



Strengthening Canada's Communities / Des communautés plus fortes au Canada

***Remarks Submitted to the Standing Committee on
Human Resources, Skills and Social Development
and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA)***

***Regarding the Federal Contribution to Reducing
Poverty in Canada***

From the Manitoba CED Network

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your deliberations and discussion on the critical issue of poverty reduction in Canada.

The Manitoba Chapter of the Canadian CED Network represents hundreds of community organizations that are working with thousands of community members across the province to build stronger and fairer local economies, reduce poverty and homelessness, and create more sustainable communities.

I should clarify that when we talk about Community Economic Development, we are not referring simply to business-focused development as you might envision with this term. We are talking about people in communities working together at a local level to generate innovative and effective initiatives that create economic opportunities for individuals, families, and neighbourhoods in a way that improves social and environmental conditions as well.

Whether we are looking at the social determinants of health, the many facets of full social inclusion, or at the nature of poverty we understand that they all describe a complex and inter-dependant set of dynamics that can only be effectively addressed with integrated approaches. The CED model understands that complex community issues require multi-faceted and coordinated responses, and that those responses will be most successful and sustainable if they are community-led.

This is not a new idea. Communities across this country and around the world have been working together to fight poverty for a very long time, and we have many innovative and effective models here in Manitoba as well. But despite the proven track record of this approach, communities of all kinds (urban, rural, northern, newcomers, Aboriginal, etc.) lack the necessary support to take action in dynamic, holistic, and innovative ways.

What has been lacking, and what we are recommending, is a comprehensive federal strategy for reducing poverty and for supporting community-led responses to poverty reduction. In order to be effective, this federal strategy must be strengthened with targets and timelines for outcome based results and with accompanying Anti-Poverty Legislation. We stand as part of The Dignity For All campaign with this clear and fundamentally important request.

A comprehensive strategy requires that policies be developed in order to achieve defined objectives in key areas such as childcare, housing, food security, skill development and employment. Here in Manitoba, this has been very well laid out in The View From Here, a comprehensive strategy designed by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba together with Make Poverty History Manitoba. Policies in these areas will

have an even greater impact on poverty reduction and social inclusion if strategic consideration is given to the way that these policies are implemented.

When capital projects are undertaken, we recommend that the federal government implement training and apprenticeship components that ensure skill development happens in the local community. This is important because when the infrastructure is completed and the project is finished, the employability of people in that area will be enhanced and the legacy of the project really can live on in the lives of those people. When creating economic stimulus initiatives aimed at infrastructure, we recommend ensuring that community infrastructure such as child care centres and social housing are strategically invested in. When supporting labour market development, we recommend that community-based organizations rooted in impoverished neighbourhoods are given the resources they require to provide holistic supports for a sufficient length of time to ensure success. And when addressing our social housing crisis in this country, we recommend that social enterprises such as our own Inner City Renovations are contracted recognizing that the overall return on investment through this strategy is much greater than simply the value of the construction contracts. And when developing strategic investments, we recommend prioritizing comprehensive community renewal initiatives as demonstrated here in Manitoba through 12 Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations that work with the community to identify a comprehensive, long term strategy for revitalizing their neighbourhoods.

I do know that you heard from one of the members of the Canadian CED Network Policy Council in Vancouver on the value of social enterprises, so I will just re-iterate the primary point that this is one important model that hires and trains people from marginalized populations that would otherwise have barriers to employment; particularly people living in poverty and living with various disabilities.

A point I want to make clear is that there are opportunities in everything that government does, in every department, in every program, in every project, and through every policy to have an impact on poverty in this country. But without putting in place a comprehensive framework and anti-poverty lens through which all decisions are made, most of these opportunities may not even be identified and will then certainly be missed. In creating a federal framework for reducing poverty, we would recommend considering Manitoba's CED Policy Framework and Lens as a model that would require the federal government to ensure that all programming and policies considered the implications on poverty and community development.

Finally, we recommend that the federal strategy include a program that commits funds to strengthen effective community-led poverty reduction initiatives. As I mentioned earlier, Canadians across the country have long been taking action that enables others in their community to overcome barriers and develop capacity and opportunities to participate fully in community life. Many lack the required resources to work with the active leaders

in their communities to tackle the complex issue of poverty, and yet they do what they can with great passion, innovation, effectiveness, and dedication.

There is a long history, and current strength and innovation in communities across the country already working at reducing poverty. But what we need is strong government leadership that creates a comprehensive federal strategy for reducing poverty strengthened with targets and timelines for outcome based results and with accompanying Anti-Poverty Legislation, and a complementary program for enabling community-led responses to poverty reduction.

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