hiring and develop growth strategies that intentionally create opportunity and benefits. They have the power to create circles of prosperity.

LEADERSHIP
The first step in any new direction-setting effort is naming the issue and continuing to find creative ways to keep the conversation fresh. Public lectures by people with lived experience of poverty, role-playing experiences, lunchtime sharing sessions, community forums, speakers' bureaus – these are a few ways in which communities have kept poverty and prosperity on the public agenda. Talk inspires action, and as one successful initiative inspires a second, the community's vision of shared prosperity becomes its reality.

In addition to taking a leadership role, local governments promote development through public/private partnerships by convening stakeholders, providing information and cutting red tape [*Wood, Grace and Hacke 2012*].

IN ACTION:

Municipal leaders are essential partners in setting the table for the work of others to build capacity and achieve vital public goals. Some municipalities, such as Hamilton, Region of Waterloo, Calgary and Surrey have seen elected officials formally review and ratify action plans to reduce poverty.

POVERTY IS COMPLEX.

Many are afraid to tackle it. But I am not. I will elevate the profile of poverty elimination by bringing the weight of the mayor's office.
-Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson

*How much more research does it take to realize that **CHILDREN** who are **HUNGRY** cannot learn**. Lets stop admiring the problem and get on with the work*
-Mark Chamberlain, CEO Trivaris

CONVENING STAKEHOLDERS

Civic leaders can play an important role in convening partners around specific topics or opportunities, and developing on-going relationships that build capacity for community investment. Local government can foster growth and investment when they develop a shared vision and translate that vision into a clear set of goals, roles and performance metrics. Investment flows most readily when the way forward is clearly spelled out, whether the goal is use of vacant land, improved access to transit or improving early learning and child care.

IN ACTION:

The Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative in Saint John was formed in 1997, partly as a result of one banker's sidewalk conversation with a panhandler. Through working together BCAPI, Vibrant Communities Saint John and the City of Saint John has seen poverty decline from a high of 27% to 20%.

PROVIDING INFORMATION & DATA

Data is a key planning tool for municipalities. Clear, well-organized data stimulates new thinking and ideas, reduces transaction costs and enables strategic action by business and social entrepreneurs alike.

IN ACTION:

Cities Reducing Poverty is working in partnership with the Canadian Council on Social Development's Community Data Program. The two organizations have developed a set of 12 indicators that member communities can use to examine residents' movement out of poverty. Municipalities can take the lead in establishing Data Consortiums through the Community Data Program to provide relevant data to their communities and staff.

CUTTING RED TAPE

Cities need to create a supportive policy environment that attracts investment and builds social capital. The benefits of aligning policy with practice apply to all citizens, whether it is a business owner seeking a permit or a parent needing a recreation subsidy.

IN ACTION:

Edmonton and Calgary were two of the first municipalities in Canada to adopt a Housing First approach to homelessness. Those efforts emerged out of a unique seven-city partnership initiated by the federal government in 2001. The National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) made federal funding contingent on the establishment of local roundtables whose members were seen as integral to the planning process. The ten-year homelessness plans that were developed in Red Deer and Calgary in 2007 and Edmonton in 2009 all were accomplished with additional leadership, input and funding from the province, which itself developed a 10-year homelessness plan in 2008. Since that time, the four other Alberta municipalities in the partnership – Wood Buffalo, Lethbridge, Grand Prairie and Medicine Hat – have all developed plans to address homelessness.

SPECIFIC ACTION AREAS

Over the past 12 years, municipalities across Canada have been employing their municipal levers to create more equitable, accessible and prosperous environments. Below are examples of how a few municipalities have focused on leveraging change.

IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES

While municipalities are not involved in delivering health care, they are clearly on the front lines of providing services that can achieve improved health outcomes. As noted, one of the biggest costs of poverty is the higher use made of the medical system by people living on low incomes.

IN ACTION:

In Hamilton, ON, in 2009 City Council endorsed the Blueprint for Emergency Shelter Services. This was a collaborative effort between the shelter services in the city that resulted in the closer of some overnight shelter beds and unique partnerships between hospitals and shelters which decreased visits to emergency rooms.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Currently, more than 4 million people across Canada are in need of affordable housing, using the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) affordability guideline that 30 percent of an individual's income is spent on adequate, suitable housing. While federal and provincial governments need to shoulder most of the weight on public spending for social housing, city leaders have considerable tools at their disposal.

Some of Canada's major municipalities such as Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal provide significant amounts of money to support social housing initiatives. Other municipalities provide less funding, but contribute with provision of land at no or low cost, waive development and permit fees, make zoning and regulatory changes to facilitate project development, and enforce maintenance and occupancy regulations that protect health and safety. There are also many municipalities that play virtually no role in the provision of housing beyond responsibility for certain aspects of the regulatory environment. Magnet communities of the future will be those where local governments proactively build public/private partnerships to develop and operate affordable housing and create livable neighbourhoods.

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FOOD SECURITY

In 2001, Toronto became the first municipal government to endorse a Food Charter. There are now more than a dozen municipalities that have followed suit, including Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Vancouver, Sudbury, Guelph- Wellington and Durham Region [Runnels 2012]. A Food Charter presents a vision, principles, and priorities for a just and sustainable food system that promotes health.

An even larger number of municipalities have multi-sector Food Councils, some of which are embedded in local government with formal lines of communication and reporting [Mendes 2011]. A Food Council is a voluntary body composed of stakeholders from across the food system. A typical mandate might be to examine how a local food system operates and to provide ideas, actions, and policy recommendations on how to improve it. Councils are often catalysts for further research, public education, joint programming, networking and policy change.

IN ACTION:

The Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee has a vibrant Food Security Taskforce whose objective is to have a food system that meets the needs of all Peel residents. The actions of this taskforce are to:

- *Formulate a Peel Food Charter that demonstrates commitment to creating a food secure community*
- *Increase the number of food programs in Peel*
- *Foster partnerships that promote urban-rural food links.*

CHILDREN AND EDUCATION

While education is not a municipal jurisdiction, city leaders have become involved in educational outcomes because they are strongly linked to human capital, economic development and quality of life.

IN ACTION:

Avenir d'enfants is an example of a Quebec civic/government partnership that guides and financially supports communities to promote the development and well-being of children from the prenatal period to age 5. Members include public health organizations, early childhood programs, schools, municipalities, community agencies and parent representatives. They come together to harmonize strategies, align services and mandates, explore and experiment with the integration of funding and human resources and ensure continuity of services for young children and families. In 2012, Avenir d'enfants supported 125

RECREATION

Recreation is a powerful method for enabling belonging and wellness. Participation in recreational activities can be limited by barriers such as user fees and attendant transportation and child care costs. Fortunately, municipalities are finding creative ways to encourage participation.

IN ACTION:

Edmonton has developed a comprehensive access to recreation strategy. It includes a Leisure Access Program that allows eligible low-income individuals to receive unlimited, free admission to various City facilities. Eligible adults and seniors receive a 75 percent discount on registration and supplies for three programs. Eligible children and youth receive the same discount and can register for up to four programs.

OPPORTUNITY-RELATED INITIATIVES

To help create a stronger economic future for their citizens, municipalities can build on the successes of Cities Reducing Poverty members that have lent support to income security initiatives, created demand for locally-sourced goods and services, and developed accessible transportation systems.

INCOME SECURITY

Provinces and territories across the country are reviewing their social assistance programs in an effort to make them more responsive to clients' needs. Getting more money into people's hands and pockets can also be accomplished by raising wages (see Living Wage, below), educating low-income earners to existing benefits and savings programs, and making available loans for would-be entrepreneurs.

LIVING WAGE

The Living Wage agenda is founded on the principle that full-time work should provide an earner and their family with a basic level of economic security. While a job remains the most important pathway out of poverty, paid work is no longer a guarantee of adequate family income. A significant number of Canadians are both employed and living in poverty. These households are referred to as the working poor, and they comprise around 40 per cent of the households (1.5 million people) living in poverty [*Fleury and Fortin 2006*]. The growth of part-time and precarious work (casual/term) means that more people are holding down multiple low-paying jobs.

Initially, Canadian Living Wage advocates looked to the US for inspiration. Cities in that country adopted an ordinance approach, making it a requirement that cities and their contractors pay their employees a Living Wage. The time and expense required to monitor contractors made this Living Wage model unattractive to most Canadian municipalities in

which it was introduced. To date, only New Westminster, BC, has gone the ordinance route. In the meantime, a quiet but continuing conversation in support of paying a Living Wage is showing results. School boards (District 69 in BC and the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board in ON) and small- to medium-sized businesses are adopting Living Wage policies as they see the benefits for themselves: Their bottom line is not affected, mainly because of reductions in staff turnover and the high cost of recruiting and training new workers.

> **IN ACTION:**
>
> *Cities Reducing Poverty has developed a Canadian Living Wage framework (see: www.livingwagecanada.ca). This methodology ensures that the living wage amounts are calculated in a consistent manner across the country. Currently, 30 municipalities have established Living Wage campaigns and several employers have been recognized as Living Wage Employers.*

PROCUREMENT

Governments not only provide important public services, they are also major buyers of goods and services. Municipalities increasingly operate in a diverse market, and it only makes sense to support companies that are owned and operated by diverse suppliers. Adding new suppliers creates more competition, which leads to more competitive ideas and pricing. Diversity in the supply chain can help organizations access new markets, enhance their reputations and improve their bottom lines.

In addition, taking a decision to purchase locally has employment spinoffs. The Power of Purchasing, a report published in May 2013 by the Columbia Institute and ISIS (at the Sauder School of Business) shows that sourcing from local suppliers creates

nearly twice as much benefit to the local economy as buying from multinational chains [Pringle 2013].

> **IN ACTION:**
>
> *Social purchasing portals offer businesses and consumers the chance to source suppliers on the basis of price, value, quality and social value. Blending corporate social responsibility with community economic development, Vancouver's Social Purchasing Portal has been replicated across the country. Portals now exist in the Fraser Valley, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Waterloo Region and Ottawa.*

TRANSPORTATION

Mass transit keeps money and commerce flowing. For those unable to afford a private vehicle, mass transit is the only way to access education, work, goods and services and social opportunities. In Canada, fare box revenues meet 60 per cent of the total operating costs of Canadian transit operations, with government subsidies largely making up the difference [*Federation of Canadian Municipalities 2009*].

Over several years, the federal government's main mechanism for supporting public transit has been to provide infrastructure funding through the Gas Tax Fund and Public Transit Capital Trust. However, Transport Canada figures from 2008 showed that federal transit funding had decreased from $1.1 billion in 2008 to about $300 million in 2011 [*Rabble 2012*]. In 2007-08, 29 percent of the Gas Tax Fund ($27 million) was allocated to public transit [*CUTA 2009*]. In general, it was left to municipal (and provincial) governments to cover transit costs in excess of operating revenues. However, this situation may improve as details of the New Building

Canada Plan announced in Budget 2014 are revealed. More than $32 billion from the Community Improvement Fund is earmarked for municipal infrastructure projects, including public transit.

In the meantime, some municipalities have taken creative steps to enable equitable access.

> **IN ACTION:**
>
> *Since 2006, Calgary has provided a Low Income Transit Pass whereby all adult Calgarians with incomes lower than 75 per cent of the low income cut-off can apply to purchase a monthly transit pass for half the full fare [Cabaj 2011]. Nine other Cities Reducing Poverty members have instituted affordable transit passes in their communities.*

MOVING FROM WORDS TO COMMUNITY ACTION

Municipalities that lead in reducing poverty become vibrant places where shared prosperity attracts business, investment, employment and talented employees to live, work and raise families. Everyone has a role to play in creating a vibrant community.

We want to hear from you. Convene a conversation in your community and begin the discussion. Use this paper as a starting point and let us know how you have used it to take action in your community. Blog about your conversations at: www.vibrantcanada.ca or e-mail admin@vibrantcanada.ca.

HOW TO USE THIS CASE TO CREATE VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

1. As a Community Organization, convene a community conversation and encourage other community groups to do the same. Over a period of 90-120 minutes, bring groups of people together to talk about what shared prosperity might look like in your municipality. Consider asking these strategic questions:

   - What elements of this *Case for Shared Prosperity* are already being employed in our community? Where are we doing well?
   - What evidence/data is available that indicates where we are succeeding and what gaps exist that need to be addressed?
   - To be a municipality that succeeds what strategies can be employed to address the existing gaps preventing a shared prosperity approach?
   - As individuals and community organizations what can I/we do to create a vibrant municipality where prosperity is shared among all citizens?
   - What role can the municipal government play in creating a shared prosperity for all residents? What policy levers can be employed and what strategic investments can be made? These conversations can be convened among municipal staff departments, community groups,

faith communities, schools, labour boards, etc. Putting a system in place to capture the threads of these conversations in an important piece of understanding what ideas are rising up and how the engagement is building around this idea.

Other ways organizations can advance the ideas of this case include:

- **Include community residents** - Consider hosting kitchen table conversations with residents – discuss ways the municipality can become a vibrant community, consider the complex challenges your community faces and uncover innovative ways of addressing these challenges. The voices of people with lived experience must be heard by those in municipal leadership. Create opportunities for these voices to be heard through print media, sharing at council and committee meetings, speaking at community groups, videos, radio programs, social media and more.
- **Share at select Municipal Council and Committee Meetings** - At all Council meetings delegations public are able to present to council. Also, residents are encouraged to attend, ask questions and share at meetings. Each council has departments and committees that could lead the way to becoming a more vibrant community where this case can be shared.
- **Assess what is already happening in your community** - Include an addendum to this document that highlights for your municipality what is already happening in your community. Convey what is occurring at the neighbourhood/community level as well as the activity of the municipality. Reflect on what the gaps are and what the municipality could do to address those gaps. Call on the community and the municipality to come together to create a vibrant community to all citizens. Consider that many municipalities have sustainability plans and uncover the connection between poverty reduction and sustainability – use what's already in place to address poverty and other challenges that are standing in the way of shared prosperity.

- **Include the provincial/territorial context** - If your province or territory has a poverty reduction strategy consider highlighting what that strategy is doing and how it impacts at the municipal and community level. This can be shared as an addendum to this document.

2. As a municipal government, convene (or co-convene) a multi-sector poverty reduction roundtable. This approach to poverty reduction has been proven in municipalities across Canada over the past 12 years to effectively address poverty at its root causes. As a convener, municipal staff participate in the leadership of the roundtable (often as co-chair) and sets aside a small amount of funds for the structure of the roundtable and participates in hiring a roundtable director as well as leveraging their networks to bring other key participants to the table. Developing this roundtable indicates a commitment to the shared prosperity approach and an openness to listening and new ways of working together.

3. As a municipal government that already participates in a multi-sector poverty roundtable, share this case for shared prosperity with your municipal leaders (mayor, council, department heads) and work towards developing a comprehensive shared prosperity strategy. Employ many of the techniques that are shared in this document and engage all citizens in the development and implementation of the strategy. Use available dollars to invest strategically in creating a prosperous and vibrant community for all.

4. Endorse the Vibrant Communities Canada – Cities Reducing Poverty Charter – find it at www.vibrantcanada.ca/charter - hang it in a prominent place for all citizens of your municipality to see.

We would love to hear from you about how you have used this case and the results of your efforts to bring a shared prosperity to your municipality

Blog about your experiences: www.vibrantcanada.ca

Tweet us: @VC_Canada

Find us on Facebook: ww.facebook.com/vibrantcommunitiescanada

CONCLUSION

No one level of government has a monopoly on the policy instruments necessary for effective economic and social growth. As this paper demonstrates, there are positive examples of municipalities across the country finding ways to share prosperity. There is a need, however, to amplify these kinds of initiatives and build them into a national shared prosperity strategy.

In 2007, Caledon Institute vice-president Sherri Torjman published Shared Space: The Communities Agenda [*Torjman 2007*].2 The book described the need to create "joined-up communities" where a shared space is created between communities and government; a common ground in which private troubles meet public issues.

Vibrant Communities Canada - Cities Reducing Poverty is such a space. In it, communities and governments make themselves available to one another. They call on partners from every sector of society to achieve shared goals. They collaborate on issues of concern, sharing resources, experience and ideas.

Earlier successes and failures speed learning for those who come later. The City of Hamilton used the lessons of Vibrant Calgary to institute a low- income transit pass far more quickly than would have been possible had they started from scratch. Representatives from the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville in eastern Ontario reflected that the year they spent learning about the successes and cautions experienced by municipal regions similar to

their own was invaluable. Halton Region members reported that by joining Cities Reducing Poverty, they were able to shorten their poverty reduction strategy process by three years.

Shared prosperity is not just words on a page – it is being experienced in many parts of the country. The truly exciting work lies ahead as greater levels of joining-up are achieved among government, business, community organizations and people with lived experience. Now is the time for municipalities to join in, lead and succeed.

ENDNOTE

1. Make Tax Time Pay operated under Vibrant Communities Edmonton direction from 2006 to 2009. At its peak in 2009, the program included 28 sites across the city and involved more than 200 volunteers. Over those first four years, the program helped 4,446 Edmonton residents put over $1 million tax dollars back into their pockets.

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