Strategies for a Caring Society*

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Introduction

Building community capacity is about far more than addressing social problems. It is about both social intervention and social investment. Its purpose is to improve the quality of life for all. In considering the strategies for community investing, there is no single correct answer. The framework presented here should be considered a springboard for discussion rather than a definitive blueprint.

This is a difficult time to promote caring communities. Concern for human and environmental wellbeing took a back seat to the fiscal bottom line during the deficit-slaying years and it looks as though this bottom-line agenda will continue to rule – at least for the next few federal budgets. It appears that the "Asian flu" is Ottawa's major health concern and the looming threat of global recession has caused other key public issues to recede from governmental consciousness.

In some regions of the country, there are growing expressions of mean-spiritedness that appear surprisingly "un-Canadian", for example, municipal ordinances that criminalize panhandling [Schafer 1998]. Even the more moderate shifts in what have been regarded as traditional Canadian values are somewhat troubling. The recent "Sex in the Snow" account of values in this country at the end of the millennium found that over the past 15 years, Canadians have moved to a more individualistic, less social posture [Adams 1997: 49].

It is difficult to promote the notion of a caring society in what appears to be a less compassionate world. In fact, some would argue that the very talk of building community capacity is a dangerous trend. It is seen as a way of reducing public responsibility by letting governments off the hook. It lets them do less because someone else is doing more. Others contend that building community capacity to solve deeply-rooted and complex problems such as

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poverty, homelessness or crime, can have an opium-like effect. It can dull the anger and pain that force fundamental social change through conflict and confrontation. Still others claim that building community capacity is an "emperor's-new-clothes" idea; fundamentally, there is nothing there but a lot of talk that lacks real substance in both theory and practice.

While I understand these arguments, I think they must be assessed critically. I do not accept the notion of waiting for government to do everything. Governments have a crucial role to play – perhaps more than ever in light of an insecure economy and turbulent labour market, but there are many actions that communities can and should take to solve problems and to improve the quality of life. In fact, there are some things that communities can do far better than governments. In some cases, governments, with their myriad rules and regulations, are actually responsible for many of the problems communities are trying to tackle.

Take, for example, the hardship that Ottawa creates for refugees by accepting them to Canada and then taking years to process their papers. Thousands of refugees live in the country in a state of "legal limbo"– sometimes for up to 12 years. They then experience a range of problems because of the restrictions they face, e.g., they cannot vote, take out loans for post-secondary education or work in certain professions such as education and health care [Brouwer 1998].

I also disagree with the approach which claims that building community capacity blunts resistance to unacceptable economic and social conditions such as extreme poverty or homelessness. There are far too many people with no roofs over their heads and far too many hungry children. Should we do nothing about these conditions while waiting for governments to act? Such an approach is diametrically opposed to the vision of a caring society that community capacity building seeks to create.

Finally, the criticism that building community capacity is all talk but no substance is an incorrect assessment of the problem. There is probably too much substance embedded in this concept. Building community capacity involves many fields: anthropology, environmental science, political science, law, organizational development, finance and business, social policy, strategic planning, recreation, music, art and drama.

Conceptual Framework
There is an overarching conceptual framework that unites these individual disciplines: sustainable development. The primary objective of sustainable development is to improve the quality of life by building on the intrinsic links among factors that foster economic, social and environmental wellbeing. It is

also concerned with intergenerational equity, i.e., responding to the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It encourages all generations, present and future, to make the best use of their capabilities and resources [National Round Table 1993].

Underlying Value

The theme of "care" was used as a key organizing concept for the international Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life, co-chaired by Monique Bégin, former Minister of National Health and Welfare. The Independent Commission argued that the ethic of care is a core value that lies at the heart of all action to effect environmental change and to improve social wellbeing and the quality of life. The Commission also noted that the domination of the market-based economy has occurred at the expense of the ethic of care. We need to balance the obsession with GDP growth by an equally important matter: caring for people and the environment [Independent Commission 1996: 116].

Care is the basic value that underlies initiatives such as the Caring Communities Award. In fact, this value is what makes the Caring Communities Award so important. It not only recognizes communities that do good work, it also promotes explicitly the ethic of care as an essential fundamental societal value.

The notion of responsibility is embedded in the ethic of care. Clearly, we all have rights as citizens and it is essential for governments to protect these rights. But we also have responsibilities as citizens – obligations to each other, our families, communities and the environment. Responsibility is an equally important part of citizenship. Governments can play a crucial role in promoting a shift in societal values by providing the moral leadership that reinforces the concepts of stewardship, responsible citizenship and the associated notion of care. Unfortunately, recent massive cuts to some major social programs have raised serious doubts about governments' ability to provide moral leadership, especially when it comes to the ethic of care.

Strategies for Community Investing

The theoretical notion of sustainable development and the underlying value of care provide the foundation for investing in the whole community. I use the term "community" to include both geographic communities and communities of interest and of relationships, such as people with disabilities, the ethnic communities or the gay and lesbian community. And, of course, there are thousands of burgeoning electronic communities, now made possible by technology.

Both the literature and models of exemplary local work point to seven major strategies for community investing:

- poverty reduction
- broadened concept of investment
- civic engagement
- problem-solving
- partnership
- leadership development
- celebration.

Strategy #1: Poverty Reduction

Reducing poverty is the first and most important investment that any caring society should make as a prelude to other forms of community investment. Canada has a serious poverty problem – a national average rate of nearly 18 per cent at last count. The rate has been rising over the past few years despite falling unemployment and healthy economic growth.

Poverty has a devastating impact. It represents a serious disinvestment in society because of its profoundly negative impacts on physical and mental health, educational attainment and social wellbeing. The deprivation hits children especially hard [Steinhauer 1995].

A major goal of sustainable development is to reduce and eradicate poverty – which the United Nations calls the "greatest threat to political stability, social cohesion and the environmental health of the planet" [United Nations Development Programme 1994: 20]. Poverty is both caused and exacerbated by the unequal distribution of land as well as other resources and assets [World Commission 1987: 29].

Governments play the central role in reducing poverty by means of income redistribution. Progressive income taxes and transfers in the form of income programs have significantly narrowed the gap between the labour market earnings of rich and poor; however, governments' capacity to fight poverty and inequality is being tested by the growing inequality of market income (i.e., income from employment, investments and other private sources). Earnings have become more insecure and, for many Canadians, more inadequate in the face of an increasingly turbulent economy.

Despite the more-important-than-ever redistributive role, governments' ability to counter the growing gap between rich and poor has begun to falter. Recent cuts to Unemployment Insurance and welfare payments (especially the drastic

21.6 per cent slashing of benefits in Ontario in October 1995) are now being felt. For the first time ever, there is evidence that government transfers have become less effective in reducing inequality than they have been in the past [Battle 1998].

Thus, our first job is to strengthen social programs, but there are other actions that communities can take to reduce poverty. These actions fall into four major streams: meeting basic needs, removing barriers, building skills and promoting economic development [Torjman 1998a]. This framework was developed as part of Opportunities 2000, a poverty-reduction initiative undertaken by the Lutherwood Community Opportunities Development Association in Ontario's Waterloo Region.

i)   Meeting Basic Needs
It is almost impossible for people to learn new skills or explore job opportunities when they are worried about where their next meal will come from or about an impending eviction notice. It is equally difficult to concentrate on employability enhancement if physical security is imperiled by actual or threatened violence. Basic needs must be met first.

Basic needs encompass both physical security and physical and mental health. *Physical security* refers to food, housing/utilities (heat and light), clothing, clean water and sanitation, and protection from violence and physical/sexual abuse. *Physical health/mental health* includes health care services and programs that promote early childhood development and stimulation, build self-esteem and furnish emotional support, provide counselling and mental health services, and tackle substance abuse.

ii)   Removing Barriers
Poverty reduction also involves removing barriers that prevent participation in training and the labour market. Major interventions include ensuring access to high-quality, affordable child care and offsetting work-related and health costs. The needs of people with disabilities must be accommodated through removing physical, procedural and attitudinal barriers. New Canadians are often unemployed, not because of lack of education or training, but because the training they acquired offshore is not recognized in Canada. Transportation problems related to cost and access can be reduced.

iii)   Building Skills
Building skills is another way to reduce poverty. Some people need basic life skills training before they are ready for job training or paid work. Programs focused on language skills help workers learn English or French, and *literacy* refers to the functional ability to read; some programs incorporate both literacy and *numeracy* skills.

Job search involves assessing current skills, preparing resumes, self-marketing and providing information on employment vacancies through computerized listings, job banks and job search clubs. Building skills includes *academic* upgrading and *job training*, e.g., computer training, data processing and training for trades such as carpentry or electronics. Training may lead some participants to immediate jobs; in other cases, they may seek financial or technical assistance to create their own employment.

iv) *Promoting Economic Development*

Finally, poverty can be reduced through economic development: job creation and retention, self-employment, access to capital and technical assistance. Job creation includes the development of small businesses, worker co-operatives and *self-employment*.

Lack of access to capital has been identified as a major barrier to business startup. There is a tremendous amount of community activity underway throughout the country to promote access to capital. Peer lending, for example, was pioneered in Canada by the Calmeadow Foundation and is modelled after successful local lending initiatives in the developing world. In such programs several self-employed individuals (no more than 10) form a lending circle and approve each other's loans. Typically the capital is provided by an outside organization, such as Calmeadow Foundation.

There are several different models of community loan funds. For example, money may be raised from community investors who expect a return on their investment. In other models, contributors make donations and do not expect anything but a tax credit in return.

Some community loan funds, such as the Montreal Community Loan Association, also make available technical assistance for the legal and financial aspects of setting up a small business [Evoy 1997]. *Technical assistance* includes community and business planning, marketing and financing, enterprise management, investment mechanisms, institution-building, human resource development, board development, trade opportunities and information technology [Levine 1998].

Individual Development Accounts represent a model program of access to capital being actively promoted in Canada by the Self-Employment Development Initiatives (SEDI). In contrast to a loan that must be repaid, these accounts help low-income households save money by matching private savings, typically on a 3:1 ratio [Nares 1998].

The Funders' Consortium on Women and Economic Development is a unique method of promoting access to capital. The Native Self-Employment Loan Program directs capital to small, community-based businesses that rely on, and

serve, the local market. Grassroots Economic Opportunity Development and Evaluation (GEODE) in Sudbury has created a system of green dollars – effectively a form of barter – as one way to reduce poverty. Community foundations throughout the country are developing innovative forms of grantmaking for community investment.

Strategy #2: Broader Concept of Investment

The concept of investment is not new. But it has been interpreted far too narrowly. Money markets and money marketers have dominated the language of investment.

Investment typically is defined in fiscal terms. "Capital" is usually understood as accumulated monetary stocks held or saved for future investment or expended on such items as plant and equipment, buildings and vehicles [Spellerberg 1997: 43]. The concept of capital as a form of monetary currency is easy to understand because spending and investing money are part of everyday reality and financial capital can be readily measured. It is either there or it is not. For much of the 1990s, governments bemoaned the fact that the money was "not there".

But investment can be a far broader concept than the one typically used. The broader notion of investment means creating and employing all forms of capital: natural and built, human, cultural and social that are equally important to economic, social and environmental wellbeing.

These forms of capital represent significant sources of wealth, yet they are often undervalued or devalued. In fact, they are usually not recognized because they are more difficult to quantify and measure than financial capital. They tend to be overlooked in policy discussions and are not even counted in our formal notion of wealth as represented by the GDP (the sum total of goods and services produced and sold).

The GDP is, at best, an incomplete measure of the health of an economy and society. Worse still, it is a blunt and misleading calculation that counts as positive some very negative events such as spending to clean up oil spills and other environmental disasters. It fails to account for degradation of the environment and natural systems. It ignores the hours of time spent in informal care-giving and in volunteer effort in communities [Intergovernmental Panel 1995: 5].

The GDP is an equally inaccurate gauge of total economic health. In the past two years, for example, poverty has continued to rise despite economic "growth" reflected in a higher GDP. The expression "jobless recovery" embod-

ies the contradiction. High rates of growth do not guarantee the easing of urgent social and human problems [Henderson 1978: 36].

These problems have encouraged the development of other measures, such as the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI), which attempt to reflect more accurately the true health of a society. Statistics Canada recently announced a pilot study in Nova Scotia to test out an indicator of economic, social and environmental wellbeing based on the GPI.

Focusing on other forms of capital helps restore a crucial dimension to public policy – the "people dimension" that for too long has been overlooked in the obsession with financial capital. Broadening the concept of investment can help overcome the economic fundamentalism that has held sway in recent years [Riddell 1997: 18]. Nevertheless, in stressing the importance of other forms of capital, I am in no way downplaying the significance of money. Unfortunately, its importance is all too clear for those who do not have enough. But it is important to remember that there are other forms of capital that also contribute to economic, social and environmental wellbeing.

i)   *Natural and Built Capital*
"Natural and built capital" refers to the natural resources and the physical assets in communities. These include land, parks, schools, community centres, libraries, public housing, shopping malls and other physical properties.

Community land trusts are an example of "natural capital". These trusts are nonprofit corporations that separate the ownership of land from the ownership of buildings and other improvements to the land. Their purpose is to hold a body of land permanently in trust for the benefit of the community, help communities gain greater control over local resources and expand access to these resources for lower-income residents [Concordia University 1995].

Social housing is an example of "built capital". Social housing often is considered to be a liability to a community because housing projects purportedly reduce the value of the property in the neighbourhood. However, some communities in the US have begun to use their social housing stock as the foundation for substantial community investment. The value of the public housing is being calculated as equity to obtain bank loans for community economic development and additional affordable housing.

ii)   *Human Capital*
Human capital refers to the wealth inherent in human resources: knowledge, skills, time, energy, interest and commitment. There are countless models of programs that are now building on the strength of human capital. Recent figures issued by Statistics Canada show that one in three Canadian adults volunteers

regularly; their collective contribution exceeds $16 billion worth of paid work [Picard 1998: D2].

The knowledge, skill and expertise of retired and elderly Canadians in particular can make a significant contribution to society. A partnership between the Volunteer Centre of Ottawa-Carleton and the Ottawa-Carleton Learning Foundation pairs seniors with students to provide individualized reading instruction for children. The model helps promote literacy as well as intergenerational understanding. South Simcoe School in Oshawa engages a wide range of members in the community, including retired members of service clubs, to become involved in reading circles – known in the school as "circles of love". Retired Canadians also have a wealth of knowledge that they can share as business mentors for young people.

"Sweat equity" is another form of human capital. Habitat for Humanity is an example of an organization that uses sweat equity to create affordable housing. Each project is supported by volunteer labour including that of the new homeowners, community volunteers and company employees. Local and national businesses donate cash, building materials, builders' trade skills, food services and warehouse storage space.

iii) *Cultural Capital*
Cultural capital helps link members of a group through bonds rooted in common values, language, customs, traditions, beliefs and arts. It can also provide protection from outside groups and can be drawn on in times of hardship.

The concept of cultural capital is becoming more important in a globalized world. The more integrated we become in an economic sense – the greater the pressure to assert individual and local distinctiveness through cultural expression – the greater the value of our cultural capital. This phenomenon has been named the "global paradox": "The more people are bound together economically, the more they want to otherwise be free to assert their own distinctiveness" [Naisbitt 1994: 10].

Culture in the form of drama, music and art is being used increasingly to raise awareness about relevant social concerns and to help young people in particular to speak out on important issues, such as racism. The Conscious Youth Theatre Collective in North York, for example, trains young people in theatre techniques which help them express their views on social questions. The Three Fires Confederacy Native Student Council in West Bay promotes native culture in the home, school and community by working with elders.

Caledon has been following the story about Meacham, a small town in rural Saskatchewan, in which various aspects of culture are being used to promote

local economic development – a recording studio to produce the music of local artists, concerts to raise money for community investment and businesses to sell local crafts. The arts also provide a means of rallying the community to deal with major concerns, effectively helping to create social capital.

iv) *Social Capital*

Social capital refers to social connections and the associated norms and trust that enable community members to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives. These networks and bonds of trust have been found to increase a society's productive potential [Putnam 1993]. In short, social capital is good for business.

As part of its community-based poverty reduction initiative, the Opportunities 2000 project in Waterloo Region created a Leadership Roundtable. It is composed of the Chairman of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, the Medical Officer of Health, high-profile business leaders, low-income people and several local agencies. The Roundtable itself represents a form of social capital through the networks it has created.

The business leaders involved in OP2000 are encouraging their peers to examine their employment practices and broader involvement in the community. They expect businesses to ensure that their employees are paid adequately and work sufficient numbers of hours to provide a living wage. Employers in Waterloo Region will be encouraged to hire from the target population of low-income households.

The concept of social capital raises important funding issues. Investment in the whole community means building the capacity of organizations rather than investing in single, isolated projects. And here's where a buck is not a buck. A dollar contributed to the core activities of a group or organization helps bolster its capacity far more than funds directed towards individual projects. Grant funding is more conducive to building social capital than is a system of contracts for service. Grants help create and support local networks with a core building block of social capital [Robinson 1997: 41].

Through the network of bonds and trust that social capital creates, it also contributes to social cohesion. The notion of social cohesion – or social stability – is gaining attention in light of labour market trends that are driving a growing wedge between the rich and poor throughout the industrialized world [Blakely and Suggate 1997].

But let's be clear: the growing gap between the "haves" and "have nots" cannot be closed simply by creating strong bonds in communities. Social cohesion is no cure for poverty.

Strategy #3: Civic Engagement

Civic engagement – or broad participation in decision-making – is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development. Sustainable development identifies poverty as the major threat to humanity. Poverty is caused by the grossly inequitable distribution of resources. It is exacerbated by the inequitable access to decision-making processes that control the flow of resources. While civic engagement is one remedy, poverty must be attacked fundamentally at its heart through effective employment and redistribution policies made by governments.

A discussion of the need for improved civic engagement must acknowledge that, in relative terms, Canada is a fortunate country. In many nations, civic engagement focuses on far more fundamental issues of democracy.

Civic Alliance in Mexico, for example, is a collaboration of seven different organizations through which citizens monitor the integrity of the Mexican elections. The Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists evolved from the International Freedom of Expression Exchange – an electronic clearinghouse that brings international attention to journalists who are attacked for what they write. The Third Sector SOS campaign was initiated in Slovakia in response to proposed legislation to curb the rights of foundations [Civicus 1997: 3].

Canadians, by contrast, have many opportunities for political participation – membership in political parties, voluntary associations, special-issue campaigns, public demonstrations and representation to parliamentary committees. But there are signs of declining confidence in the traditional paths of political influence [Abele *et al* 1998]. There are also problems with respect to certain groups. New Canadians, for example, tend to have low participation in formal political processes, either through mistrust or deliberate exclusion.

Some of the traditional methods of civic engagement, such as consultation and polling, are being used as a tactic to delay substantive change. The flurry of activity around a consultation process can mask the fact that nothing is actually happening. At the federal level, for example, Canada has spent millions on finding out what actions should be taken to assist the disabled. But once identified, the needed actions turn out to be complex and they cost money. Consultation effectively has now become a substitute for action – in which case it actually slows progressive change.

I have similar concerns about the recent reliance on polling to help "guide" governments to what I have called *The New Public Policy* [Torjman 1998c]. I am not against polling *per se* – it provides an important indicator for politicians and the public. But it is impossible to know the extent to which governments may be controlling the process, e.g., determining the choices, how the ques-

tions are being asked and how much information respondents are given to permit them to respond intelligently to the questions. A lot of public money is being spent in ways that may or may not promote civic engagement.

The shift from meaningless consultation and sometimes vacuous engagement – usually a snapshot of public opinion captured at a particular moment in time – to genuinely deliberative and interactive citizen engagement will require a fundamental change [Abele *et al* 1998: 1–2]. True citizen engagement involves dialogue and listening, the expression and exchange of views, group and individual deliberation, reflection and learning.

At the end of the day, civic engagement is really about involving citizens actively in discussing and arriving at a consensus around key issues. Community problem solving is the fourth strategy for investing in the whole community.

Strategy #4: Problem Solving

Community problem solving lies at the heart of building community capacity. The "problem" to be solved may be a negative one – such as high unemployment, poverty or crime, but it may also be a positive one, such as how to promote a community's appreciation of the arts or how to beautify a neighbourhood.

Community problem solving does not mean that any one person or group has the answer to a certain problem. Rather, it is a process of finding a solution appropriate to the community. That solution is found by engaging key players from different sectors, sometimes referred to as "stakeholders", to help make decisions that ultimately will affect them.

There are many positive examples from which to learn – especially in the environmental field. Canada has substantial experience in encouraging voluntary action through multi-sectoral dialogue. We are "pioneers of the concept of 'Round Tables,' and moved in the late 1980s to establish these multi-stakeholder advisory bodies at all levels of government and in every province" [Bell 1998: 1]. Under the auspices of the Ontario Round Table on Environment and Economy, for example, a Transportation Collaborative involving 32 stakeholders developed a strategy for reducing carbon dioxide emissions that was endorsed formally by all but two members [Bell 1998: 6]. The National Crime Prevention Centre actively supports community-based problem solving. It encourages communities to work collaboratively to identify concerns, set goals and develop an appropriate implementation strategy.

An interesting example of this collaborative approach can be found in the Debra-Dynes area of Ottawa, a community that used to be known for its drug scene and increasingly violent confrontations with police. The police under-

took extensive consultations and subsequently entered into a partnership with the community. Local contractors, architects and engineers donated time and expertise towards the construction of a youth centre with an active sports program as the major attraction. The young people were drawn to a program that did not label them as delinquents, diagnose them as patients, or treat them as criminals but engaged them in an activities that they enjoyed in an atmosphere of respect. The more than 850 kids registered at the centre participate in sports, camping trips and leadership training.

There are many other examples of creative problem solving, including that of the Dufferin Mall in Toronto. The Mall has six schools in its catchment area and had become a meeting place for many teens during the day. There were growing numbers of disturbances involving crime and store break-ins. The mall manager realized that he would have to turn the mall into a "fortress" with multiple security systems or address the problem in a creative way so he convened the school boards and 12 community agencies to consider the options [Hall 1997].

The result of the problem solving effort was the Dufferin Mall Youth Services which offers individual and family counselling, advocacy, information and referral, job training, recreation and theatre. The model has been successful in using an existing facility in an innovative way to reduce crime, promote literacy and training, and engage businesses in providing work placements. But the important lesson from the Dufferin Mall is not so much the specific programs that were set up. The mall manager points to the problem solving process in which the community engaged to arrive at those programs as the key to its success.

Conflict resolution represents another form of community-based problem solving. Conflict resolution mechanisms seek non-violent solutions to economic, social and environmental problems such as racial tension, domestic violence and conflict related to commercial interests (e.g., protection of fishing areas from overuse by sport fishers). But the existing channels for mediating conflict locally, nationally and internationally are seriously overloaded. It is essential to invest in a conflict resolution infrastructure in order to solve problems with civility [Henderson 1978: 243].

Despite the wide variety of community-based problem solving models, they all have one important element in common: they engage in some form of collaboration to achieve their goals. This formation of alliances and partnerships is the fifth major strategy for community investing.

Strategy #5: Partnership

A partnership is a voluntary arrangement between two or more parties who agree to work co-operatively towards mutual objectives. It is an arrangement in which there is shared authority for, and responsibility and management of, the work. There is joint investment of resources (e.g., time, work, funding, expertise and information); shared liability and risk-taking; and accountability for the partnered project [Health Canada 1997: 2].

Partnerships sometimes are discussed as though they are alliances within the same sector or between different sectors in a defined geographic area. But these arrangements can include parties from different communities, provinces or countries, regional, national or international in scale. Partnerships also can bring together different generations. Groups such as United Generations of Ontario are working to bridge the age gap – a practice consistent with the concept of sustainable development.

Unfortunately, the term "partnership" now has become so overused that it appears to have lost its meaning. Because the term is being bandied about so loosely, it is important to be clear about the relationships that these arrangements exclude. Partnerships do not include mediations or negotiations although these skills are essential to the success of any working arrangement. Nor do partnerships include dialogue among organizations for the sole purpose of information exchange. There is no partnership without a sharing of risk, responsibility, accountability and benefits [Frank and Smith 1997: 7].

There are many advantages to partnerships. In fact, they are virtually a requisite for community-based initiatives that seek holistic and multi-sectoral solutions. Partnerships can harness previously untapped resources in new and creative ways thereby increasing the investment in a given area.

Partnerships and collaborations help raise awareness of pressing social problems such as poverty and family violence. They also embody a clear and important message: tackling community problems and generally improving the quality of life are the responsibility of the entire community – not solely of governments or the social sector.

But there are also concerns about partnerships. These include public sector divestiture, power imbalances and ethical issues [Torjman 1998b]. Many nonprofit groups question their ability to be equal players, especially with business partners who may wield substantial economic power and political influence. Community groups often face ethical and moral dilemmas working with partners whom they hold responsible for many of the social, economic and environmental problems the groups seek to address. Some organizations are using ethical screens to help determine the appropriateness of a future

partner [White and Wybrow 1996]. Partnerships are not a panacea for solving all community concerns, nor should they be viewed as a replacement for government intervention. *Partnerships and collaborations should never be expected to replace the role of government in redistributing income and making essential social investments.*

Practical issues also have become a major concern. Because of the variety of resources that partnerships are able to harness, funders increasingly are expecting groups to form alliances either as a spinoff of the project or even as part of the application process. Applicants should arrive with a partnership already in place (a deal already made) before submitting their proposals. While that expectation may not be compulsory, it nonetheless counts heavily in the funding decision.

The problem is that the development of a partnership requires a substantial investment of time and resources – a pressure rarely recognized by funders. It may take many meetings with several organizations before a suitable arrangement is struck. There is neither recognition of this work nor compensation for the invested time and resources. The "opportunity cost" of seeking suitable partners may be very high [Torjman 1988b]. At the end of the day, organizations may feel that the investment in a partnership was not worth the effort. Too much time may have been spent for too little return. At the very least, funders should recognize the upfront resources required for successful partnership – possibly by funding the initial exploratory work. The time invested in establishing a firm foundation will be saved in the long run by increasing the probability of success [Frank and Smith 1997: 13].

On a related note, funders often create unrealistic expectations in the area of evaluation. There is extraordinary concern with outcomes and measurable results. Clearly, outcomes are important and funders are keen to see that they get good mileage for their money. But the apparent obsession with outcomes-based evaluation has detracted from the equal importance of process. Ironically, it is process that we are talking about when we refer to civic engagement, community-based problem solving and partnerships. The outcomes of community-building efforts are often an improved process, i.e., greater capacity to accomplish goals and a heightened sense of community.

Strategy #6: Leadership Development

It takes strong and effective leadership to promote civic engagement, encourage community problem solving and establish strong partnerships but, typically, we define community leadership too narrowly. Leaders come not only from the community development sector. They can be from the arts, recreation, business and labour. Leaders can be educators, politicians, religious officials,

government administrators or individual citizens of any race, colour or ethnic heritage [Thomas 1998: 78].

As part of a study on building community capacity, Caledon conducted a national survey on leadership development to identify the key areas of knowledge and skill required by community leaders [Torjman 1998a]. What we heard was very important: community development leadership does not start with technical knowledge and skills. It begins with values and vision grounded in democracy and empowerment.

In addition to clear values, there are desirable leadership qualities: ability to connect with other people, entrepreneurial spirit, patience, confidence, integrity, humility, passion, tenacity, a sense of humour, ability to honour and work with differences, willingness to learn from mistakes and the ability to handle failures.

We also learned that there are two major sets of skills central to community leadership. The first set includes interpersonal and communication skills. The second set focuses on organizational and political skills including coalition-building, problem solving and the ability to link social issues with relevant policies. Training for these skills can take the form of teaching, mentoring, coaching and modeling [Mattessich *et al* 1997: 38]. In building leadership capacity, the major question is not so much how to train leaders but rather how to inspire them. Community leaders told us that they need "opportunities to blossom". A major goal of building community capacity is to "create space" for identifying concerns, venting anger and acknowledging frustrations in order to ensure common ground and encourages people to assume leadership roles. We heard that "capacity is built from sharing experiences face to face". This physical and emotional space helps leaders come together and realize that there are, in fact, many resources and strengths in their communities. A noteworthy example of a program designed to foster leadership is the work of the Community Foundations of Canada's "Growing to our Potential – The Community Leadership Workshop".

Community development is complicated, controversial work. It frequently involves confrontation because it deals with shifts in power and resources. Emotional support is crucial. Community leaders told us that they "need opportunities to talk to each other, to network, and share stories".

Storytelling is not a new method of learning. For example, it has long been used in aboriginal communities. Storytelling is a way to share experiences, especially that of elders. One respondent in the Caledon survey noted that in some traditions, including her own African culture, telling stories – not writing reports – is the key method of learning.

In his study of modern civilization, John Ralston Saul talks about civic storytelling as a means of countering the public mood of discouragement and despair. Civic storytelling, when undertaken in a thoughtful and nonsentimental way, is critical to the public articulation of different models of "hero". Civic storytelling is also essential to spreading "good news" of civic work and to evaluating best practices [1995: 24].

In recognition of the importance of storytelling, Caledon started the *community stories* series to document creative local efforts. We wanted to provide a vehicle for community leaders to write about and share their experiences. We wanted not only to give national profile to these efforts but also to reduce the waste of scarce resources through continual "reinvention of the wheel". We wanted to promote the documentation and replication of best practice.

Each story is unique in its method and approach but its overall purpose is the same: to harness local resources to reduce poverty and promote economic, social and environmental wellbeing. Taken together, the series represents an important body of community work to share – and celebrate.

Strategy #7: Celebration

Finally, it is important for communities to celebrate their strengths and successes. We pay so much attention to what is wrong and what needs to be fixed that we spend far too little time recognizing the efforts and initiatives that are going well. Celebration can take the form of oral or written recognition, but there are other ways for communities to celebrate their members, their leaders and their achievements. The arts have long been an important part of community celebration. Community events such as festivals, parades and block parties, are important not just because they are fun but because they keep people in touch with each other and reinforce the networks and associations that create constructive change. They are part of the glue that holds together the community fabric [Kanter 1995].

Positive role models should be publicly recognized. The Community Foundation of Ottawa-Carleton, for example, sponsors an Investing in People Award that recognizes individuals who have shown imagination and leadership in addressing local issues and opportunities. Winners' profiles are presented in the Community Foundation's Annual Report and they receive a $2,000 grant in support of their work. Skills for Change has developed a Pioneers Award to acknowledge the achievements and contributions of newcomers. At Caledon, we initiated the *real leaders* series to tell the stories of individuals who make exemplary contributions to their communities.

The Caring Communities Award is another celebration of success. It is far more than simply a feel-good event – although it certainly is that. Recognition and

celebration of success are investments in themselves. They not only reinforce positive efforts but also serve as a role models for other communities. The Caring Communities Program seeks community efforts concerned with poverty reduction and economic security. It supports initiatives that have a broad conception of what constitutes "investment". It rewards community-based problem solving. It encourages collaboration and helps develop community leaders. It promotes the sharing of exemplary stories. The Caring Communities Program breathes life into the fundamental core value of care. Most important, it seeks to reinsert the wellbeing of people and the health of the environment into the public discourse – the two areas that are fundamental to a "caring society".

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