



**Work. Connect. Create. Transform.**



**Centre for Social Innovation**

215 Spadina Avenue, Suite 120  
Toronto, ON M5T 2C7

**[www.socialinnovation.ca](http://www.socialinnovation.ca)**

## Overview

The Centre for Social Innovation is a hub for Toronto's social mission sector – a place where innovative people and organizations come together to ignite and advance new ideas that can, and are, changing the world! Our Vital Idea is based on a simple observation: ***Great initiatives need space to develop and grow.*** The Centre for Social Innovation (CSI) has responded to this need by creating a dynamic convergence facility that provides workspace, shared services, programming and incubation support to Toronto's social mission groups and social entrepreneurs. Together with its tenants, CSI creates a healthy work environment, builds a space for shared learning, fosters a sense of community, and supports established and emerging leaders from across the sector.



Our approach is rooted in our values of community, collaboration and entrepreneurialism. We believe in the strength of our sector's diversity. We believe in the power of social capital. We believe that great things happen when you bring together a mix of creative and socially conscious innovators. Most of all, we believe that, *by working together we can reduce costs, forge powerful relationships, and spark new ideas to improve our city and our world.*

## Our Vital Idea

The CSI collocation model allows its tenants to focus on their missions instead of administration. By working together, CSI tenants have access to office facilities and amenities they simply couldn't afford on their own.

Canada's social mission sector<sup>1</sup> is made up of hundreds of thousands of small organizations that work on limited resources to pursue their missions and to effect change in their communities. Approximately 80% of nonprofits and charities working across Canada have less than five paid staff and operate on annual budgets of less than \$250,000<sup>2</sup>. These small groups report limited access to core funding, and hence struggle through the burden of office management and administration<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, they are frequently in substandard office facilities, work in isolation from their peers, and are forced to quickly scale up and scale down based on the ebb and flow of project funding. The Centre for Social Innovation has imagined and created a Vital Idea to directly address these needs.

Our model is simple. The Centre for Social Innovation has secured 19,000 square feet of beautiful workspace at 215 Spadina Avenue - a renovated historic warehouse in downtown Toronto. We have subdivided this space into a series of office suites, desk spaces, meeting rooms and common areas. Tenants pay rent based on the size of their workspace, an equivalent portion of the common space, and a small margin to cover the salary of the office management. Tenants also pay a monthly amenities fee to cover the costs of internet access, kitchen facilities, security, cleaning, photocopier, fax machine, audio-visual equipment and much more. The results have been remarkably clear: *By*

<sup>1</sup> We use the term "social mission sector" to describe the great variety of organizations – whether nonprofit, charitable, for-profit, or grassroots – working toward our common good.

<sup>2</sup> Cornerstones of community: highlights of the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations. Michael Hall et al. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Small Business and Special Surveys Division, c2004.

<sup>3</sup> The capacity to serve: a qualitative study of the challenges facing Canada's nonprofit and voluntary organizations. Michael Hall et al. Toronto: Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, c2003.

*pooling the limited resources of a large number of groups, we can leverage 'the power of the collective' to achieve more individually and together.*

But that is only part of the picture! For all of the financial incentive for being part of the Centre for Social Innovation, there is something even more essential that drives their participation: *Community*. Our tenants tell us (see Evaluation, Attachment 4) that they want to work in a dynamic facility that is filled with

The **Stephen Lewis Foundation** got its start at CSI. Starting with 1.5 FTE, the Foundation grew to 3 FTE, then 5 FTE and then outgrew us! When they left, they told us that CSI allowed them to concentrate on building their organization and testing their model, rather than becoming bogged down in office administration.

likeminded, yet diverse, organizations and individuals. For them – and for us – sharing space together means more than simply being office mates. It means sharing ideas, strategies and experience. It means supporting each other. It means working together to build our profile and to connect to new communities. CSI tenants collaborate, learn and grow. And as a result, they become more resilient!

Built into our model is a philosophy of diversity and collaboration. We believe that the arts sector can learn from the environmental community, and that social justice groups have much to teach professional associations. It is CSI's stated goal to begin breaking down the barriers between subsectors and to release the creative energy and potential that comes from cross-sectoral

collaboration. Our tenant listing reflects this tremendous diversity and illustrates our target audience: small, one to four person operations working in a variety of sectors. It is these groups who represent Toronto's – and Canada's – social mission sector. It is these folks most in need of functional workspace and dynamic community. The Centre for Social Innovation offers them both.

Our recent expansion is proof that the model is needed and is working. In June 2006 – two years after first opening our doors – we had a waiting list of over 40 groups hoping to join the Centre. In November 2007, when we decided to increase our size from 6,000 square feet to 16,000 square feet, we hosted information meetings with more than 200 attendees. Before even opening our doors we have filled 19 of 20 office suites and 20 of 35 desk spaces. We anticipate full tenancy by May 2007 – a remarkable achievement that is far ahead of our original projections. Clearly, CSI has envisioned a Vital Idea for Toronto's social mission sector.

Of course, the Centre for Social Innovation is not just a resource for its tenants, but a resource for all of Toronto's social mission community. We invite groups from across the city to take advantage of our space and our programming. Over 100 organizations have used our space to host their own events. Over 5,000 people have participated in these events and in the Centre's own capacity-building workshops. Without the Centre for Social Innovation, Toronto's social mission community would have less opportunity to attend and host such important events.

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#### Our tenants include:

Ability Online  
African Canadian Social Development Council  
Canadian Centre for Pollution Prevention  
Canadian Environmental Grantmakers' Network  
Care Canada  
Centre for Business Success for the Disabled  
Chinese Canadian National Council  
Comet art + design  
Communicopia.Net  
Community Bandwidth  
Community Cultural Impresarios  
Conservation Council of Ontario  
Coptor Productions  
Corporate Knights  
Creative Trust  
Documentary Organization of Canada  
Facilitators without Borders  
Five Minutes to Midnight  
Friends of Fort York  
Grassroots Youth Collaborative  
Great Lakes United  
Hill Strategies Arts Research  
Hogtown Consulting  
Hospitality Workers IMPACS  
MarkPowell.ca  
[murmur]  
Nat'l Action Committee on the Status of Women  
National Anti-Racism Council of Canada  
No. 9 Contemporary Art Organization of Calypso Performing Artists  
Partnership Platform  
Professional Writers Ass. of Canada  
rabble.ca  
Recycling Council of Ont.  
Remarkk Consulting  
Sage Centre  
Shift Unlimited  
Spacing Magazine  
Sustainability Network  
Te Amin Musical Theatre  
Telecentres.Org  
The Pembina Institute  
Tides Canada  
Vision Legacy  
Wireless Toronto  
Women's Healthy Environment Network

Finally, the Centre is also a *launchpad* for new social mission initiatives. There are thousands of Torontonians with great ideas for improving our city and our world. But new ideas need structural and strategic support to get off the ground. The Centre for Social Innovation incubates and supports emerging projects, providing services that range from free workspace and back-end administrative support to organizational and strategic planning. Through our incubation activities, CSI helps ensure that promising community initiatives have the best possible chance of success.

The **Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE)** is a collaboration of eleven groups from environment, child and health sectors working together to eliminate toxics from children's environments. CPCHE has reached over 300,000 parents and service providers. CPCHE plays a pivotal role in promoting more child protective policy.

CSI plays a key role as incubator and secretariat for CPCHE, ensuring that this fantastic collaboration reaches its full potential.

The Centre for Social Innovation has been instrumental in the launch of **Green Enterprise Toronto (GET)**. GET encourages consumers and businesses to buy and produce goods and services based on their shared commitment to "living economy" principles: strong communities, a healthy environment, providing meaningful employment, and buying local first.

CSI provides GET with workspace, back-end financial management, and strategic planning support.

High school students across Toronto engage in co-op placements. But almost all are placed in traditional for-profit organizations. We're working with an inspired youth to develop the **Semesters for Social Innovation** program, which places high school students in progressive social, cultural, environmental, and political organizations.

CSI is helping to develop the program plan and to connect its own network of supporters to this great initiative.

CSI benefits from the tremendous contributions of its staff, board and supporters. Tonya Surman, the Executive Director and one of the key visionaries behind CSI, has been working with social mission groups to collaborate, innovate and overcome barriers for over 15 years. Margaret Zeidler is a CSI Board member, the owner and operator of the building at 215 Spadina Avenue, and another key visionary behind CSI. Margaret has devoted the past decade to the development of creative and environmentally sensitive urban space for artists and cultural entrepreneurs, as evidenced by her success with 401 Richmond. Both women are social entrepreneurs and partners in the Centre for Social Innovation, and are committed to its ongoing success. But they don't work alone! They are backed by a terrific staff team and a strong and active board of directors.

The Centre for Social Innovation is unique within the city of Toronto and is one of only a small handful of similar initiatives worldwide. The CSI model stands out in that it is a working demonstration of:

- the relationship between space, community and collaboration;
- how social sector groups can collaborate to increase efficiencies and effectiveness;
- the value of cross-sectoral clustering, showing how we can break down the barriers that prevent learning and systemic change;
- how space can galvanize social entrepreneurship by providing access to

#### What type of events take place at CSI?

Press conferences, book launches, communities of practice, breakfast forums, documentary screenings, board meetings, and tons of capacity-building workshops that address issues ranging from fundraising and marketing to IT development and program planning.

connections, expert support and a hive of activity;

- how community can work together to create solutions that are *for the community and by the community*;
- the power of collective action to build a more resilient and effective social mission sector.

***The Centre is not talking about it or planning it – we are doing it!***

Through the strength of our team and our model, we have achieved tremendous success. With additional support and development we can achieve even more, welcoming new tenants, launching and supporting new projects, and providing an even more dynamic hub for Toronto’s social mission community.



## Accomplishments

The Centre for Social Innovation serves Toronto’s social mission sector and therefore serves a variety of communities. Our tenants, incubated projects and programming activities address diverse issues including social justice, the environment, arts and culture, and public space. The CSI community reflects Toronto’s community and all the diversity and dynamism therein.

Our accomplishments in less than three years of operation have been nothing short of remarkable. We have scaled our model from 14 tenants to over 65 tenants – soon to grow to close to 100! We currently incubate five great projects that wouldn’t otherwise have a place to test, develop and scale their ideas. We have hosted over 100 workshops, including sessions on facilitation techniques, working with volunteers, accounting for nonprofits, and introductions to social enterprise. Over 100 groups have used our space in the past two and a half years to reach their communities numbering well into the thousands. We are a hub for new ideas and initiatives and we support the leaders whose projects have the potential to change the world.

*The Centre for Social Innovation creates the space – Toronto’s social mission community animates the space with its energy and ideas.*

The Centre for Social Innovation initiated the **Collaboration Practitioners**

**Community of Practice**

in response to an increasing trend in collaboration, and a lack of support for the project managers and facilitators who make collaboration work. This group meets quarterly to share tips, strategies and to uncover new knowledge about the best ways for moving collaborative projects forward. Topics have addressed themes of power, leadership and governance structures.

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We've shared just a sampling of our accomplishments in the orange boxes throughout this proposal. We'd be pleased to share more!

## Cost/Benefit

A photocopier lease can cost \$250 per month. A fax line \$40 per month. Security, if you can afford it, can be \$50 per month. Cleaning services an additional \$100 per month. A digital projector is over \$2,000. We won't even mention the cost of an office manager and receptionist! These costs demonstrate one of the key motivations behind the Centre for Social Innovation. Why should small organizations pay such high prices for services and amenities they rarely use? And why should they go without them simply because they are too expensive? By pooling the limited resources of small organizations, they can use such amenities more efficiently – and more economically – than they could on their own.

*The Centre for Social Innovation has a clear and sustainable business model with multiple positive social impacts. They not only provide physical space for new and exciting organizations to grow, but they represent a symbol for Torontonians that social innovation is possible and that there is no shortage of creative and professional people to fuel it. Their approach is fresh and attracts the most innovative people and organizations. I have no doubt that they will succeed in exciting, mobilizing, hosting and connecting the new generations of change makers in Toronto.*

- Andres Dussan, Director,  
Ashoka Canada

Similarly, should a three-person organization rent a space that can accommodate quarterly meetings of their Board of Directors? Should they pay the associated costs of having an in-house kitchen? Or a reception area? We pool the resources of our tenants to allow them to have access to such facilities *as they need them*. The result: more space for less cost.

Economies of scale and collaboration! By working together our tenants reduce overall costs for services and facilities. No wasted resources!

With respect to CSI's own programming – the events and workshops we put on for our tenants and Toronto's social mission community – we work strictly on a cost recovery model. Participants pay for their own catering and use of the space, but our staff time is not built into the pricing. This allows us to keep costs low and to ensure that price is not a barrier for participation.

Finally, CSI space is made available to the sector at a low cost and on a sliding scale from \$8 to \$12 per hour. This allows even the smallest community groups to host events in our space and reach out and support their target audiences. In renting our space for such low costs, we have been able to reach thousands of members of the sector – and the community at large – with engaging events and workshops.

## ***Great initiatives need space to develop and grow.***

The Centre for Social Innovation has responded by creating such a space: A space for working; a space for connecting; a space for learning; and a space for sparking and growing new ideas. And we are just getting started! We are already bubbling over with other ideas for building the sector's capacity for entrepreneurship and collaboration.

CSI has launched a Social Enterprise Training Program designed to help individual innovators and local nonprofits develop an achievable action plan for their social enterprise ideas.