

# From Access to Inclusion:

## A future vision for CAP

Building on the Pictou CAP Summit, the National CAP Council Working Group has developed two proposals aimed at providing a future focus for CAP:

### **A community driven vision ...**

Create a stable, diversely-funded program that supports the ongoing efforts of CAP networks to promote digital inclusion.

Encourage government, business, non-profits to use these networks as a way to connect and dialogue with local communities across Canada.

### **A national voice ...**

Create a National CAP Network that acts as a national policy voice, facilitates communication within the CAP community and conducts community based research and development. Ensure that this network is representative of the communities that CAP aims to serve.

This document outlines these two proposals for consideration by the CAP community at the Vancouver CAP Summit in March 2004.

This document was produced by the **National CAP Pictou – Vancouver Working Group** – an ad hoc committee focused on both future models for CAP networks and the potential for a national CAP network.

Document prepared by the Learning Enrichment Foundation and the Commons Group.

**March 16, 2004**

## Executive Summary

*Let us resolve to measure progress by the standard we set for the least privileged among us.  
Equality of opportunity - that is the Canadian way. And it is the only way I care to know".*

*- Prime Minister Paul Martin*

Since Industry Canada began CAP in 1995, the nature of the digital divide in Canada has changed. Ten years ago, the issue was simply getting people online. Today, the stakes are much higher – technology literacy increasingly represents the basic cost of entry for an education, a job or access to government. Canadians who lack technology access and literacy risk social and economic exclusion.

### **A commitment to digital inclusion**

Responding to this changing landscape, many CAP sites have transformed from local computer centres into dynamic hubs for community development. The National CAP Council Working Group has developed two proposals aimed continuing this commitment digital inclusion:

- Develop a renewed policy vision for CAP, based on a major renewed Federal investment as well as funds leveraged from other sources;
- Create a national voice that can represent the CAP movement and work in close partnership with government.

These proposals are put forward for consideration and discussion at the Vancouver CAP Summit.

### **What do our communities need?**

In order to preserve our commitment to equality of opportunity, we need to ensure that all Canadians have the ability to participate in our information society. While an increasing percentage of the population already has the skills and access necessary, many people still need:

- **Computer and broadband Internet access**, especially for people rural areas, low income Canadians, people with disabilities and others at risk of social exclusion.
- **Technology literacy** necessary for getting an education or finding a job;
- **eBusiness and eCitizenship skills** that open up new opportunities for economic development and democratic participation;
- **A supportive environment** that invites marginalized groups to participate fully in the information economy.

These needs are especially pressing amongst those groups most at risk of social exclusion – youth, new Canadians, people with disabilities, First Nations communities, women, people with low incomes and seniors. Any effective strategy for digital inclusion must consider the fact that these groups face unique barriers – and require specific, targeted support.

## Policy Vision: A Future for CAP

A local CAP network provides more than just Internet access – it is a hub that connects communities, both internally and to the outside world. CAP networks act as social and economic glue that helps hold communities together. In order to ensure digital inclusion for all Canadians, **we need to develop a CAP model that makes it possible to grow and sustain this community driven approach.** This model should include the following elements:

- Continued refreshment of **infrastructure** including hardware, software, assistive devices and connectivity. Also, training to advance the skills of volunteers and staff. *(10% of overall budget)*
- **Training and mentoring** programs that address core needs such as technology literacy, eBusiness skills and eCitizenship skills. A special emphasis should be placed on involving youth as both learners and as trainers at CAP sites. *(55% of overall budget)*
- **Network coordination** at all levels to ensure that CAP remains sustainable, community-driven and connected to the needs of other sectors. *(25% of overall budget)*
- Strategic **research and development** focused on documenting and sharing successful approaches to achieving digital inclusion. *(5% of overall budget)*
- A **community leadership and apprenticeship program** aimed at creating the next generation of CAP leaders and champions *(5% of overall budget)*

This program would be built around a multi-tiered, partnership-based sustainability model, with investments from a wide variety of organizations whose constituents benefit from a vibrant CAP network. An initial Federal investment of \$90 million per year would be required, with an eventual ability to leverage an additional \$120 million a year from other sources.

## National Voice: A Network of Networks

In order to move forward, CAP networks need a national network that will connect them and act as a prominent voice on the issue of digital inclusion. Based around common values such as community participation, partnership and **innovation** the National CAP Network would:

- **Advise government** including Industry Canada through the creation of a National CAP Advisory Council;
- Act as a **national level policy voice**, working with government and other stakeholder to create a policy and funding environment that promotes digital inclusion;
- **Facilitate communication** amongst local CAP operators and with other stakeholders such as government, business and at risk communities;
- Create community-based, nationally coordinated **research and documentation** including the collection of best practices and the creation of an annual Digital Divide Report Card;

A broad-based process of network development is still needed to determine exactly how this Network should operate. However, it is assumed that the Network would need to have at least one

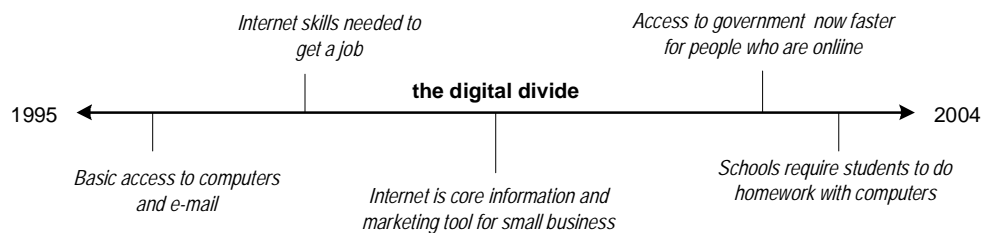
full time staff right from the beginning and would need to be **representative of broad interest areas** including both CAP networks and representatives of priority communities that the CAP networks aim to serve.

## Context: The Evolution of CAP

Canada exists in an increasingly connected, competitive, global economy. Our ideas about both economic prosperity and social exclusion are changing rapidly to mirror this networked world. Today, a prosperous Canadian not only has economic security but also unbounded access to information and opportunity. Those who are left behind by society are not only disenfranchised but also disconnected, left on the wrong side of the digital divide. With programs like CAP, Canadians have made a commitment to bringing all citizens across this divide, feeding directly into Canada's prosperity and stability within an ever changing global economy.

### **CAP: Crossing the digital divide**

Since Industry Canada began CAP in 1995, the nature of the digital divide has changed. Over this time, effectively participating in the information society has become a more complex affair and the social costs of being left on the wrong side of the divide have become greater:



Today, Canadians need complex skills and systems to participate fully in our information society. While the 75% of Canadians with home Internet access presumably have these skills and systems, the remaining 25% do not. On the wrong side of the divide, these people risk further isolation and exclusion as our economy, government and society safety net increasingly move online.

### **From computers to caring communities**

Fortunately, the people and organizations who deliver CAP have transformed themselves again and again to respond to these changing needs. CAP in its current best practice provides a flexible, community model for responding to the fast shifting nature of the digital divide:

#### **Who we were ...**

- Focused on infrastructure
- A place where people can access the Internet
- Basic web surfing skills
- Located in rural areas
- Model defined by funding program
- Geographic communities
- Locally and provincially focused
- A federal program funded by Industry Canada
- Partnering with government

#### **Who we are ...**

- Focused on people
- A platform where government and business connect with communities
- Skills for e-citizenship and e-business
- Rural and urban
- Diverse, community-driven models
- Communities of interest
- Locally-driven, globally connected
- A national social inclusion movement grounded in local communities
- Partnering with government, business and non-profits

CAP has evolved from a program focused on computers to a national network of people and organizations committed to digital inclusion. Local CAP networks are now preparing those who risk social exclusion with the tools they need to participate and prosper in a technology driven, knowledge based global society. Building on almost 10 years of experience, the focus of many CAP sites has moved to supporting and strengthening the economic and social well-being of the most vulnerable and economically fragile individuals and communities in Canada.

This ability to evolve and adapt quickly to change can be attributed in part to the unique partnership between Industry Canada and local community champions. Industry Canada provided early leadership and an ongoing, flexible approach to funding. Local champions and leaders have taken the CAP concept and made it relevant on the ground. The result is a diverse, nationwide network of community technology centres unparalleled anywhere in the world.

### **A commitment to digital inclusion**

To move ahead as an information society, we must make an aggressive commitment to digital inclusion – ensuring that all Canadians make it across the digital divide. The national CAP network is Canada’s biggest hope and most valuable asset in delivering on this commitment.

In order to build on this asset and put it at the forefront of Canada’s digital inclusion strategy, we must ensure that the CAP network has a solid future. Based on its mandate from the Pictou CAP Summit, the National CAP Council Working Group has developed two proposals aimed at helping to sustain the good work of CAP networks across Canada:

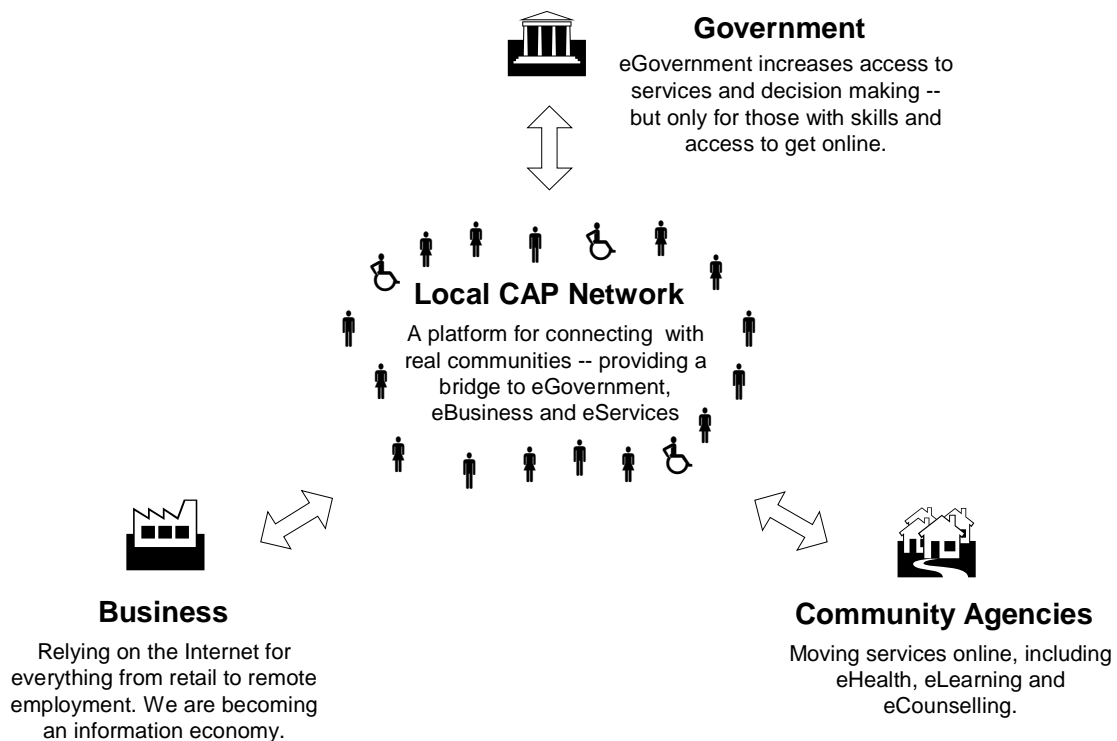
- Develop a renewed policy vision for CAP, based on a major new Federal investment as well as funds leveraged from other sources;
- Create a national voice that can represent the CAP movement and work in close partnership with government.

This document provides an initial overview of these two proposals for consideration at the Vancouver CAP Summit to be held in late March 2003. If the Vancouver Summit accepts these proposals, a new working group will need to be stuck to take them further and make them real.

## Policy Vision: A Future for CAP

### **CAP: Networks that support healthy, vibrant communities**

A local CAP network provides more than just Internet connectivity – it is a hub that connects communities, both internally and to the outside world. In their best practice, CAP networks act as a platform that provides distant government, business and non-profit agencies with a real and meaningful presence in Canadian communities:



As this diagram illustrates, CAP networks act as agents of social cohesion that help hold communities together. They provide those who would otherwise be disconnected the opportunity to perform important, everyday tasks – registering for employment insurance, ordering from an online department store, contacting family that still lives halfway around the world.

By bringing together tangible local communities and access to the global Internet, CAP networks also provide the raw material for something much bigger. They provide a cornerstone to community champions, enabling them to bring together the people, knowledge and tools necessary to nurture innovative, locally based businesses and social services. In this regard, CAP has strengthened the social and economic fabric of the communities where they are located.

Moving forward, **we need to develop a CAP program model that makes it possible to grow and sustain this community driven approach.** It is our communities that weave together the threads of government programs into a local social safety net. It has become an “anchor tenant” in the social economy. The following sections describe what a future, more sustainable CAP model might look like.

## What do our communities need?

In order to preserve our commitment to equality of opportunity, we need to ensure that all Canadians have the ability to participate in the information economy. While an increasing percentage of the population already has the skills and access necessary, many people still need:

- **Access to computers and the Internet** – Many Canadians do not yet have effective computer and Internet access at home or work. This is especially true amongst people with lower incomes, people in rural areas where access costs are high and people with disabilities who must purchase assistive devices in order to use computers.
- **Technology literacy** – Basic technology literacy is now a ‘must have’ for almost any job or educational opportunity. This represents a barrier for those who lack basic technology literacy skills – using a mouse, navigating a web site, formatting an e-mail resume. There remains a pressing need to provide technology literacy training, even for people who may have access to the Internet at home.
- **eBusiness and eCitizenship skills** – The Internet can open up a world of opportunities, but only for those who know how to seize them. Beyond basic technology literacy, Canadians also need the skills to market themselves and their businesses online, to connect with others in their community and the world and to access and participate in government. eBusiness and eCitizenship skills development has the potential to open up new doorways, especially in marginalized communities.
- **A caring, supportive environment** – Often, the biggest barrier to participation in our information society is fear. Many Canadians – especially seniors and people who do not speak English or French as a first language – lack confidence online. These people need a caring and supportive environment where ‘social technology’ mentors and support people can make the online world feel more approachable.

Responding to these needs means more than just providing computers and connections – it is about a human connection and hands on support that will ensure that those who are at the biggest risk of exclusion are not left behind. Without this approach, we risk a widening of the digital divide and the exclusion of many Canadians from our emerging information society.

## Who needs these things most?

Making a commitment to digital inclusion means providing support to those who need it most. Some of the people who face major barriers and risks include:

- **Children and youth** who are required to use computers to do their homework but do not have adequate access at home or at school;
- **New Canadians** who need technology skills to find jobs and participate fully in Canadian society;
- **People with disabilities**, those who require assistive devices and other forms of support in order to use computers;



- **Members of First Nations communities**, many of which remain isolated and are located in areas where the cost of connecting to the Internet is prohibitively high
- **Women** who often lack access to the skills development opportunities and technology resources necessary to advance their careers;
- **Low income Canadians and people without jobs** who risk exclusion from our information society simply because they cannot afford computers or Internet access;
- **Seniors** who have valuable skills to offer do not have the skills or confidence to use computers.

Any effective strategy for digital inclusion must consider the fact that these groups face unique barriers – and require specific, targeted support.

### **A community driven program vision**

In order to ensure digital inclusion of all Canadians, we need a renewed and refunded CAP program that builds on the past five years of success. Drawing on funds from the Federal Government and leveraging a variety of other sources, this program should support the diversity of on the ground community technology models that have evolved within the CAP community. Key program elements would include:

- Continued refreshment and redistribution of **infrastructure** including hardware, software assistive devices and connectivity. Also, training to advance the skills of volunteers and staff. *(10% of overall budget)*
- **Training and mentoring** programs that address core needs such as technology literacy, eBusiness skills and eCitizenship skills. A special emphasis should be placed on involving youth as both learners and as trainers at CAP sites. *(55% of overall budget)*
- **Network coordination** at all levels – local, provincial and national – to ensure that CAP remains sustainable, community-driven and connected to the needs of other sectors. *(25% of overall budget)*
- Strategic **research and development** focused documenting and sharing successful approaches to digital inclusions. *(5% of overall budget)*
- A **community leadership and apprenticeship program** aimed at creating the next generation of CAP leaders and champions *(5% of overall budget)*

This model would require an investment of \$90 million a year over five years, up to a third of which would be used by government to administer the program. As outlined below, additional funding would also be leveraged from other sectors.

### **What would this look like on the ground?**

The aim of this renewed program would be to build on and strengthen the existing network of CAP sites that already exists across Canada – an existing asset with approximately \$10 million in

technical infrastructure and an incalculable amount of social capital. Based on a flexible, community-driven model, sites would operate a number of different levels:

- **Express** – Simple sites with one or two computers in a publicly accessible location such as a coffee shop. (*operating cost: approximately \$4,000 per year*)
- **Access** – More advanced sites with volunteer mentors or staff assistance, access to roving support staff. (*operating cost: approximately \$25,000 per year*)
- **Innovation** -- Local content, full suite of training programs and coordination with other sites in a local network. (*operating cost: approximately \$60,000 per year*)

These sites will be located where people need them most – recreation centres that serve youth, settlement agencies, women’s shelters, local coffee shops and where people already go to seek information – such as, public libraries. At least 60% of sites will be fully wheelchair accessible and will have assistive devices to ensure computer access for people with disabilities.

It is important to emphasize that these sites would not only provide access and skills development, but also a direct link to government services such as tax submissions and employment insurance applications. As such, these centres would maximize and democratize Canada’s investments in eLearning, eHealth and eGovernment.

#### **How would this program be paid for?**

This program would provide the foundations for a diversely funded community technology infrastructure across Canada. Community technology centre sustainability would be build on the following principles:

- A **multi-tiered, partnership-based sustainability model**, where government, business and non-profits invest based on the level of benefit that their constituents receive from CAP;
- A **solid funding base** for the next five years based on a renewed Federal investment of \$90 million dollars per year, with at least 1/3 of which would go directly to communities;
- Gradual, **multi-staged growth** of the funding pool available for CAP, with the initial Federal government investment eventually leveraging an additional \$120 million per year from other sources;
- **Independent revenue generation**, based around clearly articulated CAP values and a social enterprise approach;
- **Foundation and philanthropic support** both at the local and the national level.

This financing model would need to be developed in a multi-staged manner over a number of years. A renewed Federal investment would represent the first step in this process and could be used to leverage contributions from other sources.

### **Who do we need to work with to make this happen?**

Building a sustainable, national infrastructure for digital inclusion will require a broad-based, partnership-driven approach. A variety of stakeholders need to be at the table as CAP evolves into the future including:

- **Government** including key Federal and Provincial departments and municipal governments, possibly represented by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities;
- The **education and knowledge** sectors, especially national associations representing libraries, universities, colleges and community based trainers;
- The **community economic development** and **labour** sectors including national networks and federations representing these sectors;
- The **business** sector, especially national associations representing the high tech sector;
- The **voluntary sector** including both local organizations and broader networks promoting the effective use of information technology by non-profits.

Clearly, the future goals of CAP are broader than access – and these broader goals cannot be addressed without this sort of multi-sectoral partnership. As a first step towards developing these partnerships, the CAP community should go through a process of identifying motivations and opportunities for collaboration with the sectors listed above. This should be followed by an ‘action conference’ aimed at generating initial commitments of involvement from key partners.

### **How would this program move Canada closer to digital inclusion?**

Canada is no longer at the forefront of using information and communication technologies to empower its citizens. In CAP, we have a proven, holistic approach – combining technology with caring mentors and support people – that can put us back into a leadership position and at these same time advance the cause of digital inclusion. Making an ongoing investment to ensure the long term sustainability of CAP would:

- Ensure Federal presence in at least 3,000 neighborhoods and communities across Canada;
- Provide business and community organizations with a way to access and support local communities in a real and tangible way;
- Leverage an additional \$120 million new dollars per year for a coordinated approach to the social economy above and beyond the Federal investment in CAP;
- Ensure that all Canadians have a way to participate in our information economy and society.

Given the hopes that we have placed in eBusiness and eGovernment, this kind of access and inclusion is essential. Failing to build on the network we have built through CAP will lead to a disconnect between Canada’s vision of a social economy and an information society.

## National Voice: A Network of Networks

In order to move forward, CAP sites need a national network that will connect them and act as a prominent voice on the issue of digital inclusion.

The National CAP Council Working Group proposes the creation of a community development-focused National CAP Network with the following goals in mind:

- Provide all Canadians with affordable public access to the Internet but especially the most vulnerable and economically fragile Canadians;
- Provide the necessary skills for all to take part in government, social, and economic activities by attaining a minimal level of information and technology literacy;
- Foster and assist in the creation of content and services that use technology to bridge divides between individuals, groups, and communities;
- Allow each citizen to participate fully in a connected community, nation and world.

While local CAP sites and networks will form the initial constituency, this network will eventually expand to include others with an interest in community-based technology and digital inclusion.

### Guiding principles

The National CAP Network will be based around a set of guiding principles and concepts that affirm a mission-driven approach to using technology. These include:

- People centred
- National program
- Innovation
- Participatory
- Tracking the digital divide
- Aggressive inclusion
- Raising tech literacy
- Visionary leadership
- Grassroots community
- Partnership

These principles will guide both the operation of the Network and the policy approaches that it develops.

### Why a national CAP network?

We are now at a crossroads – a place where there are certain things that local CAP sites and networks can accomplish by working together that they cannot do alone. This includes:

- Developing a **strong policy voice** that can articulate a future vision for CAP and enter into an ongoing dialogue with key stakeholders including the Federal Government;
- **Leveraging funding and support** from a diverse number of sources including Federal and Provincial governments, the private sector and national sector associations;
- Promoting a **digital inclusion agenda** by conducting research and raising awareness about the risks we face as we transition to an information economy and society;

- **Creating synergies and combating isolation** by sharing best practices, connecting CAP sites together and creating strong social networks within the CAP community.

Some of this networking is already happening now at a regional level and informally amongst a small number of people working at the national level. However, there is a need to take more concerted steps to help the CAP community ‘work like a network’. This would be the role of the National CAP Network.

### **What would it do?**

Connecting local CAP networks and other stakeholders, the National CAP Network would take on a number of specific roles and tasks. These include:

- **Advising government** including Industry Canada through the creation of a National CAP Advisory Committee;
- Acting as a **national level policy voice**, working with government and other stakeholder to create a policy and funding environment that promotes digital inclusion;
- **Facilitating communication** amongst local CAP operators and with other stakeholders such as government, business and at risk communities;
- Create community-based, nationally coordinated **research and documentation** including the collection of best practices and the creation of an annual Digital Divide Report Card;
- Develop flexible **standards** that CAP sites can strive towards as they work to meet the needs of their local communities.

These roles and activities would expand and evolve over time, with the policy and communications roles taking priority during the early stages of network development.

### **How would it work?**

A broad-based process of network development is needed to determine exactly how this network should operate and be governed. As a starting point to this process, the following approaches and principles are offered:

- The Network needs to be **recognized as a credible entity** by all stakeholders including government. This does not mean that it needs to be an independently registered non-profit organization. The Network could be housed in an existing organization, at least in the beginning.
- At least one **real live person** must be hired from the outset, with more staff coming on later. This person should be knowledgeable about digital inclusion issues, skilled at facilitating and empowering others and able to work with a variety of stakeholders.
- The Network needs to be **representative of broad interest areas** including both CAP networks and representatives of priority communities that the CAP networks aim to serve.

- **Strategic alliances** should play a defining role in the approach of the Network, making it possible for the Network to focus on core policy and communications issues while at the same time addressing other concerns by partnering with others.

It cannot be emphasized enough that the Network will need both a facilitative leader and a strong 'business plan' to succeed. If the Vancouver Summit approves the idea of a National CAP Network, a network development process should begin immediately with the aim of developing a business plan and finding a person to play a leadership role.

## Appendix A: The Pictou Proclamation

**Pictou Proclamation  
National Community Access Program Summit  
November 22-23, 2003  
Pictou County, Nova Scotia**

Whereas the Community Access Program, through Industry Canada, enables people to enhance the socio-economic development of their communities through connections to new communication technologies that are emerging in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century;

Whereas local, regional and provincial organizations have partnered with the Government of Canada, primarily through Industry Canada, to achieve the vision of equitable opportunity for access for all people in every community, to make Canada the most connected nation in the world;

Whereas these local, regional and provincial organizations have added value to this important vision through their own commitment, innovation, and partnership initiatives;

Whereas the Community Access Program, led by Industry Canada, with its federal, provincial, regional, municipal and community colleagues, has assisted communities to prove it can effectively support community socio-economic development and achieve this vision of a connected Canada; and Whereas socio-economic development is essential to all communities across Canada;

We, the undersigned, believe that the Government of Canada should continue its leadership role through the Community Access Program and leverage its significant experience to expand its mandate to support community socio- economic development.

Therefore, we request that the Government of Canada:

1. Establish a national policy and plan to lead delivery of connectivity and access strategies aimed to develop community socio-economic opportunity, equity, inclusion and well-being;
2. Provide sufficient multi-year funding to enable effective community-based planning and delivery;
3. Establish, in concert with local Community Access partners, accountability criteria that enables community development and innovation; and
4. Establish a National Community Access Steering Committee to liaise with provincial, regional and local partners.

Signed Sunday November 23, 2003 at Pictou County, Nova Scotia

## Appendix B: National CAP Pictou-Vancouver Working Group

The following is a list people who participated on the National CAP Council Working Group. This group was formed as an ad hoc voluntary committee at the Pictou CAP Summit.

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