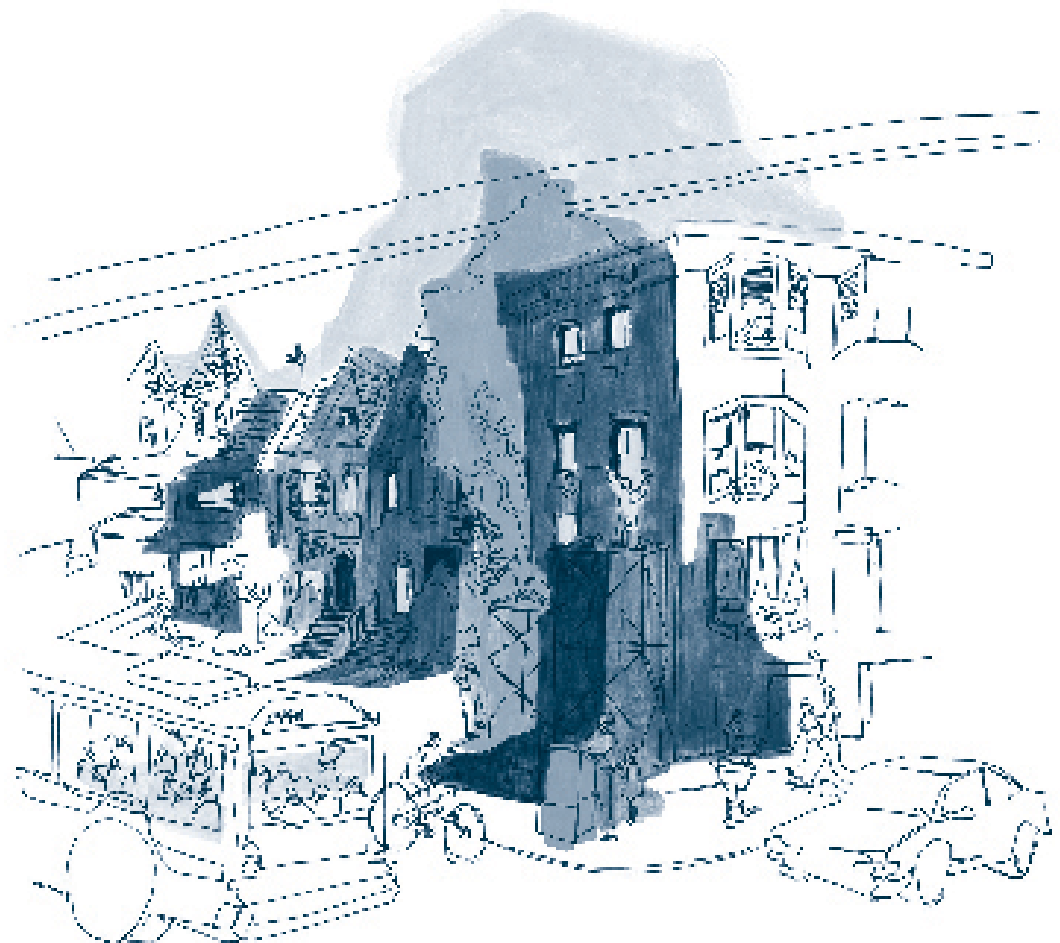




Goodwill Community Works Report

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INTRODUCTION

The Poor Man sits on a bench on a main thoroughfare of an Ontario town. He is in poor health, poorly dressed and poorly housed. He holds a sign reading “Will Work for Food.” He sits there for a long, long time. If he had a heart attack and toppled forward, a highly responsive and well-equipped emergency paramedic crew would convey him to a hospital where he would be diagnosed and treated, housed and fed, possibly receiving highly-sophisticated and expensive surgery. If he broke the law, a responsive and well-equipped police service would transport him to a lockup where he would be assessed and processed, housed and fed, possibly leading to a stay in a correctional facility.

But instead, he sits begging for work. And there is no response from a well-equipped team. He is no one’s immediate responsibility, and he is neither housed nor fed. And so he just sits.

And he thinks, “What kind of crazy world is this?”

The problems facing the Poor Man are not on the mind of the Knowledge Worker as she passes by in a taxi. Instead, she contemplates the IPO of the high-tech company she works for in which she has stock options. But the image of the Poor Man slowly worms its way into her thoughts. At first, she is frustrated. Why can’t the government find a solution? Why can’t the homeless find jobs? But the more she thinks about it, the more her frustration turns into fear. After all, there are always rumours of reorganization, of outsourcing. With a couple of unlucky breaks, she could be the Poor Man.

Before long, she is in a panic. She knows that no matter how hard she works, no matter how good her work is, no matter how much money her company makes, her job will never be entirely secure.

And she thinks, “What kind of crazy world is this?”

The Taxi Driver notices none of this. He just wants the day to be over. He was an engineer in his land of birth and enjoyed material comfort, the respect of colleagues and friends, and good health, until he was forced to emigrate. Now he works terribly long and sometimes dangerous hours at a job that gives him little satisfaction. It makes no sense to him. He has the same skills as before. He has the same work ethic as before. And Canada is a wealthier country than the one he came from.

And he thinks, “What kind of crazy world is this?”

“What kind of crazy world is this?” has become a common refrain in our communities when thinking about employment issues. Not only does the lack of readily apparent solutions plague us, but even the issues themselves have become more complex. The simple division of the workforce into “employed” and “unemployed” no longer seems appropriate. Issues such as job security and underemployment have made the topic of work a much broader concern. Consider our examples of the Knowledge Worker and the Taxi Driver. As demonstrated by our story, employment issues have become more nuanced, and that has expanded their importance to a much greater percentage of the population than ever before.

That said, there is no question that employment issues affect the marginalized members of society most of all. They are the first ones let go and the last ones hired, and so they are always the ones most vulnerable to trends in the workforce. In fact, the lack of decent work is a large part of the vicious cycle that keeps these groups marginalized. Our story didn’t stop with the Poor Man because these issues affect everyone. But not proportionately. It was important that our story didn’t end with the Poor Man, but it’s equally important that it began with him.

The story highlighted just a few of the many ways these employment issues can manifest themselves. But no matter how any individual may frame the issue, the fact remains that this “crazy world” will persist until we as a community can find solutions and act on them.

This paper is a step along that journey and is organized around four important insights:

1. A lack of work is not a “private trouble,” it is a “public issue,”
2. Increased work opportunities will benefit all communities in Ontario,
3. The Golden Age of “full” employment is not coming back, and
4. When people lack decent work, there is a tremendous waste of all forms of capital – financial, human and social.

A Working Society

At what point does unemployment become not just a “private trouble,” but a “public issue?” If one person in a town lacks for work, that’s a private problem and is only of concern to that person and his or her immediate circle. But if thousands of people are unemployed or underemployed in a community, then it is no longer simply a private trouble but also becomes a public issue. This distinction was introduced by American sociologist C. Wright Mills in 1959 and remains as important today as it was then.

Clearly, we are past the point where lack of work can be dismissed as a collection of “private troubles.” It’s well documented that unemployment creates financial hardships, increased health risks and greater social isolation for the individual. Though less acknowledged, it is also understood that widespread unemployment creates social tensions, weakens social institutions and generally increases the process of social disintegration. Work is definitely a public concern.

Fortunately, most Canadians have embraced the “public issue” definition. We as a people strongly believe that each person should have an opportunity to work. Should be able to make a contribution through work. Should be able to earn a living wage. Should reap the benefits for themselves and their families that flow from work. More than that, most Canadians want action. They support social and economic policies that would increase work opportunities for all who don’t have access to them now. This, in fact, is exactly what Canadians said during sessions of the Citizens Dialogue on The Kind of Canada We Want, organized by the Canadian Policy Research Networks.

This outlook is not unique to Canada. The fundamental importance of work is recognized by all nations. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, Article XXIII, states:

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment,

and

2. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.”

This view of work as integral to our human dignity is well established historically. In the Western world, the Protestant Work Ethic has been a defining characteristic of our approach to employment: our self-worth is directly connected to our ability to be productive. This belief that you are what you do is fundamental to our society. In the time of King John of England, it was law that your trade became your last name, hence the Bakers, Skinners and Millers among us. While the law is long gone, the reality is much the same today, since a person’s line of work is still central to his or her social identity and feeling of self-worth.

The importance of work is deeply ingrained in us. Indeed, religious and spiritual leaders have long recognized work as “a fundamental dimension of human existence on earth.” In his encyclical letter, *On Human Work*, the late Pope John Paul II spoke of work as a characteristic that distinguishes humans from other creatures. Work allows us to achieve fulfillment. Work is also key to promoting social justice. The dignity of work is violated when opportunities for work are limited “as a result of the scourge of unemployment, or because a low value is put on work and the rights that flow from it.” Work adds to the heritage of the whole human family, of all people living in the world. It is a common thread that links us all together.

For in the end, work is the great connector. Work gives all citizens the opportunity to participate in the social and economic benefits of society. Work opportunities are essential to breaking down the barriers that exclude marginalized groups including new immigrants, people with disabilities, racial minorities, Aboriginal peoples, single mothers and disadvantaged youth. Work is socially inclusive, bringing people from all walks of life together in a common endeavor and allowing us to share our experiences, and this social cohesion is essential to any hope of an equitable society.

Developing Material, Social and Human Capital

Increased work opportunities will benefit all communities in Ontario

Having seen that Canadians and leaders around the world value work, we turn our attention to a fuller accounting of work's benefits and the costs of its absence. Only when we acknowledge these tangible costs and benefits can we appreciate fully the immediacy of this crisis. It is too easy to dismiss the need for action on employment as pie-in-the-sky idealism divorced from practical reality. But that is not at all the case. These benefits and costs are very real, and the more they're understood, the more crucial work becomes.

Moreover, it would be a mistake to dismiss employment as only an end in and of itself. Access to decent work opportunities leads to improvement in so many of the fields that matter to Canadians, such as health, justice, education, inclusion, the economy and so on. Progress on the employment front is progress for society as a whole.

To understand the aggregate benefits, we first consider individual and family benefits, which accumulate upward to create dynamic and productive communities and nations. Conversely, vibrant nations and communities make it easier for individuals and families to prosper. But to understand how these benefits unfold, it helps to start with the individual.

We discuss these benefits in terms of capital. We normally think of capital in financial terms, as wealth in the form of money or other material assets, but there are other forms of capital to consider as well. Human capital is the skills, talents and capabilities of people. Social capital is a form of wealth that involves people's trust, connections with

each other, participation in organizations and confidence in public institutions. All these types of capital are resources, and just like with financial capital, they all have the potential to be used profitably or to be squandered.

Work benefits individuals and families in three key dimensions of their wellbeing:

1. **Work contributes to material wellbeing by providing an adequate income to live on.** Work provides a critical foundation and springboard for families to pursue healthy, happy lives as fully active and valued participants in society. Work that provides an adequate and stable income gives families access to quality food, clothing, housing, educational, recreational and cultural resources, and other community amenities. The experiences parents have with work profoundly affect the future life chances of their children. Parents need adequate and stable incomes to meet their children's immediate and developmental needs.

The list of benefits which could potentially be attached to material wellbeing is too long to even contemplate. Indeed, it is virtually infinite. The simple truth is that we live in a capitalist society, and there are very few arenas in life in which access to money can't in some way be turned into an advantage. When we talk about marginalization, we often mean exclusion from the things money can buy, and the obvious corollary is that material wellbeing is a precursor to inclusion.

Table 1. Percentage of Canadians aged 25 to 54 who have 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in selected public institutions, by household income, 2003¹

Household Incomes	Police (%)	Health Care System (%)	Education System (%)	Welfare System (%)	Federal Parliament (%)	Justice System (%)
Less than \$20,000	78.8	65.2	65.7	46.4	44.6	53.5
\$20,000 to \$39,999	83.2	65.1	70.1	43.8	41.4	57.8
\$40,000 to \$59,999	86.5	66.6	72.2	42.2	44.2	60.6
\$60,000 to \$79,999	87.7	67.6	72.4	40.1	41.9	59.4
\$80,000 or more	89.3	70.4	69.5	38.6	42.9	64.2

1. Adapted from: Statistics Canada, 2003 General Social Survey on Social Engagement, cycle 17: an overview of findings, Catalogue 89-598, July 2004, p. 50.

2. Work also promotes social wellbeing by enabling individuals from marginalized groups to participate more fully in Canadian life, a process we call social inclusion. Through work opportunities, individuals who have been excluded due to race, disability, immigrant status, gender, or class, can feel a sense of belonging to their community and society. People who are working are more likely to form social relationships and networks, which provide vital social support and connections that lead to other opportunities. They are more likely to participate in community life and political activity. They also have a higher degree of trust in others and in institutional authorities such as police and politicians.

These are more than mere academic constructs. Civic and social engagement can be measured and have been by Statistics Canada. Their 2003 General Survey on Social Engagement showed that as incomes decline, so too does social and civic engagement. Or, to state it more positively, we see that people with adequate income are more highly connected, participate more readily in organizations and political activities, feel a greater sense of belonging to their local community, have more trust in other people, and have greater confidence in public institutions.

Table 2. Percentage of Canadians who say that it is 'very likely' or 'somewhat likely' that a wallet or purse containing \$200 would be returned if found by a complete stranger / someone living close by, by selected characteristics, 2003²

	If found by a complete stranger		If found by someone who lives close by	
	Very likely (%)	Somewhat likely (%)	Very likely (%)	Somewhat likely (%)
Total	5.0	31.5	42.7	36.1
Men	5.0	31.3	43.6	35.7
Women	5.0	31.7	41.8	36.5
Household Income				
Less than \$20,000	4.9	27.1	33.1	36.6
\$20,000 to \$39,999	5.5	29.0	42.0	36.6
\$40,000 to \$59,999	5.0	32.1	41.9	41.0
\$60,000 to \$79,999	4.6	35.7	46.2	39.1
\$80,000 or more	5.9	41.2	53.1	36.3
City Size				
Rural and small town areas	6.1	34.4	59.3	28.9
CAs less than 50,000	3.9	34.0	44.7	36.2
CAs greater than or equal to 50,000	4.9	34.2	45.3	36.1
CMA less than 1,000,000	4.9	33.8	42.4	36.3
CMA greater than or equal to 1,000,000	4.8	27.2	33.5	39.6

2. Adapted from: Statistics Canada, 2003 General Social Survey on Social Engagement, cycle 17: an overview of findings, Catalogue 89-598, July 2004, p. 52.

How individual citizens relate to each other is enormously important, for this “social capital” is as much a part of our wealth and protection as are other forms of capital. As Harvard University’s Robert Putnam has observed from his U.S. data, there are strong positive correlations between social capital and measures of wellbeing such as children’s health, happiness and educational performance. Putnam has also found that in regions and communities with higher levels of social capital, there are fewer violent crimes, mortality rates are lower and tax evasion is less common. Perhaps most importantly, this capital pays huge future dividends, as children tend to thrive when their parents can serve as positive role models through active involvement in work and community life, while also

having the time, energy and resources to be fully engaged in home and family life.

3. Work contributes in many important ways to personal wellbeing, or health in the broadest sense.

Our goal of providing universal access to decent work is supported by a large body of evidence demonstrating the importance of work as a primary determinant of health. It has been proven that those who work generally live longer and enjoy better physical and mental health than those who lack work opportunities. Work also provides a sense of purpose and builds self-esteem and self-discipline, all of which contribute to a better lifestyle and consequently better health.

Table 3. Percentage of persons aged 25 to 54 who participated in selected political activities, by selected characteristics, Canada, 2003³

	Searched for information on political issue (%)	Contacted newspaper or politician (%)	Signed petition (%)	Boycotted / chose product for ethical reason (%)	Attended a public meeting (%)	Participated in a march or demonstration (%)
Educational Attainment						
Less than High School	9.2	4.6	14.5	7.5	13.2	2.4
High School	19.9	11.7	29.7	18.8	19.0	4.4
Certificate or diploma	23.9	13.1	32.0	23.6	23.3	5.4
University degree	42.0	19.3	37.3	36.3	30.5	10.6
Household Income						
Less than \$20,000	22.0	11.9	25.4	17.5	17.7	6.1
\$20,000 to \$39,999	20.6	11.0	27.0	18.2	18.4	6.6
\$40,000 to \$59,999	23.4	12.1	30.2	21.6	22.0	6.6
\$60,000 to \$79,999	26.5	13.6	34.0	25.0	23.5	5.2
\$80,000 or more	34.8	17.8	37.4	32.7	29.0	6.8
Immigration Status						
Canadian-born	25.8	13.7	33.3	25.5	24.0	5.9
Immigrated before 1980	28.6	16.3	29.3	23.7	22.2	8.0
Immigrated 1980 to 1989	26.8	11.6	22.0	17.6	16.6	8.1
Immigrated 1990 to 2003	22.2	8.6	12.2	10.3	14.6	5.8

3. Adapted from: Statistics Canada, 2003 General Social Survey on Social Engagement, cycle 17: an overview of findings, Catalogue 89-598, July 2004, p. 54.

Beyond its benefits to individuals, work is also the lifeblood of healthy, vibrant communities and can be a catalyst in revitalizing marginalized communities. A community that offers diverse and plentiful work opportunities becomes a magnet that draws in both people and investment. In turn, this economic and social vitality supports livable neighbourhoods and healthy cities enriched by cultural, recreational, educational, artistic and community resources and services. Work also builds social cohesion by including rather than excluding the citizens of Canadian society. When more citizens have access to work opportunities, they contribute and participate more fully in the life of their communities and country.

The economic benefits to the community at large are also considerable. When more people are working, tax revenues increase dramatically and spending on employment insurance and other social assistance falls. More consumers have money to spend on goods and services, which generates greater economic activity and new work opportunities.

There is a clearly symbiotic relationship between communities and work. Despite the trend towards globalization, place matters more than ever before. Real communities, where people live and work, have not been replaced or supplanted by virtual communities. For instance, studies

of successful innovation in the knowledge-based economy show the critical role played by spatially-anchored learning communities, large and small urban spaces where leading-edge institutions, businesses, knowledge workers and resources cluster. Employers recognize that knowledge workers and management look for places where there is economic, social and cultural diversity, a wealth of leisure resources and the quality of life is high. Work opportunities clearly gravitate towards healthy communities.

By the same token, as we have already demonstrated, work is essential to improving our communities. Indeed, any definition of a healthy community includes an abundance of work opportunities. As an example, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has developed a set of Quality of Life indicators, which includes Quality of Employment.

On both the individual and community levels, in economic terms, the choice between expanding or diminishing work opportunities is a choice between efficiency and waste. In social terms, it is a choice between boosting or losing human capital.

Table 4. Percentage of persons aged 25 to 54 who participated in selected political activities in the past year, by whether or not they voted in most recent federal and provincial elections⁴, Canada, 2003⁵

	Searched for information on a political issue (%)	Contacted newspaper or politician (%)	Signed petition (%)	Boycotted / chose product for ethical reason (%)	Attended a public meeting (%)	Participated in a march or demonstration (%)
Voted in both federal and provincial election	29.5	16.6	36.0	27.6	27.3	7.0
Voted in federal or provincial election	26.4	9.6	29.6	23.8	20.5	6.3
Did not vote in either federal or provincial election	17.7	6.8	18.1	14.9	12.9	4.6

4. Readers are reminded that the GSS data were collected throughout 2003 and that the phrase "most recent federal and provincial elections" refers to the elections prior to the data collection.

5. Adapted from: Statistics Canada, 2003 General Social Survey on Social Engagement, cycle 17: an overview of findings, Catalogue 89-598, July 2004, p. 54.

Current Reality

The golden age of “full” employment is not coming back

We have shown that availability of work opportunities is of benefit to all. But it is much easier to recognize this than it is to achieve it. We are faced not only with problems in terms of quantity, but in terms of quality as well. Our primary concern here is with the marginalized, with barriers to decent work opportunities for typically excluded groups such as people with disabilities, racial minorities, new immigrants, Aboriginal peoples, single mothers and disadvantaged youth.

Based on the European experience, employment researcher Serge Paugam describes the downward spiral of “precarity,” a process of progressive marginalization that occurs when work becomes permanently precarious. The threats to social cohesion arising from widespread unemployment and widening precarious employment have been acknowledged by the European Union, which has adopted a collective program of action to eradicate poverty and social exclusion by 2010 through a commitment to sustained economic growth, and more and better jobs.

We see the same spiral of “precarity” has evolved here in Ontario. We live in a society where workers can be poor. With the new realities, even people who work can be marginalized. It’s the “new normal,” so much so that we now take this relatively recent phenomenon for granted and believe that it could never be otherwise. But only a few decades ago the notion of the “working poor” was unthinkable. It was an oxymoron because decent, steady jobs included rather than excluded working Ontarians, assuring breadwinners and their families of a secure place at society’s table.

The good old days of steady, permanent jobs that provided most Canadians with an income they could live on, and with non-wage benefits too, were characteristic of the “golden age” of work in the 1950s through the 1970s. That basic, conventional paradigm of work — in which the vast majority of people working had secure, full-time jobs — is a historic relic that is gone forever, just like the gold watch upon retirement.

Figure 1: The Impact of Racialization

- A double digit racialized income gap as high as 30% in 1998
- Higher than average unemployment, with unemployment rates two to three times higher
- Deepening levels of poverty
- Differential access to housing leading to neighbourhood racial segregation
- Disproportionate contact with the criminal justice system (criminalization of youth)
- Higher health risks⁶

“In 1995, the mean income of employed Aboriginal people was 50% lower than the national average.”⁷

“Forty-four percent of Aboriginal people have incomes falling below LICO, compared with 20% of the total Canadian population. Twice as many aboriginal children live in single-parent or low-income families as other Canadian children (32%). Although they constitute only 3% of the Canadian population, Aboriginal people account for 16% of the sentences to correctional facilities.”⁸

Today’s reality includes a much more diverse set of work arrangements. Globalization, technological change, deregulation and a growing emphasis on competitiveness at all costs have transformed the landscape of work immeasurably. These trends have had a disproportionately harmful effect on traditionally marginalized groups, making barriers to decent work even more formidable. But beyond that, profound changes in the world of work have also marginalized and excluded many other groups in society, including the “working poor” and immigrants, who historically have been upwardly mobile but are particularly vulnerable in the new labour market.

6. Adapted from: Ehrenreich as cited by Curry-Stevens, A., “Income and Income Distribution” in Raphael, Dennis, ed. *Social Determinants of Health, Canadian Perspectives*, Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc. 2004, p. 31. Reprinted by permission of Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc.

7. Adapted from: Galabuzi, Grace-Edward, “Social Exclusion” in Raphael, Dennis, ed. (2004). *Social Determinants of Health, Canadian Perspectives*, Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc. 2004, p. 240. Reprinted by permission of Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc.

8. Source: Chah, Chandrakant P., “The Health of Aboriginal Peoples” in Raphael, Dennis, ed. *Social Determinants of Health, Canadian Perspectives*, Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc. 2004, p. 269. Reprinted by permission of Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc.

To understand this new reality, we must recognize five key trends:

1. A greater divide among workers

With the growth of precarious work and the erosion of job security, underemployment has become as much of a problem as unemployment. At the same time as work has become less secure, unemployment benefits and other elements of the social safety net have weakened. In recent decades, there has been a tremendous individualization of risk and responsibility, with many of the old social anchors removed. As changes in work have accelerated, individuals and their families have been forced to deal with the risks associated with those changes while receiving less government and corporate support.

The result is a more polarized work world. Some people move onward to develop new skills, meet greater challenges, earn more income and realize upward mobility, while others experience more stress, insecurity and a downward spiral. More people are excluded from many of the social and economic benefits that decent work can offer, and there is a greater divide growing between those for whom work is positive and rewarding and those for whom it's a negative experience. Also, as traditionally marginalized groups tend to have more negative experiences, inequities are perpetuated and exclusion becomes entrenched.

2. The expansion of precarious work

Flexible strategies are the norm for employers today, and consequently, many more Canadians are involved in various types of non-standard, precarious work. Over 33% of working Canadians are employed in part-time work, temporary work, self-employment or multiple jobs. Only 50% of working Canadians have a single, full-time job that has lasted more than six months. In the past two decades, about 50% of the new jobs created in Canada have been non-standard, precarious work. For people entering the workforce, leaving jobs or changing jobs, much of the work available will be precarious work rather than standard, permanent full-time jobs.

The increased flexibility of labour markets and workplaces has expanded the opportunities and the quality of work experience available to some high-skilled workers who are able to negotiate high fees and hours that suit them. That romanticized image may be foremost in the public mind,

but that reality only fits a small proportion of the contingent workforce.

For the majority of people doing non-standard work, contingent work means a lower and less secure income. In the Greater Toronto Area, for example, it's estimated that more than 1.2 million people are involved in non-standard, contingent work. Many are new immigrants, who end up self-employed or doing temporary work. Immigrants and racial minorities are disproportionately represented in industries dominated by non-standard, low-income forms of work such as textiles, clothing, hospitality and retailing. They often work in service occupations as newspaper carriers, pizza deliverers, janitors and cleaners, dish washers and parking lot attendants. A study by the Contingent Workers Project (now called Toronto Organizing for Fair Employment) found that about 70% of contingent workers in Toronto earned less than \$18,000 a year.

Marginalized groups are particularly vulnerable to flexible employer strategies, but virtually no one in Ontario is immune from the effects of technological displacement, economic restructuring or downsizing. A growing number of professionals, managers and other white-collar workers have lost jobs, become underemployed and been forced to make the shift from traditional full-time jobs to precarious work. Indeed, surveys suggest that the fear of losing a job and being without work is even greater among the middle class than low-income groups.

Figure 2

"It is common, among the non-poor, to think of poverty as a sustainable condition – austere, perhaps, but they get by somehow, don't they? They are always 'with us.' What is harder for the non-poor to see is poverty as acute distress: The lunch that consists of Doritos or hot dog rolls, leading to faintness before the end of the shift. The 'home' is also a car or a van. The illness or injury that must be 'worked through' with gritted teeth because there's no sick pay and the loss of one day's pay will mean no groceries for the next."

(Ehrenreich, 2001:214).⁹

9. Adapted from: Ehrenreich as cited by Curry-Stevens, A., "Income and Income Distribution" in Raphael, Dennis, ed. *Social Determinants of Health, Canadian Perspectives*, Canadian Scholars' Press Inc. 2004, p. 31. Reprinted by permission of Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.

National unemployment figures in the 7% to 8% range do not accurately reflect the extent of insecurity — anxiety and uncertainty — about work in society today. People moving from unemployment to short-term employment or precarious employment feel a lack of job security. But anxiety about being without work affects many of those in standard full-time jobs too. For those who have full-time jobs, the risks of losing a job are much greater than in the past, and many worry that if they lose an existing job, they won't be able to find a new one. In an age of flexibility, where doing a good job provides no job guarantee against downsizing or layoffs, a sense of job insecurity is now widespread among Canadians.

As Heather Scott, a researcher with the Institute for Work and Health in Ontario, has noted, “the current employment regime has made work-related insecurity (framed euphemistically as ‘flexibility’) a core value.” Accordingly, any discussion of job insecurity as an acute stressor, as something to be endured temporarily, belies the fact that job-related insecurity is in fact an ever-deepening structural factor in today's work world.

Under the old model of work, job insecurity represented a somewhat anomalous event in a predictable work pattern. But under the new employment model, work-related insecurity is a more chronic problem for a broader segment of the working population than ever before. The chronic, persistent nature of work insecurity translates into a particular type of health risk, the harmful effects associated with long-term and traumatic strain.

3. Polarization of incomes

Incomes have also polarized so that Canadians are either moving up into well-paying, higher-skilled jobs or down into low-skill, low-wage precarious work. During the 1990s, the income gap between rich and poor widened dramatically. The well-paid took a greater share of all income and people who earned lower pay saw their real wages stagnate or decline. And a growing number of people who work — including those who work full-time — are unable to earn a living wage. As more Canadians move into non-standard work, fewer receive non-wage benefits such as pensions, life and disability insurance and supplementary health insurance to cover dental, eye care and other health expenses. Again, this polarization disproportionately harms marginalized groups.

4. Work has intensified

Globalization, advances in technology and an increasing emphasis on cost reduction have also led to an intensification of work. When there are fewer people to do the same amount of work after layoffs and downsizing, employees tend to work at higher speed, with greater effort and in many cases for longer hours to meet tighter deadlines. The demands of work are becoming greater, resulting in a higher level of workplace stress. People with core full-time jobs are generally working longer hours — one in three Canadian men work more than 40 hours a week — while many people doing non-standard work are not getting enough hours. The distribution of work is such that people tend to be either working too much or too little. By contrast, in many European countries, regular hours are generally shorter and the work is more evenly distributed.

Figure 3

In Canada, not counting those who are unemployed, only half of all Canadians have a single, full-time job that has lasted six months or more (Lowe, 1999). The current Canadian labour force includes the following:

- 16 % self-employed workers;
- 10 % temporary workers;
- 11 % regular part-time workers;
- 6 % employed in their current job for less than six months;
- 2 % are employed in more than one job.¹⁰

5. Fewer opportunities for self-development

Workplace training opportunities are less developed in Canada than in the Scandinavian countries and Germany, which have a solid training culture. Less than one in three working Canadians participate in job-related learning activities, which is even about 10% lower than in the U.S., and the rate of job-related training in Canada has been steadily falling over the past fifteen years. Training is most often provided for core workers in large companies,

10. Adapted from: Tremblay, Diane-Gabrielle, “Unemployment and the Labour Market” in Raphael, Dennis, ed. *Social Determinants of Health, Canadian Perspectives*, Canadian Scholars' Press Inc. 2004, p. 59. Reprinted by permission of Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.

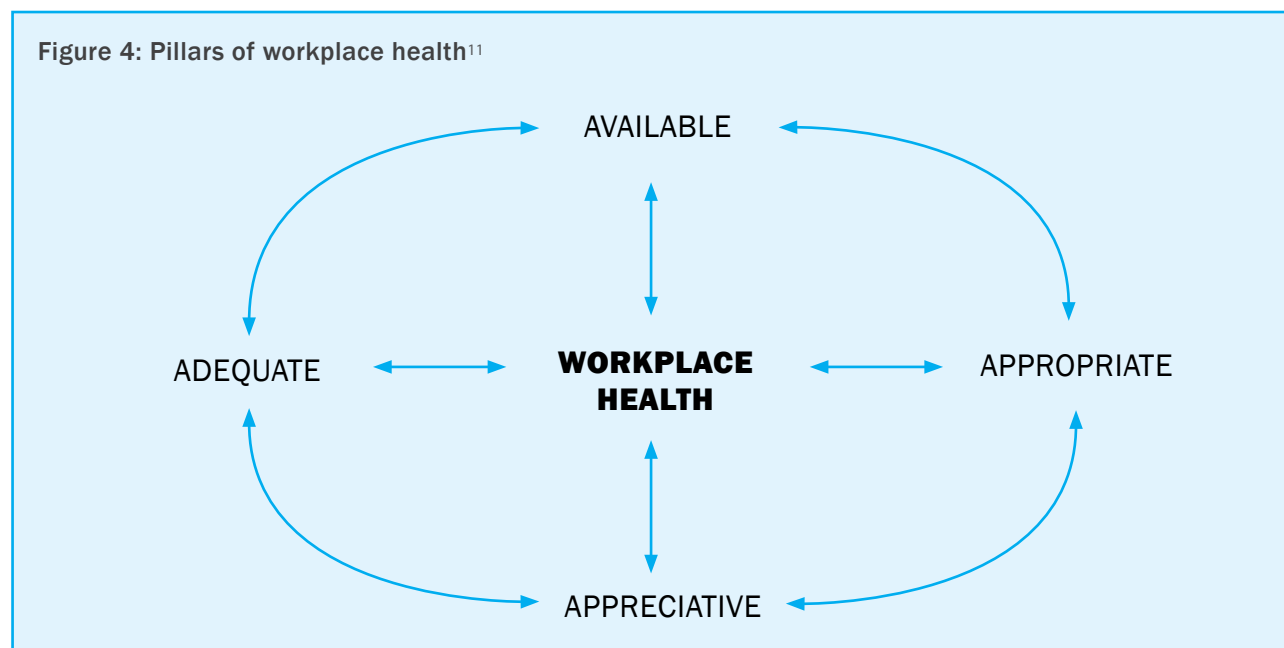
while the growing numbers of people doing precarious work generally have little access to training. So, a lack of opportunities for self-development through work is being perpetuated in low-skill, low-wage work and human capital is being wasted.

Based on these new realities, it is now most meaningful to talk about “decent work” rather than “job” or “careers.” Decent work is defined as having four essential elements: availability, adequacy, appropriateness and appreciation. Availability means that work should be available to all. To make work more available, it may be desirable to reward or support unpaid family, community and civic work. After all, this work is as challenging and productive as typical paid work, and can address many unmet social and community needs. Adequacy means people should be able to earn an adequate income from work to meet their needs. Appropriateness recognizes the importance of ensuring that the demands of work fit with people’s home and family responsibilities. Appreciation recognizes the value

of workers as contributors in the workplace and society. It encourages people’s involvement in decision-making, learning and growth through work and in providing work that is linked to their interests.

These four elements capture the aspirations all workers have, and what we mean by our collective commitment to decent work. We can measure any work opportunity against them, using them as a yardstick at any point in time. We must also evaluate each work opportunity in the context of a life cycle, with each opportunity building upon the past and leading to a future better opportunity.

To this point, we have explored the benefits of work to society, and we have looked at the current reality of the workforce. Clearly, the state of things will not allow us as a whole to enjoy all the benefits decent work has to offer. But what price do we pay as individuals, families, communities and a nation when people lack decent work?



11. Adapted from: Polanyi, Michael, “Understanding and Improving the Health of Work” in Raphael, Dennis, ed. *Social Determinants of Health, Canadian Perspectives*, Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc. 2004, p.100. Reprinted by permission of Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc.

Health, Social and Economic Costs

When people lack decent work, there is a tremendous waste of all forms of capital — financial, human and social

Our reality is far different from the vision of decent work for all. This creates a tension, as we try to cope with this disparity. The easiest thing for us to do is to ignore the reality or distort it, burying our heads in the proverbial sand. Except the costs are too high.

The trap we so often fall into is accepting our reality as static and unchanging. The changes around us are so hard to see, we accept the constructs of society as a constant, when in fact, they are anything but.

Our situation is akin to the parable of the frog and the pot of boiling water. If you drop the frog into a pot of boiling water, it will sense the danger it's in and will jump right out. However, if you put the same frog in a pot of cold water and then bring it to boil, the frog is oblivious to the rising temperature and will eventually die from it. If we have become too complacent and too accepting of our reality, it is because we have simply adjusted to it without stopping to take stock of our situation. This section deals with the consequences of a paucity of decent work, and it is our intent to make it clear that we are indeed in boiling water.

In the same way that the benefits of available work are communal, a lack of work opportunities for some is a public issue that has potentially devastating consequences for all. Individual and family costs accumulate upward to create strain on communities and nations. Conversely, strained nations and communities increase the burden on individuals and families, with costs spiraling back downward to the victims. But to understand how these consequences develop, it helps to start with the individual, once again discussing these issues in terms of capital.

Health risks for individuals

Numerous studies done in many countries since the Great Depression of the 1930s have found that losing or being without work has a pernicious effect on the health of individuals. Studies by American sociologist Harvey Brenner in nine western countries, including Canada, consistently show that the loss of a job contributes significantly to premature death and is associated specifically with deaths from heart disease and suicide. Studies by William Avison, director of the Centre for Health and Wellbeing at the University of Western Ontario, also show how loss of work contributes to depression, anxiety, panic and other mental health problems in individuals, as well as higher rates of substance abuse.

Avison has looked at how a widely-accepted stress model can be applied to unemployment and health outcomes for individuals. Loss of work can reduce self-esteem and personal efficacy, reduce social support, create financial strains and lead to marital and family conflict. By increasing each of these stressors, a loss of work contributes directly to emotional and physical health problems.

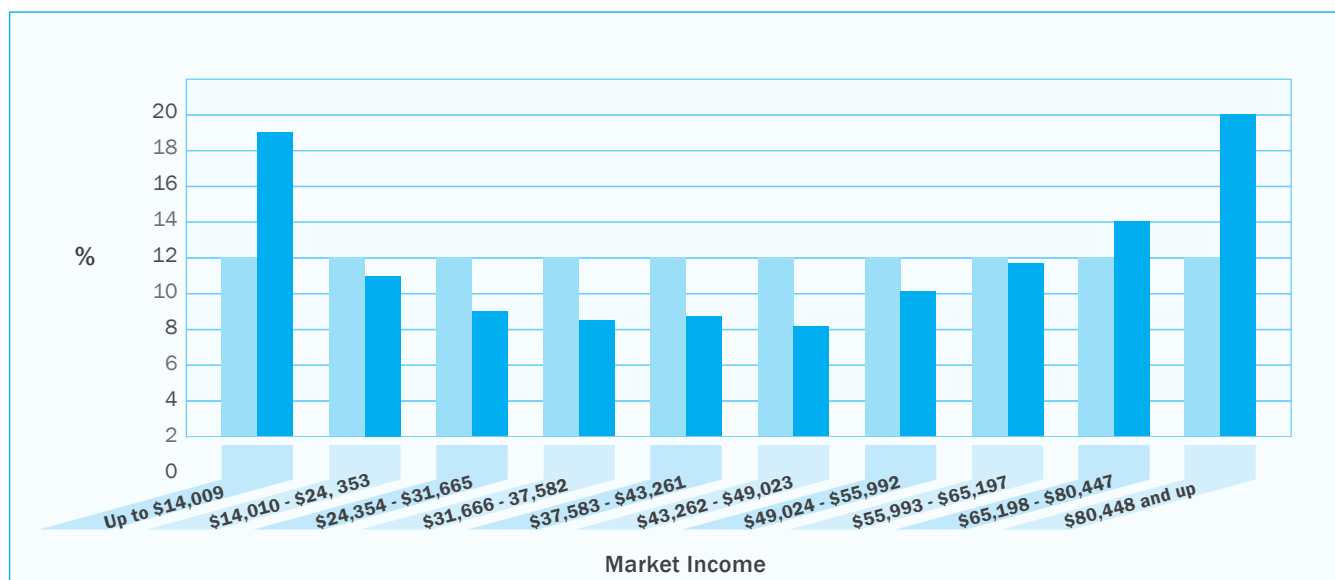
Avison's work also suggests that the health costs of losing a job can be relatively long lasting, and are not immediately regained by finding work. In a world where job security is reduced, and more and more people are experiencing job loss, the potential health costs are much greater. A review of 93 studies of contingent work and occupational health in a variety of countries found a strong association between precarious work and poor health. New research suggests that underemployment is also bad for health. Non-standard hours of work have been linked with ill health and a key factor seems to be whether employees can choose their own hours and schedules.

The concept of "work strain" shows how seven key components can contribute to health problems: employment uncertainty (control over access to work), earnings uncertainty (control over future earnings), household precariousness (control over the ability to provide basic needs), scheduling uncertainty (control over work hours and schedule), location uncertainty (control over work location), task uncertainty (control over use of skills and job assignment) and employment uncertainty workload (demand required to manage employment uncertainty). The stress or strain that individuals experience in today's work world is related not just to the worker's job, but his or her experience of the broader organization and arrangements of work.

The cost in terms of unrealized human potential is also huge. Unemployment and underemployment are tremendously wasteful, with a loss realized with every person who lacks the opportunity to fulfill his or her potential through decent and suitable work.

Table 5. Distribution of Market Incomes of Canadian Families 1980 to 2000, highlighting most recent recession and recovery data, as well as data for last 2 decades¹²

	1980 (%)	1989 (%)	1993 (%)	2000 (%)	Calculations		
					Recovery (%)	Recession (%)	2 Decades (%)
Poor < \$5000	7.3	7.7	10.9	7.3	-33.0	41.6	0.0
Working Poor \$5,000 - \$19,999	10.1	10.6	12.9	12.0	-7.0	21.7	23.0
Struggling \$20,000 - \$29,999	8.1	8.5	9.9	8.7	-12.1	16.5	6.9
Middle Class \$30,000 - \$59,999	34.7	32.1	30.5	28.8	-5.6	-5.0	-17.0
Well Off \$60,000 - \$99,999	29.7	28.1	25.0	27.9	11.6	-11.0	-6.1
Rich \$100,000 - \$140,000	8.0	9.6	8.4	11.1	32.1	-12.5	38.8
Very Rich > \$150,000	2.2	2.9	2.3	4.3	87.0	-20.7	95.5
Total rounded to nearest 1%	100%	100%	100%	100%			



12. Source: Curry-Stevens, Ann (2003) Arrogant Capitalism: Changing futures, changing lives. In Canadian Review of Social Policy, June 2003, no. 51.

13. Original Source: Yalnizan, A. The Growing Gap: A report on growing inequality between the rich and poor in Canada, Centre for Social Justice, October, 1998.

Adapted from: Raphael, Dennis, ed. *Social Determinants of Health, Canadian Perspectives*, Canadian Scholars' Press Inc. 2004, p. 27. Reprinted by permission of Canadian Scholars' Press Inc. and The Centre for Social Justice

Diminished opportunities for families

Growing income inequalities and the proliferation of precarious work means more Canadian families are being excluded from the social and economic benefits of work. There are a growing number of people who work but can't earn enough to keep themselves and their families out of poverty.

In the past two decades, there has been an alarming hollowing-out of the middle class. Market income data show that a growing number of Canadian families — more than one in five — are among the “working poor” and “struggling.” Fewer families are “middle class” or “well off,” and a shrinking minority are “rich” or “very rich.” More people are working without earning a living wage, some of whom are even working full-time. One impact on families is that more earners are required to make ends meet, including both spouses and adolescent children.

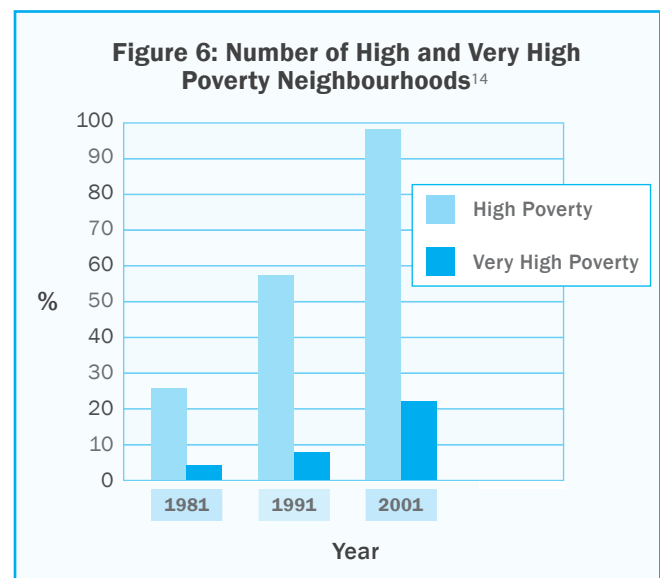
There's a fundamental problem in society when people work but cannot earn enough income to meet their basic economic and social needs. These families pay a heavy price. Children do not get the nutritious breakfasts they need. Living in distressed neighbourhoods, they don't get access to recreational programs and the community amenities they need. They may not get the care or attention they need when both parents are stretched to earn enough for their families. For these and other reasons, children's education suffers. The income gap is widening and access to decent work opportunities has become more difficult. As a result, it's becoming harder for marginalized families, including new immigrants, to move up and become part of social networks and communities.

About one in five Canadian families with children experience unemployment each year. When one parent is out of work, studies suggest that the loss of work affects the health of other family members. Spouses experience more anxiety, depression and other emotional problems. Children whose parents are unemployed, especially teens, are also more likely to have emotional and behavioural problems. Studies by Irish social policy researcher Brian Nolan have also shown that job insecurity has negative effects on marital relationships, parenting effectiveness and children's behaviour.

Erosion of communities

A lack of work or work opportunities threatens the wellbeing of neighbourhoods and strains the social fabric of communities. A study by Avison in London, Ontario, found that when more people are out of work there is an increased demand for protective services for children, more sexualized violence and more teenage violent crime. The “Poverty by Postal Code” report, prepared by the United Way of Greater Toronto and The Canadian Council on Social Development, paints a disturbing portrait of a dramatic increase in the number of distressed neighbourhoods, where a high proportion of families live in poverty. Concentrated pockets of poverty in the city have exploded from 30 to 120 in the past twenty years, making children, single parents, new immigrants and visible minorities particularly vulnerable.

People tend to stop investing in neighbourhoods in decline. This triggers a downward spiral as more businesses and residents leave. A concentration of poverty in neighbourhoods can lead to a decline in an entire community. We've seen graphic examples of this in other countries, and we can see early warning signs closer to home.



14. Adapted from: Poverty by Postal Code: The Geography of Neighbourhood Poverty 1981-2001, United Way of Greater Toronto and the Canadian Council on Social Development, 2004, p. 49.

One of Toronto's key competitive strengths is its cultural, ethnic and racial diversity. But this asset can be devalued when a growing number of immigrants and minorities are excluded from decent work opportunities, decent neighbourhoods and the community life of the city. The size of the poor immigrant family population in the city of Toronto has grown 125% in the past two decades and the poor visible minority population has grown by 361.7%. The proportion of poor immigrant families in higher-poverty neighbourhoods has increased from 44.8% to 65.25% in two decades.

Toronto has won worldwide recognition for its healthy, vital neighbourhoods and diversity, which attracts both employers and a talented, skilled labour pool. It is known for its social cohesion, as a community where diversity works. But the diversity advantage is being undermined when so many face formidable barriers to work opportunities. Ignoring the growing divide between those who have access to decent work and those who don't ultimately affects everyone in the community. Work builds social cohesion in communities, while a lack of work breaks down cohesion and inevitably leads to more crime, violence and social problems.

Strain on the nation

Work is central to the economic and social wellbeing of the nation. When people are without work or lack decent work, their health suffers. When more people are sick, the nation's health care costs increase dramatically and the nation's productivity falls. When people are unemployed or underemployed, social assistance costs are higher and governments receive less tax revenue.

Studies by British researcher Richard Wilkinson have shown that among developed nations, those with the greatest income inequalities have the poorest health and lowest life expectancy. People living in developed countries where income differences are narrower enjoy better health and live longer. Those relatively more egalitarian countries have a stronger community life and are more socially cohesive. Societies in which the vast majority of people working earn a living wage are healthier than the very richest countries, where a large minority of the working population struggles to make ends meet.

The costs to society of these work and income inequalities include more emotional disturbance in children, poor educational performance, crime and violence. This deprivation imposes additional costs on society through growing prison populations, additional health services, costs of drug addiction and social services.

But beyond the sad toll that a lack of decent work has in economic terms, we are also concerned here with the broader consequences in terms of social ills, the decline in social cohesion and the increased presence of conflict, violence and racism and a culture of "prohibitionism." Edward Luttwak, author of *Turbo Capitalism: Winners and Losers in the Global Economy*, points out that these social manifestations are non-economic reactions to economic dissatisfactions. In the U.S., these reactions include an "insatiable demand" for more prisons, harsher sentences and prompter death-penalty executions. Luttwak suggests that the middle-class majority, feeling a lack of economic power and security, is venting anger and frustration by punishing and prohibiting.

The work-related insecurity that permeates the North American economy and society is breeding a climate of intolerance, where the knee-jerk reaction is to blame the victims. And the challenge of bridging the great divide becomes that much harder.

What happens to the unemployed? To be sure, there is passivity, shame and withdrawal, a retreat into activities with no particular aim or objective. They sink into a sad and disturbing anomie, as reported in studies by the Australian occupational psychologist Anthony Winefield. Perhaps the shamed, demoralized and disconnected army of those excluded will stay passive; perhaps we will see civil unrest, riots and even the rise of totalitarian and fascist societies.

So here we stand. The stakes are high. Many possible scenarios await us. Some may think that the days of careers, predictability and stability are coming back, but there is little evidence of this. Worse yet, as precariousness generates exclusion for ever-growing numbers of marginalized, all the consequences outlined in this section are likely to come true.

Working to Solutions

Meeting of minds

If we're going to move forward, we need to make some meaningful choices regarding work.

In this paper, we talked about the importance of work as a public issue. There have been major changes, and the costs and impacts of these changes on individuals, families, communities and the nation threaten those things we value most. When decent work opportunities are only available to some, a great divide exists between those who have them and those who don't. Human, social and financial capital is needlessly wasted.

However, if we can create more decent work opportunities, there will be wide-ranging benefits for all. Work opportunities break down the barriers that exclude marginalized groups, allowing society's human, social and financial capital to be used productively and profitably.

Work is the great connector that gives all citizens the opportunity to participate in the social and economic benefits of Canadian society. Canadians believe in a working society, where everyone can contribute and have access to decent housing, education and work opportunities. We want "work" to work. Anything less offends people's sense of justice and fairness. The health of the nation depends on making the reality fit with the common social vision.

Currently it does not.

This is a crisis. As an old Chinese proverb tells us, a crisis has in it elements of both a threat and an opportunity. Which one turns out to be dominant will depend on our ability to answer four key questions:

1. What is success?

The most important thing is that success must be defined as actual achievements relative to expectations. The key issue is expectations. Small wins, or short-term achievements, are important because movements need momentum. Those dedicating time and effort need wins. Wins bring satisfaction, pride, conviction and evidence that the chosen strategies are working. Success encourages fence-sitters to make a decision and jump in. Success also motivates well-wishers — individuals and groups aligned with the driving ideas, but who have not yet committed resources.

Short-term and small wins must, however, serve a greater purpose. We need to define loftier, compelling expectations. It will take time to make major changes, as organizations, government policies and our socio-economic culture all change much more slowly than individuals, and individuals often resist change as well.

The list of achievements might be measured at the individual and family level. Other achievements might involve organizations in the private and voluntary sectors. We will also want to see and measure changes in government policies and budgets. But most of all, we will want to see and measure positive changes at the community level. Earlier we looked at measurements at the community level, tied to concepts such as attractiveness, competitiveness and healthiness. As part of this, we will turn to labour economists and others to measure employment in ways that make sense in the new reality: the amount of decent work among different groups across time.

We will also look at the economy as a whole in a progressive way. Terrence Sullivan, former president of the Institute for Work and Health, recommends the use of a socially-sensitive GDP indicator, such as the Genuine Progress Indicator. The GPI begins with personal consumption, but unlike the traditional GDP, it adjusts for income distribution, and adds and subtracts social and ecological costs and benefits. With tools such as this, we have the ability to quantifiably measure our success.

Our expectations must be clearly defined, range from the short-term to the long, and range in magnitude from the small win to the fundamental and profound change. These will vary. What cannot vary, however, is the direction of change, grounded in the facts and values outlined earlier. We can not and will not vary from our commitment to decent work opportunities, to maximizing the human and social capital in our communities.

While holding to this vision, we also know that commitment to broad and systemic solutions must be tempered with actions that address the current symptoms. Just as we sustain food banks while fighting for food security and affordable housing, we will strive to prepare people for work opportunities that reflect the constraints of current labour market realities and people's previous experiences.

“A foot in the door” and “a leg up” are valuable when they in fact represent real movement. We will measure work opportunities not as single frames or snapshots but as events across the life cycle, as marks of progress. The important thing is to ensure that the marginalized not be consigned to a metaphorical treadmill, where no matter how much they do, they end up where they started. Small or large, all steps must be steps forward.

So we will not settle for simple expedient solutions, such as calling for more study, more structures, or reshuffling organizations and mandates. Or just moving the problem somewhere else — to another province perhaps, or into the correction system, or to the suburbs.

We might all yearn for a return to stability, with some winners and losers to be sure, but at least to live in a world with known, predictable and manageable events. Yet nothing suggests the rate of change wrought by globalization is slowing. So our achievements must be adaptive and ever-changing.

2. What will it take?

Three things.

First, plenty of resources, including dollars, programs, buildings, staff and events. While in some ways this is the “obvious” answer, resources alone are not solutions, for it is possible to just throw money at a problem and end up with nothing to show for it. Having recognized this, there is no question major resources are needed. It is clear that the resources are not sitting in one place, unused and unallocated. So we must take the opposite approach — that the money is potentially everywhere.

After all, what is not connected to universal decent work? Decent work can prevent a number of problems that are now addressed “downstream.” For example, knowing what we know about the health effects of precarious employment, is it not clear that employment is a major determinant of health? So, health dollars in the form of health promotion can be wisely and effectively directed to this area. This is true for all the so-called soft services. Next, what economic portfolio is not related to decent work? Finally, what strategy (environmental, for example) would not prosper from an engaged and secure population?

Second, a powerful expression of ideas that capture the province, from the man on the street to the legislature. Powerful expression requires new, compelling and clear

expression. Expression that goes beyond the common call for innovative, integrative, multidisciplinary perspectives and actually provides them.

Reports such as this play a role, as do endorsements, declarations, reporting and editorial support. This issue has to be heard, in many places, over a sustained period of time.

But resources and ideas are not enough — they must be shaped, sustained, nourished, and used widely and strategically.

Which leads us to our third need: leadership.

3. Where will the leadership come from?

Jane Jenson, a researcher at the Canadian Policy Research Networks, expands upon the idea of the welfare diamond, comprising four main elements: families, business, government and the community sector.

Individuals and families have a role to play. They have tremendous strengths, talents, abilities and these powers often come to the fore in difficult or challenging situations. The private sector has enormous resources, tremendous power over how work is created and managed, and contributes to many socially responsible causes across a wide range of issues. The government is responsive, has tremendous resources to consult, research, develop policy, and implement all sorts of programs, policies and services. The voluntary sector is a tremendous resource, rich in ideas and vision.

We would not look to any one of these four elements alone to do the job, since each have limits as well as strengths. The magnitude of the problem is too great a burden to place solely on individuals and families. The private sector has a full agenda. Government must follow the lead of its constituents. The voluntary sector is stressed.

This is not to suggest that things cannot happen or that there is no leadership. What it does suggest, however, is that all points on the welfare diamond will need to show leadership and bring their talents and resources to the table.

All of these sectors will have to change how they think, how they act and how they contribute.

How can individuals and families show leadership? Where can their voices and ideas be heard? By investing in our “civil society,” despite declining trust among the public and other challenges. By participating more and demanding more from local leadership, the media and government.

The private sector must continue to adapt in a complex environment, thinking more strategically and longer-term. They must see corporate social responsibility as “good business.” Governments must find ways to truly integrate policies across the silos that Ministries and Departments create, to find a few key priorities and to drive action.

Finally, the community sector must lead, taking advantage of its strong relationships with the others. Business-like to a point. Tied to the community. Independent of government but willing to partner. Respected and trusted by individuals and families.

4. What are the solutions?

It is hard to say precisely what the solutions are. This is why we seek dialogue and exploration. Dialogue and action are a beginning, but not the end.

We are not seeking more paper, more reports, more recommendations. These are not sufficient to create

change. We are seeking dialogue and exploration that lead to identifying possible solutions, rigorous evaluation of alternatives based on what we truly know, rapid deployment of resources to try the favoured approach and ongoing evaluation of results, for as long as it takes. We seek not one-time innovations, pilots, or models, but sustained study and action, moving forward from opportunity to opportunity.

Creating an action orientation, compelling visions, partnership building and evaluation are critical to success.

It will not be easy. But we face that challenge armed with wisdom from policy proposals advanced from the left and the right. We are also blessed with insight, protocols, materials and expertise under the umbrella of human resource development, community economic development, and social enterprises. And we are driven by the collective will of individual communities and their inhabitants. We will move forward.

We welcome the proven and true. We welcome innovative solutions. And if we apply ourselves, we can look forward to some day seeing people from all walks of life looking back, smiling, and thinking “What kind of crazy world was that?”

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