



# **New Thinking for the Next Decade: Forum Highlights and Areas for Action**

September 29 – 30, 2010

St. John's, NL

*prepared by Fran Locke*

*Community Sector Council NL (CSC)*

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On behalf of the Community Sector Council of Newfoundland and Labrador we are pleased to forward highlights from our Community Sector Provincial Forum – *New Thinking for the Next Decade* – held September 29-30, 2010. There were excellent presentations and wonderful discussion throughout the two days. This document serves as a reminder of our deliberations, including a group of action priorities which will help focus our planning as we move forward.

The Community Sector Council has reviewed feedback from both days and has listened to the suggestions that we find a way to ensure continuing conversation around these issues of such importance to the voluntary, non profit sector. To meet this objective the CSC Board of Directors is establishing a Community Sector Working Committee to help meet our mandate for capacity building and support to the community sector and to help shape and influence public policies.

We look forward to your continuing engagement as we all work to build the vital community sector.

**Penelope Rowe**  
**CEO**

## New Thinking for the Next Decade: Forum Highlights and Areas for Action



One hundred twenty people from across Newfoundland and Labrador representing community groups, government departments and agencies, academia and the private sector gathered at the Capital Hotel in St. John's on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010 for Day 1 of a three-day provincial forum – *Connecting People, Organizations, and Communities: [New Thinking For the Next Decade](#)* – hosted by [Community Sector Council NL](#). The event was designed to engage participants in presentations, panel discussions, table conversations and learning sessions around current trends and future directions for the community (nonprofit) sector.

Day 1 included a talk by keynote speaker Tim Brodhead, President and Chief Executive Officer of [The J. W. McConnell Family Foundation](#) (Montreal), and a presentation on Social Return on Investment by Natalie Nicholles, Project Manager and Advisor for [nef consulting](#) (UK).

[Imagine Canada](#) facilitated Day 2 activities, which were focused on a [National Framework for Action](#), and Day 3 consisted of a series of workshops on topics of interest to community groups.

## Background

The Community Sector Council NL (CSC) has been engaged in consultation, research and program delivery within the community sector in Newfoundland and Labrador and across the country since 1976. Our Provincial Government's emphasis on the voluntary, non-profit sector is also helping to build understanding of the sector and its integral value to our quality of life.

But the world of the community sector is changing. Organizations and their leaders are looking for new ways of doing business - for connecting across sectors, sharing expertise, strengthening collaboration, building social enterprise and financing their work - yet a significant issue facing many organizations is lack of capacity to plan for the future. A commonly stated challenge is acquiring support to seed the development of new ideas and approaches.

CSC convened this three-day gathering to

- Encourage conversation with a provincial focus around opportunities to
  - o support innovation
  - o expand research and development
  - o make strategic investments and
  - o demonstrate the value of the sector
- Reflect on the national framework for action
- Build skills
- Foster networking

## Priority Issues

Urgent realities of today (identified on Day 1) that have an impact on the community sector and contribute to instability within organizations and service delivery challenges include:

- Changing demographics, ageing population and out-migration
- Changing nature of volunteerism
- Staffing issues (recruitment and retention)
- Knowledge and skills gaps
- Project-based funding
- Push to be more innovative
- Push to collaborate
- Issues around sector image and the need to be highly accountable and transparent
- Emergence of new technologies and communications challenges

It was evident from the discussions over Days 1 and 2 that there was among the participants:

- An appetite for sharing resources, including on a regional level
- A wish to learn from each other (for example, through mentoring)
- A desire to work with government and the private sector and to identify champions for the community sector
- A need for mechanisms, tools and templates to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

## ***Human Resources and Capacity Building***

An examination through small group discussions on Day 2 of the [drivers of change](#) as outlined by Imagine Canada revealed that human resource concerns (shortage of talent to strengthen and lead charitable and nonprofit organizations, and lack of growth in the number of volunteers to govern, support and promote community groups) were uppermost in people's minds. The overarching driver of changing demographics (ageing population, urbanization, loss of young people from rural communities) has a big impact on recruitment and retention of staff, boards and volunteers.

Actions around human resource development and capacity building took top priority overall when the group voted on future action areas. Imagine Canada presented a number of possible [actions to consider](#) and participants were asked to discuss, prioritize and add to these. The group was most interested in:

1. Ways to increase incentives and compensation for staff, including non-monetary benefits
2. Regional resources to provide basic supports to small organizations in areas such as proposal writing; insurance, liability and risk management; encouraging and supporting mentorship and peer learning
3. Advice and planning to recruit, develop and retain younger volunteers and staff
4. Ways to establish pooled pension and benefit plans
5. Sharing information, human resources, physical space, evaluation tools, advocacy and other resources; this will help create synergy among groups
6. Regional, local and sub-sector snapshots to inform grassroots' efforts to communicate impact and assess performance; collation of research information and mobilization of knowledge.

### ***Revenue Base, Transparency and Accountability***

Structural shifts in the revenue base and the heightened demand for transparency and accountability were also high in importance. Participants want support for social innovation through an innovation fund and an environment that encourages social enterprise, along with accountability tools and revision of accountability frameworks for grants and contributions.

In a nutshell, organizations are first concerned about their people, next about money and then about demonstrating impact. The right human and financial resources may enable innovation, collaboration, the learning and use of new technologies, better compliance with accountability requirements, communication of impact and engagement in policy discussions. Without human resources, community organizations would not exist, and without sufficient financial resources, their work is hindered.

### **Areas for Future Action**

To be proactive in shaping our future while coping with today's realities, CSC has outlined several areas of activity that are important for individual organizations, the sector as a whole and our partners in the public and private sectors heading into the next decade:

1. **Demonstrating value** A common language, tools and framework are required to demonstrate the social and economic return on investment in the services, programs and innovative ideas of community sector groups. This will enable organizations themselves, funders and the public at large to have a clearer understanding of the value of the contribution made by the nonprofit sector to the quality of life of people and communities.

2. **Learning more about the sector (research)** A picture of the sector including such topics as numbers and age range of staff, board members and other volunteers, categories of organizations, mission and activities, how they collaborate with other groups and across sectors, whether they have succession plans, strategic plans or business plans.
3. **Thinking about survival** Opportunities to facilitate discussions to consider how organizations can survive into the next decade; to think about innovative approaches such as mergers and co-location, sharing services and resources, collaboration and partnerships, and to plan for community needs.
4. **Building capacity** Dedicated resources at a regional level might help bring organizations together, assess needs, identify skills within local areas, develop capacity through peer learning and more formal training and engage new volunteers in meaningful ways. The public and private sectors can play a role through mentoring and access to training, for example, in the area of new technology.
5. **Encouraging innovation and strategic investing** The community sector is naturally innovative and resourceful, but many good ideas either go unfunded, or receive support for a year or two and become unsustainable as funding priorities change. A community investment fund could provide capital / seed money to get ideas off the ground and longer-term funding to grow good ideas to continue meet the needs of communities.
6. **Continuing the conversation** It is vital for the sector to convene at provincial and regional levels to discuss areas of common concern, strategize around these issues and think about how new technology can also be used for the purpose of connecting, consulting, monitoring and planning.

The Community Sector Council NL is a leader in advancing the community sector, encouraging engagement and promoting the integration of social and economic development. A working group is being convened to follow up on the 2010 provincial forum and facilitate development of a 2020 collective vision.

We wish to thank all our government and corporate sponsors:

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BMO Nesbitt Burns  
 Innovation, Trade and Rural Development  
 Quikprint Services Ltd.  
 Rural Secretariat, Government of NL



## Video Clips

**Penelope Rowe** - CSC NL Provincial Forum 2010 - Opening

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=QozmMnQhqK0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QozmMnQhqK0)

**Penelope Rowe** - CSC NL Provincial Forum 2010 - About the Community Sector in NL

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpCW9NidrB0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpCW9NidrB0)

**Penelope Rowe** - CSC NL Provincial Forum 2010 - General Issues for Community Organizations

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xnKHz0j17](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xnKHz0j17)

**Penelope Rowe** - CSC NL Provincial Forum 2010 - Breaking Down Isolation Amongst Groups

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=CP4LXd6w0js](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CP4LXd6w0js)



**Tim Brodhead** - CSC Provincial Forum 2010 - Part 1: A New Narrative for the Community Sector

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=rop9E\\_HVD14](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rop9E_HVD14)

**Tim Brodhead** - CSC Provincial Forum 2010 - Part 2: Vision for the Community Sector

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MVJs1vmIMI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MVJs1vmIMI)



**Natalie Nicholles** - CSC NL Provincial Forum 2010 - Social Return on Investment (SROI)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=xK9avN-6KEw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xK9avN-6KEw)

**Natalie Nicholles** - CSC NL Provincial Forum 2010 - Stages of Social Return on Investment (SROI)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhUB8xdGbrA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhUB8xdGbrA)



**Rick Comerford** - CSC Provincial Forum 2010 -  
Demonstrating Value - Government Perspective  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPBdUsPR4-0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPBdUsPR4-0)



**Alton Hollett** - CSC Provincial Forum 2010 -  
Changes Reshaping NL Society a  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoiVmmtwtUE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoiVmmtwtUE)



**Andrew Harvey** - CSC Provincial Forum 2010 -  
Engaging Youth  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=TitbPI\\_4ciI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TitbPI_4ciI)



**Ross Reid** - CSC Provincial Forum 2010 -  
Part 1: Innovation and the Community Sector  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipnSeM5BAB8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipnSeM5BAB8)



**Ross Reid** - CSC Provincial Forum 2010 -  
Part 2: New Way of Supporting the Community Sector  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=PiQ\\_ySfq0ik](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PiQ_ySfq0ik)

**Darlene Scott** - CSC Provincial Forum 2010 -  
Types of Committees  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=8f89xye7gpM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8f89xye7gpM)



**Bettina Ford** - CSC Provincial Forum 2010 -  
Attracting New Leadership  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-kEgk5H5SY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-kEgk5H5SY)

