

THE J. W. MCCONNELL  
FAMILY FOUNDATION

IN A WORLD OF UNPREDICTABLE CHANGE,  
WHAT CANADA NEEDS MOST IS  
**RESILIENCE**



THE J. W. MCCONNELL  
FAMILY FOUNDATION

IN A WORLD OF UNPREDICTABLE CHANGE,  
WHAT CANADA NEEDS MOST IS  
**RESILIENCE**

TIM BRODHEAD

*Your task is not to foresee the future, but to enable it.*  
- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry



THE J.W. MCCONNELL FAMILY FOUNDATION  
LA FONDATION DE LA FAMILLE J.W. MCCONNELL

The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation  
Suite 1800, 1002 Sherbrooke Street West  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3A 3L6  
Telephone: 514-288-2133  
Email: information@mcconnellfoundation.ca  
[www.mcconnellfoundation.ca](http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca)



The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, 2011.

This publication is licensed under a Creative Commons agreement.

This license permits non-commercial use of this work, so long as attribution is given.

Written and originally released September 2011.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Foundation.....	4
Foreword .....	5
Why Resilience? .....	6
How Do We Promote a Resilient Canada? .....	8
Inclusion.....	10
Opportunity for New Canadians.....	12
Reducing Vulnerability and Isolation.....	14
Sport: An Open Doorway to Participation.....	16
Sustainability.....	18
Vibrant Communities.....	20
Food: Creating Robust Regional Food Economies .....	24
Protecting Our Environment .....	27
Active Citizenship: At the Heart of Resilience .....	30
Formal and Informal Support Systems: Caring for the Caregivers.....	32
Making Space for Youth .....	34
Classrooms in the Community: Bridging the Gap.....	36
Innovation .....	38
ArtsSmarts: Unleashing Creativity.....	40
Measuring “Progress” .....	43
Social Innovation Generation .....	45

# About the Foundation

Established in 1937 by philanthropist and financier John Wilson McConnell, The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation funds programs in Canada that support Canadians to build a more resilient society by promoting inclusion, sustainability, and innovation.

Our vision at The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation is a Canada where all people have the opportunity to develop their potential and contribute to the betterment of their communities and country.

Over the years, the means to achieve this have evolved; what remains constant is the importance of community as a source of identity and a place where people contribute and thereby develop a sense of citizenship and belonging.

In the process of developing and supporting programs, the Foundation has come to appreciate better the importance of innovation, the exploring of new and effective ways of addressing intractable social problems, and the challenge of ensuring that these new approaches are sustainable.

## Foreword

Aristotle wrote that simply giving away money is easy, but that giving it away prudently and with a clear purpose in mind is “not an easy matter.” The experience of The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation would confirm his observation. The purpose of this document is to provide a concise explanation of what the Foundation is trying to accomplish through its grants, and why.

Many grant-makers have a precise thematic or geographic focus, but that is not the case for the McConnell Foundation. The Founder’s aim was broad, to improve the well-being of Canadians, and the Board further mandated that we grant countrywide. This led us to focus on issues of national concern, and to aim high: to address the causes of persistent social and environmental challenges facing Canada.

Private foundations have many advantages. They can look to the long term, take risks, and learn and adapt their granting programs in the light of experience. But they have weaknesses too, among which are a lack of effective accountability to the broader public, a lack of transparency, and a tendency to overrate the importance of their chief resource, money. This brief statement of the Foundation’s activities is an attempt to address these shortcomings, but for a fuller understanding we recommend that you consult our website: [www.mcconnellfoundation.ca](http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca).

It has often been said that good granting is both an art and a science: it takes the heart to understand and to discern what is true, and the head to ensure rigour and effectiveness. Balancing logic and intuition is not easy, as Aristotle reminds us, and we at the Foundation do not pretend that we always succeed. For us, every grant tests a hypothesis, an attempt by a group or an individual to frame and solve a problem or create an opportunity. If the attempt is bold and the challenge complex, the initiative may not succeed, but the effort will teach us something of value for the next attempt. It follows that the “how” of granting is as important as the “what.”

Our granting programs have not followed a blueprint. A strategy that began as implicit has progressively evolved from a focus on *change* to *adaptation* to *resilience*. Most of this has emerged from the experience of our partners or fellow-travellers, the so-called “grantees” upon whom we depend for ideas, knowledge, and fundable initiatives. Our roles are complementary, and therefore we aim for relationships that are respectful and collaborative, appreciative and self-critical.

Herein you will find examples of the Foundation’s emergent approach over more than a decade. The next few years, under new Foundation leadership, promise continuing discovery and excitement.

Lyn Baptist  
Board Chair

Tim Brodhead  
Past President and CEO (1995–2011)

Stephen Huddart  
President and CEO

# WHY RESILIENCE?

More than 2,500 years ago, Heraclitus already had observed that no one can step in the same river twice.

There is nothing new about change, but perhaps now the river current is faster and more turbulent. Change is like a drumbeat today: elections are fought over it, business schools have change management in the curriculum, young people are exhorted to *be the change*. It seems a given that we all desire change – in our lives, in our organizations and businesses, in our communities – and that we all agree on what the change is that we seek. Change is progress, improvement, desirable; but it is also uncomfortable, disruptive, and anxiety-provoking.

For almost two decades, the McConnell Foundation too has focused on “change.”

Our concern, however, was not to drive change, but to help Canadians cope with the changes they were facing. During the 1990s, events such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the sovereignty debate in Quebec, and the curtailing of services as governments wrestled with deficits, made many apprehensive. In response to this, the

*“There is a pessimism that we can solve our problems. We live in angst and doubt. We have become a nation of Woody Allens.”*

- pollster Michael Adams,  
quoted in *Maclean’s*, June 8, 1992

McConnell Foundation restated its mission in 1995 “to help Canadians to understand and adapt creatively to the changes affecting Canadian society.”

One result was to shift our granting away from supporting physical infrastructure, such as hospitals, schools, universities, and cultural institutions, toward strengthening the adaptive capacity of communities, families, and individuals. People have come to depend less on governments and employers and experts. Some see this as signalling an erosion of trust, or a decline in deference to authority and “expertise”; others view it as simply a welcome move toward greater self-reliance. Bank tellers, gas jockeys, even travel agents are increasingly a thing of the past as we have taken on these tasks for ourselves. Similarly, maintaining good health or pursuing lifelong learning or ensuring an adequate income for retirement have also become individual responsibilities.

However, not all needs can be met by individuals on their own, nor are all people equally capable of looking after themselves. Our social safety net is the way we share the burden of common risks such as ill health, disability, or adversity. We balance our desire for autonomy and our need for community, our thirst for change and our attachment to what is familiar. As a society, too, we value continuity and stability, even as we deal with often disruptive change.

The term that best describes this combination of adjustment and continuity is *resilience*. A resilient system is one that remains healthy and successful while responding to shocks or disturbances. In other words, without losing its essential qualities, it adapts. This goes beyond simply coping, or “bouncing back” to a prior state; it involves learning and integrating new and old in a fresh synthesis.

For the Foundation, enhancing resilience means investing in our capacity to handle challenges at multiple levels. Our concept of resilience links social and ecological systems, people and nature, and can be addressed locally at the level of the individual, family, or community, and nationally or even globally. Individual resilience grows by acquiring skills, assets, confidence, leadership abilities, and access to knowledge and social networks. Communities are stronger when there is abundant social capital, a dynamic civil society, supportive informal networks, and a culture of active citizenship.

Strengthening resilience at all these levels is the goal of our granting programs. In a world that is increasingly unpredictable, interconnected, and facing complex social and environmental challenges, ensuring that Canadians, and Canada, are resilient is the greatest guarantee of our future prosperity and well-being.

# HOW DO WE PROMOTE A RESILIENT CANADA?

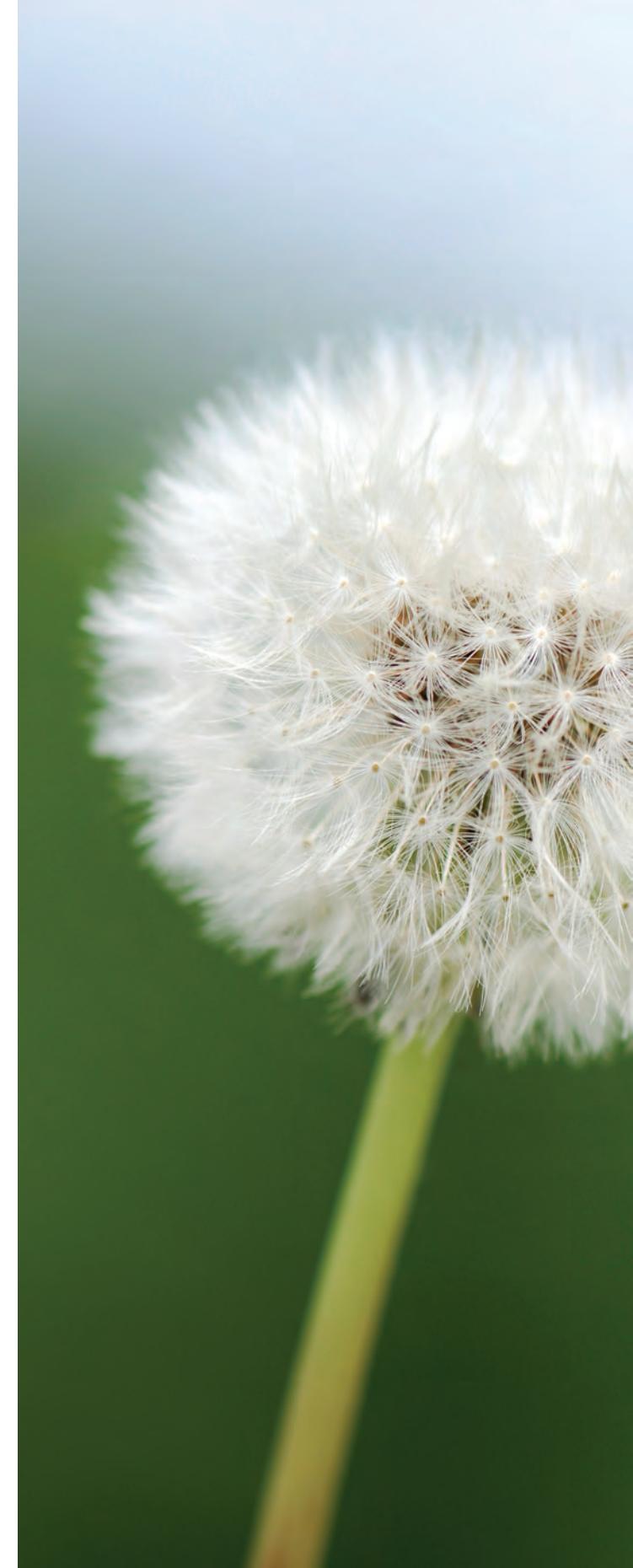
THE J.W. MCCONNELL FAMILY  
FOUNDATION BELIEVES THAT  
A RESILIENT SOCIETY IS  
*INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE,  
AND INNOVATIVE.*

The short answer is that we don't know.

Our experience tells us that the ingredients are present: we have talented people, resources, and much of the knowledge we need to build a more resilient society. But we live in a global system that has tightly interlinked our economies and, to a large extent, interwoven our destinies. This has a positive side: greater knowledge of other people and cultures, a shared stake in creating a sustainable future, a greater capacity for collaboration to find solutions to global problems. But it also

has a darker side: a shared vulnerability to disruptions, financial crises, epidemics, or acts of terrorism.

In the end, the role of a granting organization such as a foundation is to identify worthwhile projects, people, and organizations, and to support them with grants. And so we have had to develop some hypotheses about resilience, and to make judgments about how best to fulfill our mandate.



# INCLUSION



Canadians are proud of living in a country that has integrated people from all corners of the globe, benefiting from their mix of backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives.

About 20 percent of our population was born outside the country, and 16 percent are members of visible minorities. It would seem that a society able to draw on such a rich mosaic should, like a biological organism, be more resourceful, more innovative, and more resilient. But sometimes Canadians' pride in our diversity slips into complacency, as though being open and inclusive was a national trait that required little attention or effort. For Canada, an inclusive society remains an aspiration, not a description of reality.

For the Foundation, social inclusion is not simply to be accepted, but to be appreciated for the qualities, skills, and values each person possesses. It is to belong and to contribute, to be fully a citizen with rights and obligations.

Social inclusion must therefore embrace not only ethnic or religious difference, but also people historically and consistently marginalized, including people with physical or mental health challenges, or those isolated by poverty, age, or by being otherwise vulnerable. Being inclusive goes beyond "mainstreaming" marginalized or isolated groups. It means creating true communities that are both diverse and cohesive. The importance of strengthening social cohesion is arguably more important now, given the many influences in contemporary culture that foster individualism.

Canada has traditionally encouraged inclusion by redistributing wealth, and by investing in human capital through equalization payments and spending on schools and hospitals, but this becomes more difficult when economic growth slows and demographic and competitive pressures lead to

both higher demand for government services and lower capacity to raise taxes to pay for them. As governments shift from redistributing the fruits of an expanding economy to meeting growing needs with stagnant revenues, political leaders begin to preach the virtues of "less government." There is a risk that promoting social inclusion or protecting the quality of the natural environment will receive less attention, to our long-term cost.

A smaller role for government inevitably places demands on business and the voluntary or community sector. The widespread response at first was to turn to the private sector, lowering taxes and cutting regulation to allow it to create more wealth and even take over some functions from government. Since 2008, however, it has become apparent that the private sector cannot be relied upon to always pursue the public good, and so more attention is being directed to the contribution that can be made by individuals, families, and communities. In terms of building supportive, inclusive, and socially cohesive communities, the pendulum is swinging back from relying on formal systems, professionals, and institutions toward a renewed appreciation of the capacities of people, mutual support, asset-based approaches, and local resourcefulness. As always, we need to be careful that this swing does not become exaggerated, but perhaps we are moving toward a new balance between formal institutions and informal systems of help and caring, where the relationship is one of mutual support rather than competition.

Below are some examples of Foundation grants to promote inclusion. Other programs that also reflect this, focus on youth, Aboriginal citizens, and seniors.

## Opportunity for New Canadians

There is both a moral case and a pragmatic case for ensuring new Canadians find suitable jobs: being productive and contributing members of society promotes individual dignity and self-respect, to which all Canadians are entitled; and Canada needs to harness the creative potential of all its citizens.

Canada makes a great effort to attract qualified people, but, once here, many face barriers to employment in their professions. Obstacles include language, employers' inability to evaluate foreign credentials, the lack of Canadian experience, as well as racial or cultural bias. Some settle for low-wage jobs that do not use their skills, others leave; in both cases, the individuals suffer and Canada loses the contribution they could make. A 2005 study by the Royal Bank estimated that if immigrants had the same likelihood of employment at the same average income as people born in Canada, personal incomes would be about \$13 billion higher – with multiplier effects in the markets for housing, consumer goods, and savings and investments (from *The Globe and Mail*, September 10, 2009).

This situation has been well known for many years, but progress is frustratingly slow. A 2010 report by Community Foundations of Canada shows that the employment gap between newcomers and people born in Canada is greatest among those with the highest cre-

dentials and educational backgrounds. In Toronto, which receives the greatest number of immigrants, the unemployment rate for university-educated newcomers is 14 percent, compared to 3.3 percent for Canadian-born workers (from *The Globe and Mail*, October 5, 2010).

In 2003, the Maytree Foundation launched the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC), which has succeeded in integrating more than 2,000 foreign-trained professionals into suitable jobs. Through programs including Career Bridge, The Mentoring Partnership, hireimmigrants.ca, and the Immigrant Success Awards, TRIEC ensures job seekers gain access to the job market, and helps to change the way employers, governments, and others value and work with immigrant professionals.

In 2007, the McConnell Foundation partnered with Maytree to use TRIEC's experience to create a national program called ALLIES (Assisting Local Leaders with Immigrant Employment Strategies). ALLIES is engaging strong local networks of business leaders, community organizations, universities and colleges, and all levels of government to create locally adapted strategies to promote immigrant employment. Such initiatives are now under way in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, Waterloo Region, Toronto, Ottawa, London, Niagara, Montreal, Fredericton/Moncton and Halifax. While communities adapt the model to their own circumstances, they have benefited from the exchange of experience and tools

such as the immigrants.ca website, the National Mentoring Initiative, and the TRIEC-produced video, *Finding Talent*. The 2011 ALLIES Learning Exchange, held in Calgary in May, attracted nearly 150 people and focused on the positive experiences of mentoring for both the mentor and the new Canadian, many of whom found suitable employment through strategies and knowledge acquired as a result of the mentoring experience. Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi spoke to attendees about the contributions immigrants can bring to their communities. Recent immigrant Zenping Han described how he spent months stocking shelves at a Safeway despite 20 years of experience in the energy industry in China; working with a mentor helped him to secure a job at Husky Oil that made use of his professional qualifications and skills.

To date, ALLIES has enjoyed more success influencing large employers, so its focus increasingly is on small and medium-sized businesses. While helping to address a pressing need, that is, the lack of qualified job candidates in some fields, it also brings to employers the benefits of the innovative ideas that emerge from a more diverse workforce. A 2010 study, *Immigrants as Innovators: Boosting Canada's Global Competitiveness* by the Conference Board of Canada, concluded that "at every level – individual, organizational, national and global – immigrants were associated with increased innovation," pointing to data that immigration boosts trade, foreign investment, and even the number of patents issued.

## The Mentoring Partnership

For staff of TD Bank Financial Group, participating in The Mentoring Partnership has become part of the corporate culture that began in 2005 when 20 top executives championed the idea and led by example. At the same time, TD decided to invest in the program and became the founding corporate partner.

Five years later, TD employees have mentored close to 700 skilled immigrants.

"My mentor and I worked extensively on my resumé and interviewing skills," says Karen Brown, former mentee and Senior Process Analyst at TD. "She gave me the support I needed to get back into my field. I'm thrilled to be working in a position that is in line with my experience." Karen was hired by TD after being mentored by Jasmine Tehara, AVP, Business Process Solutions, Wealth Management.

In part, through its relationship with The Mentoring Partnership, TD is better connected to new talent and has established a solid reputation with newcomers to Toronto. But it doesn't stop there. TD is again investing in a good idea, and solidifying itself as an employer of choice, by sponsoring the cross-country expansion of mentoring of skilled immigrants through the ALLIES National Mentoring Initiative.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit ALLIES <[www.alliescanada.ca](http://www.alliescanada.ca)>

Visit the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council <[www.triec.ca](http://www.triec.ca)>

Visit the Maytree Foundation <[www.maytree.com](http://www.maytree.com)>  
Watch *Finding Talent and Integrating Talent* available at Hire Immigrants <[www.hireimmigrants.ca](http://www.hireimmigrants.ca)>

Read the report by Michelle Downie, *Immigrants as Innovators Boosting Canada's Global Competitiveness*, available at the Conference Board of Canada <[www.conferenceboard.ca](http://www.conferenceboard.ca)>

## Reducing Vulnerability and Isolation

PLAN, a Vancouver-based organization, has worked for many years with parents of adult children with a disability, to ensure a continuing level of care and support when the parents are no longer able to provide it themselves. Starting in 1995, the Foundation worked with PLAN to disseminate their model of family support across Canada, and its founders, Al Etmansi and Vickie Cammack, became the first of many innovators in what we called our “applied dissemination” program to scale up successful social innovations.

PLAN learned that the replication model to extend social innovations could expand a program’s reach but not necessarily lead to system change. Beyond the services provided to people with a disability and their families lie more fundamental issues, namely the social isolation and economic poverty that constitute the two biggest handicaps facing people with disabilities. PLAN’s mission therefore expanded beyond the provision of services, tools, and supports for individuals’ well-being to embed a “citizen perspective” – the sense of belonging to the larger society, and the expectation that people with disabilities can and wish to contribute and to live lives of fulfillment and meaning, like every Canadian.

This “system approach” has produced some very tangible results. The 2008 federal budget created the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP), an idea developed by PLAN, as a tax-sheltered vehicle to enable families and individuals to accumulate assets to be used to support a person with a disability, without the danger of those assets being “clawed back” as a condition of receiving government benefits. PLAN has since worked with major banks, provincial governments, and the disability community to implement the RDSP, and, to date, more than 40,000 RDSPs have been created. Specific tools have been developed, including ratings standards for accessible tourism, disability awareness training courses, work with the 2010 Olympics and Paralympics and B.C. municipalities to make facilities more accessible, regular *Thinking Like a Movement* workshops to share their knowledge of bringing about change, and new social finance instruments to create flows of capital for social enterprises.

PLAN’s insight was that we need to shift how people with disabilities are perceived by the larger society: from people with “special needs” who are recipients of allowances and subsidies and clients of “service providers” to citizens with their own resources, abilities, and support networks. By changing the rules that forced people to exhaust their financial and other assets in order to qualify for welfare, people with disabilities can be helped to move from dependence to some degree of

autonomy with the support of those who choose to care for them – their families and friends – rather than solely those who are paid to care for them.

A new PLAN Institute initiative adapts social media for vulnerable people living in isolation. Tyze places such people at the centre of a virtual network of family, friends, and caregivers, enabling contact and collaboration. The program also enables collaboration with and among health care professionals. Saint Elizabeth Health Care in Ontario, for example, uses Tyze to provide personal support networks for people with chronic illnesses who are receiving care in their own homes. Nurses, physiotherapists, social workers, and dieticians coordinate efforts to ensure people can choose to live in their own homes for as long as possible. Tyze itself is structured as a social enterprise, raising private capital as well as grants to allow it to expand and meet growing demands.

## Tyze Networks Support In-Home Care

Ana, an immigrant from Mexico, worked as a social worker in San Francisco and lived on her own. After surgery for a brain tumour, she found herself isolated and facing a long period of rehabilitation. Through the Community Living Campaign (CLC), she started attending a weekly computer lab where she found out about Tyze.

Tyze helped Ana to move into a circle of care; a donated computer gave her independence at home and connection to a growing personal network of friends and the medical professionals she relied upon. “Once you have friends on Tyze, you have a healing circle,” she says. Marie, the CLC director, also points out that Ana has given much back. “So many have directly benefited from Ana’s research, advocacy, and skills and talent for networking and connecting people.”

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit PLAN <[www.plan.ca](http://www.plan.ca)>

Visit Tyze Personal Networks <[www.tyze.com](http://www.tyze.com)>

Visit PLAN-RDSP <[www.rdsp.com](http://www.rdsp.com)>

## Sport: An Open Doorway to Participation

The 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games demonstrated sport's power to mobilize people. Beyond playing, training, and competing, people organize leagues, referee games, advocate for recreation facilities, and encourage young people to be active and have fun. For the Foundation, sport and recreation provide an exceptional opportunity to encourage that willingness to get involved, especially for those disadvantaged by poverty or lack of access to facilities. The Foundation has supported many initiatives across the country, from the More Sports program at Ray-Cam in Vancouver to the Active Circle in the North and hundreds of small community sport projects supported by the True Sport Community Fund. Above and beyond the personal benefits for participants, these projects have inspired parents, volunteers, and community leaders to use sport to build more inclusive communities.

The Foundation's interest in the potential of sport and recreation to strengthen community was catalyzed by the Sport Matters Group (SMG), which was created in the late 1990s. Visionary leaders in organizations, such as the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, Motivate Canada and the Commonwealth Games Association

of Canada, recognized the ability of sport to contribute to a range of public policy objectives: healthier lifestyles, economic development, integration of newcomers, and improved academic performance. SMG has convened more than 30 sport organizations to work with municipalities, academics, band councils, and local bodies to promote community sport activities (particularly for marginalized groups), to carry out research to demonstrate the value of a physically healthy lifestyle, and to advocate for a national strategy to promote sport as a lever for community development. SMG has flourished using a model based on mobilizing the skills and assets of people who are passionate about the value of sport and recreation – wherever they may be – rather than devoting precious resources to building an organization.

The SMG's – and our – emphasis is not on the physical infrastructure for athletics; however, budget cuts and the resultant closing of public spaces, such as schoolyards, playgrounds, municipal parks, and so forth, where people can play has an obvious effect on access to sports and recreational opportunity. Insurance and liability concerns and the cost of maintenance and supervision have resulted in the loss of community assets. When the economic downturn of 2008 led to the federal government's stimulus plan, however, SMG was already organized to advocate for sports infrastructure in deprived communities. It estimates that some \$3 billion has been invested in the

construction or renovation of sport facilities as a result. Facilities provide a necessary space, but it is volunteers who bring life to that space, building healthy inclusive communities and offering fellow citizens opportunities to interact and have fun.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit True Sport <[www.truesportpur.ca](http://www.truesportpur.ca)> to read *What Sport Can Do: The True Sport Report*

Visit the United Nations <[www.un.org/](http://www.un.org/)> to Read *Harnessing the Power of Sport for Development and Peace: Recommendations to Governments*

Visit Right to Play <[www.righttoplay.com](http://www.righttoplay.com)> to read *From the Field: Sport for Development and Peace in Action*

Visit the International Platform on Sport and Development <[www.sportanddev.org](http://www.sportanddev.org)>

## Equitas

Supported by a grant from the Foundation, Equitas developed *Play It Fair*, an integrated program of games for children and training for staff that fosters inclusion and peaceful conflict resolution. Over the past few summers, the program has been in use in hundreds of day camps across Canada and has reached more than 80,000 children.

Several municipalities have now included the program as standardized training for volunteers and employees working with children. An example given by a youth leader, "We used the *Play it Fair! Toolkit* to intervene when a group of children had been making racist comments about others in our program. We chose the 'In the shoes of an immigrant' and led the group discussion with all the children. This helped them to really understand the problem and the racism stopped immediately."

## Ray-Cam

The Foundation has supported Ray-Cam to develop MoreSports and YELL, community sport programs that help children and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds to develop healthy lifestyles and leadership skills through sport. The distinguishing feature of these programs is the degree to which neighbourhoods are involved in their design and implementation. MoreSports was highlighted on CBC's *Soccer Day in Canada* as an example of one of the best community sport programs in the country. In the words of one participant, "Because of YELL, my love of sports came back to me. Continue doing a good job at YELL, and continue to inspire other youth that with their help, sports can create a whole new different meaning."



# SUSTAINABILITY



It has been said that sustainability could be defined as *Living as though we planned on staying here.*

- as shared with The Foundation by  
Professor Rick Kool of Royal Roads University, quoting a Tsartlip First Nation band elder

It is a concept often, and rightly, invoked in relation to maintaining the natural systems that sustain life: the conservation of non-renewable resources and careful management of those that are replenishable, minimizing the disruption human activities cause to climate and other global goods. But sustainability can also refer to social systems' capacity for endurance and adaptation, finding an appropriate balance between preserving what is of value and nurturing the emergence of the new and disruptive. Western societies, which have traditionally focused on economic growth as their sole indicator of well-being, are wrestling with the implications of sustainability. Leadership, in both politics and business, is critical, but so is a broad public understanding of the need to adjust now for the sake of our collective well-being.

Often we talk of sustainability in terms of systems, but a more immediate reality for most people is the community in which they live. Economic changes, such as the loss of manufacturing jobs, the impact of transient capital flows, and the closing of public institutions such as schools or post offices, create concern over the sustainability of many communities, particularly rural ones. Sustainable communities protect their

environment, embrace diversity, work hard to achieve economic security, create opportunities for everybody, and aim to reduce inequalities; they are fed by their members' active participation and sense of obligation to future generations. The inevitable costs of change and adjustment are shared, so that inequities are not exacerbated and cohesion is not undermined.

The Foundation can identify, encourage, and fund promising initiatives, but if they are to have impact, their future sustainability will depend upon organizational capacity, strong leadership, and diversified support. If they aim for truly transformative change, that sustainability will likely require a permanent shift in resource flows or the creation of a new and stable financial and organizational base. For this reason, we view the "how" of granting to be as critical as the purpose for which grants are made.

We try to ensure that sustainability is a core concern of every activity the Foundation funds. Program initiatives that aim to introduce new and potentially disruptive elements, within the context of fostering a more sustainable society, include those that follow.



## Vibrant Communities

The cost of poverty in Canada – to the health care and justice systems, in lost economic productivity and tax revenues – has been estimated by the Ontario Association of Food Banks (2008) at between \$75 billion and \$85 billion. In the words of Senator Art Eggleton, “While most people understand the moral arguments for ending poverty, they don’t realize how poverty is costing each and every one of us. It depresses the economy, increases health care costs, and leads to alienation and crime. Ending poverty is doable.”

In the United States, Comprehensive Community Initiatives (CCI) began in the 1990s as a strategy to combat poverty. Rather than focus on one intervention at a time, CCIs brought a range of approaches to bear in order to improve human, physical, and economic development in poor neighbourhoods. CCIs are inspired by an asset-based approach that values local capacities and engages residents to build stronger communities. A report by the Aspen Institute in the spring of 2010 summed up some of the lessons of two decades of U.S. experience: it concluded that while CCIs have not succeeded in transforming poor communities, they have highlighted the importance of *place* as the locus of activity. The difficulty of balancing “process” and “product,” that is, the time required to engage people, build capacity, and manage multiple relationships versus the need for tangible results that

build confidence and encourage people (including funders) to remain involved, is one factor inhibiting success, as is the need to combine community-level actions with policy change.

In Canada, the CCI approach has been championed by the Tamarack Institute. The Foundation has partnered with Tamarack and the Caledon Institute, a social policy research centre, to support a 10-year program to eliminate poverty called Vibrant Communities (VC). In 11 cities, from St. John’s to Victoria, multi-stakeholder bodies have been formed comprising local business, government, voluntary organizations, and representatives of people living in poverty, to craft strategies for change. Each community has set its own priorities, but they all contain components that build individual, family, and community assets, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and strategies to learn and share knowledge of what works. Once accepted into the program, communities have received planning grants, matching grants to support locally designed projects, and coaching and support from Tamarack and Caledon. A “learning community” shares lessons by means of regular telelearning sessions, podcasts, policy papers, and evaluations.

Results of VC are measured at three levels: changes in public policy and in how service and support systems operate to benefit those living in poverty; increases in community capacity as demonstrated through stronger local leadership and collaboration; and growth in personal

## Vibrant Surrey – Project Comeback

*The most successful Vibrant Surrey-influenced initiative to date is “Project Comeback,” a community action project that helps homeless day labourers find sustainable employment and independent housing.*

A 41-year-old Project Comeback client named Peter experienced a childhood filled with neglect and pain. By the time he was 14, he had been placed in 18 foster homes. Throughout his life, Peter received inadequate dental care and his teeth deteriorated. He did not finish high school. He found work with construction, warehousing, and manufacturing companies in his early 20s, but he had difficulty handling his own and other people’s anger. Says Peter: “Project Comeback gave me new hope and new life. You get choices and people don’t give up on you. Nobody’s ever gotten mad at me; they gave me options and helped me through situations. I never felt forced to do anything. I felt respected. They helped me to find a place to live and to get back into working again. They got me my first pair of workboots; I was able to pay for my own after that. They also found someone to pay for my teeth. They got me the things I needed to get and maintain work – bus tickets, food, and basic necessities for setting up house. More recently, they got me a couch. Once I’m stabilized, I’d like to offer whatever I can for the next people who come along who need this.” He’s back.

Anne Makhoul,  
Caledon Institute of Social Policy, March 2008

# Hamilton's Hostels to Homes Project

Community organizers in Hamilton had long advocated for a new funding formula for emergency shelters and, in the summer of 2006, were invited to participate in a two-phase pilot project, Hostels to Homes (H2H), to test the validity of their system transformation ideas.

Program accounts show that H2H has, indeed, shown cost savings for the city and the province. In 2009, \$697,000 was reallocated from the emergency shelter budget for the associated program costs for the H2H Pilot; actual expenditures were \$53,000 less than this amount. Thanks to the number of men now moving into stable housing, the City of Hamilton will reduce the number of men's shelter beds from 250 in 2010 to 145 in 2011.

Anne Makhoul,  
Caledon Institute of Social Policy, March 2010

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit Vibrant Communities <[www.vibrantcommunities.ca](http://www.vibrantcommunities.ca)>

Visit the Foundation's online resources <[www.mcconnell-foundation.ca](http://www.mcconnell-foundation.ca)> to read *Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Lessons Learned, Potential and Opportunities Moving Forward*

Read *Shared Space: The Communities Agenda* by Sherri Torjman, 2007

Visit the Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement <[www.tamarackcommunity.ca](http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca)> to read *Evaluating Vibrant Communities 2002–2010* by Jamie Gamble

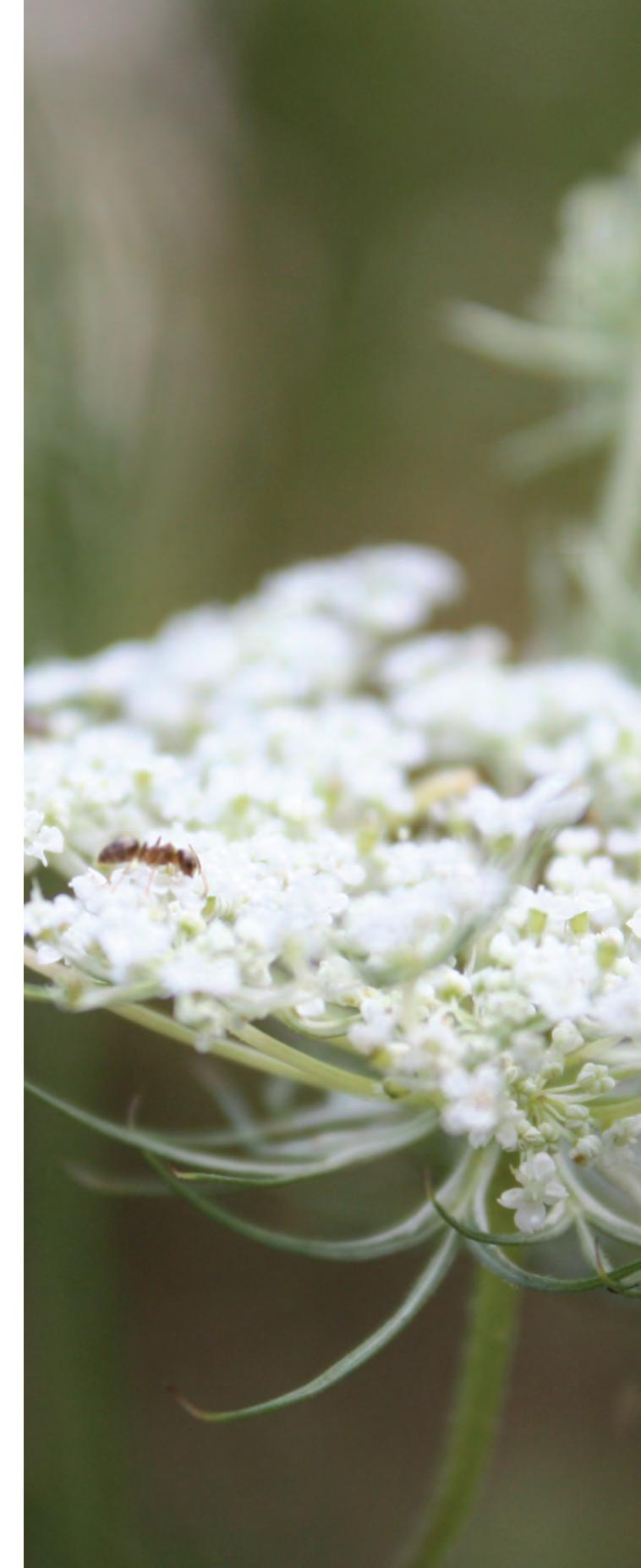
physical, financial, and social assets. Policy changes have arguably had the greatest impact in terms of number of people benefiting. A Fair Fares program for public transit in Calgary, for example, has benefited more than 10,000 low-income residents of that city, while creation of a regional housing trust fund in the B.C. Capital Region has resulted in more than \$51 million being mobilized for affordable housing.

So long as poverty is seen as a problem only for those directly affected by it, it remains a low priority. One of the outcomes of VC has been the involvement of local business in devising solutions. In Saint John, Hamilton, Victoria, and Calgary, among other cities, business groups have forged links with municipal economic and social development offices and community organizations; out of these have emerged efforts such as the Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative in Saint John, and the Calgary Chamber of Commerce's encouragement of municipal legislation on a living wage. In Victoria, more than 500 employers used work done by the Quality of Life CHALLENGE to improve wages and benefits, and the Surrey, B.C. Chamber of Commerce has undertaken work to promote the hiring of immigrant and hard-to-employ workers.

Finally, the test of an effective anti-poverty strategy is its impact on people living in poverty: does it increase their assets, life opportunities, overall well-being? It is difficult to calculate this with certainty, and particularly to assess the

durability of improvements, but VC has tracked very carefully a series of measures from the beginning of the program and has concluded that, to the end of December 2010, some 170,000 households have benefited from one or more of the VC initiatives; of these, more than 84,000 households have increased their net financial assets.

The work of VC and other broad-based programs to combat poverty has reignited a political commitment to adopt explicit anti-poverty strategies by a number of provincial and territorial governments, notably Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, New Brunswick, Manitoba, and the Yukon (Quebec had already adopted a law to address poverty several years ago).



## Food: Creating Robust Regional Food Economies

*“...food policy must strive to provide a healthy diet for all our people; this means focusing on the quality and diversity (and not merely the quantity) of the calories that...agriculture produces and...eaters consume.*

*Second... policies should aim to improve the resilience, safety and security of our food supply. This means promoting regional food economies both (here) and around the world.*

*And lastly...policies need to reconceive of agriculture as part of the solution to environmental problems like climate change.”*

- Michael Pollan,  
*Farmer in Chief, The New York Times Magazine,*  
October 12, 2008

For decades, Canadians have benefited from food that was inexpensive, varied, and abundant. In recent years, though, the fragility of our food system has become apparent. Since much of what we eat is imported, we depend upon cheap transportation and secure supply chains – no longer assured in an era of oil scarcity, financial crises, and political conflict. Ever longer supply chains also mean that the safety of our food can no longer be taken for granted. Poor dietary choices lead to a host of

health problems while monoculture and intensive agriculture harm the environment. In response to such concerns, varied local and ecologically sustainable food initiatives are multiplying across the country. Renewed interest in “natural” and organic foods, restaurants that source products locally, the growing presence of farmers’ markets, as well as efforts to improve children’s nutrition and food knowledge through links between schools and local farms are all strategies that aim to support local agriculture while enhancing consumers’ ability to make healthy food choices.

Without a safe, affordable, and sustainable food system, no society can be considered resilient. As Cathleen Kneen of the People’s Food Policy Project says, “Any jurisdiction that doesn’t feed its own people is at the mercy of whoever does.” The Foundation has launched a program to improve Canada’s food system by strengthening integrated regional and community-based strategies (for example, encouraging local purchasing, supporting seed and pollinator diversity, and funding farm-to-market initiatives), and by testing and scaling up innovative projects that make nutritious, safe, and affordable food available for all Canadians.

Influencing such a large and complex system is a difficult challenge, and the Foundation recognizes that its grant support can only go so far in modelling and prototyping alternative approaches. To be effective, we must

work in concert with other private and public funders. Thus we are collaborating with several private foundations to align efforts and share learning. In particular, we acknowledge the leadership of the Metcalf Foundation in Toronto, which provided early support to Local Food Plus and The Stop, and which has published several useful papers about its work.

Governments and public institutions at all levels – including health departments and hospitals, agricultural and environmental ministries, and educational institutions – play a key role in shaping policy and directing their purchasing power to improve local food system resiliency. The Foundation works with several such agencies to co-fund work on food system resiliency. Lakehead University, for example, as part of our university-based Community Service-Learning program, has established a food security research initiative focused on Northern communities, the Food Security Research Network: In and for the North, that involves six faculties and 25 community partners.

Creating a resilient marketplace that balances the need for profit with the needs of today’s and future generations also requires private sector investment and innovation. In some regions of Canada, the infrastructure necessary for processing and distributing local foods has been eliminated or sidelined by the shift to export markets. Specialized loan and investment funds are needed

## Community Food Centres

The Stop in Toronto has received a Foundation grant to expand its innovative community food centres to two new locations in Ontario. The Stop integrates healthy eating, the cultural aspects of cooking and meal preparation, gardening workshops, and the more conventional functions of a food bank as tools for community-building and inclusion. With further testing and adaptation, it is envisaged that this model could lead to a national network of community food centres that will improve Canadians’ food literacy and ensure that everyone has the option of safe and healthy food.



## Local Food Plus

### *Local food movement goes national*

*“Although LFP’s influence is not always visible, the agency is the reason that many high-end restaurants, municipalities, schools, universities, and hospitals have been able to integrate locally farmed food into their offerings, or are now eyeing the transition. LFP provides an instant menu of certified producers that offer an alternative to the large, mainstream food distributors that dominate North American food trade.”*

*“Shifting even a small fraction of grocery offerings to local food can have a big economic and environmental impact, according to calculations done for LFP by Rod MacRae, a York University food policy expert and head of the agency’s standards development team. For example, in Toronto, replacing one 10-tonne truck loaded with California-grown produce with an Ontario-grown load (from within 200 kilometres of Toronto) is the environmental equivalent of taking two cars off the road for an entire year.”*

- Jessica Leeder, Global Food Reporter,  
*The Globe and Mail*, July 1, 2011

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit Food Security Research Network: In and for the North <[www.foodsecurityresearch.ca](http://www.foodsecurityresearch.ca)>

Visit Food Secure Canada <[www.foodsecurecanada.org](http://www.foodsecurecanada.org)>

Visit Metcalf Foundation <[www.metcalffoundation.com](http://www.metcalffoundation.com)>

Visit The Stop <[www.thestop.org](http://www.thestop.org)>

Visit Local Food Plus <[www.localfoodplus.ca](http://www.localfoodplus.ca)>

to finance the restoration of integrated supply chains – as well as support for new farmers. Efforts to establish such funds are currently under consideration.

A key component of our granting program, Local Food Plus (LFP), certifies farms and processors and creates a market for them among buyers, including universities, municipalities, retailers, and restaurants. After landing contracts with the University of Toronto’s food service providers and expanding across Ontario, LFP is expanding into Manitoba, B.C., and Quebec. LFP’s Lori Stahlbrand says, “We’re not saying you have to eat the 100-mile diet. It’s not a realistic way to live your life; I don’t expect we are going to stop eating oranges and bananas anytime soon. But let’s be eating Ontario strawberries when they are in season here. We’re exporting apples and we’re importing apples. Let’s eat our own apples.”

## Protecting Our Environment

In his book *A Short History of Progress*, Ronald Wright recounts how in the past cities and even civilizations have prospered and then perished as humans destroyed the environmental foundations on which they were built. Clearly, a concern to maintain the integrity of the ecosystem upon which we depend is the starting point for sustainability.

Over the past decade, the Foundation focused mainly on three issues: encouraging responsible stewardship of the environment among primary and secondary school students; strengthening national environmental organizations; and promoting local environmental philanthropy.

The Foundation supported a decade-long environmental education program called Green Street. Environmental organizations with educational programs were assisted in improving their quality and in tailoring them to provincial curricula. At the same time, educators were provided with financial assistance to secure programs from an approved list, as well as professional development focused on improving their ability to promote environmental awareness and active stewardship among students. Midway through the program, Green Street created a student advisory committee that had considerable impact on program’s design and content.

## Renewing Approaches to Environmental Grantmaking

During the past year, the Canadian Environmental Grantmakers Network (CEGN) has actively explored and documented new relationships and partnerships that complement its members’ core work. At its June, 2011 annual conference in Vancouver, CEGN released three new publications that prescribe an “integrative approach” to environmental philanthropy.

In *The Age of the Unenvironmental*, Ecotrust founder and former Executive Director Ian Gill calls on funders, policy makers, and citizens at large to recast concern for the “environment” as an urgent call to redesign communities and social institutions, from the ground up. He calls on foundations to practise what he terms “integrative philanthropy.”

The other two publications address philanthropy’s expanding role vis à vis the environment and the economy.

*How to Accelerate Canada’s Transition to a Green Economy and the Role for Philanthropy* by Tyler Hamilton (2011) surfaces a surprising degree of similarity in the wisdom of leaders ranging from Grand Chief Shawn Atleo to Preston Manning, former leader of the Reform Party of Canada and founder of the Manning Institute.

*In Canada and the Green Economy: The Role for Philanthropy*, Alex Wood of Sustainable Prosperity, a Foundation grantee, outlines new ways that foundations can apply their financial strength to accelerating sustainable economic growth.

In Quebec, the principal teachers' union (Centrale des syndicats du Québec) administered the program under the name Ma Rue Verte, and expanded its focus beyond environmental concerns to include international solidarity, peace, and democracy education, in partnership with a roster of leading NGOs. Eventually, more than 1,200 schools enrolled in what are known as "Établissements verts Brundtland," or EVB schools. EVB has characteristics of a social movement in that province.

Similarly, in the rest of the country, the Green Street program was taken over by the Canadian Teachers' Federation and renamed Imagineaction, which was broadened to include social justice themes.

In 2001, the Foundation convened 11 of the largest national environmental organizations to determine ways they could individually and collectively increase their impact. From an initial focus on organizational issues, such as improving governance, human resource policies, and communications strategies, they evolved to consider their effectiveness as a movement. This led them to form an association called the Strathmere Group, where they collaborate on policy and strategy around such themes as climate change and the development of the oil sands.

We balanced this work at the national level by launching, in collaboration with Community Foundations of Canada (CFC), a program to encourage and

support initiatives to encourage local granting to environmental causes in participating communities across Canada. The Foundation helped foundations desirous of creating local funds with advisory support, matching grants, and other incentives. By 2011, our 2003 grant of \$3 million had resulted in more than \$70 million in newly endowed funds dedicated for local environmental projects, making the environment one of the top three priorities nationally for community foundations. A related project through CFC sparked the formation of a 13-foundation coalition to address the health of the Lake Winnipeg ecosystem.

More recently, in appreciation of the fact that, in a resilient society, environmental issues must be considered in their social and economic contexts – or risk being sidelined when crises occur – the Foundation has focused its environmental granting on longer-term efforts to introduce shifts in the fundamental relationship between the economy and the environment. Examples include support for Sustainable Prosperity, a research and policy initiative established in 2007 and based at the University of Ottawa that is formulating recommendations on how Canada's tax and fiscal policies could reward actions beneficial to the environment. It advises provincial governments and municipalities on "green tax shifting."

Support for Natural Step Canada enabled that organization to develop its education program and expand

its policy advisory services for municipalities.

Currently, the Foundation is supporting the Canadian Boreal Forest initiative with implementation of a landmark conservation agreement among forest companies, environmental organizations, and communities.



#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit Green Street <[www.green-street.ca](http://www.green-street.ca)>

Visit Sustainable Prosperity <[www.sustainableprosperity.ca](http://www.sustainableprosperity.ca)>

Visit the Foundation's online resources <[www.mcconnellfoundation.ca](http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca)> to read *Making the Path as We Walk It: Changing Context and Strategy on Green Street*

# ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP: AT THE HEART OF RESILIENCE



The lifeblood of democracy and of healthy communities is participation.

Engagement and contribution, as PLAN's Al Etmanski has argued, create a sense of belonging, of being *citizens*. No longer just consumers or clients, we become members of a community. Individuals participate through our political institutions, through paid and unpaid work, through our involvement in the myriad not-for-profit and community organizations that make our neighbourhoods vibrant and welcoming places to live.

Rightly, there is concern that citizen involvement is declining and that, in the words of Robert Putnam, there is an erosion of our "social capital." We routinely complain about low voter turnout for elections, the purported loss of the "volunteer spirit," and the alienation of youth. Perhaps this is true of every generation, yet we may discount some of the "invisible" ways that

Canadians contribute to the well-being of families and of our communities. Thousands voluntarily organize and participate in sport and recreational activities, for example, and many more engage in informal caregiving of family members, friends, and neighbours who have mental or physical disabilities or health problems.

We believe that resilience is nourished by diversity – of values, perceptions, and understandings – and that, in turn, rests on the full participation of all in contributing to a better society. This involvement is particularly important for those who historically have been excluded in whole or in part – people with a disability or a physical or mental health problem, with addictions, limited education, or excluded on the basis of age, race, gender, or other prejudice.

## Formal and Informal Support Systems: Caring for the Caregivers

Providing adequate and affordable health care consistently ranks at the very top of Canadians' preoccupations. A medical infrastructure designed to deal with acute illness is ill-equipped for today's dominant need, which is managing chronic and often multiple health problems for an aging population. Much of the provision for care therefore falls on family members and friends in the community. More than one-quarter of Canadians care for a seriously ill friend or relative each year, with one-fifth of them saying they miss work to do so. They represent the equivalent of 750,000 full-time positions with an economic contribution to the health and social systems of more than \$2 billion a year.

Despite these figures, there is very little support provided to informal caregivers. Data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) in 2010 stated that one in six caregivers reported suffering distress, the number increasing depending on the patient's symptoms. When the burden becomes too much, they are unable to continue, which can lead to institutionalization for the care recipient – and potentially for the caregiver as well, particularly if he or she is also a senior. As one care-

giver said, "It's a very demanding job, and it's exhausting and you're rarely ever free." Despite this, an overwhelming number of Canadians prefer to care for a loved one – a child with a disability, a spouse suffering from Alzheimer's, a family member with a mental illness – at home for as long as they can; they just need help to do so from the formal care system.

It was for this reason that the Foundation launched its Care Renewal program in 1999 to identify innovative ways to provide respite to caregivers. Its key insight was that respite is *an outcome experienced by the caregiver*, rather than a service input by the health care system. From an examination of 13 organizations' programs, it emerged that for caregivers to achieve respite, they need choice, voice, recognition, and empowerment. Although each of the 13 programs was unique and addressed a somewhat different clientele, it became clear that only individualized help to overcome social and emotional isolation could provide the respite that sustains people in their role as caregivers.

The Foundation moved from identifying and helping to disseminate the most successful respite programs to supporting the work of the Canadian Caregiver Coalition (CCC) to create systemic supports for caregivers.

The federal Employment Insurance Compassionate Care Benefits program has now been extended to include

family care leave for a wider range of family members living with a terminal illness. Several provinces now have disease-specific strategies for cancer, Alzheimer's, and other conditions that acknowledge the role of caregivers and their need for support. Quebec, for example, recognizes that caregivers are service recipients in addition to being partners in care. In 2009, Nova Scotia was the first jurisdiction to implement a modest Caregiver Allowance, and Manitoba introduced a Primary Caregiver Tax Credit. Strategies to support caregivers are being developed in Ontario and B.C. with input from caregivers and civil society groups that work with them. The challenge remains to create a new model of support that aligns the work of health professionals with the compassionate care provided by informal networks, giving to each the financial and other help required to meet patients' needs.

## Caregivers in Election Platforms

During the 2011 federal election, the CCC placed the needs of family caregivers firmly on the political agenda for the first time. Four of the five parties included policies in support of family caregivers in their election platforms.

The Conservatives proposed a tax credit and funding to develop new models for palliative care while the Liberal, Bloc, and New Democratic parties included enhancements to Employment Insurance and tax benefits to offset caregiving expenses.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Canadian Caregiver Coalition <[www.ccc-ccan.ca](http://www.ccc-ccan.ca)>

Visit the Foundation's online resources <[www.mcconnell-foundation.ca](http://www.mcconnell-foundation.ca)> to read *This Day Is for Me* by Silver Donald Cameron

Read *Caring for the Carers and Policy Challenges: The Caregiver and Care Receiver Relationship* by Sherri Torjman, Caledon Institute, June 2011



## Making Space for Youth

Young people have the greatest stake in the future, yet some would argue that today's adult generation is woefully shortchanging Canadian youth. Our present-day needs and wants are being satisfied, and the bill is being forwarded to tomorrow.

The Foundation's grants to support young people have been directed to three distinct cohorts. We have provided grants to help visionary young leaders start up campus-based organizations ranging from Meal Exchange, which uses food as a tool for awareness and action on hunger, to Journalists for Human Rights, which recruits journalism students to work with media in West Africa, and Forces Avenir, which celebrates outstanding student achievement across Quebec. Some of these organizations have grown into dynamic movements of young people: Engineers Without Borders, for example, in 10 short years has established vibrant chapters in virtually every engineering faculty in Canada and has received acclaim for its programs dealing with water, sanitation, and agriculture in Africa.

A second group of grants has also been directed to youth leaders with a powerful idea. TakingITGlobal was one of the

first social networking sites, linking young people from dozens of countries who share aspirations to create a better world. Free the Children started as a small group in Toronto that wanted to improve the lives of children in poor countries who were forced to work to support their families and forego an education or even hope for a better future. CanadaHelps was a remarkable initiative of three enterprising Queen's University students who built an online portal for charitable giving that now channels well over \$20 million annually to Canadian charities. To tackle the perennial problem of Quebec's high secondary school dropout rates, Gabriel Bran Lopez launched Youth Fusion, which recruits university students as mentors and tutors to work in disadvantaged schools.

These grants helped what we would today call "social entrepreneurs" to realize their goals. But the Foundation is also concerned about how other young people could be helped to participate and contribute to their communities. As a result, in 2006, the YouthScape program was launched to involve excluded or disengaged youth in planning and implementing community development initiatives. A selection process chose proposals from groups in six cities (Victoria, Rivière-des-Prairies, Halifax, Thunder Bay, Calgary, and Saskatoon) and the International Institute for Child Rights and Development acted

as coordinator. YouthScape taught us, and the local sponsors, a lot about the value of involving young people, and about the difficulties and pitfalls in doing so. Participants emphasized the need for more places where adults and youth can interact, share their interests, listen to each other's points of view, and take action – and why "engagement" conceived as an end in itself is artificial and unsatisfying. When issues that *matter* to them are being addressed, and when their input is treated with respect, even disengaged youth become enthusiastic participants.

Our experience with YouthScape led us to engage with the Laidlaw Foundation-initiated Youth Social Infrastructure, a promising approach to supporting smaller youth-led organizations to become more effective. In several parts of Canada, there are emerging hubs of youth-led organizations that are pooling resources, learning how to effectively engage mainstream institutions, and becoming a coherent voice for youth on policy issues. The evolution of our youth programming portfolio – from scholarships for individuals, to support for exemplary youth-led organizations, and, finally, to support networks of youth leaders and organizations – reflects our learning about social innovation.

## YouthScape's Ripple Effect

**Circus School:** The Circus Circle in Halifax began as a regular gathering of young people who lived on the street and adults who practised circus arts. It offers a place for young people to build and share skills and be recognized for their hard work, creativity, and perseverance. It has resulted in school performances and sold-out shows at major venues.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit YouthScape <[www.youthscape.ca](http://www.youthscape.ca)>

Visit the Foundation's online resources <[www.mcconnellfoundation.ca](http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca)> to read *YouthScape: A Funder's Perspective* and *YouthScape Guidebook: Changing the Landscape*

Visit AED <[www.aed.org](http://www.aed.org)> to read *Confronting the Glass Ceiling of Youth Engagement*



## Thunder Bay

### Classrooms in the Community: Bridging the Gap

The Foundation has invested significantly in Canadian higher education over the years. Mostly this took the form of capital gifts and scholarships. More recently, capital investments were replaced by more targeted grants.

In the mid-1990s, the Foundation launched a competitive program to support innovation in Canadian universities. One project, proposed by St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, involved engaging students in community-based activities. It appealed to the Foundation because it appeared to address several needs: it gave community organizations access to the intellectual capital that was often on their doorstep, yet out of reach; it allowed students to apply their newly acquired knowledge to solve real problems; and it had the potential to create stronger ties between universities and the wider community in order to better serve the public good.

A call in 2004 for proposals for the Community Service-Learning (CSL) program received an overwhelming response. Ten universities were funded by the Foundation, but many universities that did not receive grants also went on to launch programs using

their own resources. The enthusiasm with which students and many faculty members embraced the experience of taking “classroom knowledge” into the world suggests that this form of applied learning is here to stay. It is a strand in a larger shift toward collaboration, exemplified by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) program of Community-University Research Alliances (CURA) and its Knowledge Mobilization grants.

Universities have always held a tension between their freedom to pursue enquiry and encourage critical thought, and the need to demonstrate their value to the society that supports them – in other words, not to be stereotypical “ivory towers.” (In time, we came to regret our use of the term “service,” as it inadvertently reinforced for some the notion that benefits flowed only from the university to the community, whereas experience has shown that frequently it is the university, both faculty and students, that benefits disproportionately.) Involving students, professors, and community members in marrying knowledge, experience, and commitment to tackle local issues can have positive benefits for everybody. As Judith Ramaly wrote in *Higher Education for the Public Good*, “The challenge of engagement is to bring life and work together – in the lives of our students and faculty, in the collective work of our institutions, and in our working

relationships with the broader community... True engagement offers the opportunity to experience learning in the company of others in a situation where learning has consequences and where individuals are respected and given voice... In an engaged institution, an ideal education lies between the two poles of experience and purpose, thought and action, self-realization and social responsibility.”

In Thunder Bay, the CSL program focused on the issue of food security. Students at Lakehead University worked closely with First Nations and local farmers to strengthen the local food system – marketing traditional crops, improving the food options for remote communities, and setting up community gardens across the city in collaboration with local healing centres.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Foundation’s online resources <[www.mcconnell-foundation.ca](http://www.mcconnell-foundation.ca)> to read *Getting Wisdom: The Transformative Power of Community Service-Learning* by Silver Donald Cameron and *Storyteller’s Foundation: Critical Reflections on Learning and Service*

Visit the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning <[www.communityservicelearning.ca](http://www.communityservicelearning.ca)> to read *A Comprehensive Framework for Community Service-Learning in Canada*

Read *The Unheard Voices; Community Organizations and Service Learning*, edited by Randy Stoecker and Elizabeth A. Tryon, Temple University Press, 2009

Read *Higher Education for the Public Good: Emerging Voices from a National Movement*, Judith Ramaly, Jossey-Bass, April 2005



# INNOVATION



We live a paradox: we affirm the importance of creativity and innovation, particularly for a knowledge-based economy, yet we do little to nurture it.

The human imagination is our most abundant and constantly renewable resource. It allows us to envision alternatives, to create art, to build simulations and virtual realities, to indulge in fantasy, in short, to be creative and to innovate. Instead of treating it as a quality that everyone in some measure has and that can be developed, we treat it as something inherent in only certain types

of people or expressed only through certain kinds of activities.

Innovators and entrepreneurs as well as artists can see what does not yet exist. The Foundation has focused much of its granting in this area on schools, because this is where many children first encounter the regimentation that too often suffocates their creativity.

## ArtsSmarts: Unleashing Creativity

In the 1990s, anxious parents asked why “Johnny can’t read.” With cuts to school budgets, the most common response was to go “back to basics.” Time spent on what were deemed to be non-essential subjects, whether gym class or the arts, was to be redirected to the “3 Rs.” By the end of the decade, there were few dedicated, trained arts teachers – and few opportunities for children to have first-hand experience of creativity in a classroom. It was in this context that the Foundation launched the ArtsSmarts program. It set out with three objectives: to build partnerships between schools, teachers, artists, or arts organizations and the broader community; to integrate arts activities in non-arts subject areas as a way to enhance learning; and to provide opportunities for young people to actively participate in the arts, and thereby encourage their creative faculties.

At first, progress was slow. Schools are often resistant to change; new relationships had to be forged between unlikely partners, teachers, and artists; and the gap between school and community needed to be bridged. An initial five sites were selected across Canada, but each site was different, and those differences were reflected in the design of the ArtsSmarts programs.

In Ranchlands Community School in Calgary, Gregorian chant helped teach math and fractions; at St. Mary Margaret School in Ottawa, students used dance and puppetry to learn about the environment; and in the Halfmoon Bay Community School in B.C., pupils in grades six and seven made a huge ceramic map of their community based on what they had learned about its history, biology, geography, and so on. The impact of ArtsSmarts began to be seen in increased engagement by students in their learning, in the enthusiasm of teachers who, in many cases, saw the classroom atmosphere revitalized, and in the response of parents and community members who began to see “their” school with new eyes.

In the 2009–2010 academic year, 27,200 children and youth participated in ArtsSmarts projects developed in collaboration with 1,795 artists and teachers. Almost 70 exhibitions and performances were held in local schools and community venues to showcase what the students had learned and produced, and almost 180 professional development sessions and workshops were attended by artists and teachers. All of this work is supported now by local and provincial funding.

ArtsSmarts is now a national organization with an independent Board of Directors. A recent review has recommended that it should open source its core materials so that anybody can use them, and that its principal objective now be to advance educational innova-

tion. The Centre for Social Investment at the University of Heidelberg, which is surveying innovative education programs around the world, in 2010 cited ArtsSmarts as a leading example of foundation funding having an impact on public education.

Another program that uses art to unleash young people’s creativity and that has a transformative effect – and an international reputation – is El Sistema in Venezuela. Launched by a charismatic educator, Dr. Abreu, El Sistema has enlisted hundreds of thousands of children in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in youth orchestras, and in the process taught them the benefits of discipline, teamwork, and the development of a high level of professional achievement. The El Sistema model is increasingly being copied in other countries, and the Foundation is supporting the New Brunswick Youth Orchestra to adapt it here.

## TED Talks

In a celebrated TED talk, Sir Ken Robinson tells the story of a young girl in art class who is asked by her teacher what she is drawing. “I am drawing God” is her reply. The teacher protests that no one knows what God looks like. “They will when I am finished” is the pupil’s confident response.



## An ArtsSmarts Story

Kyle Bishop, a teacher at Waterloo Collegiate Institute, celebrated the school's 50th anniversary by involving 80 students and teachers from 10 different classrooms to make an outdoor sculpture that represented the school and its community. Collaborating with installation artists Patrick Cull and Barbara Hobot, and guided by the ideas of the students, they built a 35-foot metal Viking ship, complete with wooden oars to display the students' stories. This first ArtsSmarts project brought together students in history, English, environmental studies, graphic design, and technical studies. The history students researched the symbolism of the Vikings and the architecture of their ships; the English and ESL students interviewed students from all parts of the school to record their stories on the oars; the graphic design class prepared the layout and design and then handed the plans to woodworking and technical studies classes to etch the oars and construct the ship. In this learning journey, the teacher, Kyle, accompanied the youth as a fellow student and collaborator, and helped move his students into a leadership role as they embodied the traits of the school emblem, the Vikings, such as courage, teamwork, and a desire to explore. This project was supported by the ArtsSmarts Waterloo partners with the Waterloo Regional Arts Council, the District School Board, and the financial help of the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation, Musagetes, and the Ontario Arts Council. In its first two years, ArtsSmarts Waterloo has carried out 11 projects involving more than 895 children and youth.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit ArtsSmarts <[www.artssmarts.ca](http://www.artssmarts.ca)>

Visit the Foundation's online resources <[www.mcconnellfoundation.ca](http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca)> to read *The ArtsSmarts Story* by Silver Donald Cameron

Visit TED <[www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)>

Read *Out of Our Minds: Learning to Be Creative* by Ken Robinson, 2001 and 2011

Visit El Sistema <[www.elsistemausa.org](http://www.elsistemausa.org)>

## Measuring "Progress"

We do not have good tools to measure our progress toward a more sustainable society. Changes in GDP are regularly reported, but this just measures economic output. It doesn't track declines in our stock of natural resources nor does it differentiate between "good" and "bad" economic activity (a tornado laying waste to a town results in a rise in GDP because housing and infrastructure must be replaced). There are efforts to develop more accurate and comprehensive indicators of our overall well-being. The Foundation has supported two such efforts so that Canadians will be able to monitor how well we are doing, not just in terms of economic activity, but also with regard to our social well-being and the health of our environment.

The Atkinson Foundation launched the Canadian Index of Well-Being (CIW), which aims to create a composite index that incorporates living standards, health, community vitality and civic engagement, environment and arts, culture, and recreation. The support of Statistics Canada will be critical, but so far has been difficult to achieve; in the meantime, responsibility for the ongoing development of the CIW is now located at the University of Waterloo.

A second project funded by the Foundation enabled Community Foundations of Canada (CFC) to help its members to

## Vital Signs

The Vital Signs Reports provide an annual snapshot of a community's overall well-being, but they also highlight issues that need attention. In Victoria, the 2009 Vital Signs revealed a desperate lack of registered child-care spaces, which led the Victoria Foundation to launch a pilot project called Every Child Counts. By 2011, it created 50 new child-care spaces focused on small, home-based settings provided by immigrant stay-at-home parents. In London, Ontario, the problem was poor air quality, which was affecting people's health. By organizing an open competition, the London Community Foundation generated almost 50 ideas from individuals, organizations, and institutions, ranging from a walking school bus project to a clothesline campaign and a solar thermal installation project. In Medicine Hat, the issue was the low level of recycling, and in Calgary, Vital Signs became the catalyst for municipal departments to work with the Calgary Foundation and local groups to address problems together. In the words of Kerry Longpré of the Calgary Foundation, "This is a quality of life report focused on the citizens of Calgary," so collaboration between citizens and government is essential. By providing a baseline and revealing trends, Vital Signs enables communities to take their own temperature, spot problem areas, and take corrective action quickly.



create Vital Signs reports for their communities. The first Vital Signs report was launched by the Toronto Community Foundation in 2001. With each successive annual report, its relevance and credibility has grown as media, community organizations, municipal leaders, and others cited it to inform discussions about Toronto's progress and priority needs. By using data on 10 issue areas, including housing, education, public transit, social inequality, safety and health, and immigrant settlement, the report has influenced policy debates. When the 2004 report revealed that 70,000 people were waiting for subsidized housing even while apartment vacancies were at an all-time high, the community foundation worked with the landlords' association, the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, and others to assist people on the waiting list to move into the vacant units.

The Foundation's grant to CFC has enabled 18 community foundations thus far, from Saint John to Victoria, to develop their own Vital Signs reports. From these, CFC compiles a national Vital Signs report. Each report reflects local concerns and priorities, while the national level report gives a comprehensive overview of whether, as a country, we are truly making progress toward a more sustainable society, or merely increasing our production and consumption today.

---

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Canadian Index of Well-Being <[www.ciw.ca](http://www.ciw.ca)>

Visit Community Foundations of Canada <[www.cfc-fcc.ca](http://www.cfc-fcc.ca)>

Visit Vital Signs <[www.vitalsignscanada.ca](http://www.vitalsignscanada.ca)>

## Social Innovation Generation

Canadians are trying to meet 21st-century challenges with institutions and policies largely fashioned in, and for, the 19th and 20th centuries. We live in a post-industrial world and yet our education system is as regimented, standardized, and top-down as yesterday's factory. We have a knowledge-based economy, yet our health care system lacks proper information management, a comprehensive approach to allocating resources, and adequate support for the critical roles played by patients, their families, and community-based services. We have an increasingly sophisticated understanding of ecological threats, yet we continue to treat the environment as both a limitless resource and a dump for our waste.

It is time for fresh thinking and bold actions. We must unleash the creativity and resourcefulness of Canadians in all parts of society so that we can tackle the complex and interrelated challenges of the early 21st century.

A resilient society, by definition, is open to change. New problems arise, old methods no longer work, and fresh insights develop that lead to new thinking and innovative responses. Political and economic pundits have warned us for years that Canada has a "productivity deficit" that threatens our continued prosperity. Kevin Lynch, the former Clerk of the Privy Council, has repeatedly called attention to the importance of productivity and innovation to our

## The Provinces Promote Social Enterprise

Provincial governments, notably in B.C., Ontario, and the Atlantic Provinces, are discussing how citizens can be supported to tackle community needs, and, in B.C., an Advisory Council on Social Enterprise has been created, while Quebec has consistently promoted a vibrant social economy. In Ontario, three ministries hosted a Social Innovation Summit in May 2011, which was followed up by a first-ever wiki to engage citizens' views on a policy to promote social innovation in the province. Overall, however, government has been reluctant to lead a public discussion on the large challenges facing Canada or to reach out to engage citizens in meaningful ways. As a recent report, *Innovations in Government: Conversations with Canada's Public Service Leaders*, on consultations held by the PPF and Deloitte concluded, "Governments at all levels need to incorporate 'innovation as strategy' into medium- and long-term planning."

standard of living; he refers to innovation as “a public good and a private necessity.” In 2011, yet another federal panel was created to recommend ways to improve Canada’s performance and to achieve better results for the considerable government investment in commercial R & D.

Yet, in the mainstream discussion about productivity and innovation, the role of *social* innovation has been largely ignored. It is as though science and technology alone, along with more

*“Innovation – new or better ways of doing valued things – is, directly or indirectly, the main driver of productivity growth and thus the principal source of national prosperity.”*

- Peter J. Nicholson, quoted in *Convergence*, vol. 4, issue 2, by MaRS Discovery District

stringent intellectual property laws, could make Canada productive and prosperous. There is no question that lagging productivity is an economic problem, but a lack of capacity to innovate and to create large system change in the present context poses an even greater challenge to Canadian society as a whole. In so many of the areas addressed by the Foundation’s programs – the sustainability of our food system, the participation and sense of belonging of all citizens, the creation and application of new knowledge, to name but a few – what is needed is not just incremental improvement. We are living at a time of transformational change and it demands long-term

vision, support for innovation in all domains and at all scales, and a commitment to experiment, learn, and adapt.

The Foundation believes that for Canada to fully embrace and nurture innovation, *all* sectors must be involved. Social innovation is both a destination – the resolution of complex social and environmental challenges – and a process – devising new approaches that engage *all* stakeholders, leveraging their competencies and creativity to design novel solutions. High-impact innovations create a dynamic interplay between new products or processes, and the user (in his or her role as customer, client, citizen) and co-creator.

In 2004, the Foundation launched Sustaining Social Innovation. Working with some two dozen social entrepreneurs, this program aimed to increase the impact and durability of their innovations. Social innovators, such as business entrepreneurs, start with an idea or insight, but they need support in the form of advice, training, capital, and so on. It quickly became clear that working on an individual basis was inefficient and that there was much value in convening participants to share experiences and insights, and to develop a greater understanding of how their initiatives could bring about systemic transformation.

To create an *ecology* that supports social innovation, the Foundation in 2007 partnered with the MaRS Discovery District in Toronto, the University of Waterloo, and the PLAN Institute in Vancouver to establish Social Innova-

tion Generation (SiG). SiG is based on the premise that the major challenges we face require the focused attention of *all* sectors of our society – government, business, academe, and community – and a wider range of resources than what the Foundation alone could provide.

To date, SiG has focused on three priorities: building Canada’s *capacity* for social innovation, mobilizing new sources of *capital* to meet community needs, and creating a *culture* of continuous social innovation as a way to engage all sectors in meeting some of Canada’s most intractable social and environmental challenges.

For many years, the Foundation regularly convened meetings of some of Canada’s most experienced social innovators to enable them to share their knowledge and increase their impact and effectiveness. In 2011, a graduate diploma program in Social Innovation will be offered at the University of Waterloo for participants from government, private sector, and community organizations. This program is designed to equip practitioners with tools, strategies, and networks to tackle complex problem domains. The first course focuses on the challenges of increasing Canada’s productivity by bringing into the mainstream people who have been systematically marginalized and excluded, including new Canadians, seniors, and those with mental health issues.

Increased capacity by itself, however, has limited potential, unless we also address the chronic underfunding of activities that create public value. Vol-

## Impact Investing

Responding to the Social Finance Task Force’s call to establish “intermediary institutions, frameworks and regulations that will more efficiently connect the best people and the most innovative ideas to the capital they need to tackle complex societal problems,” MaRS Discovery District is creating a Centre for Impact Investing. The Centre will conduct research on new forms of financing like community and social impact bonds and a social venture fund, work with others nationally and internationally on impact metrics, do market development through a Social Venture Exchange, and provide advisory services and advocacy on legislative reform and tax regulations. Drawing from the experience of the U.K. and U.S. as well as Quebec’s “économie sociale,” the Centre will work with the private sector and governments to mobilize new capital for community organizations and social enterprises working on issues ranging from affordable housing to renewable energy and sustainable agriculture.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit Social Innovation Generation <[www.sigeneration.ca](http://www.sigeneration.ca)>

Visit the Foundation’s online resources <[www.mccfoundation.ca](http://www.mccfoundation.ca)> to read *Mobilizing Private Capital for Public Good*, a report of the Social Finance Task Force, and *Accelerating Our Impact: Philanthropy, Innovation and Social Change* by Katharine Pearson

Visit the Public Policy Forum <[www.publicpolicyforum.org](http://www.publicpolicyforum.org)>

Visit SiG@Waterloo <[sig.uwaterloo.ca](http://sig.uwaterloo.ca)> to read *Notes of a Newcomer: Looking in at Social Innovation in Waterloo Region*

untary and not-for-profit bodies in Canada depend largely on only two revenue sources: private donations, and government grants and contributions. Community organizations, often led by highly entrepreneurial individuals, may innovate as they improvise approaches to meeting local needs, but typically such efforts rarely get beyond the pilot project stage. There is growing awareness that new forms of hybrid financing that combine a financial and a social return, now called *impact investing*, are urgently needed.

Social enterprises can use private investment along with philanthropic and government funding to provide the capital they need to increase their effectiveness and impact. In the words of Judith Rodin, President of the Rockefeller Foundation, "While there is not enough money in foundation and government coffers to meet the defining tests of our time, there is enough money. It's just locked up in private investments." In 2010, the Foundation, through SiG, launched a Social Finance Task Force chaired by Ilse Treurnicht, President of the MaRS Discovery District in Toronto, and made up of prominent Canadian business and community leaders to make recommendations to promote impact investing to (in the words of the Task Force Report) "mobilize private capital for the public good."

The Task Force issued its report in late 2010 and it was subsequently presented to the federal Minister of Finance and several of his provincial counterparts. It calls for measures to mobilize new sources of capital, to create an enabling tax and regulatory

environment, and to build a pipeline of investment-ready social enterprises. Specific recommendations have been the subject of discussions by private and community foundations, and there is growing interest among investment managers. MaRS is following up with the establishment of Canada's first Centre for Impact Investing, which will serve as a national focus for research, capacity-building, and prototyping new funding models, including community bonds and pay-for-performance experiments, such as Social Impact Bonds. The McConnell Foundation, in common with several other private and community foundations, is beginning to engage in impact investing as a way to leverage its assets and to provide capital in a form and on a scale that meets community needs. Social finance, it must be emphasized, is intended to complement, not replace, other revenue streams and it is not viable for many types of activity.

As the ongoing national productivity and innovation debate makes clear, the final aim of SiG, to create a culture of continuous social innovation, is no short-term goal. New social, economic, and environmental realities call into question many aspects of how we do things, and not least the role of government. The widespread notion that the public sector is incapable of innovation because it lacks incentives or due to its risk-averse culture, ignores a legacy of pioneering achievements, including publicly funded health care, registered education and disability savings plans, and, at the municipal level, BIXI bicycles, and so on. SiG, in collaboration with the Public Policy Forum (PPF) and

others, has brought many of the leading thinkers and practitioners of public-sector innovation to Canada in the past 12 months to stimulate fresh thinking about the roles of government and civil society, but much remains to be done.

SiG is experimenting with concepts such as "change labs," "innovation hubs," and so on as "safe" spaces where people from all sectors can experiment, test, and prototype solutions to complex problems without all the risks inevitably involved in change. Key to these is the notion of "co-creation" of policies and programs, where citizens or users contribute to defining the challenge and possible solutions. This reflects a basic community development tenet, the principle of *ownership* (as exemplified by the approach of Vibrant Communities and other programs), and the need to develop skills of collaboration, design thinking, and other tools to promote innovation that are being addressed by the University of Waterloo program. The availability and use of new IT technologies allows for sharing of data sets, "crowd-sourcing" solutions, leveraging market forces for desirable social and environmental outcomes and other ways by which communities mobilize their chief assets – local knowledge, deep engagement, and entrepreneurial drive – to solve problems and to revitalize democracy.

SiG's goal is to help to create a culture that welcomes and supports innovation in Canada, beyond discrete solutions to particular problems. "Culture" sets the limits of what is possible, what is viewed as "realistic" or doable. In a time of accelerating, unpredictable change,

being realistic is not enough. We need to free our imaginations, to ask what is desirable, and then to engage as many of Canada's creative, diverse, and talented people as possible to build the society we want.



THE J.W. MCCONNELL FAMILY FOUNDATION

---

LA FONDATION DE LA FAMILLE J.W. MCCONNELL