Building Community Wealth

What is Possible in Rural, Small and Mid-Sized Communities?



June 2021

This report was drafted on land which is the traditional territories of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, comprised of the Ojibway, the Odawa, and the Potawatomie peoples. We ask the reader to take a moment to reflect upon the lands that they are situated and the peoples who were here before us.

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For social and economic justice

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Forward

As Canada looks to recover from the impacts of COVID-19, we must look at ways to ensure that the recovery in our communities is both just and inclusive. Community benefits are a tool that can help move us towards a more inclusive economy, but for a long time they were viewed as an activity that could only occur on big projects in big cities. This report hopes to dispel that myth.

Although a true Community Benefits Agreement between developers, government and the community is the gold standard, many small and medium sized communities have begun to adopt elements of broader community benefit provisions to ensure development is equitable and inclusive. Some measures include local procurement strategies to help support local businesses, supporting job training in the skilled

trades for women and vulnerable populations, taking steps to protect the environment and combat climate change, and ensuring community voice is heard in the development process.

This report strives to shine a light on what is possible in smaller towns and cities by highlighting policies that are already in place or forthcoming. The goal is to empower communities to demand more than the status quo. To the best of our ability, we have tried to constrain the examples in this report to smaller communities from within Canada, so that the structural and legal frameworks are more easily replicable.

Our hope is that this report can be a launching pad for a broader dialogue on a more inclusive economy across Ontario and Canada.

This report will:

- Provide inspiration to communities as to what is possible and can be accomplished.
- Be a springboard for local research for local community wealth strategies.
- Enable coalitions of like-minded people and organizations to come together and discuss ideas of what should be.
- Support advocacy with municipal, provincial and federal governments.
- Help to right-size community wealth ideas for communities - regardless of their size.
- Highlight how for a marginal upfront investment - long-term dividends can be gained through more prosperous local economies.

Introduction

The challenges of the modern world are complicated and systemic. Decisions made halfway around the world can affect people and communities across Canada in ways that are not always seen or understood. These systems and structures have seen wealth inequality rise, commoditization of housing and acceleration of climate change impacts, while communities and those living in them are being left behind.

Bringing fairness into this system seems like a daunting task, but by taking actions at a local level and through smaller steps, a broader movement can be built to create community wealth, fairer economic systems and empower communities. Exploring the adoption of tools like community benefit agreements, social procurement policies, decent work provisions, environmental justice and racial equity and reconciliation can not only transform communities, but raise the expectations of the people who live there as to what is possible.

Given the shock to our economy, communities and society due to Covid-19, the growth of the movement of Black Lives Matter and the ongoing journey to reconciliation and ensuring Indigenous justice, there is an opportunity for communities to deploy innovative solutions to help recover, revitalize and reconnect.

A key community wealth building strategy to create a more inclusive economy is through community benefits. These tools and others have been used internationally for years in the United Kingdom, the United States and beyond with numerous successful examples. While they have been used in partnership with Indigenous communities for years, these tools are still newer to other parts of Canada and are only now taking root in towns, cities, and provinces across the country.

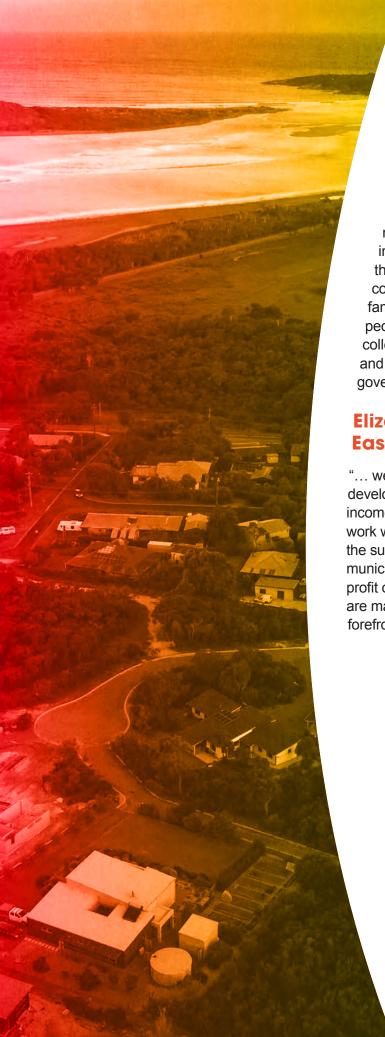
When looking at tools to build local inclusive economies and community wealth, most often the research, analysis and projects are centred on larger cities. With 60% of the population living outside of

Canada's 15 largest metro areas, there are significant opportunities to transform economies across the country by shifting focus to rural, small and mid-sized community contexts."

Community benefit processes have been seen as a tool for billion-dollar projects in big cities. When viewed in the context of mid-sized, small and rural communities, these benefits are often seen as a burden rather than an opportunity to build decent work, train future workforce and create communities that are more inclusive. This report will provide some initial perspectives on how community wealth building instruments like community benefits can be successful in any size community and almost any development process.

By illustrating what can occur in communities of all sizes and not just in big cities, it helps change the narrative that rural, small and mid-sized communities by creating space for a discussion of what is possible. What emerges from this is a more knowledgeable and engaged citizenry. It can help residents and communities create spaces and opportunities in their cities, towns and neighbourhoods while empowering equity-seeking and Indigenous communities to strengthen self-governance and create economic opportunity. These social and civic engagement benefits compound the defined economic benefits that emerge from these processes, enabling communities to better speak for their needs and aspirations.

This report will outline how these community wealth-building strategies can be accomplished through the examining of successful practices that can be scaled down to mid-sized, small and rural community contexts. The findings will primarily focus on the Ontario, but the general principles can be applied across Canada.



Bader Abu-Zahra, Chair of **Ottawa-Vanier ACORN Chapter:**

"As an ACORN member in Ottawa, I feel Community Benefit Agreements are a very important tool for development to reflect the desires of the community before construction starts. Developers should need to know the needs of the community and their demands should be implemented directly into the project. It can't just be about their profit margins. Some of the development requirements could be: daycare, playgrounds, bus stops, good jobs, family housing and deeply affordable housing for low income people. In all cases, it's essential that communities organize collectively to identify what they want for their neighbourhood and build power on the ground so that developers and government officials are willing to come to the table."

Elizabeth Ellis, Co-chair **East Hamilton ACORN Chapter:**

"... we are seeing a lot of new investment come into the city but development shouldn't be at the expense of low and moderate income communities. Developers and local government need to work with community partners to ensure projects have benefits for the surrounding community. Especially when it comes to housing, municipalities need to prioritize affordable housing needs over profit of developers. Community organizations like ACORN that are made up of low income community members need to be at the forefront of any negotiations for a community benefits agreement."



What are Community Benefits?

Community benefits are one of the more well-known tools to build community wealth and are general terms for a process which brings residents and communities into the public or private development processes in meaningful ways. The goal of this engagement is to lessen negative effects of development and amplify positive impacts for a community. The process of negotiation supports communities to set their sights high and leverage existing resources to drive additional positive change. Community benefits will be used as an umbrella term for a wide range of approaches designed to mitigate negative impacts of projects or create additional value for the communities and people who will shoulder the burden of hosting infrastructure or new development.iii

A **Community Benefit Agreement (CBA)** is a legal agreement that sets forth specific community expectations from an infrastructure or development project. The benefits of the agreement are ideally defined through an inclusive and transparent community engagement process of those who are most impacted. These agreements are legally binding and enforceable contract often between the developer or project builder, government and local community which contain clear outcomes and expectations of the project and benefits set in a manner that are meaningful and measurable.^{iv}

Community benefit agreements are not designed to unduly add costs to projects; rather they are thoughtfully designed to maximize benefits to a wide range of community members including those who are

often overlooked. Community benefits processes have been taking shape for the last two decades around the world with different styles emerging that are summed up in the table below:

Model Type	Background	Example
American Model	Primarily driven by community coalitions who enter into freestanding legal agreements (CBAs) with developers and local government. For developers, in order to access municipal incentives programs, frameworks have been established requiring community benefit processes at a municipal level to support the surrounding communities.	Milwaukee Bucks Arena CBA (2016: Milwaukee, WI): The Alliance for Good Jobs negotiated with owners of the Milwaukee Bucks for the construction of a new arena, which included a 50% hiring target from high unemployment neighbourhoods, higher minimum wage, and the right for employees to unionize.
U.K. Model	Driven by government through legal and policy structures which focus on workforce training, social enterprises and local procurement. Community members are less involved in the process.	Welsh Community Benefits in Public Procurement Initiative (2003: Wales): a government pilot project which aimed to incentivize contractors to employ and train a percentage of its workforce from among the unemployed.vi
Ontario Model	The "Ontario model" that has emerged in recent years, is a mix of both the American and U.K style particularly led by the City of Toronto. Recent governments (generally Federal or Provincial) have begun to require some community benefits elements incorporated into large infrastructure projects. Often these CBAs have been in response to advocacy from community groups resulting in grassroots community involvement in the process and benefits. Some large urban centres have begun to adopt formal Community Benefit provisions at a municipal level.	The Rexdale-Woodbine Casino CBA signed by the City of Toronto and One Toronto Gaming in concert of Rexdale Rising (a community, labour, faith coalition) and ACORN Toronto. Community groups like the Toronto Community Benefit Network, ACORN and others pressured the City to place requirements on the developer resulting in guarantees of local hiring, community spaces, over \$5 million in new childcare spaces and facilities to ensure the community is not adversely impacted by the project.vii
Vancouver Model	The City of Vancouver has implemented a Community Benefit requirement on all large development projects exceeding 45,000 square metres. In order to receive rezoning approval, developers must meet key conditions based on three core provisions. Local hiring with 10% of new entry-level jobs available to people in Vancouver first, specifically those who are equity-seeking and purchasing a minimum of 10% of goods and services from local businesses, through two pathways: 1. Social procurement – valuing the positive	A pilot for this initiative was the Parq Resort and Casino in Vancouver, a \$330 million project featuring a casino, 2 hotels and 8 restaurants. Negotiated between the City and private developer. Initial targets were 10% local hiring and 10% local procurement totaling approximately \$33 million. Upon completion both targets were met although geographic boundaries were increased for the developer, with 21% of hires being local and construction/procurement targets reaching 15% or \$62.7 million.ix
	social and environmental impacts created by purchasing select goods and services, in addition to value for money.	
	 Supplier diversity – purchasing from organizations that are at least 51% owned by equity seeking groups.^{viii} 	

A community benefits policy is a policy adopted by a local government that requires community benefits on projects undertaken by the government or by a private developer. The City of Toronto implemented a Community Benefits Framework and defined the process as "a way for government (and other institutions) to multiply the impact of their spending" by implementing conditions that "create community benefits opportunities."x

Through legally binding CBAs, taxpayers are protected as the agreement binds developers with enforceable penalties put in place on missed targets and failed timelines.xi These policy and legal frameworks allow communities to scale these processes and "right size" them for their community. These formalized systems help to ensure consistency throughout processes and measurable responses without ignoring local needs and priorities that vary from community to community.xii

In the last three decades, Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) have become more and more commonplace throughout North American cities, bringing residents into the negotiating process of large developments. Exploring how smaller communities can draw inspiration from successful projects and implement them within their own local context is a vital next step.

What is Social Procurement?

Provincial, territorial and local governments spend over \$400 billion annually across Canada. XIII Beyond government, anchor institutions (university, colleges, hospitals, school boards, etc.) also spend billions across Canada, although an exact amount is harder to determine. Whether it is purchasing of office supplies, specialized equipment, information technology or construction, the question becomes how to achieve additional value from the purchasing that is already occurring in big and small communities across the country.

The answer is a social procurement mechanism.

One of the most popular and wide-ranging community benefit provisions is social procurement. It is used

to ensure that purchases that need to be made are targeted and used as an opportunity to buy directly from businesses that are local, support or are owned by equity-seeking populations, or that serve a social purpose (i.e. social enterprise).xiv

There are a number of different mechanisms to enable social procurement. A path that some municipal governments and anchor institutions have pursued includes setting spending thresholds for staff and directing them to support business on projects and bids that meet the criteria related to social procurement priorities. Another common approach has been to include "buy local provisions" within contracts to ensure that equipment, workers and materials are sourced from within communities.

Tender reform where the value of social and environmental impact is included in the bidding process is beginning to emerge. By leveraging existing tender and bidding processes, community benefits can be embedded within current procurement frameworks while still providing an oversight structure that the community can follow if properly implemented.* This tender reform would embed community benefits within the framework by asking proponents to include key elements within their bid process and possibly bonus scoring for bidders who go above and beyond. Evidence from the United Kingdom where Community Benefits is far more entrenched is that bidder quickly adapts to meet these provisions and costs of projects do not rise significantly.*

Recent research by **Buy Social Canada** has highlighted how social procurement can still occur where free trade agreements are in place. XVIII Almost all free trade agreements hold exemptions and thresholds that allow for institutions and municipalities to undertake various forms of social procurement to support social causes or if funding amounts are under certain thresholds.

Social Procurement Strategy	Description	Outputs
Manitoba Social Enterprise Strategy	Emerging in 2015, the Manitoba Social Enterprise Strategy strives to strengthen the not-for-profit sector and create employment for vulnerable populations in the province. The strategy is based on 5 pillars that see public, private, non-profit partners that work together to achieve positive outcomes.*	One of the goals of the MSES was to double current social procurement through Manitoba housing from \$5 million/year to \$10 million/year over 3 years. The strategy was a success, resulting in contracts between Manitoba Housing and six social enterprises: BUILD, Manitoba Green Retrofit, North End Community Renewal Corporation, New Directions, Aki Energy, and the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation, which receive a total of \$7 million/year in government contracts through Manitoba Housing.xix
Coastal Communities Social Procurement Initiative	A partnership of municipalities on Vancouver Island to leverage best practices on how to create additional value from their procurement process as well as to coordinate and potentially leverage local economic development opportunities.	The village of Cumberland has outlined a dozen key priorities that its social procurement efforts will work to address. Some objectives include: 1. Contribute to a stronger local economy; 2. Increase diversity among suppliers; 3. Promote the Living Wage and fair employment practices; 4. Help move people out of poverty; 5. Provide increased independence and sustainable employment for those in need.*x
ANCHOR TO	AnchorTO, a group of 18 local institutions that include public authorities and universities looking to use their combined \$20 billion annual operating spending to drive inclusive economic growth. xxi	The 18 partners have leveraged their purchasing power to support three action areas: social procurement, inclusive workforces and capital investments. For example, the City of Toronto Social Procurement Program requires the following: - For procurement between \$3,000 and \$50,000 in value, divisions will be required to seek at least one quotation from a diverse supplier as part of the Divisional Purchase Order process. XXIII As of Jan 2021 – 50 contracts had been awarded. XXIIII

Often, social procurement policies also involve capacity-building measures, like training and development programs, to help these smaller businesses access opportunities and grow to scale for the project.xxiv This is where partnerships with Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) and small business

centres can be leveraged to strengthen the ability of local businesses to effectively bid on and win local contracts. Not only will this strengthen local business, but it will help lay the foundation for economic diversification and resilience.

Expanding the Definition of Community Benefits

So often large cities receive the bulk of resources and spotlight following economic shocks leaving smaller communities to work with what is left.

Community benefits and social procurement are tools of community wealth building that can be utilized by communities of any size, for any type of project - you just have to "right size" the benefit and the expectations. As we look to respond to shocks to our economic and social systems, there is an opportunity to build resiliency and diversify local economies, while also building inclusive economic growth.

An evolution is underway in how benefits to communities are valued in Canada -- in light of the disruptions that occurred through 2020 -- highlighting racial injustice and systemic barriers in our society, the impacts of the pandemic and growing economic inequality. The pressures of the status quo are quickly becoming untenable.

Community benefits in many ways are far more than legally binding agreements attached to formal frameworks. They are a process to achieve more in our communities and they are becoming a part of standard operating procedures in communities of all sizes. The shift that is occurring is one from "How can a project be done most guickly and inexpensively for taxpayers?" to "How can a project provide additional value while maintaining a positive return on investment for taxpayers?" These broader approaches are growing beyond just procurement or major projects to include environmental sustainability. social inclusion, community engagement and broader inclusive economic growth in a wide range of projects and programs in villages, towns and cities. This is community wealth building.



Perceived Constraints and Opportunities for Mid-Sized, Small and Rural Communities to Adopt Community Wealth Approaches

In the minds of many, community benefit initiatives occur in big cities or on big projects. A similar statement can be made about many social procurement initiatives as anchor institutions tend to be clustered in larger urban centres. To some extent this is true. Due to the economies of scale of these projects and institutions, more benefits can be captured from an investment. However, both community benefit agreements, social procurement initiatives and other mechanisms of community wealth building can be utilized in mid-sized, small and rural communities to support their local economies and create opportunity for their residents.

Not Enough Projects

A common argument against implementing these practices in smaller communities is the simple fact that they have fewer big projects and anchor institutions. There is no disputing this fact, but the question that needs to be asked is: Why can't smaller projects be used to generate additional benefit?

The Ontario Municipal Act and other legislation enables -- and in some cases -- requires municipalities to maintain municipal asset management plans, 10-year capital budgets and even multi-year operating budgets.xxv Just looking at the asset classes that municipalities of all sizes manage, the opportunities that could be generated through the maintenance and replacement of existing infrastructure are huge.xxvi These long-term spending plans and forward looking analysis of infrastructure needs can enable smaller municipalities to bundle their infrastructure investments in order to create economies of scale.

The guestion can then be asked -- why can't a municipality have ten years worth of capital projects

bundled together to create extra value? Why not plan for 10 years worth of training opportunities for apprentices to line up with capital projects in a pipeline to strengthen the local labour force for the future? Rather than tendering on an annual basis, why not tender for multiple years, with an annual accountability matrix, to create cost certainty for all parties and allow for savings to be reinvested into other initiatives? The benefits in smaller communities will certainly look different than they do in big cities. Having an occasional big project can be the catalyst to lay the foundations for future smaller projects. Once a few communities test the process, the concept can be scaled.

Projects in Small Communities are Too Small

Fewer projects and anchor institutions in smaller communities are often linked to the fact that developments tend to be smaller in nature. The resource development agreements that have been signed with First Nations and Inuit communities show that big projects do go to small communities. xxvii However, not every community is so fortunate with natural resources or being at a strategic location where critical infrastructure needs to be built.

The key is to reframe the question from "how big a project needs to be to provide community benefit" to "how small a project can be that additional benefit can be generated without creating undue burdens". Building a supply chain of work that is required to be completed will allow you to move these initiatives forward. It is true you might not have a \$500 million project. Rather, a community may have fifty, \$10 million projects over the next 10 years that could be leveraged to accomplish the same goals.

The overall benefits to the community do not need to be huge. Incremental shifts now can provide positive impacts that can pay dividends over the long term. For example, the City of Vaughan has a tree replacement requirement as a part of new development. Individuals and developers must replace every individual tree that meets certain size/type threshold that is removed from a property (with some exemptions) either through new planting on the property or through cash in lieu to a City reserve fund.xxxiii Over a generation, this will maintain their tree canopy and provide a wide range of environmental benefits to their community.

Capacity

Unfortunately, one of the biggest factors affecting small and mid-sized communities is local capacity, as 60% of Canadian municipalities have five staff members or less.xix The ability to manage and bundle projects together does take time and effort from staff and the community. Smaller communities are also home to smaller community agencies and groups who can face barriers engaging in what may be perceived to be complex processes.

Fortunately, the barriers to entry are dropping and this is where the experiences of large cities can be of value. Large municipalities like Toronto and Vancouver have already put policies in place that can be models for smaller communities to adapt and adopt. In British Columbia, the Coastal Communities Social Procurement Initiative brought together smaller communities from across Vancouver Island around eight common goals to use procurement to drive overall community wellbeing.*** For prospective suppliers, training and resources are available leading to a certification that the municipalities recognize in their bidding and procurement processes. The goal is for these smaller communities to leverage their local purchasing power to support their local economies.

Building capacity starts bottom up with local grassroots organizations and not-for-profits working and advocating for change in their community. Although often constrained due to their small size, the tighter social networks in smaller communities allow for mobilization and advocacy to be activated very quickly. The proliferation of web platforms through COVID-19 has reduced barriers to education and training for

these small communities. What is missing -- in many cases -- are resources to sustain this work over the long term. Although quickly mobilized for a key project or issue, the ability to maintain that momentum over the long term or across different projects requires a reliable funding stream.

There is opportunity for backbone organizations to emerge at a provincial or regional level to support this work. Organizations like Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) or the Federations of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) could certainly house resources and best practices. The 2020 shift to remote communications makes the potential for a centralized information portal incredibly important. Some national organizations like Buy Social Canada, offer consulting, guides and training to municipalities and community organizations, as well as suppliers and purchasers lists for social procurement processes.xxxi At the same time, local organizations that support community, social and economic development and inclusion can specialize in specific delivery models within communities, meaning that the burden would not be solely held by smaller municipalities to deliver benefits.

Beyond individual communities, the opportunity for municipalities to cooperate for both community benefits and other services is another avenue that can be explored.xxxii Formal municipal collaboration beyond statutory requirements is an underdeveloped area of municipal governance, but the opportunity for a small community to collaborate to reduce the burden on a single municipal entity is certainly available. xxxiii A potential avenue for this cooperation, in Ontario particularly, is upper tier regional governments in partnership with or in parallel to regional institutions like Police, EMS, School Boards, etc. By adopting a regional approach, economies of scale can be created that cannot be achieved in a single community. The built-in purchasing power and capacity that emerges from these collaborative services create natural synergies that develop and leverage these community wealth-building tools.

Complexity

The myth that free-trade agreements prevent local communities from leveraging their buying power to build themselves up has been largely debunked.xxxiv

Almost all free trade agreements contain provisions that allow spending thresholds, or target marginalized groups to be prioritized or granted additional benefits from local procurement processes. It is complex and given that every community has its own unique make up, history, challenges, potential projects and opportunities, the fact is, there is no one size fits all approach. Leadership and collaboration from numerous parties is required to move these initiatives forward and scale down models from larger communities.

Many initial steps towards building community wealth are already occurring in existing municipal and community processes. By not accepting minimum standards on zoning or planning applications, ensuring inclusive open engagement and community processes, providing living wages, strategically collaborating with local anchor institutions, municipalities are already taking first steps. It will take time and resources to tie these disparate actions together given the capacity constraints of smaller communities. These small steps will build the capacity and capability in communities which will enable bolder action in the future. It will require leadership to make this shift. Uprooting the status quo is always a challenge, but provincial and federal changes may begin to encourage forwardthinking communities to act.

Culture Change

One of the biggest shifts that will need to occur is cultural, for both elected officials and the administrative staff in municipalities. The shift requires a change from looking exclusively at the cost to taxpayers for a particular project to looking at broader societal value and long-term benefit beyond the upfront cost to taxpayers. The City of Windsor for example has begun to do this with "triple bottom line" analysis on key capital and operational projects.xxxv

Calculating a more robust measure of success in infrastructure is just one-step in this cultural change. A driver of this shift will be education and training of key decision makers and staff around what is possible. This is where collaboration and the learnings of larger communities can come into play, as their

best practices can be shared and right sized to the particular context. It is important to have provincial or national bodies like AMO or FCM facilitate these learnings and provide training and materials at scale. These conveners can identify early adopters and elevate their stories as case studies and demonstration cases.

Even for developers and businesses, the idea that community benefits are "red tape" is a notion to be dispelled. By engaging the community, the developer is preventing conflict and saving time and money. Political delays in receiving approvals at municipal planning tables or councils and potential Ontario Municipal Board/ Local Planning Appeal Tribunal appeal from resident groups all carry their own significant risks. Although the developer may ultimately win an appeal, this risk can be mitigated by authentically and proactively engaging the community. Bringing residents into the development process and meeting their needs --although not required -- can be a redeeming quality for controversial projects.

Advocacy from a grassroots and institutional position will also help. By demanding more for communities, we can begin to bring about change. Leveraging tools like this report and asking questions around "Why not here?" is important to drive cultural change discussions in communities. Building trust and shifting culture within and between communities takes time. Community benefits are not about a zero-sum view of development, but rather a more inclusive way to create benefits within and across communities. Adopting various incremental community benefits approaches can provide pathways to strengthen ties and achieve socio-economic-environmental benefits for communities.

By taking steps to build community wealth, it can build reserves and solidarity that municipalities can tap into in hard times. Although smaller communities are often perceived to be more "tightly knit", the divisive nature of these times show that building resiliency and trust in any community is paramount.



With just over 66,000 people, the regional district needed to build a \$125 million water treatment plant. As a part of the process a two stage RFQ/RFP was leveraged to ensure local procurement and training occurred on this project. In the first stage, the proponent had to prove their capacity to implement a social procurement program targeting local and indigenous groups. In the RFP stage, they had to quantify the number of job hours that would be assigned to individuals in these groups. Over the course of the project 10,000 hours of labour were to be completed by Indigenous and under-represented populations. Upon completion, 10,549 hours and 17,368 hours of labour were recorded, respectively.xxxxii

Conditions That Support Community Wealth Building - Federal and Provincial

Recovery of COVID-19 creates both the impetus and need for upper levels of government to empower communities, reduce inequity and build wealth. Both the provincial and federal governments have implemented changes to their procurement processes and policies to encourage community benefit and social procurement activities.

Community Employment Benefits

In 2018, each province signed long-term (10-year) partnership agreements with the federal government on the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program.xxxvii These benefits must target at least one priority population group identified by the federal government including: apprentices - from traditionally disadvantaged communities, Indigenous peoples, women, persons with disabilities, veterans, youth, new Canadians, or small to medium-sized enterprises and social enterprises.

Community Employment Benefits are the federal government's effort to leverage their existing infrastructure spending in partnership with provinces. Within the agreements, resources can be used for communities to develop a community employment benefit plan (See Schedule A – Program Detail Section Ai). xxxviii This is an important tool for communities to leverage as a strategic evaluation of the infrastructure projects that will be needed over the next decade. Aligning those projects to broader employment and social service needs now, can pay significant dividends in local economic and workforce development over the long term.

Unfortunately, the Community Employment Benefit provisions contain an opt-out, in which the recipient can provide an explanation and opt out of these provisions.xxxix Hopefully, this opt-out will be removed from future rounds of funding. In the meantime, local organizations and interested communities should be vigilant around these opportunities, engage their political representatives and advocate for their use.

Schedule A: Community Employment Benefits		
Province	Project Threshold	
Alberta	\$ 25,000,000	
British Columbia	\$ 25,000,000	
Manitoba	\$ 10,000,000	
Newfoundland and Labrador	\$ 10,000,000	
New Brunswick	\$ 10,000,000	
Nova Scotia	\$ 10,000,000	
Northwest Territories	\$ 10,000,000	
Nunavut	\$ 10,000,000	
Ontario	\$ 10,000,000	
Prince Edward Island	\$ 10,000,000	
Quebec	\$ 10,000,000	
Saskatchewan	\$ 25,000,000	
Yukon	\$ 10,000,000	

Beyond Community Employment Benefits, the mandate letter for the Minister of Public Services and Procurement outlines that green and social procurement are a priority of the existing government. Again, this creates opportunities for forward-thinking communities to collaborate with local federal government offices, facilities and departments to create economies of scale for local procurement initiatives.

The 2021 Federal Budget reinforced this support for social procurement by designating over \$80 million to modernize federal procurement processes to make it easier for diversified Canadian suppliers to bid and win federal contracts. This also includes funding to develop tracking and reporting mechanisms within the department to transparently report back to Canadians on the amount of procurement going to targeted groups moving forward.xii

Provincial Community Benefit Pilot Projects

The Province of Ontario -- under the Conservative-led government -- has continued some of the community benefit pilot projects that were initiated under the previous Liberal government. These pilots look at applying community benefits to different types of provincial infrastructure (hospital, prison, courthouse, etc.) beyond the transit projects.

Although framed as pilots, it does not mean that a municipality could not use the model on local projects or request their own pilot project on a major provincial investment in their community. The current government has also made significant investments in apprenticeships and experiential learning programs in the skilled trades that would strongly align with community benefit projects.xiiv For local organizations and municipalities, the opportunity to proactively line up some of these training dollars with local projects is real. Coupling this with the aforementioned community employment benefits, a robust framework of local projects can be designed to train residents in smaller municipalities to build up their own community while creating good paying jobs.

Planning Changes in Ontario

A number of recent bills (108, 138 and 197) looked at reforming the planning and development processes in Ontario. The goals of these bills were to make it easier for projects to move forward by reducing approval timelines and other "red tape" that delay development. Although the timeline reductions are a concern for municipalities and community groups, the introduction of "community benefit" charges under the planning act has the potential to be a tool to build community infrastructure.

"Community Benefit" Charge Thresholdxiv		
Municipality Type	Threshold of Property Value	
Single Tier Municipality	15%	
Lower Tier Municipality	10%	
Upper Tier Municipality	5%	

In many ways, these "community benefit" charges are an enhancement of traditional development charges, which will allow for community amenities (libraries, community centres, long-term care and public health facilities and parkland) to be supported so long as the development justifies their inclusion. Having received Royal Assent in September of 2020, municipalities are now in a place to begin implementing these development charge changes.xivi

Prior to passing a "community benefit" charge by-law, local councils will be required to pass a strategy framework which will look at the current demand for community amenities and how anticipated development and growth will impact those services and amenities. This plan would include items like anticipated upfront capital costs as well as future maintenance and infrastructure costs, other sources of funding being used to support this infrastructure, and an examination of how existing residences use these new community amenities. The benefits can be charged based on the land value of the proposed development with municipal structure determining the percentage threshold that can be assessed.

This new charge -- although a benefit to communities -- does create some language confusion in Ontario. In many ways, the new "Community Benefit Charge" is just a shift in language and is an enhancement of previously existing development charges. Due to the language being what it is, it is quite possible that municipalities and elected officials will not distinguish between these charges and the broader community benefits and wealth building approaches.

Thinking ahead, municipalities of all sizes will need to adapt to these new circumstances and tools that are available to them. The key is to have a vision and not accept the lowest level of requirements. Building forward and leveraging best practices and knowledge from other communities can create a foundation of expectations for communities to build for the future.

London ON - The London Children's Museum (LCM) is developing and designing a new location to serve the growing demand for its services in London, Ontario. This project involves renovating one story of a vacant factory and a rooftop garden. It is estimated that this project would cost between \$7 to 10 million. Throughout the development of this project, the LCM has been intentional in how it integrates and responds to community needs in both design and implementation, understanding that their impact is not only in delivering programs, but in how they build their facility.

> With the leadership of the Children's Museum, they are seeing their work generate impact beyond their walls. Thanks to the willingness of their contractor, Michael Clark Construction, this project is promising to demonstrate the impact that smaller scale developments can have across a community and region. Through this project, they will look more deeply into how requests for proposals (RFPs) could be structured in ways that yield social outcomes and increase benefits to the London community.

Best Practices in Community Wealth Building

Community wealth building strategies have a number of tools in their proverbial toolbox. For many of these tools, like community benefit agreements and social procurement strategies, the best practices are well established. The challenge is bringing them together and implementing them in a local context.

These practices require shifting from the status quo and going beyond statutory minimums which can be a barrier in smaller communities. The question becomes what incremental steps can be taken to improve and embed these practices as a new normal. Many communities are already adapting some or all of these best practices. The key is to track and quantify the good work that is already occurring, so the story of a community and a project can be told from beginning to end.

Identifying and Addressing Community Interests and Concerns:

Many community wealth building processes come together due to the longstanding organizing and activism in a particular neighbourhood, while others are a condition of a project. By nature, each project is unique, which coincides with the challenges of each community.

Having a clear understanding of specific community interests, issues and concerns is important. This is often easier to identify through the relatively tight knit nature of smaller communities by leveraging personal networks, tapping "plugged in" community agencies and the gathering of key information directly can be a relatively straight forward process. One item that community benefit processes in smaller communities do need to be aware of is the need to break out of their traditional circles for identifying and addressing concerns. For marginalized and/or low-income communities, development can signal displacement, a rising cost of living, environmental harm, or other disruptions to ways of living. Having active and authentic representation from the community ensures that the true concerns from the communities at risk are being met and social issues can be addressed.xlvii

The benefit of a robust community engagement process for developers and government is that it allows concerns to be dealt with before shovels hit the ground. When the community is able to work with developers and municipalities from the beginning and have their concerns met, it limits the role of community resistance and potential litigation to resolve disputes in the future.xiviii Having buy-in from the community eases the process of development over the long-term.

Transparent, Inclusive, and Accessible Development:

This "buy-in" is created by building trust through ensuring the process and those carrying it out are acting in a transparent, accountable and inclusive manner. Cynicism around development is often in response to empty promises and perceived backroom deals that meet the standards outlined in legislation, but do not meet the test of those impacted.* A formalized process that puts the residents rather than developers at the centre of the work shifts this paradigm.¹ Although planning and development processes are formalized, resident engagement is often an afterthought with plans being finalized and dictated to the community as they look for a rubber stamp.

Instead, by using 'human centred design principals', the development process can ensure that everyone wins. In successful development processes, the community is actively engaged from start to finish and their feedback is actively used to improve the outcomes of the project. The community is engaged in meaningful ways through a variety of mechanism: formal coalitions or committees, community consultations, public forums, information sessions, and newsletters. In addition to consulting with the community in a variety of ways, the process should ensure that the engagement is a two-way street, where ideas are heard and taken into the process, so a broad range of concerns are addressed before the project begins and throughout its construction. III

Community benefit agreements formalize this process by creating or empowering a community-based entity to formally have a seat at the table. Whether this formalization needs to occur on every project is debatable, but ensuring that local and impacted community groups have a clear voice and influence in the process is vital. This process features community members and can involve government, business, labour, advocacy groups and other stakeholders. IIII

It is not necessarily about the number of people engaged, but rather the quality of the engagement that matters. Every community should strive to ensure that benefits are identified within geographic boundaries, using census information or other community data. and through engagement of marginalized and selfidentified groups.liv

Meaningful, Measurable, and **Accountable Benefits:**

The transparent process to identify community concerns that can be mitigated through community benefit culminates in measurable and accountable outcomes along with a framework for their reporting. Fundamentally, the community benefit should try to answer the question, "Does it help solve a problem being faced in the community?" Whether these problems are big (like racialized unemployment) or small (like more greenery on the side of streets) they can look very different depending on the social, economic and environmental needs of a particular community. What is needed is commitment to specific targets and objectives that can be reported on publicly.

These commitments must be measurable and meaningful to the community. Through a transparent, accountable process, the terms are concrete

with realistic deliverables, timeframes, monitoring requirements, enforcement mechanisms and reporting schedules.[™] For large projects, these commitments should be legally enforceable, but in the cases of smaller communities and projects, extra legal requirements may be too burdensome. That is where shifting standard tender processes and culture within communities becomes important to ensure the inclusion of benefits and accountability back to the community. Ivi

Standardized Data Collection:

Robust and systematized data collection is a vital part of any community benefit approach. As mentioned above, ensuring that benefits are measurable is key to determine the success of an initiative in improving the state of a community, beyond any new infrastructure being built. Depending on the scope and nature of the project, data that is collected can be shared responsibly with the community to enable monitoring, allow for accountability and to facilitate continuous improvement. In many cases, some data is already being collected in municipalities, but not aligned to particular projects, like tree planting or employment services. Shifting this collection to projects does take time and effort, but resources like the Community Employment Benefit strategy funding from the federal government enables this.

Beyond specific communities, it is hoped that standardized data collection could be established across municipalities. This is where organizations like AMO or FCM could come in to establish common standards for tracking so that all municipalities can support this work. Elements could also be tracked through the Ontario College of Trades which could monitor training pathways onto infrastructure projects.



City of Windsor - Neighbourhood Small Business Grant:

A partnership between a local United Way and the Small Business Centre in Windsor-Essex.

Businesses that open storefront commercial spaces in targeted, amenity-constrained neighbourhoods in Essex County were eligible for a \$5,000 grant.\(^{\vii}\) These businesses were required to partner with the community to provide benefits to the neighbourhood beyond their physical space.

A success story of this initiative was a bookkeeping and financial service organization that provided free tax filing services to low income residents on Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program, free bookkeeping to a local resident committee, and three free budgeting workshops for the community as a part of a broader community capacity building series.^[viii]

Types of Community Wealth Strategies Typical for Small and Mid-Sized Communities

There are a wide range of benefits that communities and municipalities can strive to achieve through a community benefit strategy. As mentioned above, these should align with identified community needs, but also create opportunities to enhance existing elements and build on existing work. These benefits require collaboration between developers, governments, training organizations, community, educational institutions and the broader public, which will take time and effort to build. This process can be expedited by ensuring a transparent, meaningful and measurable process is undertaken, partnerships are built and identified needs are met.

Workforce Development:

One of the most common components of many community benefits is a workforce development provision. Workforce development fits into broader community strategies, but leverages the project to train individuals within high demand career areas that offer decent work to create a pipeline of talent into a specific industry in local communities.

What this looks like often varies widely on different projects and communities. The most common workforce development activity is supporting apprentices in the skilled trades. As most projects require construction and national shortage of skilled trades persons

is a present issue, the logical connection is to use these projects to train the next generation of these workers.

For a large project, it is easy to visualize how workforce development can occur, as hundreds, if not thousands of workers are required and it can take years to complete. For smaller communities and projects, more creative solutions are required. Educational institutions, labour unions and their training centres, workforce and community development agencies, community groups and the like, will have to come together to align their work. This will likely require linking a number of smaller projects together and structuring the recruitment and training of cohorts of trainees in a more flexible manner.

Setting clear and reportable targets for hiring, training and mentorship enables a community to plan its future workforce. Agencies can ramp up recruitment from key demographics, and education and awareness programs can support students, etc. For the project developer, workforce development creates future

talent recruitment channels while residents in identified communities have access to improved opportunities. 1x The municipality itself wins by supporting individuals who will be able to find good paying work.

City of Markham - Markham Vacant Building Revitalization for **Affordable Housing and Job Training:**

A partnership between Blue Door Shelter, a construction social enterprise called BuildingUp and Parks Canada.

A number of vacant building were taken over by Parks Canada when the Rouge Valley National Park was established. These houses are now being renovated by construction trades trainees from BuildingUp who are learning skill trades. Blue Door Shelter staffs these homes as transitional affordable housing for individuals and families coming out of shelters. Parks Canada has provided 20 years of rent-free occupancy. iix

Improved Community Infrastructure Use:

Additional value for a community, beyond the replacement of existing infrastructure, can be unlocked by wrapping a community benefit process around a project. We have all heard the story of a playground being built and going unused because it was not wanted or needed by the community. Getting robust direct input from residents can improve a project aesthetically, allow for testing related to the functionality of the design and exploration of new potential uses, and create buy-in before a shovel hits the ground.

Infrastructure should also strive to create space in communities. It is not just about constructing a road, a building or a park, it is about how that space can be activated and by which people. Is it a vision crafted by a largely affluent group of bureaucrats, planners, politicians and developers or is it a vision of the children, youth, parents, and seniors who live in that community? Even the naming of these places can be strengthened by engaging the community, ensuring that all members feel welcome and safe when using these spaces. Improved infrastructure will encourage civic pride, ownership and use of a space. By ensuring that benefits are met, it will help to move the needle on social issues.

Town of Antigonish - The People's Place:

The Antigonish Town and County Branch of the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library in Nova Scotia.

Following extensive consultation with the community to replace the original library from 1947, the Antigonish Town Library is now home to a wide range of environmental features: solar panels to power the Community Access Program or CAP site—lights, computers and offices, and the first off-the-grid CAP site in Canada. An additional \$200,000 of locally produced art was added to the facility to make it a warm and inviting location for the community. [xi]

Living Wage Ontario Network:

A province-wide network of municipalities and organizations that are advocating for living wages in their communities.

The network and local partners, including municipalities, not only calculate living wages in their particular communities but also provide supports and recognition to businesses that implement these policies. |xii|

Ensuring Decent Work:

Ensuring that projects and their outputs create good paying and decent work in communities is important. Community benefits are not just about ensuring that workers building the project are paid well and treated fairly, it is also about ensuring those in the supply chain and those workers who will be working in the finished facility (if applicable) are able to support themselves and their families. Ixilii

Studies of worker happiness, productivity and overall business success can be linked to increased worker security through the transition of employees to more stable and long-term employment opportunities. Living wage provisions that are linked to inflation, enabling unionization of the workforces, ensuring temporary or seasonal employment staff are protected and treated fairly, and transitioning temporary or contract employees to full time roles, are all elements to ensure decent work before, during and after the project.

These are all elements of building strong and resilient communities. By ensuring that the projects and the infrastructure that is built facilitates decent work, you are helping strengthen local businesses and build the local economy for the future.

Environmental Benefits:

There has been a growing focus on climate action, which looks at the climate crisis through a human rights lens and focuses on communities most vulnerable to climate impacts. Ixvi Community benefits can help to mitigate some of the negative environmental impacts of development by leveraging training opportunities to reskill people and retrofit buildings, implement best building practices in construction, and support sustainable projects in the community. Ixvii

For some community benefits projects, environmental benefits can include protecting and enhancing the ecosystem around the project: planting native species, minimizing noise, dirt and debris from construction, and investing in local parks and natural areas. For other projects, mandating sustainable and green building practices (like LEED or other green building certifications (xviii) should be used when developing the project, but can be incorporated in any community benefits project like building community centres, renovating housing, or other projects that positively affect the community. These green strategies can be linked to workforce development, so that local and marginalized workers will have the experience and benefit of working in the green economy and can bring those skills to future projects.

Kingston ON - Workplace **Inclusion Charter:**

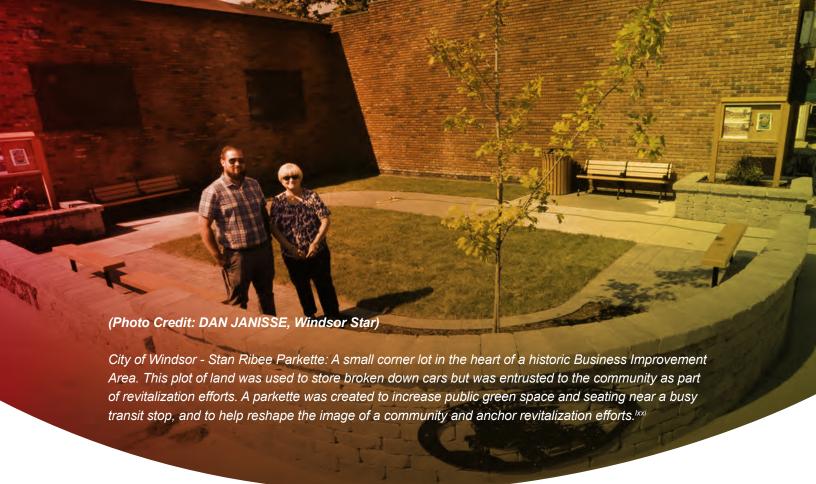
In 2019, the City of Kingston, in partnership with KEYS Job Centre, launched a Workplace Inclusion Charter with the aim of helping to guide local businesses in creating and upholding inclusive workplaces. The pilot phase of the Charter focused on newcomer inclusion in the workplace, engaging over 30 local employers. In 2020 -- building on the success of the pilot project -- the project's focus was expanded to include practices for immigrants, racialized people, Indigenous people and people with disabilities in the workplace. These groups are the focus of inclusion strategies because they continue to experience systemic barriers to employment, high rates of unemployment and underemployment, and disproportionate representation in low-pay and low-status jobs. Ixv

Supporting and Encouraging Local Economic Growth and Small Businesses:

One of the most common complaints about major infrastructure projects are its impacts on local and small businesses. Residents and customers cannot as easily reach businesses or municipal services (like public transit) due to closed streets, as an example. Construction disrupting access to businesses is sometimes unavoidable, but minimizing the project impact on local businesses is vital. Clear communication, impact mitigation and financial supports are some tools that can be utilized to support businesses that are negatively impacted by a project. Beyond just mitigating disruptions, community benefit plans can include leveraging local small business and innovation centres, business improvement areas, community improvement plans and incentives for new enterprises to start up. As an example, the Gordie Howe International Bridge in Windsor/Detroit is supporting businesses on both sides of the border. xix

At the same time, anchor institutions and municipalities can directly support these businesses through social procurement. Local governments and institutions are already buying local in many cases. What is needed are transparent tracking of expenditures, and clear pathways for businesses to bid and coordinate their purchasing power across institutions in new ways.

An emerging tool that is used by municipalities and anchor institutions is building a local vendor supply list. The City of Toronto has a relatively straight forward process that allows for local and other businesses and social enterprises owned and operated by equity seeking population to be preferred vendors for a wide range of goods and services under certain purchasing thresholds.1xx This removes administrative burden for businesses and expedites procurement for institutions, while ensuring that municipal dollars support local businesses.



Surplus Land Use:

Many projects do not productively utilize 100% of the land for development. Thinking about how that land can be put to productive use creates a world of possibilities in communities. Whether it's a large piece of land like in the Jane and Finch community, where a community centre is to be built, or affordable housing built in Hamilton on surplus land near LRT routes, Ixxii to small streetchanging projects like a surplus lot transformed into a parkette or community garden, to the naturalization of that piece of land to encourage wildlife and flood mitigation, communities and residents impacted by the project need to think critically about every inch of land and how benefit can be gained from it - whether

Legacy Funds:

A piece of infrastructure can be a legacy, but is the project going to create burden for the community? The long-term impacts – such as light pollution, traffic congestion, poorer air quality – are not always clear when a project first begins. Those impacts need to be questioned to determine how they will be offset.

Setting aside funds now to mitigate any potential medium- or long-term effects is something

to consider. Whether a fund is set aside at the time of construction or revenues generated are earmarked to mitigate specific impacts of a project, a legacy fund can ensure that the

fund can ensure that the people impacted by the project are not facing undue burdens.

Lakeshore ON -Belle River Wind Legacy Fund:

A 40 tower wind turbine project which now only generates clean energy and created 200 construction jobs. Belle River Wind is bringing strong economic benefits to the Lakeshore community, including more than \$10 million over 20 years in property taxes and community benefits. \$6 million dollars has been committed to the Town of Lakeshore as part of a long-term Community Benefit fund to support education and other initiatives. bxxiii

public or private.

Conclusion

The possibilities outlined in the pages above are by no means an exclusive or exhaustive list of strategies to create community benefits or wealth building in rural, small and mid-sized communities. The key is for each community to find the right formula that works for them in a way that adds value and enables the start of a conversation. The examples, ideas and processes outlined here will need to be "right sized" for needs and challenges of particular communities, while success stories can be held up to support local advocacy efforts to inspire specific actions.

What is most important to understand is that for a small upfront investment in a community, the broader social value that is created beyond infrastructure and development will produce savings and community wealth that will compound into the future.

As communities look to recover from COVID-19, and build more inclusive and equitable economies, it is clear that the old ways of doing things will not work. Innovative thinking, building new partnerships and listening to the needs of people will be vital to ensuring that the recovery is inclusive and long-lasting. Creating community wealth by leveraging tools like community benefits not only build communities, but people as well.

Mike Cardinal - Chair, Windsor-Essex **Community Benefits Coalition -**

"Benefits balance burden."

Community Benefits and wealth building approaches are designed to lift the human and local impact of hosting a major development. It helps bring balance. Often the people closest to the impact have the best ideas about meeting the needs of the impacted community.

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The following partners support the principles of community wealth building outlined in this report:























































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