

01

Work for what you wish for

Many years ago, a good friend created a Christmas card which he sent around to his friends and clients. It read “Work for what you wish for” — which is pretty good advice for leading your life and running your business.

That’s why we thought we’d take a minute to list some of the projects or project ideas we’d like to tackle over the next 18 months. These are the projects we’re wishing for and, who knows, maybe you can point us in the right direction and help make one of our wishes come true.

1. Work with a municipality to involve more citizens in the development of a city’s strategic plan

A municipality’s strategic plan provides the best opportunity for a citizen to influence their city’s priorities and growth. But few bother to take the opportunity, nor do they realize the consequences of their city’s plan until years later when it’s too late. We’d like to turn this around and make a city’s strategic planning exercise as inclusive and important to the democratic life of a city as its election.

2. Renew a union’s internal democratic structures

We’re fascinated by the culture of unions and the role they play in defining the interests of labour. We’d like to take a look inside a Canadian union and see whether a different approach to member participation could ease tensions and help to resolve disputes.

3. Design a process to examine the social experience of growing income inequality

This fall we’re hosting a major conference with Richard Wilkinson based on his landmark book, *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone*. According to Wilkinson, among OECD countries Canada is trending the wrong way. We’re becoming more unequal faster than our OECD peers. We’re interested in how Canadians experience inequality, and what they think needs to be done if we’re to reverse course.

4. Stage a public discussion on end of life care

As a society, we’re pretty good at births and new beginnings, but incredibly poor at managing the final months and weeks of life. This hurts families, costs a fortune and denies dignity to the dying. It’s radioactive for politicians and medical professionals to discuss, which is why we’d like to volunteer.

5. Host a major public process on the introduction of road tolls or new funding sources for public transit in the GTA

We think this issue is ripe for a good public process that raises public understanding about mobility, population growth and urban planning. The GTA needs a big conversation that creates a public mandate to solve regional transportation funding.

6. Assist a country in the transition to democracy

Countries moving towards parliamentary democracy are often expected to make the leap from autocracy to elections in a single bound. We think our work could help cultivate a culture of citizenship in the space between elections by normalizing the idea of public debate, input and equality.

7. Transform old schools into community service and learning centres

Dozens of schools across Toronto are being closed. We’d like to think about other uses for these buildings and how they could be redeveloped as new and important community assets.

8. Design a better public process for the development of major renewable energy sites

Renewable energy seems like a good idea until you decide to put a windmill in a stranger’s backyard. Then, not surprisingly, all hell breaks loose, dividing communities and shredding business plans. We’re convinced there’s a better way.

9. Take our work inside a large corporation

When you have thousands of employees, things tend to get political with different factions pulling in different directions. We want to show that more active forms of employee engagement can translate into greater competitiveness and productivity in the workplace.

10. Reinvent a provincial budget consultation process

This annual roadshow is crying out for reinvention. As governments across the country battle big deficits, we think the time is right to couple a public education campaign focused on financial literacy with a once-in-a-generation discussion about the major trends that are shaping our economy.

// Wish we could look at these or other issues too? Send us your ideas or suggestions: wish@masslbp.com //

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