

# Five Good Ideas®

## Surviving and thriving in social policy



Monday, October 20, 2025 | 1-2 p.m.

Anyone working in social policy knows that it is a challenging field. It seems like we need to make the case time and again as to why it is essential to pay attention to issues such as poverty, affordable housing, and investment in early childhood. We face so many roadblocks as we try to advance constructive change in social policies and programs.

How do we keep at it, and how do we make an impact? Join Sherri Torjman, Social Policy Consultant and former Vice-President of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, to discuss these issues. As the editor of the forthcoming *Caledon Reader*, she has been revisiting the wide-ranging work Caledon engaged in over a 25-year period. It has led her to several important lessons she and her colleagues learned along the way: They sought personal sources of inspiration; they developed various concepts and rigorous methods to guide the formulation of their policy proposals; and they tried many different ways to tell their story.

In this Five Good Ideas webinar, Sherri will share these lessons in the hope that, despite the challenges we invariably will face, social policy remains both a respected and relevant field in Canada.

## Five Good Ideas and resources

**1. Find your North Star:** In challenging times, it is helpful to remember the sources of inspiration that drove you to this work in the first place and that will keep you going.

- Ken Battle and Sherri Torjman. (1995). [Lest We Forget: Why Canada Needs Strong Social Programs](#)

**2. Do your homework:** It is essential to do your homework in any field of practice. In social policy and community-based work, it is important to understand the policy context, policy architecture, and relevant policy grammar.

- Ken Battle and Sherri Torjman. (1993). [Federal Social Programs: Setting the Record Straight](#)

**3. Dream big – and small:** Major structural reforms often take place through smaller, incremental reforms. Strategic and continuous small steps can lead to significant progress over time.

- Ken Battle. (2001). [Relentless Incrementalism: Deconstructing and Reconstructing Canadian Income Security Policy](#)

### Sherri Torjman

Social Policy Consultant and former Vice-President, Caledon Institute of Social Policy



Sherri Torjman is a Public Policy Fellow at the CSA Public Policy Centre and social policy consultant. From 1992 to 2017, she was Vice-President of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, one of Canada's leading social policy think tanks. In this role, she helped to propose and design the Canada Child Benefit and other income security and tax measures. In 1987, Sherri wrote *Welfare in Canada: The Tangled Safety Net*, developing the methodology still published by Maytree for calculating social assistance incomes across Canada. In recognition of her policy work, Sherri was awarded the 2017 Senate 150 Anniversary Medal, 2012 Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, 2011 Champion of Human Services Award from the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, and 2010 Top 25 Canadians Award from the Canadian Association of Retired Persons. She is a Board member of Prosper Canada, an organization that works to expand economic opportunity for people living in poverty.

**4. Create the pathways:** Doing the relevant and often extensive background work enables the implementation of policy proposals.

- Ken Battle and Michael Mendelson. (1997). [Child Benefit Reform in Canada: an evaluative framework and future directions](#)
- Keith Horner. (2005). [The Disability Savings Plan: Contribution Estimates and Policy Issues](#)

**5. Tell your story:** It's one thing to formulate high-quality policy proposals. But no proposal will advance unless the ideas and recommendations are well delivered.

- Ken Battle and Sherri Torjman. (1993). [Federal Social Policy Agenda: Memo to the Next Prime Minister of Canada](#)
- Sherri Torjman. (1993). [Breaking Down the Welfare Wall](#)



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Edited by ALAN BROADBENT and RATNA OMIDVAR

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