

Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative (BCAPI):

A business-led collaborative initiative

Fact Sheet

Mandate

- BCAPI is a collaborative initiative of Saint John businesses working together, and in partnership with others, to substantially reduce poverty in their community. BCAPI's primary role is a poverty reduction "catalyst".
- BCAPI's 2012 report card lists 27 different initiatives, which span from "cradle to career" and recognize the importance of enriching the educational environment for children who live in poverty so that they can succeed. Key initiatives include:
 - The Early Learning Centre (ELC) – a school-based early childhood education centre that serves a low-income neighbourhood with comprehensive supports for 200 families who have children 0 to 5 years of age and their families;
 - Partners Assisting Local Schools (PALS) – local businesses partner with K-to-8 schools in low-income neighbourhoods to improve student literacy and numeracy. More than 100 organizations and 1000 volunteers are PALS partners;
 - P.R.O. Kids – financial contributions that enable more than 1000 children of low-income families, annually, to participate in after-school activities in arts and culture, sports and recreational pursuits;
 - The Resource Centre for Youth (TRC) – a centre that engages teens and helps them optimize their health, education and employment-readiness and develop leadership skills. The TRC reports more than 1200 youth contacts per month; and
 - First Steps Housing Project (First Steps) – a safe and supportive environment where homeless young mothers can continue their high school education, further their personal development and gain the skills required to thrive as individuals and as parents. 438 women and their children have benefited over the past decade.

Location

- Saint John, New Brunswick

Type of organization

- Non-profit charitable organization

Size of organization

- Over 100 businesses are involved in the collaborative initiative
- BCAPI provides the backbone support with a \$150,000 budget and 1 paid staff

Community investment activities

- Senior business leaders oversee the organization, enabling BCAPI to research, analyze, plan and support a unified collaborative approach to reducing poverty in Saint John.

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- Business leaders and professionals participate on various working groups that address specific priorities of the Saint John Poverty Reduction Strategy.
- 8 businesses fund BCAPI directly; others do fundraising and provide gifts-in-kind and services.
- 100-plus businesses provide direct support to one or more of the community's poverty-reduction initiatives (cash, volunteerism, sponsorship, board participation).
- Local newspapers and other media give special attention to poverty issues, helping to build awareness.

Social partnerships

- Over 100 businesses are involved in initiating and supporting poverty-reduction activities which BCAPI has identified as priorities.
- Key sponsors of BCAPI (donating \$5,000 or more) are: Innovatia, TD Waterhouse, Fortis Properties, J.D. Irving Limited, Emera N.B., Moosehead Breweries Limited, Dowd Roofing and Bell Aliant.
- Fortis Properties sponsors an annual golf tournament, raising \$100,000 in 2012.

Impact

- BCAPI measures: progress on specific initiatives; impact of programs on people's lives (readiness for school, high school graduation rates, employment); and impact on government policy and practices towards poverty reduction.
- In 2010, BCAPI commissioned Deloitte to evaluate 10 year progress (2000 to 2010) and recommend priorities for the next decade.
- Work is beginning on measuring Social Return on Investment (SROI) for one community program. This federally funded demonstration project is being supported and monitored by BCAPI and others with a view to scaling up SROI evaluation locally.
- Awareness and understanding of poverty has increased among all sectors.
- More and more businesses are getting involved, and once they commit, they tend to stay.
- Provincial government has established a poverty reduction plan for all of New Brunswick and is developing policies and programs such as dental and eye care coverage for low-income children.
- From 1996 to 2006 poverty in Saint John was reduced from 27% to 20.8%. While this is a definite improvement Saint John's 2016 goal is to bring poverty levels to within provincial and national averages (15%).

Challenges

- Poverty is a complex issue. Reducing poverty requires **change** in attitudes, practices and policies. The involvement of all sectors at a leadership level and long-term commitment are vital elements of success.
- Players involved must be steadfast in their commitment and stay focussed on the ultimate goal, while remaining flexible and continuing to learn and adapt.

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Success Story

One might be tempted to ask what business leaders know about poverty and why they should care. But in Saint John business leaders have taken the time to understand the issue and to collaborate to solve it. And they do so because they care deeply about their community and the people who live in it. Working together over the past 15 years, local businesses have leveraged their business skills and networks and engaged their employees to put a serious dent in poverty. While Saint John still has one of the country's highest rates of poverty, it has achieved a significant reduction, from 27% in 1996 to 21% in 2006.

The initiative began in 1997 when retired bank executive Bill Gale decided he needed to do something to tackle poverty in his community. He gathered together a group of Saint John business leaders to ask for their help and the beginnings of BCAPI emerged. Mr. J.K. Irving, Chair of J.D. Irving Limited, was one of the original BCAPI leaders who had been convinced by Bill Gale to participate. One of his early contributions was funding a major poverty study for Saint John that described who was likely to live in poverty and why and what best practices would break the poverty cycle. The study set the stage for a community strategy to reduce poverty. BCAPI's solid beginnings are attributed to the leadership of these two individuals.

Monica Chaperlin, Coordinator for BCAPI, is quick to point out that this initiative is not about BCAPI – it's about the businesses themselves that have come together to help reduce poverty in Saint John. BCAPI's role is to act as a catalyst and provide the backbone support that inspires business participation. The success of the initiative is attributable to the shared leadership of the business community and to their long-term commitment to breaking the cycle of poverty by helping children, from cradle to career, to succeed.

There are many ways that businesses can get involved, and it is up to them to figure out the best fit. Some help to lead BCAPI's operations. Many work directly with schools and non-profits that are leading initiatives to eradicate poverty. A company's involvement typically begins with its leaders learning about poverty and using their networks to connect to other business leaders and to engage their own employees in the initiative. Through the learning process, businesses typically figure out how they can best contribute. Some will donate cash, for example by sponsoring the annual Fortis Charity Golf Classic. Some will join the BCAPI leadership team, or participate in one of the many working groups that tackle priority areas such as education, housing or single parent family issues. Many will engage their employees in volunteering and fundraising for a particular poverty-reduction activity or program. There are no formal agreements in place, just a genuine and shared desire to strengthen the Saint John community. Following are just a few examples of some of the companies involved:

J.D. Irving, Limited (JDI): with Mr. J.K. Irving as one of the active leaders of BCAPI, this company has been contributing human and financial resources and diverse skills to many different aspects of the poverty-reduction work in Saint John. They house and help to fund BCAPI's sole staff member and have commissioned a number of studies to help Saint John better understand poverty and the community's

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progress. JDI employees are fundraisers and volunteers for many poverty reduction initiatives. Partners Assisting Local Schools (PALS), one of Saint John's flagship programs, was founded by Mr. Irving. His participation in BCAPI helped him to recognize the unique challenges faced by a school right across the street from company offices. Over 300 JDI volunteers have devoted 25,000 hours mentoring young students through PALS since 2001. According to Chaperlin, J.D. Irving's support goes much further – they are often the ones working quietly behind the scenes to take care of the details, for example: providing a bus for students to participate in community events and after-school activities; ensuring that the kitchen at the local Boys and Girls Club has the capacity to host the school's lunch program; or helping to beautify the school and upgrade its technology.

KPMG: a partner from the local KPMG office was instrumental in the development of the Early Learning Centre (ELC) model, which serves a low-income neighbourhood and provides early childhood education and childcare and comprehensive supports for young families to ensure school-readiness. Employees of KPMG then became involved and now take responsibility for the in-school breakfast program once a week that also serves the Early Learning Centre families. Now this partner is heading a new BCAPI working group that is examining how to build a culture of social innovation and entrepreneurship in Saint John.

Fortis Properties: In 2002 Bill Gale, founder and Chair of BCAPI, approached the Saint John General Manager of Fortis Properties and asked for her company's help in organizing a poverty reduction fundraiser for BCAPI. The annual Fortis Charity Golf Classic resulted. Last year Fortis Properties celebrated its 10th anniversary event which raised over \$100,000 for BCAPI. Staff from all levels of the business pitch in to make this a stellar community fundraiser that rallies contributions from 125 businesses. The Fortis Properties General Manager also chairs a steering committee of a major poverty reduction initiative that is helping adults who have limited education and/or work experience to attach to the workforce.

Regardless of how a company participates, it is the long-term commitment of business leaders that makes this initiative so successful. Businesses bring a different way of thinking – though they may not be experts in poverty, they bring a business skillset that includes asking the tough questions, analyzing the data, working together to tackle the problem and demanding results. But it is not an easy road, and after 15 years there is still much more to be done. Change of this nature doesn't come easily or quickly and BCAPI has had to keep going, keep learning and keep adapting. New ideas and opportunities come along and must be considered and integrated. With its shared leadership model and long-term commitment, BCAPI is a unique and successful approach to poverty reduction.

This story was developed as part of knowledge product funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. May 2013