

Budget Consultation February 27th, 2015

Days Inn

Stephenville NL

Prepared by Community Education Network

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Community Education Network (CEN) is a not for profit community based organization in Western Newfoundland. It seeks to foster a community wide interest in learning, and to provide both the means to learn and specific opportunities relevant to the areas social and economic challenges and to address them using a holistic approach-one that considers lifelong learning within a community context as a central part of the solution. It is characterized by the involvement of people of all ages; the use of community learning, resources, and research to bring about community change; and the recognition that people can learn through, with and for each other to create a better world. CEN is currently celebrating 24 years of successful programming.

We recognize that with the decrease in revenues from oil we need to curb spending in the province and to ensure that investments have maximum return . I am here today to ask that when the current budget is prepared that the value of community based organizations be recognized and acknowledged . We are committed to ensuring that the future of Newfoundland and Labrador is rock solid.

CEN completed a Social Return on Investment evaluation process in 2012. The purpose of this process was to demonstrate the value of CEN work, in all of its various forms. The SROI methodology used provided a route for us to use to accomplish this task.

Through the articulation and examination of Community Education Networks theory of change, key outcomes have been identified that cut across the CEN collaborative process and program levels that identify outcomes for stakeholders. These key outcomes are rooted in the field of well-being, both personal and social.

Through the modelling of data collected against these outcomes, the analysis concludes that community education work provides a solid evidence based social return on investment made both by governments investment in supporting CEN's work and by the investments made by participants, volunteers and community. The analysis further concludes the social economic value that is created, for those participating in collaboration and programs, those linked in the community and local governments, proves that CEN is meeting the identified

need of creating a learning culture through a lifelong learning process which promotes personal enrichment and healthy sustainable communities.

It is critical in this challenging economic climate that we strengthen the social safety net around our most vulnerable citizens. In reviewing the programs and services that government delivers, it must partner with the community sector if these services and programs are to survive. Collaboration has the power to make real change and enhance the overall quality of life in our province. In the 2011 Blue Book government stated: " We will reinforce our commitment to the value, role and importance of the community sector in the social, economic and cultural fabric of our communities.

When we emerge from this current economic climate we need to emerge strong and reliant. In order for that to happen continuing with proactive social programs is critical. Research has proven that it much cheaper to respond in a proactive manner than a reactive.