



HRSDC



Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction



*“One Thing We Learned”
Newfoundland and Labrador’s Community Accounts
June 27, 2008*

On June 27, the learning partners involved in the Community-Government Collaboration on Policy gathered around their computers and telephones in 15 sites across the country to get an introduction to Community Accounts in Newfoundland and Labrador [www.communityaccounts.ca]. Community Accounts evolved from the province’s Strategic Social Plan and is an innovative information system which gives users at all levels a reliable source of community, regional and provincial data. Community Accounts provides information that would normally not be readily available, too costly to obtain or too time consuming to retrieve and compile.

The session was hosted by Penelope Rowe of the Newfoundland and Labrador Community Services Council. Presenters included:

- Alton Hollett, Assistant Deputy Minister (Economics and Statistics), Department of Finance
- Robert Reid, Director, Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency
- Doug May, Professor, Department of Economics, Memorial University
- Cory Giles, Senior Research Consultant, Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency

All are part of the team that conceived and developed the Community Accounts database and is now working on a provincial Market Basket Measure.

One thing Sherri learned from the presentation:

I was very impressed with the quality, depth and scope of the work and with the presentation itself. It struck me that this material is powerful partly because it has been developed by a government statistical agency along with colleagues from the university. The Community Accounts evolved from a methodologically rigorous process. The fact that a government body produces the numbers means that the methodology cannot be challenged on the grounds that it is inadequate or incorrect.

I also liked the fact that the information is so accessible to communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. It is also readily available to the public. In most cases, there is a

*Sherri Torjman, Vice-President,
Caledon Institute of Social Policy*



The Caledon Institute is the lead organization for the “Community-Government Collaboration on Policy” project.

Caledon’s ongoing mission is to assist in the development of sustainable, practicable social policy. Our interest in establishing a community of practice around

substantial charge for local data, which makes it out of reach for many communities and individual researchers.

There were two major substantive contributions that I thought were particularly valuable. The first is the distinction between home ownership and rentals, which has important policy implications in terms of support for affordable housing. The second was the inclusion of transportation, which is becoming an increasingly significant consideration in light of high fuel costs.

One thing Anne learned from the presentation: Webex presentations [<http://www.webex.com/>] are an interactive, inexpensive way to accomplish distance learning. Community Accounts offers an extremely rich and layered series of statistical reports for every community in Newfoundland and Labrador. The webex software allowed partners from across the country to really see and talk about this powerful community resource. We got a great introduction to both the Accounts and the software presentation tool.

One thing Marc learned from the presentation: I was generally impressed at the scale of the undertaking and the commitment of the development team to continually improve upon their work. I can't wait for the "Market Basket" research to surface!

I was particularly intrigued by the ability to perform specific queries and the resulting ability to track disinvestment in lopsided high-income communities.

The neighborhood *Santropol Roulant* is situated in a mixed commercial and residential area that has seen a fair bit of gentrification in the past years, particularly in the form of high-end condos being developed in abandoned textile buildings. The skewed income projections that followed this migration have resulted in the withdrawal of support by the province to the municipality and community organizations for work being done in poverty reduction, more specifically in front-line food security. Our community would benefit from a Community Accounts approach, and I will be

community-government collaboration grew from a number of previous initiatives. These included our work with Vibrant Communities to establish Policy Dialogues with government partners and subsequent Government Learning Circle initiatives.

Anne Makhoul, Principal Project Officer, Caledon Institute



Marc Nisbet, Meals on Wheels Director, Santropol Roulant



Santropol Roulant is a youth-led organization that lives its mission: to break social isolation and increase the food security of Montrealers living with a loss of autonomy. We

keep one foot in the world of daily front line services and the other in the realm of long term social change. Experimenting with ways to magnify our work, particularly through shared learning and peer exchanges around the policies that impact our membership is what attracted us to this innovative project. Our particular policy focus will be to track the reorganization of the provincial Healthcare Network (launched in that 2004 with bill 83), and find

sharing the information from the presentation with Montreal’s community foundation – the Foundation of Greater Montreal – that publishes “Vital Signs: Our Region’s Annual Check-Up.”

One thing Liz learned from the presentation:

The Community Accounts presentation provided an overview of the capacity of working collaboratively toward community outcomes driven by evidence and data. Understanding the complex nature of communities through publicly accessible evidence will be transformative to community organizations.

One thing Maria learned from the presentation:

I learned how useful it is to have an interactive presentation. Combining both Webex and Community Accounts was a great experience. CUISR, in partnership with the City of Saskatoon, is developing an indicator system and Community Accounts is a very useful model.

One thing Scott learned from the presentation:

I’d never thought of myself as an envious person until I saw the opportunities that knowledge can bring to an entire province. While I don’t have a research background, I can appreciate that accurate and timely information is critical to effective decision making. I have seen other mapping examples using data here in Alberta, however, none of them appear to be as robust and user-friendly as the system demonstrated

a relevant way to share this information with our peers in the “community care” sector in Montreal.

*Liz Weaver, Director,
Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction
(HRPR)*



HRPR is a cross-sectoral community planning table which has a strategic focus on poverty and the aspiration of making Hamilton the best place to raise a child.

*Maria Basualdo, Community Research Liaison,
Community-University Institute for Social
Research (CUISR)*



CUISR facilitates partnerships between the university and the larger community in order to engage in relevant social research. This work supports a deeper understanding of our communities and reveals opportunities for improving our quality of life. Community-government collaboration has been present in several CUISR initiatives including Monitoring Quality of Life in Saskatoon. CUISR engagement in this project contributes to rethinking the three Rs (research, relationships, and reflexivity) of Community Visioning.

*Scott Cameron, Manager, Social Planning
Department, The City of Red Deer*



Operating within a municipal context, the City of Red Deer Social Planning Department strives to support healthy child development, reduce inequalities associated with income and social status, and provide

by the Community Accounts group. It's a shame that this model of information dissemination using public data isn't the rule rather than the exception. We've recognized a shift toward greater public access to data and appreciate that more information is available free of charge through Statistics Canada. I'm still curious about the information available for very small communities. I wonder about the information available to very small communities when suppression rates are to 1000 or greater. Herein lies a social policy paradox: How can we gain the knowledge of our small communities without violating public trust and respect for the residents of that community?

One thing Caroline learned from the presentation: What really impressed me about the presentation was the enthusiasm, the openness and the flexibility of the government people. They were really interested in producing first-rate statistical material and information that could be concretely useful in practical ways to people who wanted to figure out how to solve problems. The pleasure they had in trying to make their material as useful as possible to the public made the presentation a joy. A true win-win situation – communities with greater capacity and government officials enjoying meaningful work.

leadership in the creation of inclusive social and physical environments. The Department achieves its outcomes through community development activities, allocation of municipal, provincial and federal resources, building capacity within the human services sector, social research and social policy development. As the Social Planning Department works closely within other municipal departments and with the provincial and federal orders of government, the opportunity to learn and collaborate with other communities exploring social policy development has been most beneficial.

Caroline Andrew, Dean, Social Sciences, University of Ottawa



The Centre on Governance is part of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ottawa. It defines itself as a research centre that works primarily with partners outside the university and is interested in the ways universities and university researchers can work with communities, civil society organizations and governments to work on the “wicked problems” of our society – those problems that require the combined action of a very large range of actors – public, private, civil society. We are therefore extremely interested in better understanding how to learn to collaborate across sectors and levels and how social policy development can best emerge from these processes of collaboration.

Copyright © 2008 by The Caledon Institute of Social Policy, ISBN 1-55382-307-9
1390 Prince of Wales Drive, Suite 401, Ottawa, ON K2C 3N6 CANADA
Phone: (613) 729-3340 Fax: (613) 729-3896
E-mail: caledon@caledoninst.org Website: www.caledoninst.org