

Resilient Communities

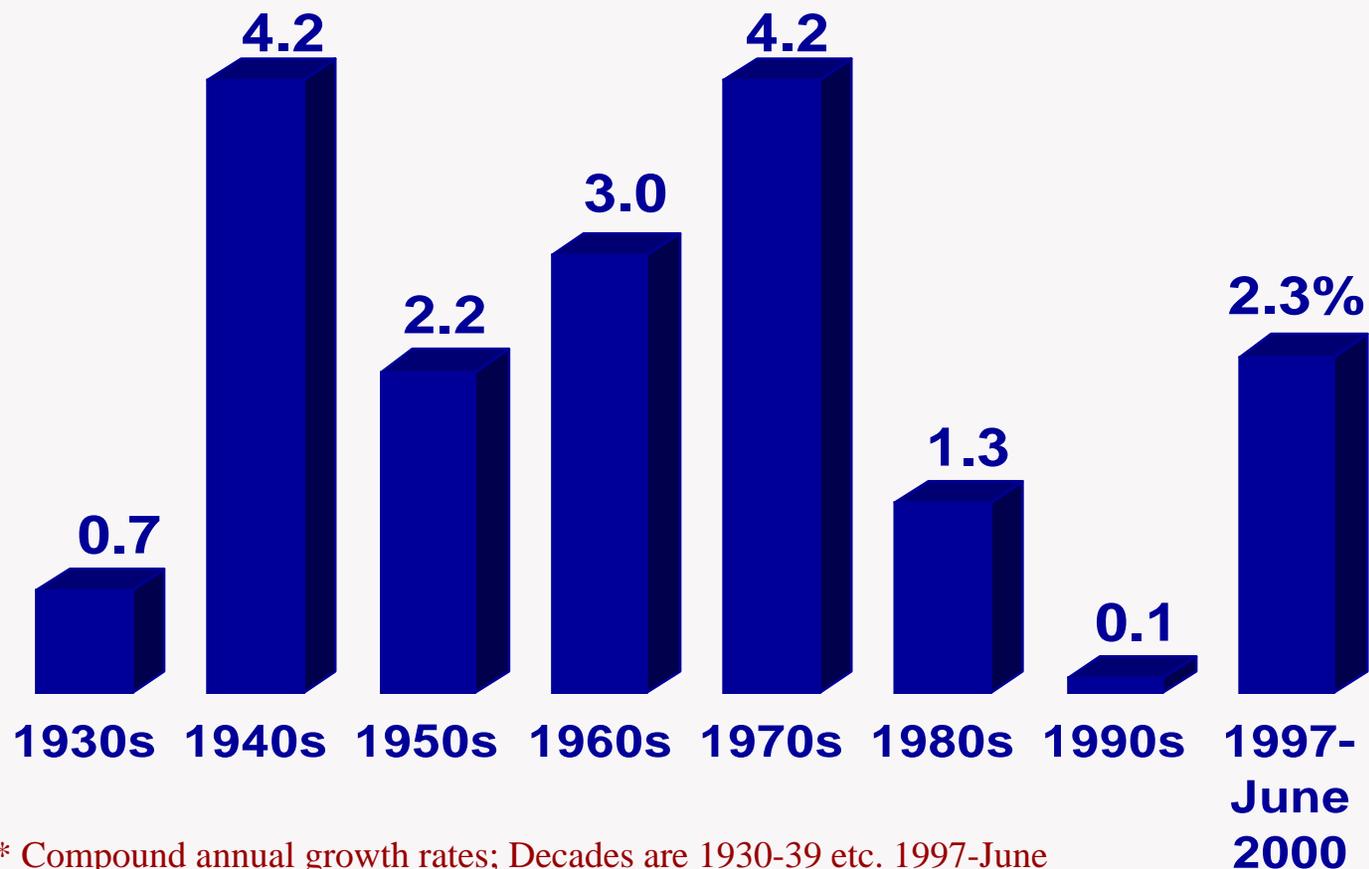
Presentation by Judith Maxwell
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to
The Willing Community Conference
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Outline

- Where we have come from
- Resilience - some definitions
- What makes or breaks resilience
- Healthy society *and* economy

Income growth since the 30s

Real Disposable Income Per Capita*



* Compound annual growth rates; Decades are 1930-39 etc. 1997-June 2000 is calculated as an annual average.

Source: Statistics Canada

Impacts of the 90s

- Families are stretched
 - Lone parents; two parents working
 - Distance from relatives
 - Cutbacks in education, social and health services, income supports
- Workplaces are less supportive
 - More contract, part-time, short term jobs
 - A minimum wage job requires 74-hour workweek to support a family
 - More unemployment; more self-employment
 - 25% of employed have no insurance benefits

Restructuring

- Growing role for markets
 - Individualization
- Shrinking role for the state
 - Power is shifting to markets
 - To other countries
 - To other jurisdictions
- In 1988 we made a “leap of faith” to free trade. Now we need an act of faith to re-weave our social connections
- This will be “a journey forward”

Where does the journey begin?

- When institutions and markets are changing, we must go back to core values
- Core social values of Canadians are:
- Self-reliance
- Collective responsibility
- Investment in the future, especially in children
- These are the cornerstones around which we can construct community and our common citizenship

Self-reliance

- Does it mean autonomy?
 - “I’m alright Jack?”
- Or does it mean responsibility?
 - Taking responsibility for yourself, your family, your community?
- Both meanings are used today.
 - To the Canadians we met, it means taking responsibility
- Self-reliance is generated by
 - Inner strength; Outer help; Good fortune

Resilience

- Resilient people are self-reliant.
 - They bounce back from adversity because of their inner strength and supportive families.
- Vulnerable people are less resilient.
 - They need more from families, community etc.
 - All of us are vulnerable at some time in life
 - Bad fortune can overwhelm the most resilient people, if they lose their jobs, get sick, lose their homes or their loved ones.
 - Women in Toronto “welfare motels”
 - Breakdown of all levels of connectedness - family, work, friends, community

Resilient communities

- Resilient communities also bounce back from adversity. They have
 - Resilient people who are mutually supportive through dense social connections.
- Two examples:
 - Port Colborne's healthy kids -- woven-ness
 - Elliott Lake's transformation from mining to seniors
- People are nested in family, in communities, and in wider social institutions

The nests need re-weaving

- Both markets and public policy have shifted more risk to individuals
- Hard times make people angry, alienated, disengaged
- Winnipeg's journey forward is rebuilding the nest -- reconnecting the social tissue which weaves people and resources together

Woven-ness

- **Connective tissue needs constant nourishment**
 - If it is not used, it deteriorates
 - The more it is used, the more it grows
- **Re-weaving connections can be informal**
 - As people discover common goals, learn to trust each other, learn how they can make a difference, they create resilience
- **Or formal**
 - Aboriginal HeadStart builds self-reliance among children and parents

Healthy economy *and* society

- In the 1990s, we put our economic house in better order.
- Now we must deal with the social and political scars on the landscape.
- Healthy communities and healthy families are essential to our quality of life
- They are also the foundation for our common citizenship

Collective responsibility

- In the past we asked governments to look after many of the issues identified for this conference:
 - Declining feeling of safety and social civility
 - Poverty
 - Marginalization
 - Stressed families, children and youth
 - Systems that hamper self-sufficiency and independence.
- Winnipeg is not the only city facing these challenges. But it has more than its share.

More than government

- But it takes more than government to reweave the nest.
 - “The responsibility for social well-being is shifting away from total dependence on the state to a combined responsibility for individuals, families, employers, and the state.” Courtney Pratt, Hydro One
- Working together, you can make a difference
- Working together, you can lead the way for other cities
- Working together, you can hold governments to account in restoring social rights we have lost



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