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Quality of Life
CHALLENGE

Annual Report November 2008

Quality of Life CHALLENGE
Narrative Report
November 1, 2008

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1. Executive Summary

The Quality of Life CHALLENGE continues to be in a place of transition, but is moving forward. Phase Two of the CHALLENGE was launched in May at the Victoria Conference Centre with about 130 people in attendance. The CHALLENGE has more clearly re-articulated its purpose and work in a Strategic Priorities document. New partners are being approached and the Leadership Roundtable, formed in August 2007, has slowly increased its membership this year.

The CHALLENGE is contributing to poverty reduction in BC's Capital Region, most notably through human resource changes in the workforce. The CHALLENGE 2008 release of information on living wages contributed to an estimated 1,600 businesses' decisions to increase wages or benefits, impacting 3,200 employees. An additional 400 businesses made decisions to change HR policy or practice following other CHALLENGE information.

Despite these strong results, we continue to face difficulties as we move into this next phase. There has been a transition in leadership, both at the convenor organization Executive Director level, as well as in the strategy to hire a Director specifically for the CHALLENGE. Existing core financial supporters, including the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, are now reducing their funding in order to encourage new funders to step forward. This funding reduction was understood and planned for. Yet new supporters have been slow to commit. As we redefine our work for the coming three to four years, we are seeking a balance between the core collaborative work we know to be essential for deep and durable change, and shorter term projects which produce outcomes attractive to funders. Finally, as our organization engages a wider variety of partners, we sometimes find ourselves unable to take on particular issues or policies where some partners are in a conflict.

2. Engaging Business

The CHALLENGE transition team was clear that Phase Two should engage more of the business community because the priority areas linked directly to them; there was little work being done in this area; and the increasing labour market shortage was creating new opportunities to work with employers. To this end, a Coast Capital Savings representative took on the role as Chair of the Leadership Roundtable. Additionally, Coast Capital Savings contracted with outside communications professionals to support the engagement of the business community in the Quality of Life CHALLENGE and Vibrant Surrey. There are new business voices represented on the Leadership Roundtable, and we are building stronger relationships with business associations and networks.

In October 2008, the Quality of Life CHALLENGE along with the Greater Victoria Coalition to end Homelessness co-hosted the Canadian Business for Social Responsibility (CBSR) "Seeing is Believing" Tour in Victoria. Twelve business leaders spent half a day touring facilities and meeting with individuals to see for themselves the issues related to poverty, homelessness and adequate, affordable housing for families and what actions need to be taken. The program is based on a simple principle: you can't solve a problem without seeing it. The effectiveness of corporate community investment is increased as executives see and hear about the complexity of the problems first-hand and understand the implications and emerging opportunities for improved business engagement and support.

In June 2008, the CHALLENGE conducted a statistically significant survey of randomly selected businesses in BC's Capital Region to assess their impact. Results were very positive.

3. Making an impact: Improving quality of work and reducing poverty in the workforce

Of businesses who had seen at least one CHALLENGE tool, almost half (49%) reported the CHALLENGE had contributed to their decision to make an HR change. This suggests that the CHALLENGE has supported an improved quality of work for employees in almost 7,800 businesses.

The CHALLENGE employs a range of communications tools to reach businesses, including broad but shallow contact through media campaigns (e.g. Living Wage) and deeper connections through one on one contacts (e.g. Labour Market Dialogues). Both strategies are effective. The Living Wage made the greatest impact on the total population as it reached the most businesses. Yet for those employers who saw the tool, the Labour Market Dialogues Reference cards and presentations were more likely to generate action with over two thirds of those businesses reporting making an HR change.

Percent of employers who made HR changes based on CHALLENGE information on:

- Living Wage: 10% total business population, 35% who saw the tool
- Recovery: 2% total business population, 22% who saw the tool
- Labour Market Dialogues: 2% total population, 67% who saw the tool
- *the employer CHALLENGE (e-newsletter)*: 2% total population, 23% who saw the tool

4. Hey, have you ever heard of us?

With 18 media hits in 2008, the Quality of Life CHALLENGE is becoming increasingly well known (see attached media list). However, Quality of Life CHALLENGE communications tools are not always identified with the CHALLENGE. Only 16% of employers report being aware of the Quality of Life CHALLENGE, yet 39% of employers reported seeing at least one CHALLENGE communication tool. 49% of those who are aware of the CHALLENGE agree the CHALLENGE is making a positive difference.


Percent of employers who report seeing the following CHALLENGE communications tools:

- Living Wage 30% (media coverage)
- *the employer CHALLENGE* 9% (1511 subscribers, 9% of CRD businesses)
- Recovery booklet 7% (distributed to 34% of CRD businesses)
- Labour Market Dialogues Reference card 3% (distributed to 34% of CRD businesses)

5. Projects

5.1 Labour Market Dialogues

This project, now in its third year, focuses on reducing barriers to employment. It is funded by Service Canada and Vancity Credit Union. Using a Positive Deviance approach, this year's project is seeking to identify, document and understand the positive and innovative practices of local employers who have succeeded in hiring and retaining people experiencing scheduling and transition barriers to employment. As well, more in depth relationships are being formed with five businesses who are co-designing HR Pilot Plans. The plans address their hiring and retention needs, focusing on practices that address those barriers to employment. This pilot plan will be tested with a selected number of employers, and evaluated to produce concrete HR recommendations that are relevant and practical to local employers.



It's increased our awareness of the relationship between employers and employees, and the responsibility of the employer.

Last year, the Labour Market Dialogues developed a short reference card with tips to reduce barriers to employment. This year, over 5,200 reference cards were distributed (sent to just over 33% of businesses in the region). The survey found that 29% of employers who had seen the reference card felt it was relevant to their business. Many of those that had not heard of the Labour Market Dialogues were interested in learning more. During the survey, 105 employers requested more information about the project and were sent the reference card and a copy of the Phase II report. As of September 2008 over 2000 Phase II reports have been distributed.

The survey found that 2% of businesses in BC's Capital Region had made HR changes which the Labour Market Dialogues contributed to (an estimated 320 businesses). Many more businesses were sent the reference card (34%) than remembered seeing it (3%), but of those that did see it or had interacted with the Labour Market Dialogues in some other way, it made a deep impression. Over two thirds (67%) of businesses which were familiar with the Labour Market Dialogues said it had contributed to their decision to make HR changes.

5.2 Recovery

This one year project, funded by the United Way, supported employers and landlords to address the unique challenges that potential employees or tenants with addictions face in finding and maintaining shelter and work. Opportunities to contribute to the community and participate in meaningful activity are cornerstones of the recovery process. Many people with addictions identify housing and employment as the two most critical ingredients for successful recovery and a sense of community belonging. The Quality of Life CHALLENGE gathered information from existing research; conversations with landlords successfully housing, and employers successfully employing, people with addictions; and from discussions with people with past or current addictions. This information was compiled in two information guides (i) *Addictions, Recovery and the Workplace – a guide for employers* and (ii) *What do Landlords Recommend? Successfully housing people struggling with mental health or addictions*.

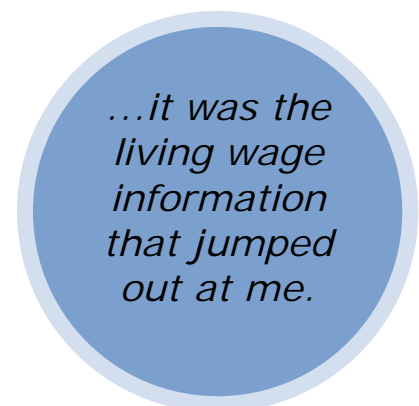
5,500 copies of the Addictions Guide were distributed to employers across the region through the mail. Further copies will be distributed in face to face meetings with employers by the Community Council business liaison. Service providers across the region have also requested copies of the guide for reference. The CHALLENGE employer evaluation survey found that 12% of employers who had seen the Addictions Guide felt it was relevant to their business. Many of those that had not heard of the Addictions Guide were interested. During the survey, 88 employers requested more information about the project and will be sent the Addictions Guide

Again, only a small percent of businesses who had been sent the Addictions Guide (34%) recalled seeing it (7%). The guide had contributed to 2% of businesses' decisions to change HR policies (an estimated 320 businesses). These businesses reporting on change were in health and social services, accommodation and food services and general services sectors, with five or more employees. It was a less effective tool than the Labour Market Dialogues overall, contributing to just over one in five (22%) of businesses' decisions to change HR policy among those who saw the Addictions Guide.. However, it was a less resource intensive project, and addressed a difficult topic. Even within the CHALLENGE collaborative, addressing addictions in the workplace was controversial and we hope that this project has laid the ground work for others to build on in the future.

A range of stakeholders reviewed the landlord tip guide and reported it was a relevant tool. Landlords housing people with mental illness or addictions need to be aware of existing supports and proven strategies and practices which build success for these vulnerable populations. A finalized version of the paper has been posted on-line and will be distributed more broadly through landlord networks such as through the Rental Owners and Managers Society of British Columbia and the Victoria Real Estate Board, as well as housing providers such as BC Housing.

5.3 Living Wage

In May 2006, the Quality of Life CHALLENGE released information about a local living wage for BC's Capital Region. The living wage dialogue encouraged employers to consider ways they could move towards a living wage by increasing wages and / or reducing costs of living for their employees. Following this release and a strategic communications plan, more than 500 businesses increased wages, impacting close to 900 low wage workers, now earning between \$1 to \$2 an hour more. The intention was to annually update the living wage, as new cost of living information and taxation became available; however, no direct funding was able to be secured to do so. Quality of Life CHALLENGE staff subsequently supported several other communities to develop their own living wage dialogues or campaigns. Working closely with a coalition in Vancouver, a revised calculation for a living wage was developed using the same categories and assumptions, so a provincial comparison can be drawn.



The 2008 Living Wage was launched on May 20 as an indicator of affordability in BC's Capital Region. With sky-rocketing housing costs, lack of affordable and available child care options, and wages that can't keep pace with costs, and labour shortages, employers and their employees are struggling. Employers have responded by increasing wages with average wages in this region now rising faster than

inflation. Nevertheless, with the costs of living among the highest in the country, employers are having difficulty attracting and retaining staff and the economic vibrancy of the region is being undermined. The Living Wage calculation is a recognized tool across Canada for stimulating dialogue and action around strategies to prevent and reduce poverty amongst employers and at a broad community level. In the Capital Region it serves to illuminate the costs of living, the income that is required to maintain a modest quality of life, and serves as a key indicator in tracking the affordability of our region.

The Living Wage launch was covered in the Times Colonist, NewsGroup, on C-FAX Radio's late afternoon show and on local news radio stations. There was additional coverage in September when the Vancouver coalition released their living wage, along with Victoria data in a report co-published by the Community Council. The release this year had lower media coverage than in 2006, with just under one third of businesses recalling seeing the information.

Despite lower coverage, the Living Wage information continues to be effective in contributing to employers' decisions to make HR changes, as measured in a survey of employers. The survey found that 10% of employers overall made HR changes based on CHALLENGE Living Wage information, or 35% of those who saw the information. Looking at the demographics more closely, businesses reporting on change were primarily in the general services (one in three) and health care and social services (one in five) sectors. Other sectors reporting on change include retail services, manufacturing, finance and insurance, and accommodation and food services. These businesses reporting on change mainly had a staff size of 5 to 25 employees. The message has had some staying power. Recently, one of the frontrunner mayoralty candidates in the City of Victoria reported CHALLENGE living wage data in a news interview, using CHALLENGE language and messaging months after the initial release.

This continues to be an area of interest for business in BC's Capital Region. Three quarters of all businesses surveyed reported believing that paying a living wage will help to keep employees.

5.4 "The employer CHALLENGE" e-newsletter

"The employer CHALLENGE" e-newsletter continues to be produced and distributed once a month to employers around the Capital Region. Each issue contains one case study of a local business with progressive human resource practices which reduce poverty in the workforce. Since January 2008 the distribution list has grown by 6%, to 1,577, just under 10% of businesses in the region. This was consistent with the survey data of those who had seen a copy of "the employer CHALLENGE". The survey found that 9% of businesses had seen a copy of "the employer CHALLENGE", 75% found it relevant to their business and 2% said it had contributed to their decision to make a human resource policy or practice change. "The employer CHALLENGE" is the longest standing business engagement tool for the CHALLENGE.

5.5 Workforce Housing Task Force

This is a new task force for the Quality of Life CHALLENGE. Phase One of the CHALLENGE focused on three interrelated priority areas: housing affordability, sustainable incomes and community connections. Phase Two activities have thus far been more focused on sustainable incomes. However, the CHALLENGE Leadership Roundtable is committed to reducing costs of living, including housing. This task force intends to use concerns about labour shortages as an entry point to engaging employers and labour market stakeholders into discussions on policy and strategies to improve housing affordability. The task force has met several times, has

distributed a survey to employers across the region, is identifying relevant policies they wish to inform, and is developing a strategy to engage employers and decision makers.

6. Governance and Leadership

The Leadership Round Table has fourteen active members including three business, three public sector and nine community organizations. Letters of agreement, detailing what each partner brings to the CHALLENGE, and what they need from the relationship, have been signed for seven of the members. A Terms of Reference has been created and approved which has helped to establish the group's sense of identity.

There continues to be some public confusion about the roles of the Community Council and the Quality of Life CHALLENGE. An attempt was made to give the CHALLENGE an external face by hiring a full time director for the CHALLENGE this year. It was hoped this person would raise interest and funds for the CHALLENGE. In hiring from outside the agency and community, there was a steep learning curve, including adjusting to a new culture to transfer skills to this situation. Unfortunately, resources are insufficient at this time to support a full time staff person, and the director resigned in October 2008. CHALLENGE coordination duties are being shared by Community Council staff as the Leadership Roundtable reviews their budget and funding options.

Poverty is becoming much more visible in BC's Capital Region, both as poverty worsens and as initiatives such as the CHALLENGE raise awareness about it. As poverty issues are taking a higher priority in public consciousness, more organizations are convening action on poverty issues with mostly positive outcomes that the CHALLENGE has discussed in earlier reports. The increasing number of collaborative groups working to address social issues in BC's Capital Region is leading to some overlap between issues, and this can cause tension as the different groups address different working styles and the desire to maintain a leadership role when seeking funding and public support. The CHALLENGE continues to engage and work collaboratively with these other groups, sometimes in a lead role, sometimes not. A recent alliance has been formed with the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness, who spoke at the launch of Phase Two and co-hosted the local *Seeing is Believing* tour with the CHALLENGE. Together, the two collaborations cover the continuum of housing issues and solutions for individuals and families who are homeless or in unstable, inadequate housing or who lack access to affordable housing in this region.



7. Strategic Planning

A significant accomplishment this year has been the reframing of the Quality of Life CHALLENGE for Phase Two in a Strategic Community Plan to 2011. Providing an overarching

vision, mission, context, principles and strategic priorities, this document has supported reaching out to new partners. The new Framework for Change (see attached draft) further articulates the CHALLENGE's beliefs, ways of working and goals. Both documents are expected to be living documents, updated regularly to respond to changes in the environment in which we work.

The working principles of the CHALLENGE still resonate and hold true. Several key strategies have changed.

- In Phase One, the CHALLENGE focused on the term “quality of life” rather than “poverty”, in an effort to engage a wider audience as poverty was not a concern for many in the region. As awareness of poverty has increased, the CHALLENGE is now being explicit about a focus on “poverty”. This raises a different, yet important, tension about the discomfort that many people who are living on low income have with the label “poor” or “poverty”.
- In Phase One, the CHALLENGE worked primarily on a local level, seeking to engage a wide number of citizens to leverage local political changes. While this strategy had some success, i.e. the Regional Housing Trust Fund, there are numerous inter-jurisdictional challenges (thirteen municipalities, two electoral areas, a regional district, a health authority, four school districts) and financial limitations to remaining focused on local politics. As the CHALLENGE more explicitly seeks to inform policies at a provincial level, we are working with businesses as a lever, given the private sector's greater influence with the provincial government.

8. Inclusion of People Experiencing the Issues

As all Vibrant Communities, the Quality of Life CHALLENGE has committed to including people with experience living on low income in the work to reduce poverty. At the outset of Phase One of the CHALLENGE, people living on low income advised the CHALLENGE that the best way to do this was to create and support a working group of people with this experience. Some members of the group would participate in other CHALLENGE groups. Others might only participate through the working group of experiential people. This group was formed and named itself the Community Action Team. A coordinator and facilitator, who also had experience living on low income, was contracted to support the group.

In 2007 a different co-ordinator was contracted from the Community Action Team. The facilitator focussed on developing the Poverty Experience and expanding the diversity of the team. The co-ordinator and facilitator are contracted for a maximum of a combined 30 hours per month.

The Community Action Team was active from 2003 to 2008, meeting each month for one evening over dinner. It developed and implemented an innovative tool, the Poverty Experience, to inform people about the daily realities of living on a low income. They developed an Inclusion Policy to clearly lay out practices to support including people with experience living on low income. Members of the Community Action Team contributed to various working groups throughout the CHALLENGE, providing valuable insight and advice. Community Action Team members also reported that their membership in the group had supported them to make changes in other organizations they were part of.

However, the group was limited in size; more than 10-15 members made meetings unmanageable and expensive due to transportation, food and child care costs. Despite

significant recruitment efforts the group remained fairly similar in background. Most were receiving some form of disability benefits. Most were not able to return to the workforce full time, if at all. Most were women, middle aged and white. The diversity of the group became a greater issue as the backgrounds became less consistent with the focus of the CHALLENGE, the working poor, people who were homeless, people with experience of addiction, families etc. Individual members of the group, some due to past experiences, were uncomfortable engaging further with people in greater degrees of crisis such as addiction or absolute homelessness. Developing Poverty Experience scenarios which were relevant to these issues was difficult. Further, as the CHALLENGE sought to provide opportunities for public speaking on the realities of living on low income, or to participate in other working groups, the number of people interested in or able to do so was small. Some members of the Community Action Team were very busy, and participating in the meetings was all that they were able to contribute to the CHALLENGE. Community Action Team members were also unhappy about the lack of tangible action the group was taking.

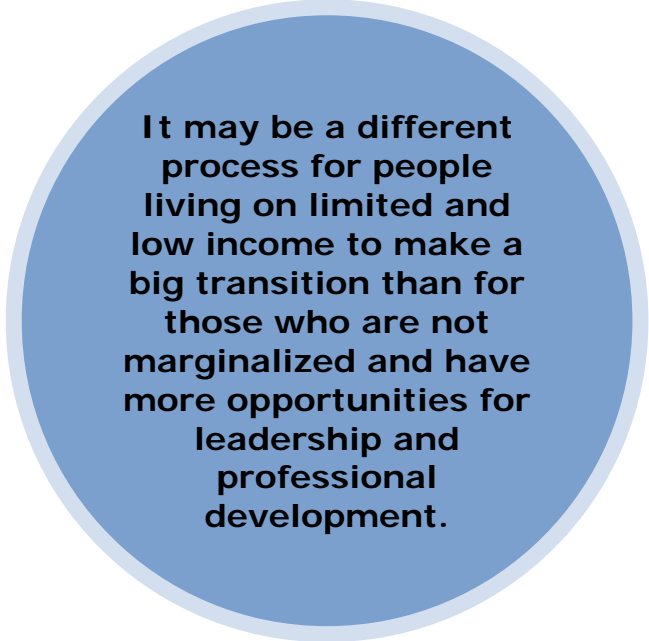
In 2007 to further encourage self-direction, each member of the Community Action Team had the opportunity to facilitate a meeting (with support if needed), take meeting notes and co-ordinate the food. The facilitator stepped back from facilitating twelve meetings to lead five meetings, supported members during another five meetings and was not present at all during two meeting to allow the group to practice self-organizing. Group members were asked to develop a new structure or vision for the Community Action Team during several meetings, and Community Council staff and the CHALLENGE coordinator took this feedback into account when proposing a substantial change.

Rather than be financially supported to meet twelve times per year, The CHALLENGE budget included four meetings with support from contracted staff. They were encouraged to take the initiative to meet as often as they liked, however, financial support would be decreased over the next year.

At the same time, a new group would be formed which would act as a hub with other groups of people with experience living in poverty not represented within the Community Action Team. Each member of the new group would be a person with the experience of living on low and limited incomes connected with a group of organization in the community. They would be responsible for informing this group/organization of the CHALLENGE and promote the Inclusion Policy. To increase the diversity of Poverty Experience stories and facilitators, each of the hub volunteers would recruit three to five other people and / or organizations with a similar experience, e.g. a hub member for new Canadians, people with mental health challenges, working poor people, people with substance use addictions, indigenous people, etc. These three to five people are seen as spokes of each group. The hub groups were identified based on those who were most likely to be living in poverty. In order to engage a more diverse group of people, the hub would only have a few Community Action Team members present. Others would be part of different spokes. People active in the hub and spokes would all be invited to participate in the CHALLENGE task forces and events, as well as to develop and facilitate further Poverty Experiences. It is proposed that hub members would participate as paid work, while other participants would be volunteers, compensated for costs and sometimes honoraria, as detailed by the Inclusion Policy.

The transition to this new model has been much slower than anticipated due to several significant factors that individually may not have made such a large impact. However, all together these have made the transition to this new model much slower than anticipated.

The size and scope of the new model was too ambitious for a one-year deadline. As a work plan was fully developed it was quickly realized that there were too many tasks for the two contracted staff that worked combined hours of 5-6 hours per week. Either two part-time jobs were required or a considerable decrease in outcomes was needed. Secondly, two new staff members were hired, a new director and a new supervisor who were unfamiliar with the Inclusion Project. Time was needed to build relationships, describe the history, revise the work plan while bringing people up to speed with the new model. Thirdly, some activities the two contractors had been participating in on a voluntary basis were now part of their paid work responsibilities. Both contractors have also experienced significant transitions such as working on a fixed schedule rather than throughout the week and being compensated differently for their time. For example, when one participated in a working group meeting as a volunteer, they were provided with an honorarium to cover lunch costs and reimbursed for transportation, totalling \$16. When participating on paid time, she now earned \$30 but was no longer paid for lunch or transportation. These adjustments all take time. Both contractors are working within their \$500 work exemption with BC Disability Benefits, and are also still living well below the poverty line, yet are working to reduce poverty. Working, as with volunteering, costs money for clothing, haircuts, lunches, special events etc.



It may be a different process for people living on limited and low income to make a big transition than for those who are not marginalized and have more opportunities for leadership and professional development.

Community Action Team members were extremely unhappy about no longer meeting monthly. Some members of the group had been attending meetings regularly for almost five years, and this was one of the most consistent activities in their lives. There was great personal pleasure to members from the meetings. It may be a different process for people living on limited and low income (who may have fewer opportunities to develop as leaders and to have their voices heard) to make a big transition than for those who are not marginalized and have more opportunities for leadership and professional development. One Leadership Roundtable member compared the transition for the CHALLENGE from Phase One to Phase Two, where some members of the Steering Working Group left the table instead of joining the Leadership Roundtable. For these folks, she suggested, it may have not been of much consequence – a feeling of “whew - one less meeting I have to attend” rather than fear of loss of opportunity. Upon reflection, it may be that part of what was seen as resistance from the Community Action Team to transition to a new model, was rather about members wanting to remain an integral part of the CHALLENGE and initially not seeing how that could be done. One interesting part of clarifying Community Action Team members’ new role was changing the language describing their function from “you could participate by” to “your responsibility will be”.

Finally, the proposed new Inclusion Project is more resource intensive than the Community Action Team, though expected to generate greater outcomes over time. However, as the CHALLENGE experiences resource constraints, it is difficult to expand spending in an area which will not deliver quick results and thus far has been unsuccessful in attracting other

funding. Despite these obstacles, the CHALLENGE is excited about the new direction of the Inclusion Project, and is committed to continuing along this path.

9. Provincial Partnerships: Vibrant Communities British Columbia

In British Columbia, three communities who have established poverty reduction initiatives as part of Vibrant Communities entered into discussions as to how they could work together to inform provincial public policy. In addition to the Quality of Life CHALLENGE, the other two initiatives are Vibrant Surrey and Vibrant Abbotsford.

A common thread amongst each of these community-based initiatives is the impact of policy on poverty. The Vibrant Communities of British Columbia (VCBC) group is examining the possibility of convening a Provincial Policy Roundtable on Poverty Reduction and Prevention. The objective of this group would be to identify policies that impact poverty in the province, prioritize those that are of greatest impact, and research and explore potential policy adjustments with the goal of improving the social conditions and economic outlook of our communities. How effective policy change will take place is a decision of the table. VCBC would offer the Government of British Columbia access to dozens of organizations working on poverty reduction now.

Members of the Leadership Roundtable have expressed concern about conflicts they may have in being associated with attempts to inform certain public policies. Some are funded by the provincial government and are concerned about future funding. There is not universal agreement about some policies, which, if the group moved forward with, might result in the loss of other partners, e.g. minimum wages. The CHALLENGE has chosen to begin building consensus on a policy or policies at the local government level but is still interested in working provincially as well.

10. Resources

The budget year for the Quality of Life CHALLENGE is from April 1 to March 31. Confirmed revenue for the current 2008-2009 fiscal year is \$239,552 and considerable in-kind support, including \$100,400 from the Community Council for the Labour Market Dialogues research funded by Service Canada. Total Quality of Life CHALLENGE expenses include \$ 239,552 to cover \$166,247 for personnel, \$ 61,722 for program and \$ 11,583 for administration and overhead.¹

As we understand that Vibrant Communities operates on a calendar year, which is covered by this report, we have provided our revenue in two tables: one on a calendar year, and a second on a fiscal year.



We know that working together is the most effective way to bring about lasting change in our social fabric.

¹ Contact the Quality of Life CHALLENGE for Quality of Life CHALLENGE second quarter Income and Expense Statement, April 1 to September 30 2008 (383-6166 or info@qolchallenge.ca) ⁴

Table 1: CHALLENGE Revenue 2008 (Calendar Year, Jan - Dec)

	<i>Cash</i>	<i>In kind</i>
Non profit	\$70,000	\$100,400
Private	\$50,860	\$9,000
Individual	\$2,800	
Public	\$2000	
Total	\$125,660	\$109,400

Table 2: CHALLENGE Revenue 2008-09 (Fiscal Year, April – March)

	<i>Cash</i>	<i>In kind</i>
<i>Deferred from previous year</i>	<i>\$100,000</i>	
<i>Balance from previous year</i>	<i>\$5,745</i>	
Reserve	\$12,000	
Non profit	\$32,500	\$100,400
Private	\$62,500	\$9,000
Individuals	\$2,807	
Public	\$0	
Total	\$215,552	\$109,400

Please note that while the Labour Market Dialogues outcomes are contributed to the CHALLENGE, its funding is external to the CHALLENGE budget. The Community Council is funded for this project through Service Canada and Vancity.

The CHALLENGE expenses for 2008-09 were greater than the new revenue brought in that year. However, as there was substantial deferred revenue from the previous year, it seemed possible to cover the cost of a full time staff person for the CHALLENGE. Given the lower resources generated, however, it is clear that at this time a full-time position is not financially viable.

The confirmed revenue to date for the 2009-2010 fiscal year to cover the 2:1 match required for Vibrant Communities includes \$50,000 from Coast Capital Savings, and a decision on United Way funding support pending. Leadership Roundtable members contribute considerable in-kind professional support. In kind contributions are assured from Shaw TV. Negotiations continue with community partners including local governments to confirm long term funding.

Securing funding for the core collaborative work of the CHALLENGE continues to be difficult. It was hoped that two municipalities would fund the CHALLENGE this year, but neither came through. Budget forecasts also expected a higher number of individual donations. In seeking to maintain a focus on core collaborative work, rather than delivering individual projects which are easier to fund, the CHALLENGE has not been able to access all the funds available for poverty reduction work.

The Quality of Life CHALLENGE has been actively fundraising throughout its existence. Despite this hard work, we have been unable to secure funding from our provincial government or any substantial amount from other large provincial funding bodies.

Reflecting on our current budget concerns, one CHALLENGE Leadership Roundtable member said, "this crisis, in some ways, has been a blessing". The CHALLENGE has had difficulty

getting a concrete commitment from some partners. The realisation that the initiative could not sustain a full time staff person has both spurred the CHALLENGE to ask directly for support and encouraged partners to make either in kind or financial contributions. For example, one partner has now committed his and another staff person's time to help write a business plan for the CHALLENGE.

11. Where to from here? The year ahead...

As the CHALLENGE moves forward into this Phase Two, we continue to work to define our role clearly for potential partners, decision makers and the public. As we expand to encompass even more diverse perspectives, we must focus on finding common ground. One Leadership Roundtable member described this as figuring out "how to advocate without offending anyone". As a non-partisan, broad-based collaboration, the CHALLENGE can create a safe space for idea incubation, relationship development and innovation to help prevent and reduce poverty in the Capital Region. The Leadership Roundtable is interested in promoting this strength of the CHALLENGE.

The Leadership Roundtable is developing a Business Plan in early 2009, fleshing out substantive elements in the three priority areas, and clarifying strategies to implement projects as well as sustain the core functions of the CHALLENGE.

The ongoing confusion of the Community Council and Quality of Life CHALLENGE will continue to be addressed. This work of collaboration is not always clear and straightforward. Particularly as other Leadership Roundtable partners contribute outcomes and projects, the need to address governance, partnership and identity issues will remain a priority for the Leadership Roundtable.

As the CHALLENGE continues to seek funding partners, we are reconsidering our earlier assumption that businesses would bring resources to the table. BC's Capital Region has very few head offices or large businesses. The CHALLENGE must reconfigure its business engagement strategy to procure some financial resources from business partners, as well as finding alternate, sustainable sources of funding.

Attachments

- i. Media Coverage 2008
- ii. CHALLENGE Strategic Plan
- iii. Framework for Change