

Forum Speech

Good morning... good day... and may I say, it feels like a new day in Canada. Today, once again we can see a glimmer of the promise of Canada ---- a Canada we have all fought, sacrificed and worked so hard for.

Three days... in only three days... we have experienced the many rich lifetimes, the lived experience and the honesty that you have shared with us to define this moment in this space.

We have witnessed many things, learned so much. And, in the process, many of us have been transformed.

And while much remains to be seen and learned, we *will* continue to see, to learn, to change and mostly to be agents of transformation.

So what have we heard? What have we learned?

- That we are all connected—that everything is connected. There is no we-them; there is only us.
- We are the system; we are the government; we are the people.
- That schools are places where community happens.
- That honesty and persistence are indispensable.
- That we must have faith in our principles—in what drives us----the reasons why we do what we do.
- That we must to create the conditions for change
- That we will not let anyone bury our passion.

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- That we have to be ruthlessly strategic.
- That we need the discipline to stay the course and the courage to change direction----follow when needed but mostly to influence and lead.
- That we need spaces to talk ---- to share ---- to reflect. We need to focus as we are often so intent on what we are doing that we forget why we're doing it.
- And yes, we've learned that it's OK to be uncomfortable—that you can't call for change and stay the same

We at CCSD know how uncomfortable change can be—we've been going through our own strategic thinking process—asking ourselves those difficult questions. Who are we? Are we the same organization that we were 90 years ago? Ten years ago? Last year? Who do we serve? How do we serve? Where do we lead?

So. . . what is different today from what it was three days ago? What has changed? And more importantly, how have we changed?

What have we achieved? How does this moment matter? I believe it matters because.....

- We have connected.
- We have strengthened the conditions for change.
- We have given ourselves permission to reconnect with our principles, our passion, our purpose.
- We have created a space for sharing and reflection.

- We have come through discomfort to a place of resolve.
- To a collective call to action.....

Now... how do we lever what we have learned over the past three days?

How do we take this call to action forward?

We do it by coming together as a community, acting as a community and being bold and courageous together. In the words and message of Sheila Watt Cloutier—we are all connected and we must acknowledge and honour those connections. Together we will prosper ---- alone we will surely perish.

NOW I recognize that none of this is simple. If it was, we wouldn't need this space, this Forum.

We must recognize that our systems, institutions and practices have evolved in a way that fosters competition; in ways that are counter intuitive that can never facilitate collaboration.

When we are forced to ration, to compete for scarce resources, the possibilities can come with change are lost.

The over 150,000 Canadian nonprofits working—and I do mean *working*—to improve the wellbeing of our people, our society, our world, each of us grabbing for those elusive brass rings....not for us but for our shared mission to build a greater Canada.

How can we resolve this paradox? How do we constrain sectoral, Siloed divisive competition? We must create the conditions that will reduce and manage conflict and honor the promise of leadership.

Indeed as I said, our task is not simple.

What we *will*, what we must do is keep being bold.

We will continue to engage with this community, be the honest broker, work with you to create the conditions for change, and together be a vehicle for change.

Throughout the Forum, you have been voicing your opinions and sharing your aspirations. We have been inspired and we have been listening.

You told us that:

- We need to take both the long *and the short* view. Early childhood education and living wage.
- We need to fundamentally rethink our structures and processes. At the same time, we mustn't use them as excuses for not moving forward.
- We need to honor, nurture and sustain our connections; when any one of us is vulnerable, we are all vulnerable.
- We need to bring the voices together to articulate our shared vision for change.

- A vision for my Canada, my son's Canada, your Canada, OUR Canada
- It is not a single voice, but the one voice of the many.
- We need to not compete with one another and focus on the people we work and live for.

What we are talking about here is vision—if we were to step back for a minute and take a longer view—it is clear that we must launch a process a moment to build that shared vision -----creating the conditions for success - --- the best start----healthy thriving and resilient communities for all Canadians.

Because process is about the importance of means and ends—the values and principles that inform and direct our activities.

The variety, breadth, creativity, and dynamism of the work you do—the work you have profiled at this Forum—is clear evidence that:

- there is not,
- never has been
- and never will be
- any one activity,
- individual,
- organization,
- leader,
- institution,

- or curriculum that can—by itself—bring about the scale of transformation we all seek.

And you have just witnessed this spirit this morning an extraordinary example of the kind of process we are talking about—a process of shared values, different histories and common purpose—as a number of different organizations—many of whom have been fighting poverty in this country for over a quarter of a century—joined together to launch the Dignity For All: A Campaign for a poverty-free Canada.

I have heard from many of you that this has been a good Forum, perhaps even a great Forum.

We have been informed, challenged, energized, inspired.

We have raged, we have wept, we have laughed.

AND Yes, I suppose this has been a good forum, but the true measure of its success is whether it translates into and even greater *new* start.

We hear you --- we hear your impassioned call for action and with you we make this promise—to go forward together in this our collective project—to eradicate poverty in this country.

What we have here is a moment. What we have—in the words of Arlo Guthrie—is a movement.

SO yes, Three nights ago I welcomed you—

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in fact I and my young son welcomed you—to this unprecedented space.

The journey we have travelled together over the past few days reminds me in many ways of a line in the film Kolya—a film, incidentally, that also featured a small boy. The line is: “and the teachers and nurses shall save them.” The line is spoken while thousands and thousands of people crowd into Wenceslas Square as the old repressive regime crumbles.

Those people are us—all of us—you and me—nurses, teachers, activists, lawyers, people with lived experience.

Those who serve, those who educate, those who nurture, those who mend.

Those who lead

Those who enable transformation.

I urge you....Continue to be those people!

ACT now 4 our future, our children, our Canada.

AND Yes dear friends.....Make hope real!

There are at least 600 people I should thank this morning. The organizers, the volunteers, our partners, our sponsors. Every single person who attended this Forum—and the people and organizations and the faith that brought them here and enabled them to come.

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But... in the absence of a longer window, I will have to be ruthlessly strategic and pick out just a few that I especially want to single out.

THANK YOU'S (GAIL)

Loreen Gilmour and John teLinde who by being the Calgary members of our advisory committee bore the brunt of many of our phone calls, questions and panic attacks....all with creativity and good grace.

Sheila Regehr from the National Council on Welfare who is a fountain of knowledge, information and contacts. .. and who truly helps make things happen.

Other members of advisory Committee: Laverna McMaster, Edgar MacLeod, Lisa Little, Marcel Lauziere, Lionel Robert, Sid Frankel, Gayla Rogers, Michael Cushing.

Our Social Development Report authors
And our wonderful partners in the Community Social Data Strategy

Speakers, panelists, moderators, and our tremendous volunteers

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Canadian Labour Congress

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Social Science and Humanities Research Council

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Kathryn Sim at United Way Calgary who helped us publicize the Social Forum locally.

Julie Bevan at the Glenbow Museum who helped us arrange the Social Forum Quilt project.

Tessa Bourdon our videographer who helped make Speakers Corner happen and who shot and edited our opening video.

To Tarun Nayer and the Delhi 2 Dublin crew who let us use their song “Nightsteps” as the Forum musical theme.

To Campbell’s Soup who provided the community kitchens’ dance Hunger display.

To our CCSD Calgary member Bob McInnis, for helping out in a hundred ways.

The People Who Made the Forum Happen

To Golden Planners – Phil, Jessica and Zoe.
The incredible technicians with TELAV
And the staff of the TELUS Centre

Board and Staff

Now for the final session of this Forum.

For the next two hours we have an opportunity to have a frank, no holds barred discussion on next steps.

To do this.. we have asked CBC National TV Journalist Mark Kelley to moderate this session.

Mark has become famous for his CBC Road Stories which show the human side of many news stories.

He asks direct questions.... And many times the questions many of us want to ask.