

**From Governing to Governance:  
Reflections on the Community  
Collaboration Project**

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## **Executive Summary**

This review was commissioned by the Community Animation Project, in collaboration with the Manitoba Healthy Communities Network, as a contribution to the further development of the Community Collaboration Project. The title of this report - "From Governing to Governance" is intended to convey the fundamental shift in organizational philosophy and arrangements that lies at the heart of this report. Although the communities are by and large agreed that they set the agenda for their work and their priorities, they are still somewhat beholden to government when it comes to programs and funding. This impression is reinforced by the fact that the Management Committee consists almost entirely of provincial and federal government staff, and does not include representatives of any of the communities. The central recommendation of this report, then, is to move towards a deeper and fuller partnership between communities - both 'communities of interest' and 'communities of geography' - and governments, and indeed to shift the balance for managing the successor to the Community Collaboration Project to one that is community-led but involves federal and provincial governments - a true governance partnership.

It is important to recognize that community representatives who participated in all four RRTs were very positive about the overall approach and the intent and purpose of the Community Collaboration Project. It would be fair to say that the RRTs are all seeking a more effective relationship with federal and provincial government departments and agencies. It is essential to read and consider any criticisms in the light of this overall favourable response. The criticisms are constructive, and need to be accepted as such. As one RRT noted "this is probably the best approach to our issues in the past ten years".

From a community perspective, it is clear that the CCP is a valued and valuable undertaking. The principal benefit, clearly, is the opportunity for communities to come together, identify common issues and concerns and develop common approaches and solutions. The second most important aspect of the project is the opportunity to interact with provincial and federal government staff, both so as to provide them with information and increase their awareness of issues in the communities, and to learn more about provincial and federal programs that might be available to the communities. The communities both valued the opportunity to have a voice and also expect that federal and provincial staff who attend their meetings will be a voice for the communities back to provincial and federal departments. However, this requires the consistent presence and participation of government staff. Moreover, there is clearly an appetite for a deeper and fuller partnership between the communities and federal and provincial governments.

From the government perspective, it is clear that if governments are serious about listening to the communities, then they have to respond to local needs in flexible ways, which means reviewing and adapting existing services and programs. The exchange has to be more than simply information sharing, with government departments being pro-active in responding to community concerns. There are also benefits from a "horizontal", interdepartmental and intergovernmental collaborative approach, although it will be important to link RRTs to other regionally focused programs and activities. A core issue is how to provide stability and resources to communities without getting involved in core funding and creating a sense of entitlement and/or dependence.

Beyond that, perhaps the most important finding from this review, and the one with the most profound implications, is the need to shift from a project managed by a steering committee composed primarily of federal and provincial staff to a partnership in which the communities - both 'communities of interest' and 'communities of geography' - are in the majority, while maintaining a close partnership with federal and provincial governments. The importance of community management of the partnership is clear from the discussions, as well as the examples from Ontario and Quebec. However, and uniquely, there is a clear interest on both sides for a continuing partnership between communities and federal and provincial government departments. The two key elements of the recommended approach are thus:

- a community-led partnership organization: This would be a coalition of community-level organizations (eg., local governments, local community organisations, Regional Roundtables, Regional Economic Development organisations etc.), as well as provincial organizations engaged in one way or another in community capacity building/social development/sustainable development, healthy communities, rural development, etc., together with federal and provincial departments.
- A Government Liaison and Support Group: This would be a work group of provincial and federal agencies and departments whose task it would be to support the Partnership and its community members by identifying suitable programs, funds and other resources that could be made available to communities. This group would be responsible for finding ways to better integrate multiple programs and to simplify the application process for communities, and for working with other government departments to adapt and modify their programs so as to be responsive to the needs of communities, as expressed through the Partnership or elsewhere.

As in other provinces and other parts of the world, there is a growing interest in Manitoba in the need for “joined-up”, horizontal, intersectoral policy development and program implementation. At the same time, there is also interest in building on community capacity. Because of the pioneering work of the Community Collaboration Project, the opportunity exists to create a new mechanism for a community-led, multi-agency cooperative approach to joint regional planning and project development activities that will improve the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of rural and northern communities.

## **Preface - Building Community Capacity: An Overview**

The "Healthy Communities" movement, now a global phenomenon involving several thousand cities, towns, villages, neighbourhoods and communities on all five continents, is but one manifestation of a world-wide interest in building, regenerating or otherwise developing community capacity. That capacity is seen as including the skills and energy of individual citizens; the strength of the myriad of community-based citizen organizations; the resources of the community's public, private and voluntary sector institutions; and the physical assets and land base of the community (Kretzman and McKnight, 1995). Kretzman and McKnight's concept of community assets also makes it clear that they are talking about 'communities of geography', or place-based communities, not simply 'communities of interest' that are non-spatial. This is also a characteristic of the various community 'movements' - green, safe, liveable, healthy, sustainable and so on - discussed below, as well as the Regional Round Tables (RRTs) that form the basis for the CCP.

Central to this rediscovery of community and its assets is a fundamental shift in our relationship to government, coupled with a growing sense that re-localization is a necessary counter balance to the growing globalization of our economy and culture. The shift in our relationship to government means that we are no longer content to let government make all the decisions, rather we want to be more active participants in the process of governance, which involves all the key stakeholders in making decisions about factors which affect the wellbeing and quality of life of our communities and our society.

The growing emphasis on community-level action may perhaps be traced to two inter-related phenomenon. First, a growing recognition of the validity of Rene Dubos' dictum that to address environmental (and other) concerns, we have to think globally but act locally. Coupled with this is a growing sense of our relative powerlessness to affect supra-national and global issues such as NAFTA, the European community, the World Trade Organization and trans-national corporations which leads us to try to focus our energies where we can make a difference.

But at the same time, access to information and data through IT infrastructure such as Community Connections provides a mechanism to move knowledge resident in government and academic institutions to community-level processes. As digitally literate populations emerge and knowledge and the power that goes with it becomes increasingly distributed across a society the relationship between a state and its citizens may fundamentally change.

For these and many other reasons, the task of (re)building community capacity and a more civil society has emerged as a major concern at the end of the 20th century and as a major challenge for the 21st century.

### **Green, safe, liveable, healthy, sustainable . . .**

Over the past decade or two, a large number of different "movements" have emerged that, while starting from different perspectives, share a common goal - to improve the wellbeing and quality of life of people in the physical communities in which they live - and common strategies, including:

- involving community members in a participatory process of community action
- building the capacity of community members to take action to improve their community's wellbeing and quality of life
- forging partnerships among many different stakeholders from the public, voluntary and private sectors
- changing local policies and conditions so as to improve wellbeing and the quality of life

- advocating and working for supportive policies and programs from higher levels of government
- creating provincial, national and international networks for mutual learning and support.

Among the key "movements" are those of safe, clean, green, healthy, liveable and sustainable communities. Each of these is described briefly below.

- safe communities: the concept of safe communities has at least two connotations - in Europe it more often refers to accident prevention and injury control, while in North America it more often refers to prevention of violence and crime. National and international networks, newsletters and conferences exist for both perspectives.
- clean communities: here the emphasis is on control of litter and keeping cities attractive. There is at least one international network focused on this.
- green communities: while sometimes considered to be much the same as "sustainable communities" (see below), green communities also refers to and can include efforts to plant more trees and protect and promote green space and the local environment.
- healthy communities: the focus here is not on health care but on health status and all those factors which affect the health, wellbeing and quality of life of cities and communities. Thus the concept tends to encompass both the physical and social aspects included in concepts such as safe, clean, green, liveable and sustainable. There is a large international network and many national networks.
- liveable communities: the emphasis here tends to be on urban planning and design (such as the "new urbanism" movement) and on the creation of community festivals and effective public spaces. Several national and international networks exist.
- sustainable communities: here the emphasis is on the "ecological footprint" of the community, with particular emphasis on energy and resource use and the community's impact on the global ecosystem health. Several important national and international networks exist.

It is important to recognize that these different movements are in reality all facets of the same central concern. Different communities - and different groups within a community - will find different facets to be of use at different times and for different reasons. What is important is that these be seen not as disparate and indeed competing approaches, but as different means to a common end - a better life for all.

Thus these (and other) community movements have to understand and respect the perspective and the contribution of each other and learn how to work well together for the benefit of all. At times, and in the spirit of true collaboration, this may mean offering up resources to support others, forming coalitions or even true partnerships where necessary. This too is part of the process of governance, and is essential to the creation of a civil society.

### Building community capital

One way to think of all these movements is that they are all focused on building different aspects of community capital. One way to think of community capital is shown in the attached model (Figure 1). The model incorporates the four forms of capital that are now gaining growing acceptance, even by organizations as conventional and mainstream as the World Bank (1995). These four forms of capital are:

- economic capital - our conventional meaning of the term, including our produced assets, infrastructure and wealth
- ecological or natural capital - the natural resources, biodiversity and global life support systems that constitutes the natural capital of the planet
- social capital - the strength of our families, communities and institutions and the formal and informal social support systems and legal and political institutions we have created
- human capital - educated, healthy, innovative, creative and productive people.

There is growing recognition that if we accumulate economic capital by depleting ecological, social or human capital we are in fact losing ground, not making progress. Hence the growing consensus that we need an alternative to GNP (and its community equivalent) such as the "Genuine Progress Indicator" being developed by Re-defining Progress and other groups ([www.rprogress.org](http://www.rprogress.org)).

The challenge for the global community, nation states and local communities is to simultaneously build economic, ecological, social and human capital. The process of achieving that objective is the process of governance: at the community level, it requires the creation of a civil society.

## **Background**

The Community Collaboration Project (CCP) was a three-year project, running from 1999 to April 2002. Its purpose was

“to design and model a multi-agency cooperative approach to initiate joint planning and project development activities within an agreed process for a regional social, environmental and economic community development plan” (phase 1 proposal).

The overall intent was

“to assist communities in building capacity that contributes to improving the health of the communities within a sustainable community framework” (phase 1 proposal).

As noted earlier, the communities that are involved in the CCP and the RRTs are place-based, or ‘communities of geography’, rather than non-spatial ‘communities of interest’. Their primary shared interest is in the place they share, as well as having similar socio-economic and demographic concerns.

The CCP is supported by the federal government’s Community Animation Program (a joint enterprise of Environment Canada and Health Canada) and the Rural Dialogue component of the Canadian Rural Partnership Initiative, with in-kind contributions from Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs.

The CCP is a collaborative arrangement between selected communities working together in Regional Roundtables (RRTs) in four regions in Manitoba and a number of other partners. The four RRTs are:

- Northern Vision Regional Roundtable (South Indian Lake, Lynn Lake, Leaf Rapids, Granville Lake)
- Southwest Regional Roundtable (originally Boissevain, Deloraine, Killarney and Souris; joined more recently by Glenboro, Baldur, and Wawanesa)
- Bayline Regional Roundtable (Cormorant, Wabowden, Thicket Portage, Pikwitonei, Ilford, and War Lake First Nation)
- Kivalliq Regional Roundtable (an unique Roundtable encompassing parts of northern Manitoba as well as the western portion of Nunavut Territory - Churchill, Gillam, Baker Lake, Rankin Inlet, Coral Harbour, Whale Cove, and Repulse Bay).

The Year 3 Review of the Project by Brandon University’s Rural Development Institute notes that

“The four RRTs involved in the CCP are very diverse and were chosen for that very reason. Northern Vision includes northern industrial communities and remote First Nation communities. Bayline RRT is made up of primarily isolated Métis communities. Southwest RRT encompasses agro-based communities. The Kivalliq RRT encompasses a huge expansive geography that crosses provincial boundaries and includes Aboriginal and Inuit communities as well as northern industrial communities in Manitoba and Nunavut.”

One unique aspect of the project is that the Management Committee consists of representatives from both federal and provincial government departments and agencies, community development organizations and a university research institute. They constitute the communities’ partners. Participation on the CCP Management Committee includes representatives from

- Health Canada

- Environment Canada
- Rural Secretariat (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada)
- Community and Regional Development Initiative, Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs)
- Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs
- Community Connections, Manitoba Industry, Trade and Mines
- Western Economic Diversification Canada
- Community Futures Partners of Manitoba Inc.
- Community Information Management Network
- Rural Development Institute, Brandon University.

In addition to housing the project and providing support to the communities, the Rural Development Institute (RDI) has also undertaken annual reviews, focused on specific objectives of the project. In terms of the overall goal and intent of the CCP, a review of the three annual reviews conducted by RDI suggests the following:

- the multi-agency cooperative approach has generally been very successful.
- the process of joint planning and project development activities has been partially successful, with a good deal of joint planning. However, project development is at too early a stage to make a definitive judgement.
- the development of an agreed upon process for a regional social, environmental and economic and community development plan seems in general to have been achieved.
- there has been a fair degree of success in assisting communities in building capacity.
- the evidence on whether health has been improved or whether a sustainable communities framework has been applied is absent or equivocal, at this stage.

What emerges from the reviews is that the most important aspects of the project have included

- bringing all the players together to work together
- the sharing of information on available federal and provincial (and local) resources
- provision of a voice from the communities back to government.

Key issues to be addressed and challenges to be faced include

- the need for the ongoing commitment of federal and provincial governments in terms of funding and resources, principally personnel
- the time demands and travel demands upon volunteers, which may lead to burn-out
- the need for a better articulated process of community/government collaboration, in particular the role of the Management Committee and the overall aim of the project.

## **Purpose of this review**

This review is not intended to duplicate the annual reviews undertaken by the Rural Development Institute. Rather, it is intended to examine the CCP in a broader context, relating it to other community-based processes and initiatives, and to consider the future development of the CCP beyond its immediate (and now concluded) first three years of funding. This review also examines the nature of the relationship between the communities and the federal and provincial departments and agencies that constitute the bulk of the Management Committee.

In order to undertake this review, the author met with representatives of three of the Roundtables (Northern Vision, Bayline, Kivalliq) at the Manitoba Rural Forum in April 2002. In addition, a teleconference interview was undertaken with the Southwest Regional Roundtable and an additional teleconference interview with the Bayline RRT. Meetings were also held with the Management Committee and two senior federal and Manitoba government staff at the Rural Forum. A preliminary set of findings of the review was presented to the Management Committee at a meeting in Winnipeg in May 2002, in order to obtain comment and feedback. Interviews were also conducted with the founder of Villes et Villages en Santé (the Quebec Healthy Communities Network) and the coordinator of the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition.

The key questions for this review focused on the relationship between, on the one hand, the communities and, on the other, the Management Committee and, more broadly, the provincial and federal departments and agencies involved in the project. Community groups were asked, from their perception

- who set your agenda? Who do you feel is in control of the process?
- is this process helping you move forward on your own agenda?
- has this process helped you - or is it helping you - to have more influence or control over your community's future?
- have the federal and provincial government staff helped you in this respect?
  - if so, how?
  - how could they help more?
- what have you learned about working with federal and provincial government agencies?
- how do you think this project should develop in the future?
  - how could it be improved?

The two government key informants were asked questions that tried to understand

- how this process has affected their approach to working with communities
  - what has been learned
  - how is the response different
  - how could this be improved

- how the process has affected their approach to working with other federal and provincial departments.

### **Key findings - the communities' perspective**

To begin, it is important to recognize that community representatives who participated in all four RRTs were very positive about the overall approach and the intent and purpose of the Community Collaboration Project. It would be fair to say that the communities working together as RRTs are all seeking a more effective relationship with each other and with the federal and provincial government departments and agencies. It is essential to read and consider any criticisms in the light of this overall favourable response. The criticisms are constructive, and need to be accepted as such. As one RRT noted "this is probably the best approach to our issues in the past ten years".

- In terms of who sets the agenda for the process, who is in control, most of the RRTs agreed that they set the agenda for their process. However, one RRT noted that at first it was the government staff who set the agenda, and it came as a bit of a shock - and perhaps an unpleasant one - when the community took charge. Another RRT noted that ultimately government controls the finances and therefore ultimately they are in control.
- With respect to the benefits of the process, there was widespread agreement that the chief benefit was simply in getting together, recognizing each other's issues, identifying common issues, developing solutions, and developing a common voice. This common voice was seen as more powerful and more effective.
- Another key benefit was to provide more "exposure" of the communities' issues and concerns to the federal and provincial government departments. This ensured more attention to their problems, and provided some influence and ability to affect decisions. This added exposure, one RRT stressed, was the result of being face-to-face with federal/provincial staff: "being in the same room is important".
- A third key benefit was the ability to find out about federal and provincial government programs and funding opportunities - this process is "the perfect vehicle" for finding dollars, one RRT noted.
- With respect to key problems, perhaps the most common was the need to maintain a consistent presence and effective participation from provincial and federal staff. One RRT noted that staff tended to attend in the early part of the process, but attendance would then fall off. Even when they were there, noted another RRT, staff tended to be observers, "on the outside", "visitors", "gathering information". Another RRT noted that "there cannot be a partnership without partners being there" - while another RRT suggested that federal/provincial staff don't need to be there so much at the outset (when the RDI is doing the initial training and development) but need to be present later, when RRTs need information on programs and can articulate needs to government. Another RRT noted the down side of government staff not being present; reading and extracting useful information from the minutes of the RRT does not appear to happen, and as a result government staff cannot and do not always respond effectively to issues raised at RRT meetings - they really have to be there in person.
- Another important problem recognized by three of the RRTs was the problem of short-term funding and the need for support. One RRT pointed out that it is hard for local leaders to give funding or find resources for regional efforts when funding is needed for local community issues and there is no funding or taxation base for regional purposes. The fact that they do in fact support such regional efforts is very much to their credit.

- A couple of the RRTs noted an absence of attention to their issues in the form of visits to their communities by Ministers, or evidence that their issues are being addressed in the legislature or elsewhere on the public agenda. They want to see Ministers listening to (rather than talking at) the communities.
- The key concern raised by all four RRTs with respect to future directions is the need for real financial support. Staff is essential for the RRT, noted one group; there is a need for start-up funding noted another; while a third noted that money is needed for start-up and on-going costs and to leverage other resources.
- Two RRTs specifically referred to the need for governments to respond flexibly to community needs, rather than requiring communities to respond flexibly to government programs. One community referred to the need to “fit your programs to our needs”, while another community noted that “tailoring your programs to our needs is the test of sincerity”.
- Other issues raised in terms of future direction include
  - the need for more input to or control over policy at the local level
  - the possibility of an annual meeting of RRTs/community members with Ministers
  - the need to participate in some way in the Management Committee (without overwhelming the slender capacity and resources of the RRTs)
  - problems of community volunteer burn-out
  - the need to task the federal/provincial staff attending the meetings
  - beware of transferring large amounts of money directly to small communities, it can distort local priorities and cause problems.

In conclusion, the communities saw the CCP as a positive initiative over which they had considerable, if not complete control. The key benefit was simply in getting together to share concerns, views, and ultimately to have a more effective unified voice. There seems to be a real thirst for a deeper and fuller partnership in which federal and provincial staff participate in the work of the RRTs, provide information and advice on programs, and provide a voice back to government departments to ensure that programs are tailored to the needs of the community. Funding and other forms of support to the communities and the RRTs is generally considered to be vital.

### **Key findings - the Management Committee and senior staff perspective**

As was the case with the communities, there was wide agreement that the CCP was a valuable and important initiative, and provided important lessons about working with communities. It was noted that “the value of a ‘horizontal’ approach is clear” and that the Federal/provincial collaboration in the Rural Team is “unique” in Canada. But at the same time, a remaining challenge is to determine how community and regional groups can have more influence centrally, in Winnipeg and Ottawa.

But in dealing with communities, it was noted, “it must be more than information sharing”. As one informant noted, “if we are serious about listening to community, we have to respond to local needs”, and this entails reviewing services and providing resources in ways that are “flexible and responsive”. It will also be important to link to other regionally-focused programs/activities.

In response to one comment from a RRT about a shift in roles from “governments thinking and communities acting” to the reverse of that, the Management Committee suggested that what is needed

is that “both communities and governments do both thinking and acting”. But there is another role shift for government, it was suggested; this is not about looking after communities, but looking out for communities. Nonetheless, it was agreed, community advocates are still needed to act as the “voice” of community, an important role that enhances the visibility and presence of the communities in governments’ minds.

The issue of ‘voice’ was a recurring theme, with some wondering where is the voice for rural and Northern Manitoba in a broad, holistic sense, beyond strong but narrow sectoral voices, eg., agriculture or mining. The Management Committee saw the potential for the CCP to evolve into a vehicle for sustained civic engagement, rather than the current episodic or crisis based mechanism that is too often the norm elsewhere.

A particular concern of the Management Committee, in the face of requests from communities for funding, is how government can provide stability and resources without committing to core funding to communities, and without creating a sense of entitlement and/or dependence.

To summarize

- from a community perspective, it is clear that the CCP is a valued and valuable undertaking. The principal benefit, clearly, is the opportunity for communities to come together, identify common issues and concerns and develop common approaches and solutions. The second most important aspect of the project is the opportunity to interact with provincial and federal government staff, both so as to provide them with information and increase their awareness of issues in the communities, and to learn more about provincial and federal programs that might be available to the communities. The communities both valued the opportunity to have a voice and also expect that federal and provincial staff who attend their meetings will be a voice for the communities back to provincial and federal departments. However, this requires the consistent presence and participation of government staff. Moreover, there is clearly an appetite for a deeper and fuller partnership between the communities and federal and provincial governments.
- from the government perspective, it is clear that if governments are serious about listening to the communities, then they have to respond to local needs in flexible ways, which means reviewing and adapting existing services and programs. The exchange has to be more than simply information sharing, with government departments being pro-active in responding to community concerns. There are also benefits from a “horizontal”, interdepartmental and intergovernmental collaborative approach, although it will be important to link RRTs to other regionally focused programs and activities. A core issue is how to provide stability and resources to communities without getting involved in core funding and creating a sense of entitlement and/or dependence.

### **Lessons from the Healthy Communities Networks in Quebec and Ontario**

As noted in the preface, the healthy communities movement, which in fact has its roots in Canada, is one that has many commonalities with other community capacity-building and civic engagement movements. The Healthy Community Coalitions in Quebec and Ontario provide a useful and positive example of provincial organizations that have been long established (more than 10 years each) and that are focused around building on community capacity to create healthier, more sustainable, more economically viable communities. There are certain common attributes of both the Quebec and the Ontario healthy communities networks that provide important guidance for any similar activity in Manitoba (see Appendices 1 and 2 for a more detailed review of these networks).

- Both organizations are based on the membership of communities, who constitute the majority of the Board of Directors of both organizations.

- Neither organization provides direct funding to communities, but instead provides a wide range of education, training and other supportive and capacity-building services and activities. In Ontario, a key feature is that two-thirds of the staff are community animators based all around the province and providing services within defined regions.
- Both organizations are heavily dependent on government funding, but at arms length and through a third party (the Institute of Public Health in Quebec, the Ontario Prevention Clearing House in Ontario).
- Both organizations rely on close collaboration and partnerships with other provincial organizations and networks that have shared interests.
- In neither case do provincial governments have members on the Board of Directors.

In considering the potential for what might become a Manitoba community capacity building partnership, as described in the next section, these lessons should be borne in mind, together with the findings from a review and evaluation of the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition (OHCC) undertaken in 1995 by Abt Associates. Among the key findings of that evaluation:

- the Coalition has achieved an unexpected level of success in facilitating the work of communities, notwithstanding the organization's growing pains;
- the evidence ... "indicates that provision of an experienced individual who can interact with communities, providing assistance that is appropriate to a community's needs, is a powerful and effective strategy for a program such as the OHCC";
- in spite of the relatively short time during which the OHCC and the community animators had been active, the evaluation team was "surprised and pleased to find substantial evidence of OHCC impacts":
  - large numbers of individuals have been involved in community coalitions
  - community groups have made progress on all key indicators established in the evaluation design, in particular more than 80 percent have taken some action to make their community healthier, almost half have been involved in promoting policy changes and about two-thirds have achieved some support at the municipal level for their initiative;
- "while community groups strongly support the importance of the OHCC in the process of building a healthy community, they give the most positive ratings to the contributions involving the community animators."

## **Towards a Rural and Northern Manitoba Community Capacity Building Partnership**

Communities are usually interested in being one or more of the following: clean, safe, green, healthy, livable, sustainable, prosperous. They are interested in multiple forms of development: social development, community development, economic development, sustainable development, human development, and rural development, among others. But they are normally not interested in all of them at once, nor are they interested in them in equal degrees.

On the other hand, they generally don't want to have to deal with each of these as separate issues, partly because in their own lived experience these issues are all inter-related, and partly because it is too cumbersome and too exhausting - particularly in smaller communities - to have to respond to multiple federal and provincial programs using separate forms, with separate criteria, to meet separate deadlines,

One of the things communities want most of all, therefore, is to be able to simplify and rationalize the various funding "pipes" that potentially funnel program resources into their communities. They really don't want to have to deal with multiple bureaucratic systems to address what they see as a single or a smaller number of inter-related set of issues.

Moreover, they don't want to have to respond to provincial or federal programs that define an issue and an approach to it in such a way that the communities have to adapt to the provincial and federal issue or need. From the communities' point of view - and it is the communities that governments are trying to serve - they want a provincial or federal program or policy to be flexible enough to adapt to their more local needs.

So how might this be accomplished? First, it is unrealistic to expect that all federal and provincial programs can change their modus operandi either over night or even at all. But if only a small proportion - say 5-10 percent - of provincial or federal funding directed at communities was freed up to be pooled and applied in a more flexible and responsible way, that would be a tremendous step in the right direction, particularly if allied to a process that allowed issues to be combined and integrated rather than dealt with as separate issues.

Beyond that, perhaps the most important finding from this review, and the one with the most profound implications, is the need to shift from a project managed by a steering committee composed primarily of federal and provincial staff to a partnership in which the communities are in the majority, while maintaining a close partnership with federal and provincial governments. The importance of community management of the partnership is clear from the discussions, as well as the examples from Ontario and Quebec. However, and uniquely, there is a clear interest on both sides for a continuing partnership between communities and federal and provincial government departments.

Based on this review, the RDI reviews, and the experience in Quebec and Ontario, some key principles are proposed.

- The partnership must be "owned" and managed by community organizations, and autonomous from government.
- The Quebec and Ontario experience suggests that no direct funding should be provided to the communities, but instead extensive facilitation, support, skills development and other capacity-building services should be provided. However, the high cost of travel in rural, remote and northern communities, especially when the communities are small, suggests that some direct funding for travel costs should continue to be provided.

- Regionally dispersed community animators would be an advantage.
- Provincial and federal government funding support to the partnership is an essential prerequisite for success.
- The issues to be addressed by the partnership must be very broad, encompassing environmental, social, economic and human development issues in a comprehensive manner.

But in addition to these principles, taken from the Ontario and Quebec experience, some unique aspects of the Manitoba history and experience need to be reflected in the partnership. For example:

- the federal and provincial governments should have representation on the Board of Directors
- Provincial and federal staff must remain closely engaged with the local communities
- rather than funding coming from a single Ministry, as is the case in Quebec and Ontario, core funding should come in smaller packages from a number of different federal and provincial departments. This both helps to spread the load and to ensure that no one department can carry an undue weight or influence. It also helps to ensure that if one department pulls out, the partnership does not collapse.

This suggests the need for a partnership organization with some or all of the following characteristics:

- a partnership of community-level organizations (local governments, local community organizations, and regional organizations such as RRTs, regional economic development organizations, etc.); provincial organizations engaged in one way or another in community capacity building, social development, sustainable development, rural development, etc.; and representatives from federal and provincial government departments.
- the majority of the Board of Directors of the Partnership should come from the communities, perhaps elected on a regional basis.
- core funding should come from multiple provincial and federal government sources. One model might be to have a contribution of \$20-30,000 from each of 8-10 different federal and provincial departments, which would yield a core budget of from \$160-300,000.
- management of the partnership could be contracted out to an existing organization, at least to begin with. An obvious candidate for this role would be the Rural Development Institute at Brandon University, since it already has a history of involvement in the project and has established a good relationship with the communities involved in the four RRTs.
- the key roles of the partnership are
  - capacity building, training and skills development
  - networking among communities and with provincial organizations
  - representing the communities' needs to government
  - working with government to develop/adapt the programs to the needs of rural and northern communities
  - holding annual meetings with key federal and provincial Ministers

- funding should be sought from the core budget or elsewhere to establish full-time community animators in the principal regions of the province
- direct funding support should be available for travel costs to enable RRTs in remote, rural and northern regions to function
- the partnership would work with existing community capacity development initiatives across the province and would be in a position to supplement those existing resources with additional community animators/developers where gaps and needs are identified.
- the partnership would provide a liaison and advisory role with respect to the Rural Advisory Committee (if it is re-established) and to the Rural Secretariat.

Community animators can help to meet at least some of the needs articulated by communities for resource support, without becoming involved in the transfer of resources directly to communities, which avoids the issue of dependency and entitlement that is of concern to the federal and provincial government departments.

The potential problem that transferring large amounts of money to small communities can distort local priorities and local decision-making is another good reason to avoid direct funding transfers (other than for travel) ; it also fits in with the community capacity building approach which suggests building on existing capacity, a task at which effective community animators are good.

The current Management Committee should evolve into a Government Liaison and Support Group, whose task it would be to work with the partnership to respond to identified needs, adapt existing programs and activities to the specific needs of the member communities, to act as a “voice” within government on behalf of the member communities of the partnership, and to bring key programs, funding opportunities, etc., to the attention of the partnership and its member communities.

This Government Liaison and Support Group should participate in the management of the partnership through the appointment of one federal and one provincial member to the Board of Directors (either as liaison or as non-voting or voting members, this will need to be decided during the process of establishing the partnership).

One of the challenges the current Management Committee faces as the project grows is the need to maintain contact with the various Regional Roundtables. Given limited resources, it is tempting to become somewhat disengaged from Roundtables that have been established for some time and appear to be progressing well, and instead to focus energy, time and resources on newly established Roundtables, or those that appear to be having problems. This would be a mistake, since it clear that one of the great benefits the community members of the Roundtables see is in having provincial and federal government staff at their meetings who can then take their issues back and to some extent act as their voice in identifying potential resources, working with other government departments to adapt or modify existing programs to meet community needs, etc. There is a danger, already identified by at least one Roundtable, that the absence of provincial or federal government staff from their meetings, particularly on a regular basis, may be interpreted as a lack of interest and support for the work of the Roundtable. Presumably this is not the case, nor is it a message that government departments wish to convey.

It may be that in order to preserve the limited time, energy and resources of government staff, their involvement in the work of local RRTs may be better saved for later in the process, once RDI or other community development staff have completed the start-up process of defining community values and visions and identifying key issues and priorities. Once that has happened, government staff can be a useful resources to the communities in identifying appropriate programs or resources and working with

the communities to access those program, while working within government to adapt those programs to the unique needs of local communities.

The two key elements of this new approach are thus:

- a community-led partnership organization: This would be a coalition of community-level organizations (eg., local governments, local community organisations, Regional Roundtables, Regional Economic Development organisations etc.), as well as provincial organizations engaged in one way or another in community capacity building/social development/sustainable development, healthy communities, rural development, etc., together with federal and provincial departments.
  - The composition of the Partnership might also include private-sector organizations and non-profit/voluntary agencies.
  - The Partnership itself could be quite large, especially if linked by a website/list serve, with an elected management committee with representation from all major sectors; regional representation must also be ensured
  - Ideally, 50 percent plus 1 of the board members would come from the community level, since that is the group whose needs are - or should be - driving the agenda.
  - The Partnership would be an independent organization with core funding from multiple government sources.
  - The Partnership would work with existing community capacity development initiatives across the province and would be in a position to supplement those resources with additional community animators/developers where gaps and needs are identified.
  - The Partnership would be a separate, incorporated non-profit organization and would establish a website for community stories, resources, etc.
  - The Partnership would not provide direct funding to communities, other than support for travel costs to enable RRTs in remote, rural and northern communities to function effectively.
  - The Partnership could be linked in some way to the Rural Advisory Committee (if it is re-established) and to the Rural Secretariat, not in the sense of reporting to them, but in the sense of providing input, advice, etc., and as advocates on behalf of communities.
- A Government Liaison and Support Group: This would be a work group of provincial and federal agencies and departments whose task it would be to support the Partnership and its community members by identifying suitable programs, funds and other resources that could be made available to communities.
  - This group would be responsible for finding ways to better integrate multiple programs and to simplify the application process for communities.
  - This group would be responsible for working with other government departments to adapt and modify their programs so as to be responsive to the needs of communities, as expressed through the Partnership or elsewhere.

## **Getting from here to there**

There are a number of steps in the process of moving towards such a model:

- first, the current Management Committee should explore the political and bureaucratic interest in and acceptability of such an approach, as well as the interest and support of local communities, particularly - but not exclusively - members of the RRTs.
- second, funding should be provided to the Rural Development Institute to enable them to bring together some of the key provincial and community-level stakeholders to explore the interest in and feasibility of such approach. It would be useful to bring in the Executive Directors of both the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition and the Villes Village en Santé to provide their input and experience at such a planning session.
- Even before the Partnership is established, it may be worth while establishing a website, perhaps through the RDI and/or Community Connections, that can serve as a vehicle for the dissemination of issues that fall within the ambit of this concept.
- It may be useful to convene a provincial conference focused around the themes of economic, social, human and sustainable development (or, as an alternative, a conference around the theme of “creating community capital” - understood as the simultaneous improvement of human, social, natural and economic capital). This would enable provincial organizations, communities and provincial and federal government departments to get some additional experience in working together, identifying common themes, issues and strategies, etc. Indeed, such a conference should include a process for strategy development to enable the somewhat disparate groups to come together around a set of shared interests. (It may be necessary to fund some preliminary workshops that can develop preliminary proposals to bring to such a conference.)

## **Conclusion**

As in other provinces and other parts of the world, there is a growing interest in Manitoba in the need for “joined-up”, horizontal, intersectoral policy development and program implementation. At the same time, there is also interest in building on community capacity. Because of the pioneering work of the Community Collaboration Project, the opportunity exists to create a new mechanism for a community-led, multi-agency cooperative approach to joint regional planning and project development activities that will improve the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of rural and northern communities.

## **References**

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## **Appendix 1**

### **An Overview of the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition**

This overview is based primarily on the draft 2001/2002 annual report and on supplemental information provided by Lorna Heidenheim, the Coordinator.

The Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition was established in the early 1990s, and currently involves 219 active healthy community groups and coalitions within 121 locations. The mission of the Coalition is

“to work with the diverse communities of Ontario to strengthen their social, environmental, and economic wellbeing”.

The OHCC carries out its mission using a community capacity building approach, providing bilingual training, consultation, information, educational resources, and networking opportunities to community groups who are working to improve the social, environmental and economic conditions of their community.

The OHCC's 2002-2003 budget is \$767,000, with funding coming from

- Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Ontario - \$350,000
- Community Animation Project (Health Canada/Environment Canada) - \$185,000
- Ontario Trillium Foundation - \$178,000.

In addition, fund raising, summer student programs and sales of goods and services are jointly budgeted for a little over \$50,000 annually.

The OHCC membership consists of

- 10 provincial associations, including the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, the Economic Developers Council of Ontario, the Ontario Social Development Council, Parks and Recreation Ontario, the Ontario Métis and Aboriginal Association, and the Ontario Public Health Association
- 43 formally participating community members
- 76 “network” members.

The Board of Directors consists of

- 4 representatives from the provincial associations
- 10 members representing the communities, with 2 members from each of 5 regions (North, Southwest, Central, Greater Toronto Area, East).

The Coalition has a staff of 12.5, of whom 4 (Executive Director, Administrative Coordinator, Communications Facilitator, Development Coordinator) are in the main office. But the core of the staff are 8 full-time community animators working in 8 different regions of the province; in addition, a part-time community animator liaisons with Aboriginal and Métis communities.

Community Animators act as a catalyst to bring together the people, tools and resources that will help to improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of communities. They provide

consultation, information, networking and training services on a wide range of topics relating to developing healthy communities. In 2001-2, they provided a total of 1,424 services involving 9,933 individuals. Most of these services were provided to community organizations, coalitions, multi-sectoral groups, local governments, environment groups, and health care workers. Over half of these services were provided in person.

The Coalition develops and distributes a wide range of educational resources, including publications on healthy environments, health food, indicators, community and local government joint action, a healthy economy, the use of stories to guide action, and a book "Inspiring Change: Healthy Cities and Communities in Ontario". Many of these publications are available on-line through the Coalition's website.

The Coalition's annual conference provides an opportunity for people to come together to learn, share and to celebrate. The 2001 conference was a three-day event co-sponsored with the Sudbury Roundtable on Health, Economy and Environment, and was attended by more than 100 people.

The provincial network of coalitions, groups, organizations and individuals that the Coalition facilitates through its activities has the following benefits:

- enhances communication, cooperation and a mutual support among communities
- raises the standards and quality of healthy community projects and activities
- encourages the development of new healthy communities
- has a positive influence on public policy
- provides opportunities to form strategic partnerships
- provides input into the development of new training and evaluation tools.

## **Appendix 2**

### **An Overview of Villes et Villages en Santé (the Québec Healthy City Network)**

This overview is based on an interview with Réal Lacombe, the founder of VVS and for many years the Director. Dr Lacombe is currently Regional Director of Public Health in Rouyn-Noranda.

The Quebec Healthy City Network, has been in existence for more than a decade. The bulk of its \$300,000 budget, some 80-90 percent, comes from the Ministry of Health. This funding has been permanent for ten years, and is now part of the core budget of the Institute of Public Health, of which VVS is a part. However it is important to recognize that while the government provides most of the funding, this is done at arms length through the Institute of Public Health. The government does not and never has directed VVS in terms of its issues, concerns or activities, although it obviously finds them beneficial. In fact, there is a growing impact on government, particularly outside the health sector, with interest in this community-based approach being shown by the Ministries of Justice, Social Security and other ministries. They approach VVS because they see it as an important entry point to reach local governments, as well as an important way of hearing from local governments. Thus, for example, VVS was represented on the Advisory Panel that developed the new Rural Policy for Quebec.

VVS is established as a corporation in Quebec, an association of municipalities. Regular membership, with voting privileges, is restricted to municipalities and is based on the passage of an official resolution by the Municipal Council. There are currently some 150 municipalities that are members, covering some 50 percent of the population; most of Quebec's big municipalities and many of its middle sized municipalities are members. The membership fee ranges from \$25 to \$300 (based on population) and the small amount of money that is raised this way covers the costs of board meetings, etc. Associate members (ie., other than municipalities) are also welcome, but as they have no vote, and as they can usually benefit from the services of VVS without being members, there are very few associate members.

The Board is composed of ten members, seven of whom are elected by member municipalities; six of these must be politicians, and the Chair of the Board must be a politician. The three additional members of the Board are as follows:

- one representative of the Directors of Public Health in Quebec
- one representative of the CLSCs
- one representative from the school boards.

VVS has four fulltime staff, who legally are accountable to the Institute of Public Health but in practice are accountable to the Board. They provide a range of services to members and non-members. However, there is no direct funding from VVS to member municipalities. The staff activities include:

- facilitation of and support for activities undertaken by local municipalities
- technical assistance, work skills training and development, workshops, etc.
- communications, web site, newsletter, etc.
- annual conference
- referral to other resources
- joint work with municipalities

- responding to requests for information
- collaboration with other ministries
- co-directing the WHO Collaborating Centre on healthy cities at the Laval University
- public presentations
- project development, grant applications, etc.

In addition to its core budget, VVS obtains funding for other projects from a variety of sources, including Health Canada, other Quebec ministries, etc. Currently, for example, VVS is running a three-year, \$300,000 per annum Safe Communities Project in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice.

There has been no recent evaluation of VVS, an evaluation was done in 1991 (which led to the permanent funding base for VVS) and they are currently working on developing a new review/evaluation.