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Social Procurement a Game Changer for Cities **(Podcast)**

Image



A conversation with David LePage of Buy Social Canada

David LePage has spent a lifetime building community. Almost 20 years ago he and a small group realized social procurement was an untapped motherlode of potential. Since then, he and his colleagues have been making steady progress in bringing the practice to life.

Social procurement has made it into the mandate letters of Canada's federal ministries. Partnerships with the federal government in which federal funds are made available will require social procurement practices to be in place.

“Every purchase has an economic, environmental and social impact, whether intended or not. Social procurement is about capturing those impacts and seeking to make intentional positive contributions to both the local economy and the overall vibrancy of the community,” says David, managing partner of [Buy Social Canada](#).

Social procurement is a way for cities, for example, to leverage their current spending for social gains. By including social goals in requests for proposals and other spending, cities, organizations, and companies become an all-important customer to social enterprises.

Social enterprises function in the marketplace but apply their revenues and ‘profits’ to the pursuit of their social goals, rather than for the distribution of profits to investors or owners. That difference enables them to be reasonably competitive in the marketplace while supplying work environments and opportunities suited to people who experience barriers to employment.

Cities for example, can leverage their current spending on everything from pencils and office supplies, catering to mattress recycling, landscaping to land stewardship.

As a result, social procurement makes it possible to directly address local problems and possibilities at a local level and with local money. Poverty, joblessness and underemployment, even homelessness can be addressed this way. Social determinants of health will all find a home in the partnership between social procurement and social and local enterprise.

This is a big deal.

Social procurement is straightforward but not necessarily simple. Purchasers have to add social and/or green goals to their purchasing requirements. Evaluation is needed. And, social enterprises require good governance, operations skills, the ability to deliver quality goods and services, as well as show they have the supports in place to ensure the success of the people working in them.

In this podcast conversation, David shares how ‘the light went on’ around social procurement, the winding road to overcoming hurdles, and the sure-footed steps that can be taken along the road to success. He also shares stories of how purchasers enjoy exercising new-found capacity to make a difference in their

community through the great work they do every day. Calgary and Edmonton are leading the way. In British Columbia 21 municipalities are working together with social procurement as a strategy for rural economic development. David has noticed that women in leadership, some of whom are mayors and purchasers, are appearing at the leading edge of the social procurement movement.

To learn more visit BuySocialCanada.com.

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