

United Way
of Canada



Centraide
Canada

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WELCOME INTRODUCTION

Thank you so much for inviting me to this conference and for that kind introduction. It is a great pleasure and honour to be here with you today for this exhilarating exchange of ideas. Over the course of my career, I have had the good fortune to work along side many public servants who have demonstrated commitment, passion, drive and an eagerness to change society. It is always a pleasure to work with people who share a commitment to the public good.

Today, I have a sense of urgency. I can't wait for the Ottawa Senators to win the Stanley Cup!! But seriously, I do come to you today with a sense of urgency.

The work in which you are engaged and the actions which emerge from that work – this dynamic cycle of policy, partnership and social change is critical to our future, to our collective well-being. I believe that the public service is vital to the health of our society, that the people in this room have the capacity to be the most potent force for good that we have.

The voluntary sector is strong and has enormous impact and influence, but in an effective partnership with the public service, I believe we can move beyond the idea of the social safety net, beyond the idea of just catching people when they fall, and toward the idea of proactively building the type of society we want for ourselves, our families, for our children's children.

To quote an old Chinese Proverb, "One generation plants the trees; another gets the shade." So let me begin by applauding your individual and group contributions to this collective endeavour of creating a little more shade for our children.

Many others at this conference, and just now Minister Toews, have underscored the obstacles and challenges that you face, that the country faces. It seems overwhelming. How do we respond to the societal changes taking place, the expectations of the public, scepticism or apathy, competing priorities, or good ideas we can't quite find the resources to implement as fast as we would like? So we have a choice – be overwhelmed or creatively move forward. It reminds me of the motto of OUTWARD BOUND: "If you can't get out of something, get into it."

FOUR PRINCIPLES

Today, I would like to explore four principles which I believe can help us work more effectively together and to our collective benefit.

I know that the devil will be in the details, but we need to get the principles right at the outset. And I believe that we can find common ground in principles that transcend partisan politics, our different sectors, or particular interests.

The four principles I am proposing are:

1. Working to obtain the highest possible quality of life for all our citizens;
2. Making informed decisions and choices;

3. Finding the energy to move forward, together, one step at a time, starting now; and
4. Identifying, exploring and celebrating our interdependencies.

So, a few thoughts about each of these. First -

CHOOSING QUALITY OF LIFE – perhaps this is our overriding purpose, so let's just pause and think for a moment.

How many of you have had some stress or a period of the blues at some time in the past year?

Look around the room. We all have shelter, and we are all very well fed. We are employed, and we are pretty well paid for our time. And yet, none of us is immune to stress – not enough hours in the day, too little sunshine in the winter, people depending on us, new mandates that are outside our personal control, whatever the case might be. And stress, we now know, is one of the biggest factors contributing to our health care costs.

Now, let me ask each of you to imagine that when you next check your email, there is a little announcement from your boss. Beginning immediately, you are asked to work 11 hours a week less. This year, your vacation time is going to go from three weeks to six weeks. And you are invited to register your kids in the new child learning centre that is opening a block from your office.

Would you be able to wait until dinner to share this news with your family? And imagine your surprise when your spouse tells you the same thing happened at his/her office. And then your phone rings. And it's your sister, who has been staying with you with her two small children because she was unable to find either daycare or a job for the past year – she is calling to say she just got a job and is moving out.

Just imagine your head hitting the pillow at the end of that day. I feel better already, don't you? Our collective stress levels just went down.

Policy is about choices. It is about deciding how we will live. This little scenario we just walked through together is no joke. Nor is the solution out of the question.

Many countries have 5 to 6 weeks of paid vacation per year – not two or three. The average Dane has 11 more “free” hours in their week than we do. Belgium implemented a policy to redistribute work so that more people were employed and fewer are over-worked. Their civil servants were able to take a 10% pay reduction, while reducing their work hours by 20%. The Netherlands did something similar, and today, on average, they work 3 months less a year than the Americans.

Not surprisingly, according to the researchers, this has been very popular. The governments are happy – their tax base increases from higher employment, their social assistance costs go down, and individuals are healthier and more productive on an hourly basis. The former Dutch Prime Minister said, “We are not aiming to maximize our GNP. Rather we are seeking to attain a high quality of life, a just, participatory and sustainable society that is cohesive. We like it that way.”

A high quality of life. A society that is just, participatory, sustainable and cohesive. I think we might like it that way too.

George Washington Carver once said that how far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these.

Every life contains a series of critical transitions: emotional and material changes in early childhood, moves in and out of school, starting work, leaving home, marriage, perhaps divorce, beginning a family, changing jobs, losing jobs, looking after parents, retirement. Few people sail through all these stages smoothly. Each stage has risks. And if things don't go well for you in one stage, your degree of risk goes up in the next. This means that we need to provide not only safety nets at each stage, but springboards to offset earlier disadvantages.

We are here today, as the pivotal generation designing the policies and programs and actions that will shape the sort of Canadian society that our grandchildren will live in – and their world will resemble our grandparent's world very little.

So the example I gave earlier focused on improving the quality of life for public servants.

Now, what if our primary goal was to improve the quality of life for all citizens? Looking back over my career, that has been my primary goal driving all my work. I believe it is also the primary goal of government. **You** more than politicians. This is your sacred trust. Why? – You are the stabilizing, consistent ingredient in the important partnership between elected leaders and public servants. I believe the federal government has been retreating in this regard in recent years through program cuts, downsizing, right sizing, decentralizing, etc.

So more of the burden has fallen back upon the community and voluntary sector to respond and we in the United Way see its negative impact on the quality of life of individuals & agencies each day. So the demand and opportunity to marshal our collective capacity and energy is before us. It is in our mutual best interest to work together along with business, labour and the voluntary sector to create policies and programs that build the society we want.

Now, to the second principle, making informed decisions, which I think of as **WONKS WITH EVIDENCE**.

I have heard that in the 50s, the students at Harvard divided themselves into wonks, preppies and jocks. Wonks were the studious ones who were obsessive about the details. Wonk is apparently an acronym for With Ot Normal Knowledge.

My interest in effective public policy creation is not new. But my understanding of what policy wonks do is evolving. Theoretical research, statistics, environmental scanning, trends forecasting, advice, consultations, communications, program design and implementation, program evaluation – these are tasks for which so-called normal knowledge would probably be inadequate. “Normal” knowledge is often organized by speciality or based only on our own limited set of experiences, but we are here because the complexity of our challenges is such that we need to think outside our traditional portfolios, to manage our shared interests and priorities horizontally.

But thoughtful policy development needs to be partnered with action. The thinkers need to sort out the priorities, find a way to communicate them to the doers, and help get things done. The doers need to communicate with the thinkers, and share what they have found out on the ground, in the trenches, and complete the feedback loop.

Let me go back to the principle. A high quality of life. A society that is just, participatory, sustainable and cohesive. What noble goals. But how will we know if we are succeeding? For a start, we need to measure the right things.

What we choose to measure reflects two things – what we value, and, more often, what is easy to count.

Our GDP has risen as poverty, insecurity and inequality have risen. Of course, everything is not about money. Psychosocial needs are as important as material ones. GDP makes no distinction between activities that bring benefits and activities that cause harm. Crime makes the GDP go up because we spend money on prisons. War makes it go up because we manufacture weapons. Cigarette sales boost our GDP by about \$10 billion a year. So, with this in mind perhaps we can measure our success or failure using a different stick.

For example, many people have worked together to develop the Canadian Index of Wellbeing – a tool to help us measure non-economic values such as security, health, equity, environmental quality, social and cultural cohesion, meaningful employment, access to nature and leisure. What if, in the same way as CEOs are evaluated based on their stock price, our politicians were held to account for how we were doing quarterly on the Index of Well-being?

You are all familiar with the voracious appetite that our health care system has for dollars. Roy Romanow spoke at our United Way of Canada – Centraide Canada national conference two years ago, and has repeatedly reminded us that all that money, even if it is well spent, doesn't make us healthy. Our health is determined by other things, such as stress. Roy's top-ten list for staying healthy is:

Number 10 – Live in quality housing but not next to a busy street;

Number 9 - Don't live in a ghetto or near a source of pollution;

Number 8 – Live in a neighbourhood where you can trust your neighbours and belong;

Number 7 - Don't lose your job or be unemployed;

Number 6 - Don't work in a stressful job where you have little decision-making authority;

Number 5 - Go to university;

Number 4 - Pick your parents well – make sure they are the type to boost your self-esteem and provide you with lots of stimulation. Your ability to learn, your behaviour and your health – these are shaped before you are six;

And number 3, 2 & 1 - Don't be poor. Rich people live longer and they are healthier.

Let me just focus for a few moments on number 8 – strong communities where people have a sense of belonging, and what we, at United Way, envision for the future and what we are learning.

In the United Way-Centraide movement alone, there are 200,000 + volunteers. They support their community through participation on local boards, chairing community campaigns, engaging in policy dialogues, and of course – through the GCWCC, contributing millions of dollars to causes that matter. From our 123 local United Ways-Centraides, last year, in 2006, we raised \$465M.

United Ways-Centraides work closely with a number of partners, including governments, Corporate Canada, organized labour and their local neighbourhoods, to give back to communities, to build healthier neighbourhoods and to improve lives, touching every Canadian in every walk of life in every demographic profile.

In 2003 we approved a new Mission and focus for our organization – a focus that shifted our traditional umbrella fundraising approach to one that centred on why we needed those funds and what impact the funds were having in our communities. Our work is only successful by working with others, in drawing upon the extraordinary talent and resources of people who care.

I think one of our key decisions to change our Mission and focus came with the realization that we can't and won't achieve our Mission without others. Our role then, indeed our goal as a Movement, is to encourage engagement in what matters most to our communities and the people who live in them.

Traditionally, we had asked individuals, companies and communities to give, to be generous, and to understand that there were others who were having problems. Then we distributed those resources to existing community organizations and agencies so that they could respond to the critical issues.

Well, like any year's health budget, that was sufficient in the past – not sufficient for today and the future. Why? Well, there was little or no consensus around the most critical issues. No matter how much money was raised there was never enough to satisfy all the demands. And even with new investments, the problems didn't disappear. And, we lacked the tools to measure change.

For example, we continually funded initiatives on mobility for people with disabilities but the underlying issue of integration and ensuring the full participation of people with disabilities was not occurring. Persons with disabilities were encountering barriers in our buildings, our social programs, community events and in the labour force. Now we are making significant shifts in our approach and with good results.

And that is where Wonks with Evidence, people without normal knowledge come in. This is where we need you. We all know that in the past decade, society has become more complex, faster, more interconnected. At the same time, there is a sense within the Voluntary Sector that their relationship with the federal government is less clear, in flux, less manageable and more distant. The irony is that today we believe we have more in common with you in serving the public & those in need than many other sectors, and we feel that, given our common purpose, we have much to offer if we can strengthen our relationship.

In the drive to be accountable, it is possible to err on the side of caution, to be so focused on tangible short term results that we can lose sight of the most important goals and values – the values which have drawn us all to public service in the first place.

There are three new Public Service Renewal Processes now underway – an external review under former Minister Don Mazankowski, an internal review that Margaret Bloodworth talked about yesterday, and a third, independent review being led by the Public Policy Forum. These follow in the footsteps of a number of similar processes over the past decade. Let's hope that they result in improvements and real change. If they do not, the fact remains that you will still want to serve the public to the best of your ability.

United Way's belief is that the revitalization of the public service must be based on an enhanced relationship with citizens, organizations, and businesses representing the broader society. It is more imperative than ever that we all work cooperatively to achieve long-term results around some of the tougher problems facing society in Canada & globally.

Like so many other organizations and institutions, we are finally coming to terms with horizontality, recognizing that finding solutions requires a new way of working, one that brings all parties together – labour, community, advocates, citizens, governments, business - with a shared goal of making a difference. We identify the most pressing issues, and together, we gather at a common table to develop solutions.

Where previously, UW volunteers and staff made allocation decisions based on what they felt were good investments, we now have a different approach. In community after community, we are now gathering groups and partners together to collectively make decisions to build a longer term vision for their community. From this longer term perspective emerges a series of strategies and priorities for all funders and interested parties on which to collectively work. This is our new value proposition. For us it is not about how much money we raise but rather the measurable, demonstrable improvement in societal conditions that counts. Don't get me wrong, the dollars are important, but raising the money is what we do, not who we are and what we stand for.

This is our new “mantra” – Community Impact.

With the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, other academic, research and community partners we have also developed a series of Neighbourhood Indicators of Success against which we are now going to use to measure our investments in the years ahead – The NEW United Way in Action.

So to recap the principles, I've covered improving our quality of life, and using the best evidence at hand from all sectors.

And now for the third, and possibly most difficult; finding the **energy to move forward**, one step at a time.

There are many examples of how the public service has contributed to Canada's strengths, through innovative initiatives. During the post-war period and especially in the 60's and 70's, the role of government expanded. It moved into more and more fields in which the voluntary charitable sector also worked. We welcomed this infusion of resources which resulted in joint programs & initiatives and the development of policies that assisted individuals, strengthened agencies & improved life in local communities.

The social "experiments" of the 1970s brought us official bilingualism, multiculturalism, science and technology investments, human rights and citizenship commitments – it was a time of real leadership from government and the public service. And it would be hard to imagine our lives today without them.

I would argue that this is exactly what is now required – another period of innovation. Quite recently, 5 branches within 3 departments decided that working in their individual mandates was not doing the job. The National Secretariat on Homelessness, the Office of Learning Technologies, the National Literacy Initiative, Canada's Drug Strategy, and the Crime Prevention Strategy joined up and asked how they could help stressed out communities develop their own vision and priorities. Now think about it. Five separate branches, some who had never collaborated within their own departments, pool funding to ask individual Canadians to decide what is best for them!

Brilliant – Courageous – Visionary!

The result: a unique learning initiative called, Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC). ANC is taking place in five communities across Canada: Surrey, BC, Regina, Toronto, Halifax and Thunder Bay. Public servants are not only monitoring but are in fact active participants – learning along with these communities and their partners; interacting with other stakeholders. Funded by the government, the effort is being coordinated by the United Way-Centraide in partnership with the Caledon Institute of Public Policy, the Tamarack Institute – which specializes in citizen engagement, and the National Film Board.

The element that is vital is *action*. We cannot remain passive in the face of the issues that confront us all. Since we have a common objective - a better life for all Canadians, then we have to act on it. So together we need to build social consensus, to assist those with special needs, to promote policies that empower citizens, to engage them and draw out their voices and connect them with other stakeholders.

When the public service is bold and energized and responds to this call for action, we can work together to serve new Canadians, seniors, the next generation, the working poor, and those who are falling through the cracks.

Canadians are yearning for, would value, and be proud to describe their federal public service as brilliant, courageous and visionary. So what if that was your objective! Last weekend Margaret Wheatley, an influential thinker and writer addressed 500 of our UW leaders and challenged us to be more focused on relationships, caring for one another and the community. She shared a thought that really resonated with our leaders. She built upon a popular saying

which many of us know, “it is better to ask for forgiveness than permission”. But her twist was, “Proceed until Apprehended”.

I believe most Canadians’ deeper hope would be for a public service that was organized, rewarded, expected and encouraged people to be innovative and problems solvers. Am I wrong?

I am worried that our current orientation towards accountability, transparency, micro-management, tighter administration, careful risk adverse behaviour is paralyzing your spirit and eating up valuable time, energy and talent. Time, energy and talent that ought to be devoted to the goal of serving the public, adding value and responding to society’s most pressing challenges.

Focus on the right things & respond to your deeper instincts and the level of the public’s trust in you will grow and respect in yourselves will increase.

**** Hannah Taylor story**

- At 5 years of age, Hannah sees a homeless man eating from a dumpster
- She asks why and is disturbed and saddened by the event
- Begins ladybug foundation
- Now 11, raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to help homeless people across Canada and around the world
- Started by taking baby jars and painting them red with black dots
- Key message – homeless may smell, have no teeth and be dirty but deep down they are just like you and me
- If you don’t want to give them money, give them a smile, say hi, give them a piece of fruit, a scarf or blanket in the winter
- One little girl who cares – raised enough money to recently open a 100 bed hostel next to the first homeless shelter she visited.
- THAT is acting on a conviction.

And finally, to my last point. To understand and communicate and celebrate our INTERDEPENDENCIES.

We do not act only in one moment in time. We are engaged in a lifetime of building our society. What must we do to see ourselves connected, one to the other and to the next, where we each have a stake in each other’s future?

Few Canadians, if asked what they expect of their government, are likely to respond by saying more rigorous risk management. They are much more likely to focus on ways to deal with those who are most at risk, poverty, literacy, the environment, homelessness, health, violence, addictions, crime, mental illness, loneliness; intractable issues that require long term focus. Your leadership on these is critical.

Like most of you, I think I have a good intuitive understanding of the effects of things like adequate housing or education on people’s health. But in fact, I have learned over time, my

intuition isn't enough. To affect important shifts in policy, and to get the active support of politicians and the citizenry, we need bold, stark evidence.

But we also cannot wait for absolute proof to be perfectly obtained before we act. And so we balance our need for evidence, while driving forward. That's not to say that we do not pause and evaluate the consequences of our decisions and deliberations. This is an important step in any process. It just cannot limit our ability to act.

In this particular respect, the Voluntary Sector is confronted with similar demands for more accountability and transparency and new ways of measuring our impact. As in the public sector, people don't want excuses, or middlemen or excessive administrative costs. But this is hardly the point. More importantly, they want to see that their donation makes a difference.

In the non-profit sector, we see signs of donor fatigue. Some organizations are experiencing real challenges in attracting volunteers and donors. You know yourselves, everywhere you turn, there is someone else asking for money; all good causes, all competing for your dollar. And yet, people want to make a difference.

So while we share the need to implement strategies around accountability, I try to resist losing my focus and concentrate instead on the real work at hand. On helping improve people's lives.

I'm sure in this room I am not alone – I work hard at not allowing necessary management strategies to distract me from or change my fundamental beliefs - in trusting in others, caring for those who need our help, seeking justice for all, and honouring and respecting the contributions of our partners.

I remember being amazed the first time I witnessed the excavations of Mayan ruins – where every four hundred years, the walls of the buildings were rebuilt; where building projects were initiated that would take several generations to complete. What was it about their sense of place and time that enabled them to think in terms of the children of their children's children? To dedicate themselves to completing projects begun by their grandfather's grandfather?

Canada continues to be one of the best places to live on the planet. We have achieved a high standard of living which we enjoy in a state of relative social harmony. We have achieved much in health promotion, in our educational system, in supporting our children and our seniors. As soon as we step outside of our country, we know how fortunate we are.

I think that we must continue to dream bold dreams. As the public service, you are blessed with a wealth of resources – a strong reputation, legal instruments, statutory tools, regulatory capability, capacity, authority and money at your disposal. We have to make the effort to build bridges between us, formally and informally to capitalize on our collective wealth and resources, in order to ensure that Canadian society continues to evolve to be the best that it can be.

As part of building these bridges, we need you to help inform and point the direction. Your perspective and understanding, your capacity for data gathering analysis is invaluable to us, as we attempt to deepen our understanding of the needs of our communities. And we hope you can find time to listen – to how we can work more effectively, to what we have learned in the communities where we live, to our ideas.

We need to invest time and money, over the long term, despite elections and regime changes.

And finally, in your capacity as concerned citizens, we look forward to continuing to build our relationship. Each year during the Government Workplace Campaign time, people light up with enthusiasm, they have fun, they push to achieve. The government workplace campaign is the most successful fundraiser in Canada, mobilizing more people with a greater variety of events and happenings across the country. And it all happens because of you, because you care, you care about each other and you care about each one of your communities. And we thank you for your support.

A high quality of life is a concept that goes far beyond the safety net for any individual. It is about living in a society that is just, participatory, sustainable and cohesive. Ideas of justice, participation, equity, sustainability, and cohesion are ideas about us as members of a group. I believe that we must rise to the challenge of communicating and celebrating those interdependencies if we are to succeed in our first goal – obtaining the highest quality of life possible for us all.

That may seem out of reach. But isn't that what dreams are all about – isn't it worth striving for? And I see here in this room a small group of thoughtful citizens committed to public service. And to quote Margaret Mead, never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.