

Social and economic inclusion: the extent to which people are included and can participate in our society's social and economic life

Inclusion: a new social policy barometer

by Nicola Fairbrother, ESPC Executive Director

As part of the rejuvenation of our mission and contribution in Edmonton, the Edmonton Social Planning Council is adopting a new perspective in doing our work. Over the next several years, the concept of Social Inclusion will be the lens we use to view and understand social policy and practice.

In this issue of the fACTivist we introduce some of the work that is being done in this regard — work we ourselves are involved in, and work being done by some of our associates and partners.

The social inclusion movement has its roots in, amongst others, the disability community. From that community our society as a whole has been challenged to accept the idea that persons with disabilities are contributing members in community life. This has meant being less concerned about the needs of institutions and emphasizing instead the requirement that in a just society persons be provided with what they need to participate. Community Inclusion, as it is referred to in the disability community, challenges that each individual must have access to training, tools and supports individually tailored to his or her needs.

Applying this inclusive approach on a broader scale means that:

- the mechanisms we design for people to participate in our communities must adapt to

meet the needs of diverse and marginalized individuals and groups;

- we encourage new thinking on how to define social problems and potential solutions;
- communities invest in ways of including citizens in developing and providing feedback to public policy.

Adopting social inclusion as a societal principle requires that we acknowledge in policy and practise that our success is measured through each citizen's experiences in our community. Therefore it evolves past traditional notions of social justice where the focus is on obligation and charity, or on the right versus left policy debates, and moves us towards the creation of systemic tools that purposefully adapt to individual needs.

A further merit of envisioning policy via an inclusive lens is that as a form of social activism, it brings us all around the decision making table. Decisions then are truly the responsibility of the entire community, and not just the policy-makers. Communities can collectively analyse whether existing legislation, policy, process and practise promote the social and economic inclusion of all individuals, families and communities. Thus, inclusion provides us a more hopeful approach to changing our world by valuing each contributor and recognizing the importance of each voice around the table.

Edmonton as an inclusive city — is everyone “in”?

by *Michael Phair*
Councillor, City of Edmonton
National Co-Chair Inclusive Cities Project

Over the past eighteen months, the discussion of a ‘new deal’ for cities, especially at the federal government level has escalated to become official national policy! For those of us who are municipal politicians and those many groups and individuals committed to improving urban life, these are exciting times. Now is the opportunity to ensure that everyone is included in the new deal for cities – how can we create more inclusive cities for our citizens?

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) is an organization comprised of elected municipal politicians from across Canada. Since the mid-1990’s, FCM has actively pursued social issues as part of its agenda. The Laidlaw Foundation is a private foundation that funds worthwhile projects in Canada and has specifically supported research and papers on social inclusion over the last couple of years.

Together in 2002 and 2003, FCM and Laidlaw collaborated on a cross-Canada initiative to study how social inclusiveness is affecting a number of Canadian cities. This work began with a review of urban social infrastructure. However, more than social infrastructure is needed for building inclusiveness and innovation in a community. Changing fiscal conditions and governance call for use of a ‘social inclusion’ framework that will guide policies for governments as they address the new deal for cities.

Following this initial work on cities and inclusiveness, a proposal for funding was made to Human Resources

Inclusive communities

- ◆ **incorporate diversity into their structure, functions and processes**
- ◆ **value equity**
- ◆ **provide accessible and culturally sensitive services**

Development Canada for an Inclusive Cities Project (ICP), regarded as the collaborative next step between FCM, Laidlaw and five local social planning councils. The work will involve doing an in-depth look at inclusiveness in five cities.

The Edmonton Social Planning Council with the other partners is now engaged in the ICP. The ICP goals are:

1) to strengthen the capacity of cities to create and sustain inclusive communities for the mutual benefit of all people; 2) to ensure that work at the local civic level is acknowledged as being critical to a national urban strategy; and 3) that community voices of

diversity are recognized as core Canadian voices.

To achieve these goals the Edmonton Social Planning Council is establishing a civic panel that will review what is happening in Edmonton. Co-chaired by City Councillor Janice Melnychuk, ten to fifteen focus groups will provide their views on local inclusiveness. The panel will analyze the information over the next 7 or 8 months and provide a report to Edmontonians. In addition the ICP will bring the information and findings of the five cities together into a national paper to give a perspective, focus and blueprint that ensures that all are ‘in’ the new deal for cities!

Social inclusion is described as a feeling of belonging, acceptance and recognition and is intertwined with issues of diversity, equality, opportunity, and democratic participation. Inclusiveness is linked with social health and quality of life, and this in turn is closely linked with economic prosperity.

Measuring Edmonton's inclusiveness

by Phil O'Hara, *ESPC Research and Policy Analysis Coordinator*

Is Edmonton an inclusive city? Do you feel socially included or have you experienced social exclusion? How does Edmonton's inclusiveness compare with other Canadian cities? As Michael Phair asks elsewhere in this *fACTivist*, is everyone "in"?

These ideas and themes are being explored locally and nationally with the launch of the three-year Inclusive Cities Project (ICP) funded by Human Resources Development Canada and some additional start-up funds from the Laidlaw Foundation. This is a project of five community and regional social planning councils—Saint John, Toronto, Halton (region outside Toronto), Edmonton and Vancouver—in collaboration with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

The ICP is based on the understanding that everyone benefits from social inclusion: both people who are vulnerable for reasons of poverty, racism, fear of difference, etc; and also the broader community that benefits when *all* people are able to participate as valued and contributing members. Inclusive communities don't just reduce exclusion: they recognize and value diversity; nurture human development and participation in public life; and promote cohesive living standards and adequate community supports.

During Phase 1, civic panels comprised of people with diverse views and backgrounds will be created in each city or region. Each panel will conduct an in-depth review of their city's inclusiveness by looking at the extent to which institutions and organizations are structured to promote inclusion and how we integrate inclusive processes into community and public life.

In Edmonton, the civic panel will be co-chaired by Janice Melynchuk, City Councillor for Ward 3, and Lewis Cardinal, Director of Native Student Services at the University of Alberta.

Over the next few months, about 120 Edmontonians from diverse backgrounds and with varying experiences with social inclusion will participate in 10-15 focus groups. For purposes of comparison with other cities, the focus groups will be structured around five key dimensions of inclusion: institutional recognition of diversity; opportunities for human development; quality of civic engagement; cohesiveness of living conditions; and adequacy of support systems.

Documenting personal experiences with social exclusion

by Larisa Kreider, *Social Work Student*

As part of my practicum placement with the ESPC, I'm working on a grassroots initiative in support of the national Inclusive Cities Project (ICP). I hope to build on the ICP by encouraging participation from the urban Aboriginal population and other diverse populations in Edmonton.

In support of the larger project, this grassroots initiative seeks to better understand how diverse groups experience social exclusion. As well, it will explore initiatives that could be developed in Edmonton to help marginalized people feel a great sense of social inclusion.

Race, class, age, disability and gender are recognized as some of the differences that can separate people socially, and thus affect whether they

The civic panel and other local specialists will analyze the collected information and submit a report with their findings to Edmontonians. The ICP will integrate the reports from the five cities into a comprehensive paper that provides a framework for inclusion at both the national and local levels.

The ESPC is delighted to be a partner in this important national project and to be coordinating the work in Edmonton. This project reflects our growing appreciation for both the complexity of poverty and the important role played by the multi-dimensional aspects of social inclusion/exclusion.

actively participate in society. Consultation with people who have directly experienced social exclusion is vital in developing strategies to help people feel more socially included.

Information gathered from this informal process will be integrated with the results from the formal civic panels taking place in Edmonton as part of the ICP, and then incorporated into the development of a national social inclusion framework. It is hoped that this process will have an impact on future policy initiatives in building more socially inclusive communities for diverse populations in Edmonton and throughout Canada.

Larisa Kreider is an urban Aboriginal social work student who is completing her BSW with the University of Victoria. Larisa has lived in Edmonton all her life and has worked with several local social agencies.

Information resources on social inclusion

Social Capital

The **Social Planning Network of Ontario** began a Social and Economic Inclusion Initiative (SEII) almost two years ago. A web page dedicated to the initiative (www.closingthedistance.ca) includes some definitions of inclusion and an extensive literature review of the broader underlying concept of **social capital**. Social capital has to do with the relationships we have with others, the connections we have to our communities, and the networks of support available to us. The theory is that the greater our social capital the healthier and better off we will be.

Social Inclusion

Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) co-hosted a social inclusion conference with Human Resources and Development Canada just a year ago. A who's-who of Canadian and international academics and experts in this field attended; their presentations and papers are available on-line: www.ccsd.ca/ Click on CCSD Sub-sites or Key Events where you will find the section on the Social Inclusion conference.

Laidlaw Foundation is working with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and five social planning council's across the country in a new Inclusive Cities Project (see pages 2 & 3). Laidlaw's web page www.laidlawfdn.org/ contains a literature review and summary of social inclusion.

Social Determinants of Health

Dennis Raphael is a leading Canadian expert/scholar on the social determinants of health (SDOH), and specifically on the links between poverty and health. Raphael has just launched a SDOH list serve at York University which is an excellent source for the latest thinking in this field: <http://quartz.atkinson.yorku.ca/QuickPlace/draphael/Main.nsf>

World Health Organization (WHO) has published a short book (31 pages, available on-line) titled: *Social Determinants of Health: The Solid Facts, 2nd Edition* (2003). "Even in the most affluent countries, people who are less well off have substantially shorter life expectancies and more illnesses than the rich." Go to www.who.int/en/ and enter "Social Determinants of Health" in their search engine.

Health Canada also has a section dedicated to the social determinants of health: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/phdd/index.html

Social Exclusion

The **European Union** launched a social inclusion process for all member states back in 2001. Every country had to draw up National Action Plans on social inclusion (NAPs). That process entered the 2nd round this past year when member states drew up their plans for 2003-2005. "*Poverty and social exclusion are not inevitable,*" says a media release dated Dec.17/03. "The NAPs show that those countries that invest more in social protection, such as the Nordic countries, Luxembourg, Austria, Netherlands and Germany, have lower levels of poverty and social exclusion." For more see the web page of the European Union: Employment and Social Affairs division of the European Commission www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/index_en.html

What are the determinants of social exclusion?

The extent to which individuals are able to participate in the society depends on the amount of any of the following "capitals" that he or she possesses.

Financial Capital

Earnings
Wealth
Income sharing

Human Capital

Education
Skills
Credential recognition

Social Capital

Family and friends
Community life
Political empowerment

Physical Capital

Housing
Infrastructure
Geographic location

From a paper presented at CCSD/HRDC Social Inclusion conference 2003

Calgary to introduce social inclusion as city policy

by Jake Kuiken MSW, RSW

Social Inclusion Policy Development, Project Manager, Community Services Dept., City of Calgary

Large municipal governments throughout Canada are increasingly vocal about a new partnership with the two other orders of government. The reality is that large urban areas, including those in Alberta, are the social, cultural and economic engines while rural Canada is a mere remnant of what it once was. The best local evidence for this perspective is the April 2003 Special Report by the TD Financial Group, entitled, “*The Calgary – Edmonton Corridor: Take Action Now to Ensure that the Tiger’s Roar Doesn’t Fade.*” Here’s one of the key points.

“The Calgary-Edmonton Corridor is in a unique position in Canada. *Specifically, it is the only Canadian urban centre to amass a U.S.-level of wealth while preserving a Canadian-style quality of life.* At nearly US\$40,000, GDP per capita in the region is about 10 per cent above the average of U.S. metropolitan areas, and a striking 40 per cent above its Canadian colleagues.”

The report outlines a number of challenges for the Corridor amongst which is the issue of poverty:

“Despite shrinking poverty rates and numbers receiving social assistance in the Calgary-Edmonton Corridor in recent years, **there is evidence that the rising tide in the region is not lifting all boats equally.** Growth in earnings at the low-end of the income spectrum has been trailing behind those at the higher end. **What’s worse, wage increases for low-income individuals, and welfare incomes, have not been rising adequately** to counter

sharp increases in housing costs, leading to a growing problem of affordable housing.” (Emphasis mine)

Limited by legislation in their capacity to generate revenues, municipalities have used the available means to respond to a growing demand for public services. Large urban governments are constantly on the front-line, addressing emerging social, economic, environmental, recreation and cultural issues, especially as national and sub-national governments download and abandon their responsibilities.

User fees have played an important role in delivering public services. In an economic system user fees function as a form of rationing services. As fees rise,

access becomes prohibitive for those who are at the low-end of the income spectrum. In this case it is precisely those referenced by the TD Financial Group – low-income earners and recipients of income security benefits – who end up marginalized and excluded.

In order to address these issues to the extent they come within the jurisdiction of a municipality, efforts are underway with the

City of Calgary to develop a “social inclusion” policy. The framework for the policy is the municipal development plan, a requirement of the Municipal Government Act. Along with the general authority to legislate in areas of “safety, health and welfare of people,” municipalities have wide authority for matters relating to the physical, social or economic development of the municipality. The initial scope of the social inclusion policy development process will apply to the recreation programs and services, parks and social services. The expectations are that the next phase will look at a more comprehensive application to other municipal services.

Social inclusion is a normative concept aimed at re-establishing a civil society, one that values, recognizes and provides room for everyone to participate, and which aims to reduce the distance between all members of society.



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**ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING**

May 18, 2004

**Keynote: Former Senator,
Honourable
Thelma Chalifoux**

**Location:
Sacred Heart School
9624-108 Avenue**

What we heard about ESPC's past & future

Early last summer ESPC held four community consultation sessions, utilizing the facilitation services of Alberta Community Development. These consisted of gatherings made up of ESPC members, representatives of human service agencies, private consultants, ESPC board and staff members and Aboriginal representatives.

In total, 73 individuals attended the sessions. Notes from the sessions were turned over to Emerging Directions Consulting Ltd., a private Edmonton-based consulting firm, and a report was done highlighting the common themes or perspectives that emerged from the sessions.

What follows is a summary of what was heard.

What has ESPC done well in the past?

- research publications and resources
- nurturing and encouraging the startup of grassroots organizations or initiatives
- advocacy

What has not gone well or where has the ESPC struggled?

- the Council's adversarial role vis-a-vis the Alberta government; being continually at odds with the provincial government
- failure to plan and lack of clear direction
- not done well at building relationships; had no connections with similar organizations; has acted independently of the community; and was a poor team player with other groups

What do you feel the future role of ESPC should be?

- work together collaboratively, cooperatively, in coalitions with others
- maintain/enhance advocacy role
- continue the focus on social research
- enhance/change ESPC's public profile
- identify long-term, creative funding sources/approaches
- restrict involvement in direct service delivery

The material from this consultation was processed by the board and staff of ESPC this winter and a new strategic plan is being developed. More on this will be unveiled at our Annual General Meeting on May 18, 2004.

Board president retires

After four years of serving on the ESPC board, nearly two of those years as President, Wanda Dennelly will be retiring from the board this spring. She was active during a period of transition for ESPC, working with three executive directors and being involved in the recruitment of many new board members. She provided leadership as ESPC sought community input from stakeholders and partners into a new strategic plan, work that has been integral to rebuilding community relationships and renewing the council's mission. Thank you, Wanda, for your commitment and dedication to ESPC and we wish you well in your future endeavours. Bryan Sandilands, Vice President and Past Chair of the Council's Nominations Committee is serving as the Interim President until the Spring AGM.

ESPC proposes a minimum income threshold for Alberta

by John Pater, *ESPC Communications Coordinator*

“We like the MBM a lot more than LICO,” Minister Clint Dunford told the ESPC team on February 2nd. The Minister of Human Resources and Employment made the remark at the end of a 90-minute presentation and conversation between ESPC and members of the Standing Policy Committee (SPC) on Employment and Learning.

Representing ESPC were Executive Director Nicola Fairbrother and Acting Board President Bryan Sandilands. Presented to the government was the need for Alberta to adopt a credible, objective income threshold by which to measure social assistance rates and the minimum wage. We proposed two initiatives:

MBM: Market Basket Measure

The actual cost of basic food, clothing, shelter, transportation and other household needs.

LICO: Low Income Cut-Offs

Income at which households spend more of their income (20% more) than the average household does on the basics: food, clothing, shelter.

1) Adopt the Market Basket Measure (MBM), a new national low income measure, as the minimum income threshold in Alberta, and use it to set social assistance and minimum wage rates. (A similar idea was proposed two years ago by the government’s own MLA Low Income Review Committee.)

2) Develop a non-partisan, multi-sectoral group to assess and evaluate the impact, on those living with poverty, of using the MBM as a minimum income threshold. (This is similar to the idea of a Social Development Council discussed seven years ago by the Quality of Life Commission.)

A range of viewpoints were expressed by the MLAs in response to our proposals. In the end, Minister Clint Dunford summed it all up with his comment about liking the MBM better than LICO, but he wouldn’t commit to the idea of a minimum income threshold.

Minister Dunford did express interest in developing a non-partisan body, made up of human services agencies and individuals, academic experts and business interests to provide input into the supports being provided those living on low income. Initial discussions on that idea have now begun between officials from AHRE and ESPC.

ESPC serves local groups through collective

by Dianne Henshaw, *ESPC Office Coordinator*

Edmonton Social Planning Council has always been known for its vital research, advocacy and public education roles. What may be less known is that in recent months the Council has taken a more hands-on approach to serving non-profit agencies and small community groups.

Our move to Sacred Heart School was motivated in part by there being a need for a coordinating group to provide access to meeting and recreation space for groups and individuals in the McCauley community. With the demolition of the community league building in McCauley, members of this vibrant and active community were left

without access to facilities in which to meet, play games, or hold celebrations. That gap in service has now been partially filled by the Sacred Heart Collective, with ESPC taking the lead role, and with the help and cooperation of Edmonton Catholic Schools. On evenings and weekends, we can provide access to 2 large meetings rooms, as well as the gym and kitchen. On weekdays, we provide access to the basement meeting room, which now hosts agency meetings and a weekly art class for children of the inner city.

Although we have been here only a few months, we are pleased that already we have had the opportunity to provide space to many community groups and the demand continues to

grow. The school is used regularly for children and adult art classes, guitar lessons, agency and community group meetings, Aboriginal dance classes, board games days, and volleyball and basketball for both youth and adults. In addition, the gym has been booked for several special events, including a community Christmas Party, a fundraising concert for a local nonprofit agency, a Chinese New Year Party for children and adults, an Awards Ceremony and Celebration for a community youth group involved in outreach work, and a party/dance for ethno-cultural groups.

In a small way, ESPC is making a difference in our local community!



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Vision Statement

A community where all people have a commitment to social justice and shared responsibility as the foundation for community well-being.

Mission Statement

Responding to the changing political and social environment, the ESPC will:

- identify trends and emerging social issues
- create opportunities to debate and address social issues
- initiate and support community action through research, coordination and advocacy

Join us! Annual Membership Fees:

Organization	\$45	Family	\$25
Associate*	\$10	Individual	\$15
Limited Income	\$5	Student	\$5

* Associate members do not receive a vote or discount

Membership Application:

Name _____

Organization _____

Position _____

Address _____

City/Town and Postal Code _____

Phone Number with Area Code _____

Fax Number with Area Code _____

E-mail address _____

Please send completed form with a cheque or money order payable to:

Edmonton Social Planning Council

Membership form and details also available on our web page at www.edmspc.com
Donations welcome, may include with cheque or money order for membership



Recent ESPC material available on-line

News Release proposing minimum income threshold
Welfare the debate: highlights and transcript

Come visit us on-line any-time at www.edmspc.com

Factoid (bottom of each page) sources

- Page 1 — City of Edmonton Social Plan
- Page 2 — Alberta Human Resources and Employment
- Page 3 — Personal Security Index, 2003 (CCSD)
- Page 4 — National Child Benefit, Progress Report 2002
- Page 5 — Edmonton Nutritious Food Basket, January 2004
- Page 6 — Personal Security Index, 2003 (CCSD)
- Page 7 — Statistics Canada
- Page 8 — ESPC March 2004 Fact Sheet

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