

inclusive
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CANADA - TORONTO

**Community Voices,
Perspectives and Priorities**

MARCH 2005

Report of
The Toronto Civic Panel

Prepared By
The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto

A partner of
Inclusive Cities Canada: A Cross-Canada Civic Initiative
<http://www.inclusivecities.ca>



COMMUNITY
SOCIAL PLANNING
COUNCIL OF TORONTO

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It is our hope that the work of this project will contribute to the development of a strong social infrastructure for the City, to serve as the foundation of a diverse and inclusive Toronto.

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

‘Social inclusion is the capacity and willingness of our society to keep all groups within reach of what we expect as a society - the social commitment and investments necessary to ensure that all people are close to (within reach of) our common aspirations, common life and its common wealth¹’

Social Inclusion is Key to Individual and Collective Well-Being

An inclusive community is one that provides opportunities for the optimal well-being and healthy development of all children, youth and adults. All members of the community potentially gain from social inclusion – those who are vulnerable for reasons of poverty, racism, or fear of difference – as well as the broader community that benefits when everyone is able to participate as a valued and contributing member.

Population health research has taught us that inequality hurts everyone, not just those at the bottom. Similarly, while inclusion provides obvious dividends to individuals and groups who are marginalized, it benefits everyone – both in terms of the vitality a society derives when all its members fully contribute and by removing the liabilities associated with exclusion².

Inclusive cities and communities are critical not only to the well-being of individuals, but also to the social and economic health of nations. Cities are at a crossroads and are being challenged to either become more inclusive or to enter into decline. The Cities Alliance, an international initiative launched by the World Bank and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, expressed this challenge as follows:

‘The social and economic future of countries is increasingly being determined in their urban areas . . . Two alternative scenarios are emerging: one of cities characterized by increasing poverty, social exclusion and decline; the other of inclusive cities characterized by equitable and sustainable growth³’

Internationally, inclusive cities initiatives focus on areas as varied as building child-friendly cities, promoting good urban governance, and strategies for accepting growing urban diversity.

¹ Freiler, Christa (2001). *What needs to change?* Concept paper prepared for the Laidlaw Foundation.

² Backgrounder (2001). *A New Way of Thinking? Towards a Vision of Social Inclusion*.

³ The Cities Alliance. *City Development Strategies: The Cities Alliance Perspective*. [undated]

In Canada, social inclusion has the potential to act as a guiding framework for two inter-related creative projects: advancing the well-being of Canadians and urban nation-building. People's well-being is closely tied to where they live. Therefore, it is in cities and communities across Canada that children, youth and adults first experience inclusion or exclusion. The quality of neighbourhoods and communities, the common public spaces where people interact and share experiences, and the adequacy of a city's social infrastructure all contribute to creating environments that either welcome and include or reject and polarize.

Community voices first identified the importance of social inclusion as a goal of community practice and public policy. The federal government's social development ministry now also recognizes the important link between well-being and social inclusion. Social Development Canada describes its mandate as:

'[Building] a Canada where the capacities of individuals, children, families and communities are strengthened in order to promote social inclusion, participation and well-being⁴'.

Recognizing that "Canada's quality of life depends on strong, vibrant and sustainable cities and communities", the federal government has introduced the New Deal for Cities and Communities. One of its key components is to "start to deliver stable, predictable, long-term funding for cities and communities in urban and rural areas⁵." To date, \$1.3 billion in new revenues, to be shared among municipal governments in Canada, has been committed to maintain and replenish physical infrastructure programs, such as public transit.

From a social inclusion perspective, both social and physical infrastructure are required to create strong and vibrant communities and cities. Social inclusion integrates and promotes this interdependence between physical and social infrastructure. According to Clutterbuck and Novick (2003),

'Within a decade or so cities will have either "strong" or "weak" infrastructures, reflecting the combined quality of both their physical and social infrastructures and how well these are integrated and mutually reinforcing. "Weak" infrastructure will indicate a continuing separation of the physical and social requirements of the city'.

⁴ Social Development Canada, 2004-2005 estimates, A Report on Plans and Priorities

⁵ In addition to funding, the components are: vision, relationships, and cities and communities lens. New Deal for Cities and Communities, http://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/ndcc/index_e.shtml

‘In contrast, municipalities developing “strong” infrastructure will integrate physical and social planning and development and will invest adequately in both’.

With up to 80 per cent of our population now residing in large, medium and small urban municipalities, and half living in large urban centres across the country, we are compelled to address the implications of this trend for urban life in the Canada of today and the future. A social inclusion lens has obvious implications for assessing and shaping urban social infrastructure, the mix of community supports and the human services that provide stability and advance social development within cities.

Introducing Inclusive Cities Canada: A Cross-Canada Civic Initiative

Inclusive Cities Canada: A Cross-Canada Civic Initiative (ICC) is a collaborative venture of five social planning organizations across Canada and the social infrastructure sub-committee of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). The aim of ICC is to strengthen the capacity of cities to create and sustain inclusive communities for the mutual benefit of all people. Specifically, its goals are:

- To promote social inclusion as key to the development of a Canadian urban strategy
- To support civic capacity to build inclusive communities in which all people are able to participate as valued and contributing members
- To secure a stronger voice for civic communities in national social policy
- To ensure that community voices of diversity are recognized as core Canadian ones.

Inclusive Cities Canada is a unique partnership of community leaders and elected municipal politicians with a major focus on children, youth and families - particularly those from diverse and vulnerable populations. The social planning partners are:

- Social Planning and Research Council of BC (with a focus on Vancouver and North Vancouver)
- Edmonton Social Planning Council
- Community Development Halton (with a focus on Burlington)
- Community Social Planning Council of Toronto
- Human Development Council of Saint John (with a focus on the Greater Saint John Area)

The strategic direction for the cross-Canada work comes from a National Steering Committee with members drawn from the partners. (See Appendix B for a list of Steering Committee members.)

The federal government, through Social Development Canada, provides multi-year core funding. The Laidlaw Foundation, a private Canadian foundation based in Ontario, provided supplementary start-up funds.

The first phase of the initiative involved research, analysis and reporting. The National Steering Committee developed a common framework and methodology for the local research, including identifying the common dimensions of inclusion. Each city established a Civic Panel to provide leadership and direction to the initiative locally. All Civic Panels are co-chaired by a municipal politician, either a mayor or city councillor, and a community leader.

Social Inclusion and the Dimensions of an Inclusive City

Inclusive Cities Canada recognizes social inclusion as both a process and an outcome. As a process, social inclusion promotes the open, welcome and supported participation of all people in social planning and decision-making affecting their lives. It requires the active engagement of the community's full diversity in civic dialogue and public debate on policy issues.

As an outcome, an inclusive city is one that “provides opportunities for the optimal well-being and healthy development of all children, youth and adults”. Practical expressions or ways of promoting inclusion are: universal access to meaningful opportunities in education, the arts, culture, and recreation; relevant health services, school curricula adapted to specific needs and strengths, family support services and respite, safe streets and parks, and responsive governance on all levels⁶.

Inclusive Cities Canada builds on previous research and community development work undertaken by the Laidlaw Foundation and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, including a series of local soundings in 10 cities⁷. Based on this research and a review of Canadian and international literature, ICC defined the following five dimensions of inclusion as central to building inclusive cities and communities:

1. Diversity

The adoption and implementation of policies, plans and concrete actions by key public institutions that provide valued recognition to individuals and groups and reflect and respond to the full diversity of the population.

⁶ Adapted from the Canadian Institute of Child Health Communiqué (2002)

⁷ The findings and recommendations are in Clutterbuck and Novick (2003)

2. Human Development

A focus on the development of talents, skills and capacities of everyone from early childhood through the transition years into and including adulthood.

3. Civic Engagement

Strategies and actions to promote participation of individuals and groups in the full range of civic and community life to enhance social interaction, harmonious neighbourhoods and active citizenship.

4. Living Conditions

Provisions for personal and family security (food/nutrition, income and employment, housing, community safety) that minimize disparities in community living conditions within the population.

5. Community Services.

A well-coordinated system of public and community support services connected to strong networks of informal and personal support to address the diverse circumstances of vulnerable people.

These dimensions became the basis for the research questions that explored people's perceptions of their city's 'inclusivity'. Community focus groups, local soundings, feedback forums and electronic surveys were used in different ways by local ICC partners to examine the level of inclusion in key areas such as: public education, recreation, transportation, policing and justice, local government, early childhood development, and community safety. (The research process and the areas of inquiry will be discussed more fully in the next section.)

Community Voices, Perspectives and Priorities reflects and analyzes what was heard, identifies formative themes and issues, and puts forward priorities for local action. Civic panels have been key to the process. This is their report.

SECTION II: COMMUNITY FINDINGS

A. OVERVIEW

Context

Fifty years ago, Toronto became the first region in North America to pioneer a metropolitan system of governance in which the established urban centre and the new post war suburbs were joined together to manage rapid urban growth. The 1958 draft official metropolitan plan insisted that lower cost public and private housing be included in suburban development. As a result, diverse social populations were able to settle across the region. The social diversity of the suburbs led to a metropolitan mix of populations, and the avoidance of class and race enclaves in the urban centre (Novick, 1997). Ethnic clusters could be found across the region, but these tended to be open clusters with the presence of a cultural mix within each.

Strong economic and public foundations sustained the social development of Metropolitan Toronto. Labour markets generally provided newcomers with prospects for sustaining employment. Toronto benefited from having high quality public services - a large supply of social housing, a well funded public education system with special funding for inner cities, relatively affordable and well-maintained public transit in every part of the region, a strong network of libraries and public spaces, initiatives in the late eighties to improve incomes and life opportunities for people on social assistance, and the introduction of permanent public core funding of community-based services offered in neighbourhoods or by ethno-cultural groups.

Strong federal programs protected vulnerable workers and families in every part of Canada, including Toronto. Unemployment insurance provided broad coverage to full and part time workers. The Canada Assistance Plan saw the federal government provide 50 cents of every dollar that provinces spent on income assistance and social services to the needy. Medicare became a major source of civic cohesion in cities, with one common system collectively funded for everyone across the life cycle and from all backgrounds.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Toronto was highly regarded by much of the world as an exemplary innovative city. Unlike many other regions in North America, Toronto effectively responded to rapid population growth and extensive immigration. Intelligent public planning, secure public investments in social infrastructure, and an efficient public system of social provision created a very livable, vibrant diverse city. (City of Toronto 2001a; CSPC-T 2001; Toronto City Summit Alliance 2003)

However despite past achievements, including a thriving economy in the late 1990s, income disparities and poverty have been rising. These changes are occurring at a time when the need for public investments is growing and the financial capacity of local government to fund such investments is falling. The City of Toronto has endured great financial and social costs since the amalgamation in 1998 of seven municipal authorities. Realignment of the longstanding provincial-municipal cost-sharing arrangement and downloading of services has impacted the City and its communities. The City is now financially responsible for a series of services that once fell under provincial authority such as social housing, transportation infrastructure, income redistributive programs, and a broader range of children's services. Nevertheless, the province continues to retain policy and regulatory authority, limiting municipal flexibility for managing and providing services.

As Canada's largest urban centre, Toronto has attracted and made great efforts to accommodate its diverse and unique population. Forty-seven per cent of the City of Toronto is foreign born. This figure keeps growing because 80% of recent immigrants coming to the GTA settle in Toronto. The City also has high numbers of youth and seniors living alone and low-income families.

Vulnerability, marginality, and perceptions and experiences of exclusion are increasing across Toronto. Despite its improving economy, the gap between rich and poor has been escalating at an alarming rate. 550,000 people and one-third of children live in poverty (City of Toronto 2003c; Toronto Community Foundation 2004). In addition, poverty rates are greater among visible minority families with children; 38% in 2001 compared to 17% among non-visible minority families.

Homelessness, like poverty, is on the rise. Homelessness is commonly understood to mean a condition of people who live outside, stay in emergency shelters, spend the majority of their income on rent, or live in overcrowded, substandard conditions that put them at considerable risk of becoming homeless. Despite some growth in Toronto's economy, homelessness persists; it is exacerbated by an inadequate supply of social housing. Homelessness remains the most visible manifestation of Toronto's housing crisis. Toronto possesses the highest rents in Canada, with rents growing by 31% between 1997 and 2002. One-fifth of tenant households are paying more than 50% of their income on rent. In 2004, some food bank users in Toronto were spending up to 75% of their income on rent.

In 2003, the waiting list for social housing totalled 71,000. Only 25% of the supportive housing target had been met, and nearly 33,000 people stayed in Toronto's emergency shelters. Access to sustainable and

appropriate housing is directly link to health and well-being (Bryant 2004). Housing insecurity can lead to increased stress, incidences of social exclusion, illness and disease.

Growing rates of poverty and homelessness have had a considerable impact on members of diverse and vulnerable communities. Increasing need for services and resources has emerged at a time of greater social cutbacks. For example, the introduction of fees for the use of public spaces, such as schools, community centres and City facilities, has become a significant barrier for low-income children, youth, families and seniors and special needs populations (City of Toronto 2004a). User fees have even compromised the nature of schools as community hubs. Following changes in Ontario's education funding formula, school boards introduced drastic cuts that resulted in high fees for the community use of schools. Schools have traditionally been the primary site for bringing together distinct communities for a range of various activities; they have been essential sites of cultural and community solidarity and capacity-building (Qadeer & Kumar 2003).

As living conditions deteriorate, communities have become increasingly reliant upon the non-profit sector to satisfy their growing needs. Non-profit and grassroots organizations are essential in service provision, planning and coordination, public education, and citizenship participation. In addition, Community Health Centres (CHC) are extremely significant in health care and health promotion, and provide the most direct access to culturally appropriate high quality services. Yet despite its importance, the community sector's capacity is continually undermined by a lack of resources. Two issues exist: (i) the shift from core to project funding, has reduced the ability of agencies to address community needs, and (ii) financial instability has limited the capacities of agencies to undertake inclusion initiatives (CSPC-T 2003; Eakin 2004).

The repercussions of under-funding have been considerable. Community organizations have been hindered from actively engaging in their communities, while their organizational capacity has been reduced to the point where their sustainability is compromised and questionable. The impact has been greatest for vulnerable communities and families, who rely on these organizations for a variety of supports including, among others, settlement, health and childcare.

Building community capacity necessitates the involvement and contribution of community and grassroots organizations and networks. Their support is vital to ensure the development of strong and civically active communities as well as sustainable community and social infrastructures. These are key elements towards the creation of an inclusive society, one where everyone is able to participate as a valued and contributing member of the community.

Toronto's response, like other cities across Canada, has been to focus on the crisis of urban physical infrastructure. With the exception of issues such as homelessness and affordable housing, there has been little discussion over the social and community infrastructure of cities. Social and community infrastructure may be defined as a series of locally delivered services and supports provided either directly by the City or in partnership with other public or non-profit community agencies. Social infrastructure comprises both physical facilities such as hospitals, social housing and schools, and services including childcare, social assistance, and public health (Clutterbuck 2002: 2).

The strength of the City has been grounded in its social infrastructure of resources and services, which have assisted people with various vulnerabilities such as: low and modest incomes, lone parenthood with limited resources, unstable employment, homelessness, domestic violence, settlement issues, lack of mobility, isolation, physical and/or intellectual disabilities, and aging. When this infrastructure weakens, the effects are prevalent and experienced citywide, particularly for vulnerable populations such as women alone with children, young families, Aboriginal peoples, recent immigrants and refugees, and people of colour. Rebuilding this infrastructure is just as vital to the civic capacity and future of the City as is the renewal of transit and other physical infrastructure.

‘City Council and civic leaders must recognize social and community infrastructure as a priority that is as important to the quality of life in Toronto as physical infrastructure. Resources to develop the City’s social capacities should be included in the current debate on the future of the City and new financing arrangements with senior governments’.
(Ibid, pg. 4)

Social vulnerabilities possess both common and distinct dimensions. Circumstances can become more challenging during different life stages, transitional periods, economic conditions, or withdrawal of essential public benefits: ‘A healthy city is one where social supports are available to accommodate a wide range of life circumstances, and to ensure that vulnerabilities do not lead to states of risk for people and communities’ (CSPC-T 2001, pg. 7). In addition, the intersection of identities such as race, religion, gender, disability, place of origin, sexual orientation, and gender identity may intensify states of vulnerability (City of Toronto 2003b; Derencinovic 2004).

Preserving social cohesion involves sustaining civic capacity to strengthen communities and eliminate social vulnerabilities. Strong and supportive communities are belonging, caring, proud and inclusive environments that provide opportunities for community and civic engagement, and are fundamental to continuing social development. Civic engagement may be defined as a process where community

members are requested to reflect upon policy choices that inform political decision-making. People are encouraged to become involved in building their community through various initiatives such as activism, volunteering, and participation in government processes. Civic engagement strengthens the commitment of community members, builds social capital, and ensures accountability and a more transparent decision-making process.

The City of Toronto is starting to recognize its responsibility to promote civic education among youth, immigrants and refugees⁸. The Toronto Youth Cabinet seeks to engage young people across the City in civic and community service and advocacy. (City of Toronto 2003a; 2001b). Youth are eager to become more involved and accepted in local decision-making. According to one youth:

‘By not involving us in processes or in decision-making, and by not allowing us an equal opportunity to contribute, we become alienated from the system. This alienation means we may be less inclined in the future to participate in a system that is not representative of our needs (e.g. voting). Institutions are designed to help, teach, support and foster the development of youth, but these very institutions view us as being incapable of helping ourselves, then we may start to believe this or it may cause us to resent these institutions and only further intensify our lack of engagement and sense of exclusion’. (Ma 2004, pg. 16)

Effective engagement of all community members is essential in order to ensure the development of an equitable, equal, accessible and cohesive society where all members of society benefit from the inclusion of all others.

Engagement for young people starts in schools. Successful participation in community life begins with inclusive education; it is both a fundamental right and basic necessity. Inclusive education is the stage where children and adults learn to integrate into and become active members of society (Inclusion International 2004). For instance, people with higher levels of education tend to be well-integrated within the paid labour force, possess economic security, participate in various community activities, and enjoy better health and well being (L’Institut Roehrer Institute 2004). Nevertheless, children and youth from more marginalized communities and others with physical and/or intellectual disabilities are often excluded within the education system as well as from schools of choice (Barata 2003). Much research has highlighted the way in which different factors such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion and language occupy a central role in students’ educational performances, ambitions and achievement. According to

⁸ ‘Many ethnic and cultural groups in Toronto are generally not involved in the political area. Those populations’ confusion about and distrust of “the system” promote their apathy and, even worse, their cynicism. Toronto suffers from the lack of their leadership’ (Zanana Akande, President, Urban Alliance on Race Relations and former Member of Provincial Parliament; cited in Toronto Community Foundation 2004, pg. 17).

Dei, racial biases, discriminations, exclusions and inequalities are continually produced in Canadian educational systems and significantly impact immigrants, Aboriginals and African Canadians (APCT 2004; Dei 2004; Metcalfe 2003).

Inclusive education and welcoming school environments are integral first steps towards building a more inclusive society. According to Bach, it is imperative to develop a 'social inclusion as solidarity agenda', one that is built upon a human rights strategy:

'A social inclusion as solidarity agenda focuses on the process of bringing children and families who are poor back in, of including them among us, of making them matter in a way that will and commitment follow. A solidarity agenda...creates the public consciousness and commitment for public policies and practices to make sure it gets there'. (Bach 2002)

Research Process

A common framework and methodology for conducting the local research identified five common dimensions of social inclusion: Diversity, Human Development, Civic Engagement, Living Conditions, and Community Services. Each dimension possesses three areas of inquiry:

Dimensions of Inclusion	Cross-Canada Common Areas of Inquiry		
Diversity	Local Government	Publicly Funded Education	Policing & Justice System
Human Development	Early Childhood Education	Publicly Funded Education	Recreation/Arts/Culture
Civic Engagement	Local Government	Public Spaces	Community Capacities
Living Conditions	Income & Employment	Housing	Community Safety
Community Services	Healthcare	Crisis Services	Transportation & Mobility

A focus group process was designed and structured in each city. The purpose of the focus groups was to bring together the knowledge and experiences of various people active throughout the City to serve as key informants and to discuss one of the five dimensions (including respective areas of inquiry) of social inclusion, as well as proposals for change. Group responses from the Toronto focus groups have been analyzed and reviewed and formative themes identified; they are outlined in Part B of this section.

On the basis of the analysis, the Civic Panel agreed that circumstances facing diverse and vulnerable populations required further investigation. As a result, thirteen local soundings were organized between July and November 2004 with community members and service providers familiar with the conditions of the population. Populations reviewed included: (i) women who have experienced abuse, (ii) ethno-racial women with disabilities, (iii) newcomers, (iv) youth, (v) Aboriginal peoples, (vi) members of the Flemington Park community, (vii) people labelled having intellectual disabilities, (viii)

gay/lesbian/bisexual transgendered (GLBT) youth and (ix) GLBT seniors, (x) labour market bridging programs for immigrant pharmacists⁹, (xi) homeless women, (xii) ethno-cultural seniors, and (xiii) frontline youth workers. Findings are reported on page 31.

In order to ensure maximum participation and fulfill a commitment to focus group and local sounding participants, three community feedback forums were organized in three different parts of the City in October and November 2004. Over 30 participants from focus groups and local soundings attended. Topics of discussion varied between forums and served to corroborate and enrich the research findings. A summary of the feedback forums is provided on page 34.

⁹ This program is entitled the International Pharmacy Graduate (IPG) Program, and is offered through the Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Toronto.

B. FOCUS GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

The objective of the focus groups was to gather together knowledgeable participants active in civic and community affairs to serve as key informants and to discuss one of the five dimensions of social inclusion, as well as suggestions for change. Participants were invited to provide an impressionistic assessment of local conditions in a specific inclusion dimension, including key strengths and weaknesses, and propose priority actions. Measuring community perceptions through a social inclusion framework can serve to encourage both political and community leadership to work more effectively together to build an inclusive community and city.

Ten focus groups were convened in Toronto between April and June 2004. The 3.5-hour structured focus group process involved between 7 and 12 participants in each focus group. Persons invited included:

- Local service providers including the community-based voluntary sector and employers of public services (e.g. schools, public health, family services)
- Recognized community leaders affiliated with locally based groups and networks from City neighbourhoods (e.g. members of neighbourhood centres, parent groups, local ethno-cultural groups, faith community, etc.)

A team of local contacts generated the names of potential invitees to the focus groups. Altogether, 276 people were invited to participate, of which 130 were recent immigrants, refugees and people of colour. Ninety-eight (98) people were able to attend. Participants' perspectives reflected various community backgrounds including personal/professional/volunteer experience in the community with immigrants/refugees, child/youth/family perspective, work with youth, and knowledge and/or understanding of people who are living on low incomes in Toronto.

The focus groups were conducted at the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto. A discussion guide was developed for the focus groups. Co-facilitators, who were trained in the use of the discussion guides in order to ensure consistency of process, conducted all of the sessions. A recorder took detailed notes of the proceedings following a recording protocol.

Following introductions and a brief description of the project, and before group discussions began, participants were requested to submit in writing their individual ratings of states of inclusion for the dimension that they were invited to discuss. This was done in order to ensure that there was no group effect in how people rated their perceptions. The perceptions were statistically summarized and contributed to the group discussion that followed. This involved assessing the strengths and weaknesses

around inclusion in each area of inquiry. The focus group discussions concluded with the formation of sub-groups whose purpose was to come up with recommendations for change.

Participants were invited to evaluate focus group proceedings using a standard evaluation form. Nearly all participants completed the evaluation form. The approval rating was measured by taking the median point for all responses along a five-point scale. Ninety-five per cent (95%) of the participants rated the focus group session as a positive experience. The same percentage felt able to express their thoughts and views satisfactorily during the focus group discussion.

During June and July 2004, local project staff worked on analyzing the focus group findings. Responses and themes generated are presented in this section. All of the findings led to the identification of key social inclusion issues, which were presented to the Civic Panel and form the basis of the recommendations that follow.

1) Dimension: Diversity

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Findings – Key Strengths

- New Mayor is a source of hope for more consultation and engagement with diverse communities
- Participatory budget process was a good start
- Some progress has been made on diversification of City Council
- Majority of City Councillors now recognize the importance of diversity issues
- Existing evidence of a municipal orientation to accommodate gay/lesbian communities
- Greater youth involvement through the Toronto Youth Cabinet; move to start a Senior Cabinet
- Services for diverse populations and communities are being spread throughout the City into areas such as Scarborough
- Toronto is a world leader in setting municipal policies on diversity; yet implementation is not always strong

Findings – Key Weaknesses

- Limited efforts are made to inform and encourage people to participate in the political process – nearly 30% of residents do not have the right to vote; Council does not adequately reflect diversities of the City; financial difficulties exist for minorities and the less advantaged to run for Council; community consultations are selective rather than broad-based
- Deficiencies in public revenue lead to fee increases for essential public services such as transit and recreation, and the reduction of programs such as adult education; shortage of financial resources for implementing Council policy statements (thereby undermining the youth participation goal); failure to fund improvements to services and resources for people with disabilities
- Lack of explicit Council policies to decentralize support systems across the City and to provide special funding for diversity initiatives outside the downtown core
- Need to retain a strong equity focus with the shift to a diversity management designation for the lead City department; perception of differential treatment of diversities by the City contention that the Black community is not serviced as much as other minorities
- Perception that women in a wide range of difficult circumstances are invisible in City policy and planning initiatives

Proposed Actions

- Encourage the introduction of a municipal franchise for all residents of the City to include immigrants and refugees
- Review equity and anti-racist policies in relation to community grants, City services, local government decision-making, and municipal employment practices
- Strong initiatives that are required to diversify City Council should include revised election financing and mentoring of people interested in running for public office
- Strengthen and extend participatory budgeting
- Introduce multilingual civic education publications and programs in local communities on how the City works and ways that residents can participate, contribute, and influence decisions
- Greater active recruitment of and support for people with disabilities is required to ensure full engagement in local governance
- City must continue to advocate for increased revenue sources and funding from senior governments in order to have the capacity to finance the needs of all groups and communities

PUBLICLY FUNDED EDUCATION

Findings – Key Strengths

- Toronto has some of the best trained teachers in the world; good models and resource tools for use in diversity education exist
- Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is trying to reach out to diverse communities, and supports the formation and contribution of groups such as the Somali Parents Advisory Committee
- Some schools support parents by providing interpretation services
- Community agencies and local foundations provide project support for parent involvement
- Segregated schools are gone, but segregated classrooms remain
- The Human Rights Commission is working on a report on the application of zero tolerance policies
- Some TDSB schools are able to deal better with the Safe Schools Act than others, where administrators are conscious and parents stronger and more informed
- TDSB has some good policies, yet implementation is uneven

Findings – Key Weaknesses

- Strong concerns exist over the disproportionate effects and destructive impacts of zero tolerance policies on racialized minorities, working class students, and students with behavioural and intellectual disabilities
- There are serious deficiencies in educational resources in areas such as special needs, student and adult ESL, heritage language, parenting classes, music education, libraries, physical education, arts, supportive education combined with transitional housing for homeless youth, early learning and childcare, tutoring programs, adult education and adult learning centres, seniors and people with disabilities
- Limited resources and initiatives exist for newcomer parents to become knowledgeable about the school system, feel respected and listened to in school councils, and become effective advocates for their children and active contributors to their learning
- Perceptions persist that teachers and administration staff do not sufficiently reflect community diversity, that schools have lower expectations and standards for poorer students, that the educational treatment of students is racially differentiated, and that the curriculum devalues working class trades and non-Western cultures

Proposed Actions

- Rescind the Safe School Act; aim to minimize police involvement in schools; zero tolerance is not the solution
- Explore a wider range of community models that engage all parents, promote school safety, and link resources to schools
- Textbooks, curriculum, and school practices must be more sensitive to diversity
- Restore school community advisors, youth workers, adult education, music and arts programs in schools, community use of school facilities (without fees), and extra curricular programs and resources that respond to different learning styles and capacities
- Actively promote inclusion strategies to include more resources for parent and community engagement and more training for school personnel

POLICE/JUSTICE SYSTEM

Findings – Key Strengths

- Dudley George inquiry may produce some positive recommendations and bring some measure of justice to the system
- People in the gay community report improved treatment due to efforts of community leaders working with police officials
- Perception that people with intellectual disabilities now receive better treatment from the police
- City groups are organizing to promote an effective civilian complaint system
- Emergence of innovative local models, such as the Scadding Court Community Complaints Project

Findings – Key Weaknesses

- Strong perceptions that there are two realities of policing in Toronto – one for white mainstream populations and another for racialized minorities – and that white mainstream populations have little awareness of how racialized minorities across all class levels live in daily apprehension over prospective arbitrary and deprecating contacts with police officials by themselves or family members
- Racial profiling and racialized practices, such as the use of deadly force or overt verbal abuse, are prominent issues
- Persistent perception that historically vulnerable groups are not treated equally or fairly. For example, First Nation peoples contend that they are either over-policed or their calls for help can be ignored; women who have reported domestic violence do not always get quick responses on reported calls; young people of colour contend that they are heavily targeted by police and are under strong surveillance
- National security and the criminalization of dissent are used to justify unfair treatment and abuse
- Police are perceived to operate without effective accountability in their relations with racialized and marginalized populations

Proposed Actions

- Development of a restorative model of policing whereby communities acquire the capacities and resources to work with law enforcement officials to create conditions that enhance perceptions of collective security and personal safety in all communities and among all residents
- Strong commitments are required from senior police officials and the Toronto Police Services Board to restore confidence that chronic issues such as racial profiling and an effective complaints process will be seriously addressed, and that the police will operate under democratic direction and reflect and respect the diversity of people they serve
- Public investments in social infrastructures of opportunity and support for youth are essential
- Police training must continue to address the difficult challenges of working with people living in hardship and distress, who come from many cultural traditions, and who are entitled to the protection of their security and rights

2) Dimension: Human Development

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Findings – Key Strengths

- Quality of care within Toronto is generally higher than in most places in Canada; but loss of funding to centres is eroding quality
- The City has good, highly educated and well-trained centre staff, with lots of opportunity for additional training and upgrading
- There exists a strong civic culture of belief in high quality childcare programs
- The City has promoted the development of family resource programs
- Public funding and resources is provided for early years education; good range of options is emerging
- Preschool programs provide parents with strategies of what they can do at home

Findings – Key Weaknesses

- Limited spaces for children; volumes are inadequate
- Variations in quality of childcare can be found across the City; a lot of programs are ill-equipped to deal with children of special needs
- Some childcare and early year programs have difficulties understanding the difference between children with disabilities and refugee children who are traumatized
- System links between early development years and school age learning needs to be strengthened for both parents and children
- Poor basic living conditions are causing children to be hungry
- Staff are particularly challenged to be culturally and racially sensitive and open to a wide range of inclusive models and approaches; such challenges exist in an environment with limited program resources and financial recognition for the important professional work of early learning and care

Proposed Actions

- Establish stronger connections between early childhood education and public education, especially for children with disabilities
- Welcome and support families in schools as active partners in children's learning and development
- Appropriate and adequate levels of public funding are still required for a broad range of early development and family support services
- Recruit diverse population of early childhood educators
- Rehire forty-four school community advisors; prioritize strengthening linkages with diverse families and communities
- Develop a community hub model for children's services with seamless programming as required
- Recognize the public value of Early Childhood Education (ECE) staff through major improvements in areas of salary, working conditions, and training

PUBLICLY FUNDED EDUCATION

Findings – Key Strengths

- A strong overall desire exists at the school level to offer good quality education to all children
- The school system is committed to open-minded, anti-racist approaches to support the diverse lives of students
- An acknowledged challenge is figuring out how to move commitments on paper to inclusive practices on the ground that engage all parents and benefit all children
- A high level of confidence exists across the population for public education; 95% of parents send their children to public schools, with only 5% of children in private schools
- Toronto is still the best place in the province for school programs such as music and sports, but reliance on parent fundraising is growing
- School is often the only safe place to engage in recreational activity
- The City of Toronto, in contrast to areas like Peel, is more committed to public school attendance by children of illegal immigrants

Findings – Key Weaknesses

- State of disrepair in schools; physical conditions are deplorable
- Measurements of quality imposed by the province still beg the question of how quality is defined
- Diversity is not adequately reflected in neither school staffing nor school councils
- Many parents do not understand how the school system works and therefore do not participate; important language and cultural issues must be addressed in order to increase engagement
- Toronto District School Board (TDSB) fired all school-community advisors; there are no interpreters to sit in at school council meetings
- Militarization of schools under the Safe Schools Act leads to a willingness to call in the police in full view of other students; it is a worrying situation
- Restrictions in public funding lead to greater numbers of closed schools between 3:30 and 6:00 PM, a time when most violence tends to happen
- With a zero tolerance and safe school focus, suspension rates are disproportionately high among racialized youth, who can spend many months out of school; a punitive climate is emerging
- High schools place overwhelming priority on university attendance; non-academic (or delayed academic) careers are not valued; there is no focus on the development of talents and skills as a public good in itself

Proposed Actions

- Strong parent engagement in schools must be supported by legislation and local school administrations
- Strategies and resources to connect schools with local communities, and the designation and accessible use of schools as public space, are essential
- Zero tolerance and punitive approaches to school safety must give way to those of demonstrated intelligence and effectiveness
- The principle of curriculum standardization must be replaced with inclusive educational approaches that respect and support the full development of diverse talents and skills of young people as a social good in itself; this would include a renewed emphasis on arts and physical education as valued areas of learning
- Toronto school boards must demonstrate that emerging cohorts of staffing within all areas and at all levels seriously reflect the cultural and social diversities of the City
- A statutory framework for local education taxation must be reinstated in Toronto in order to recover public funding of inclusive and innovative school resources as existed before 1995

RECREATION/ARTS/CULTURE

Findings – Key Strengths

- Recreation/arts/culture is an area where people can more readily express themselves; it builds community, is an alternative to risk focused interventions, and assists young people to connect with others in relatively safer public spaces
- Evidence that Parks and Recreation is willing to get out of silos in community centres and engage with community organizations in partnerships; programs are growing and are more diverse
- Good expressions of Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgendered presences in arts and culture
- Public libraries have many arts and cultural activities and are open to everyone (youth, children, and adults)
- Schools are supportive of cultural and arts activities
- The old City of Toronto had a Welcome Policy for children without family resources; this tradition has been eroded in the post amalgamation period through user fees

Findings – Key Weaknesses

- The social and public value of recreation is neither well understood nor appreciated; recreation is often seen as leisure time (i.e. non-essential "play/fun")
- Limited youth involvement in program development, including limited hiring of young people to create new areas of expression and activity; youth want more than basketball – they want arts, poetry, reading circles
- Concerns include (i) limited availability of public spaces, (ii) underpayment of community staffing, (iii) language barriers to interaction, and (iv) older youth as becoming more violent
- Low levels of male participation in recreation programs
- Libraries are seen as an invisible resource; yet they are the best kept secret in Toronto and are struggling to become more involved in the community
- Budget cuts have resulted in the loss of many programs and reduction of community access to schools
- There are mixed messages on the issue of diversity in arts and cultural activities. Some do not see diversity reflected in established cultural activities, while others contend that some cultures prefer having a degree of isolation in activities; dealing with difficult issues of integration versus assimilation
- Public spaces in the City are not designed to promote casual recreation; i.e. there are no central squares where one can just hang out

Proposed Actions

- Create a political culture that values publicly funded recreation, arts and culture as core and essential civic activities
- The City of Toronto should take a leadership role to open schools as public spaces for recreation, arts and cultural activities
- Community organizations should be more involved in the planning and provision of recreation, arts, and cultural programs, ensuring that programs are culturally and socially sensitive to diverse populations
- There should be little need for segregated activities for people with disabilities
- Community organizations need sustained core funding in order to become fully engaged
- Examine hiring practices to ensure that new cohorts of staff reflect diversities and are sensitive to cultural differences
- Promote community audits across the City to deal with inequities in space, facilities, and programs
- The state of City-wide programs should be reviewed; i.e. how can young people interact with children and youth from outside their own neighbourhood

3) Dimension: Civic Engagement

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Findings – Key Strengths

- Established residents possess a strong belief in local democracy
- People from various backgrounds express a desire for more engagement
- Toronto Youth Cabinet is a valuable and effective approach
- Toronto has a strong core of independent advocacy groups compared to other municipalities
- The current Mayor is perceived to be strongly committed to participation
- Barriers to engagement are breaking down for some historically excluded groups

Findings – Key Weaknesses

- Low voter turnouts reported in municipal elections from lower income and less advantaged groups
- Local democracy viewed as biased towards home owners and businesses
- In the post amalgamation period, strong feelings of disconnection between residents, City Council and Community Councils exist
- Limited engagement of immigrants and youth
- Consultation is a bureaucratic word and differs from grass roots participation
- Communities need to provide more opportunities for youth and racialized minorities to sit on Boards of non-profit organizations

Proposed Actions

- Explore new models of participatory democracy as reflected in the reform of the budget process
- Develop stronger relationships between the City and the School Board in efforts to make school facilities and programs sources of local engagement
- Residents, rather than citizens, should be able to vote
- Community Councils should cover smaller geographic areas
- Convene citizenship/civic classes in local schools
- Develop strategies to engage youth and racialized minorities in civic and community life

PUBLIC SPACES

Findings – Key Strengths

- The City has a reasonably good number of public facilities
- Public facilities for lower income communities are of equivalent quality as those for higher income families
- Parks are reasonably open to communities and are full of diverse people
- Parents recognize schools as hubs
- Some malls have become more youth friendly
- Libraries are frequently important spaces for youth and lower income families
- Restaurants are venues of interaction

Findings – Key Weaknesses

- Use of schools as community hubs has worsened; inequalities of use across communities are now more evident
- The need for access to public space is vital in higher need communities
- Libraries in lower income areas do not have sufficient facilities, such as computers, for use by adults and families
- Inconsistent efforts in community schools to address racism and sexual orientation
- Community-friendly use of public spaces extends beyond schools, and includes recreation centres, libraries, and social housing facilities
- Racialized youth are not always welcomed in public places, are frequently feared, and can be subject to harsh treatment by private security guards in malls
- Sidewalks are not always viewed as safe places in parts of the City, particularly when people are isolated from streets
- Perceived danger that parts of the City are becoming ghettoized with young people segregating based on colour, race, and religion
- Advertising in public space violates its integrity

Proposed Actions

- Restore and extend community use of schools and other public spaces
- The community should have first draw on the use of surplus school space
- Address geographic inequities in distributions of recreation centres across the City
- Privately owned malls which house public resources (libraries, government services) should be governed by the same rules of access as used in public spaces
- Design public facilities, such as park benches, in ways that reduce the harassment of homeless people
- Restrict advertisements directed at public spaces

COMMUNITY CAPACITIES

Findings – Key Strengths

- The volunteer sector is an important source of civic contribution and participation
- Toronto has a strong network of community-based agencies in neighbourhoods across the City
- Advocacy is more accepted by some civic funders and voluntary agencies as inherent within committed and effective strategies of support
- People want to become engaged when opportunities are available and conditions are supportive
- Faith-based groups can provide opportunities for broader social engagement

Findings – Key Weaknesses

- Many children are being brought up disengaged from civic and community activities
- Some neighbourhoods do not provide opportunities to contribute and participate
- Parents cannot volunteer without childcare support
- Low participation levels exist among people facing racism and economic hardship
- The culture of volunteering is frequently formal and embedded in class virtues
- Movement from core- to project-funding of community-based and voluntary agencies limits outreach and engagement initiatives, particularly with diverse language communities
- Erratic funding (i.e. low salaries, limited benefits, fewer professional opportunities) creates the inability to retain good people
- Community agencies experience a “tyranny of accountability” demands from civic funders which drain limited staff resources, generate limited knowledge of critical outcomes and impacts, and do little to strengthen community capacities
- Strong community-based agencies with secure core funding are not yet fully recognized by all municipal Councillors as essential civic resources
- Ambiguity of federal charitable guidelines on advocacy still has some chilling effect on the community-based sector

Proposed Actions

- Community-based agencies need dedicated civic funding for community development workers to promote engagement and support social advocacy
- The City of Toronto in collaboration with the province should adopt the Association of Community Centres (AOCC) or old Community and Neighbourhood Support Services Program (CNSSP) model to recognize and fund community-based agencies as essential civic resources in all urban neighbourhoods and districts
- The work of civic hubs, social development networks, cross community voluntary agencies, ethno-cultural coalitions, and faith-based alliances should be strengthened as sources of community capacity development

4) Dimension: Living Conditions

INCOME/EMPLOYMENT

Findings – Key Strengths

- Some recognition by Municipal Government and community on the need for change
- Community mobilization is admirable
- Examples of strong neighbourhood support, such as in Malvern where parents are coming together to create change in their community

Findings – Key Weaknesses

- Public misperception/“myth” of social assistance; recipients of assistance experience lifelong stigmatization, prejudice and racism
- Prevalent underemployment of visible minorities, particularly female immigrants; extensive marginalization of the Aboriginal community; lack of job security for persons 30 years of age and under
- Shortage of affordable childcare, particularly for single parents
- “Class blindness”, particularly within the last decade; direct relation between income and access, race and poverty
- Financial barriers hinder post-secondary education; user fees are a significant barrier for low-income children and youth in accessing school and community space; costly transit fees impede access for low-income families to facilities
- Weakness in community sector; lack of information and availability of services; inadequate outreach initiatives and linguistic accommodation by community centres, particularly in high risk areas; insufficient number of centres
- Misinformation of new immigrants prior to arrival, particularly in relation to employment opportunities, recognition of foreign credentials and importance placed on Canadian work experience; lack of support for newcomers; lack of feeling of “belonging” for newcomers, as well as Black Canadian youth

Proposed Actions

- Reform tax structure, including improving child tax benefits
- Ensure healthy settlement process for newcomers through provision of ESL classes, affordable and reliable childcare, and early childhood education programs
- Develop a more active and well-supported strategy to recognize foreign credentials and assist foreign-trained professionals through, for example, mentoring programs
- Improve income security and maintenance through increasing the minimum wage and pensions, enhancing Employment Insurance, social assistance and child benefits, reviewing seniors benefits, developing a national living-wage commission, and improving and enforcing minimum labour standards and climate for collective bargaining
- Support strong training and retraining programs, particularly for people with disabilities, single mothers with no prior work experience, and people re-entering the labour market, and lower tuition costs and training programs for all

HOUSING

Findings – Key Strengths

- Neighbourhoods are generally welcoming to people in terms of race yet not income; all areas in the city are mixed to some degree
- Promising solutions exist, such as housing cooperatives which create communities and offer support for persons with no local or nationally-based family
- Rent supplements are effective interim solutions

Findings – Key Weaknesses

- Insufficient supply and poor maintenance of affordable housing; exorbitant rents; extremely long waiting lists; housing is considered a business rather than social responsibility; inadequate and exclusionary landlord supplements compel landlords to construct for-profit
- Intricate long-term government plans are conceived yet never implemented
- The tenant-landlord power imbalance is too great under the current Tenant Protection Act
- Lack of supportive housing and shelters for seniors, many of whom live in isolation; inefficient coordination of services for disabled persons and those suffering with mental illness; inadequate number of workers in supportive housing or home care facilities; lack of funding to agencies capable of providing such services and supports
- Contention that zoning by-laws are discriminatory against persons with physical and intellectual disabilities
- Perception that issues affecting single women are not addressed and hence continue in subsequent generations; difficulty finding housing for people with families and children

Proposed Actions

- Construct more affordable and supportive housing by appealing to and developing alternative models like co-ops; examine past successes such as the 650,000 affordable housing units constructed between 1973 and 1993
- Develop a National Housing Strategy policy which will ensure funding to municipalities for provision of housing and services in an inclusionary manner
- Effective City planning and economic development that encourages the development of mixed income neighbourhoods with multi-purpose services and resources for persons of all ages, as well as thriving local businesses
- Enhance tenants' rights through rent control and increase the rent component in welfare

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Findings – Key Strengths

- Mayor Miller’s Safety Task Force is a positive step; biking police have been effective in high-risk neighbourhoods such as Regent Park – they link faces with names
- Community mobilization and policing has been extremely beneficial in neighbourhoods such as Kensington, Jamestown, and Alexandra Park

Findings – Key Weaknesses

- Lack of police accountability exists in matters relating to budget, behaviours and transparency; police frequently target youth and children
- Lack of police officers per capita; slow response times in certain communities; inadequate police treatment in matters of domestic violence
- Lack of support for police in dealing with their high stress levels
- Media neglects its responsibility to protect people; it fosters stigmas through negative portrayals of specific neighbourhoods, such as Malvern, and blames newcomers for crime rates; rate of person to person crime is down yet is not perceived as such in the media, particularly since 9/11; there is a race dimension to the perceived crime
- The poorest areas in the city are the sickest; public health issues are directly linked to poverty
- Seniors and persons with mobility problems find the streets very unsafe in both day and night (unplowed streets, rapidly changing traffic lights and violence)

Proposed Actions

- Improve police accountability through increasing and ensuring transparency mechanisms such as the Toronto Police Services Board
- Encourage community policing
- Reduce fear and perception of danger; create a sense of belonging and neighbourliness through the promotion of strong neighbourhood associations, anti-violence programs and leadership development
- Vote
- Provide efficient public transportation, ensuring both good access and mobility
- Develop clear emergency policies; re-focus drugs from a criminal to public health issue

5) Dimension: Community Services

HEALTHCARE

Findings – Key Strengths

- Toronto has excellent hospitals
- Community Health Centres (CHC) offer a positive model of integrated multiple services; CHCs are supported by the neighbourhood, are more accountable than hospitals, and respond to specific community needs; they provide services for immigrants, newcomers and marginalized people, hire multilingual and dedicated staff, offer interpretation services, and provide a combination of primary health care and prevention, including community development and health education

Findings – Key Weaknesses

- Extremely long waiting times in Emergency Rooms; hospital care is no longer holistic
- The current two-tiered health system severely impacts low-income earners and women; health premiums and costly medications are additional detriments, the latter particularly for seniors
- Perceptions that access to services inside of hospital are neither fair nor equitable; social status, income and class believed to dictate the types of services one receives; preferential treatment believed to be based on perception, colour and language, with newcomers often receiving substandard service
- Lack of information for newcomers, particularly non-English speakers, on available services; culturally insensitive services, particularly for women, who consequently opt for no treatment at all
- People suffering from mental illness receive little/no information about existing supports; their families receive no support; waiting lists at children’s mental health centres are extensive; shortage of community-based and youth-specific mental health services; western medical approach to mental illness labels people
- Unequal distribution of CHCs across the City; few exist in suburbs like Scarborough; certain communities and populations, such as abused women and the homeless, are under-served and often fall through the cracks; waiting lists are extremely long; government appreciates neither CHCs’ role nor contribution
- The environment is not recognized as a determinant of health; poorer neighbourhoods are sicker
- Home care centres are under constant threat of privatization; visiting homecare can not compete with private business; homecare workers, the majority of whom are immigrant women, have little security and few benefits (part-time hours, meagre wages); fewer regulations exist for services in homes for the aged; patients are becoming institutionalized; cuts in services compel people to turn to nursing homes; access to home support for persons with disabilities is extremely difficult

Proposed Actions

- Implement recommendations outlined in the Roy Romanow Report
- Put into effect a population health framework throughout the system, focusing on social determinants of health and health promotion and prevention
- Revisit successful past models, such as Toronto’s Doctor Hospital, with the option of reintroducing them in today’s climate
- Increase funding to community health sector and expand community-based care through income home support, drop-ins, prevention program, and family support; encourage improved and equitable partnerships between hospitals and community centres
- Incorporate a more holistic model of care and diverse representation in the health care system; for instance, recognize and employ foreign-trained health care practitioners, particularly in communities with high concentrations of immigrants
- Establish a basic standard of care in nursing homes

CRISIS SERVICES

Findings – Key Strengths

- Culturally-sensitive crisis services have improved in Toronto, with Community Health Centres (CHCs) assuming a more central role

Findings – Key Weaknesses

- Lack of funding impedes services and fosters competition between agencies who would otherwise work together
- Service gaps are not uncommon, particularly for abused women, women with sponsorship concerns, mental illness and/or children, deaf and/or disabled persons, urban Aboriginal communities, and youth (specifically persons around 13 years of age)
- Lack of awareness of the crisis system; shortage of multilingual and coordinated information; difficulty in accessing a human, rather than computerized, voice
- Cultural barriers impede efficient access to services, particularly for oral-oriented communities
- Shelters are neither safe nor accessible; they are often highly regulated and culturally and racially insensitive. Adult shelters can be frightening for youth, who may otherwise opt to remain on the streets; places for abused seniors are practically non-existent; couples are not welcomed in shelters together

Proposed Actions

- Modify funding formula and priorities
- Develop crisis emergency shelters that accommodate various needs of same sex and heterosexual couples; increase the number of services for youth and their families; ensure that services are multicultural, accessible, youth-appropriate, community-based, prevention-focused and therapeutic
- Provide special resource people who work in the area of elder crisis abuse
- Implement recommendations outlined in the Jane Doe Social Audit regarding police investigations of sexual assault
- Promote and expand multilingual capacity of 211 and crisis hotlines; increase number of culturally competent service providers; offer distinct training programs for cultural- and racial-sensitivity
- Improve police officer training; recruit personnel who reflect the communities they serve; eliminate racial profiling
- Develop a more holistic/comprehensive, non-western model of care; include clients in program design and development
- Avoid and/or minimize crisis from the onset through: (i) ensuring adequate income (raise minimum wage, eliminate/decrease barriers in accessing Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and social assistance), (ii) addressing concerns in the Tenant Protection Act, and (iii) increasing provision of accessible and affordable housing (including co-ops and non-profit, transitional, supportive housing)

TRANSPORTATION/MOBILITY

Findings – Key Strengths

- Toronto has made impressive progress in the area of transport for seniors and the disabled; yet room for improvement remains

Findings – Key Weaknesses

- Access in the City is better than in the boroughs; suburban residents are more dependent on cars than downtown residents; access is particularly difficult for seniors, a circumstance further aggravated with the lack of a planned policy towards increasing accessibility for seniors and all who need it
- Costly fares impede access to services, such as drop-in centres, particularly for low-income families
- Quality of transit system is suspect; travel time is extremely time-consuming for children, youth and adults, questioning the frequency of and accessibility to routes; Toronto's car-oriented nature is a detriment to public policy and neighbourhoods (vast urban sprawl, little public transit on side streets)
- Greater improvements are necessary for people with mobility issues and disabilities; wheelchair accessible stations are random; shortage of available services for the visually impaired (audio warnings of door closures are too rapid); safety while disembarking buses is questionable
- Eligibility for Wheel Trans is difficult, particularly for women and elders in crisis
- Perceptions of discrimination and racism, particularly for people of colour and youth who contend that they are discriminated by other TTC riders and drivers
- The lack of resources to assist newcomers and non-English speakers in understanding how to use public transit remains a great barrier

Proposed Actions

- Increase number and improve coordination of subway and Go Transit lines; develop more alternative forms of transit, such as Light Rail Transit (LRT), shuttle buses, community cabs, etc., particularly in the 'old suburbs'
- Ensure system-wide accessibility for all, including post-secondary students, peoples with disabilities and seniors, through: (i) providing a transportation allocation (i.e. free passes for people with fixed/limited incomes and those with mobility problems), (ii) implementing fare bars for critical services, and (iii) offering a more flexible transfer system
- Implement culturally sensitive and racism training to counteract systemic discrimination; improve hiring practices to recruit more personnel that reflect Toronto's diversity
- Increase pedestrian safety – keep sidewalks clear of bicycles, enforce road and crosswalk laws, implement a system of appropriately-timed traffic signals, and provide more bicycle lanes and benches
- Promote car-free days and more green areas to encourage people to walk

C. RELATED FINDINGS

Local Soundings

In efforts to further understand conditions facing diverse and vulnerable populations, thirteen local soundings were convened between July and November 2004 with community members and service providers familiar with the circumstances of the population. Populations reviewed included: (i) women who have experienced abuse, (ii) ethno-racial women with disabilities, (iii) newcomers, (iv) youth, (v) Aboriginal peoples, (vi) members of the Flemington Park community, (vii) people labeled having intellectual disabilities, (viii) gay/lesbian/bisexual transgendered (GLBT) youth and (ix) GLBT seniors, (x) labour market bridging programs for immigrant pharmacists, (xi) homeless women, (xii) ethno-cultural seniors, and (xiii) frontline youth workers.

Potential invitees to the local soundings were generated with the assistance of community agencies and service providers. In total, over 175 people participated in the local soundings. All of the local soundings were convened in communities across the City. These sessions were guided by a series of topics including:

- Describing the realities of exclusion
- Identifying the sources of exclusion
- Framing indicators or benchmarks of inclusion
- Suggesting action to create inclusion

A facilitator conducted all of the soundings and a recorder took detailed notes of the proceedings. The intent of the local soundings was to provide greater focus and understanding of the issues facing diverse populations. Throughout these sessions, a series of crosscutting perceptions surfaced that served to support and complement focus group themes already emerged. These include:

- *Experiences and perceptions of discrimination are reported* in multiple institutions, like the police, with a particular impact on black and Aboriginal communities, and environments such as work and school, impacting groups such as immigrants, visible minority youth, GLBT youth and seniors, persons with intellectual and physical disabilities, and homeless women; the media is accused of encouraging stigmas and stereotypes. Potential solutions include greater public awareness and education, employer and employee training, development of media and programming by and for marginalized persons such as black youth and Aboriginal groups, and development of an institutionalized checking mechanism and one that gives voice to and mobilizes marginalized peoples across the City.

- *Youth engagement* should start in the community, with encouragement and support beginning in multiple locations such as secondary schools, community centres and colleges.
- *High living costs*, including those of daycare, rent, car insurance, prescription medication, tuition and user fees, have detrimentally impacted newcomers and immigrants, particularly women, homeless women and students. Positive steps include increasing social assistance, Personal Needs Allowance¹⁰, and the minimum wage, reinvigorating employment equity, addressing user fees, providing student assistance in securing bank loans to cover tuition fees, providing tax cuts to newcomers, and implementing a policy, similar to that for refugees, to facilitate settlement and employment.
- Lack of *affordable and appropriate housing* remains critical for low-income peoples and others from vulnerable populations such as GLBT seniors. Improvement is possible through reinvestment in co-op housing with mixed incomes.
- There is a *reported lack of sufficient information*, both multilingual and alternative, in matters of settlement, available services and resources, social assistance, employment and re-certification, Canadian rights, complaints procedure, and elimination of student debt. Misinformation is also deemed problematic, particularly for potential immigrants in relation to realistic employment expectations. Suggestions for improvement include providing: (i) accurate, clear, concise information to potential immigrants, including licensure/certification procedures and ways to enter existing labour market bridging programs through potential bank and student loans; (ii) multilingual oral and textual information to immigrants and newcomers, particularly for trained professionals, on distinct provincial requirements; (iii) information on accessing resources like social housing and jobs; and (iv) a list of services for abused women including ways to escape abusive environments, learn how to care for their children, and become informed of their rights under Canadian laws.
- *Schools can be unwelcoming* for reasons including: (i) zero tolerance policy strongly impacts certain populations such as black youth; (ii) lack of available spots in alternative schools; (iii) school curricula does not adequately include or reflect all communities such as black and Aboriginal groups; (iv) not all students, such as those with intellectual disabilities and persons from the GLBT community, are physically and/or emotionally safe; (v) students with intellectual disabilities are not accepted by all school boards; (vi) lack of teacher encouragement for students with intellectual disabilities and others not university/college-bound; and (vii) non-English speakers have difficulty being included in their children's education. Potential solutions include increasing the number of integrated schools and trained teachers for persons with intellectual disabilities, as well as supports like Guidance Counselors, providing translators, revising school curricula, restructuring school programs to reflect students' needs and interests, providing practical skills to youth such as interview techniques and post-secondary options, and encouraging acceptance of all peoples through more exchange programs and others like the Visiting School Program¹¹.

¹⁰ The Personal Needs Allowance (PNA) ensures that persons living in provincial psychiatric facilities, long term care facilities, shelters, hostels and other specific types of housing are able to meet incidental costs related to basic comfort and quality of life other than those provided by the facility such as clothing, shoes, and hygiene products among others. At present, the current PNA is \$112.00/month or \$3.75/day (<http://www.ppao.gov.on.ca/med-pre-per.html>).

¹¹ Funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, this program is an interactive project established to help promote and foster a greater understanding of Aboriginal people and their distinct culture. Currently in its third year, this program has been brought to thousands of children in the Toronto area and has had much success (www.ncct.on.ca).

- *Transportation* is identified as a major difficulty for many low-income peoples including newcomers, particularly women, persons with physical and intellectual disabilities, youth, GLBT youth and all seniors. Barriers include costly fares, unfamiliarity with the system, unaccommodating drivers, wheelchair inaccessible stations and non-operational accessible ones¹², lack of services for the visually and hearing impaired, and lack of consistent safety for vulnerable groups such as GLBT youth. Wheel Trans poses additional barriers: (i) eligibility is extremely restrictive, (ii) reservations are difficult to secure, (iii) pick-ups tend to be in unsafe locations such as dark corners behind buildings, and (iv) unreliability hinders efforts to secure employment. Ways for improvement include increasing the TTC budget, providing alternative transit companies as a means of reducing fares and improving service, increasing accountability of drivers through monitoring by undercover riders, increasing security on subway platforms, and employing TTC support staff to assist people boarding and disembarking.
- The issue, or lack thereof, *accountability* is a significant problem identified in multiple systems such as the police, health, home care, housing and employment. Outsourcing to private contractors has further aggravated matters. The establishment of institutionalized checking mechanisms was suggested to ensure greater levels of community confidence.
- *Healthcare* is a grave concern for many; primary complaints include extensive hospital and emergency room waiting times and quality of care. Regarding the latter, poor quality is perceived as the result of doctor and nurse shortages as well as the level of one's income in relation to access. Additional concerns include de-listing of services, lack of consistent treatment in health centres for distinct groups such as GLBT seniors, the issue of sexual orientation overshadowing individual health problems, and the lack of a safe space for different populations such as transgender peoples within the system.
- *Inadequate resources, accommodation and services* highlighted include lack of: (i) employment, (re) training and settlement programs, (ii) linguistic translators and cultural interpreters, (iii) widespread wheelchair accessible government and public venues such as polling stations and restaurants, and public resources such as hospital beds and washrooms¹³ (iv) TTY¹⁴ and/or qualified staff where TTY is available, (v) efficient elevators in many private and community Toronto housing buildings, and regular supervision of residents with intellectual disabilities, (vi) suburban-centred services, (vii) gender appropriate services and staff, (viii) services for persons between 60 and 65 years of age, (ix) adequate numbers of police officers, and (x) lack of communication between service providing agencies. Greater funding is vital to ensure the provision of appropriate, efficient, accessible, well-maintained and sustainable facilities, and training, personnel, and region-specific programs and services.
- *Language* is identified as a significant barrier in seeking employment and education, and poses particular difficulty for women wishing to flee abusive situations as well as understand Children's Aids policies and school protocol. The issue of *accent* was raised less frequently; it was

¹² This refers to elevators in subway stations that are consistently broken.

¹³ A participant reported that the Ontario Ministry of Health has recently commenced the installation of transfer lifts for hospital beds and washrooms throughout the province.

¹⁴ TTY, or TDD (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf), consists of a keyboard which holds between 20 and 30 character keys, a display screen, and a modem. When the TTY user types letters into the machine, they are turned into electrical signals that travel over regular telephone lines. When the signals reach another TTY, they are converted back into letters that appear on a display screen and can be printed out on paper (www.captions.com/tty.html).

contended that people often assume that persons with accents are unable to speak and/or understand English. Greater public education and sensitivity training is desirable.

- Demand for *Canadian experience* is extremely problematic for newcomers and immigrants; volunteering is not always valued as experience as it is unpaid. In addition, the inability to engage in the workforce impedes the development of language skills. Potential solutions include elaboration of more appropriate and effective training programs to assist people in obtaining Canadian experience and find appropriate jobs in their field, and provision of tax rebates to employers to encourage the hiring of newcomers.
- Lack of *recognition of foreign credentials and work experience* remains an enormous barrier for newcomers and immigrants. Solutions include recognition as well as increasing the number of bridging programs for all professions.

Feedback Forums

As part of a commitment to focus group and local sounding participants, as well as ensuring maximum participation, three community feedback forums were organized in three different parts of the City: one in the west end, one in the Scarborough area, and one in the downtown core. Over 30 participants from focus groups and local soundings attended. Each meeting opened with a 20-minute presentation of the preliminary findings followed by an active discussion; topics varied at each session.

Participants at the first forum focused on recommendations for change in three specific areas, viz. (i) youth, (ii) diversity and (iii) welcoming schools.

- (i) Youth: Participants focused on the importance of increasing youth engagement through various actions such as: (a) supporting youth-led organizations; (b) providing resources for youth groups to develop their own leadership programs and organizations, and act as mentors to train others; (c) encouraging participation through schools, and (iv) undertaking a youth-barrier assessment. Participants identified a series of barriers confronting youth including user fees, particularly sports fees, shortage of public spaces, unemployment, and inaccessibility to resources
- (ii) Diversity: Participants voiced concern over a variety of issues: (a) strong perceptions that two realities of policing exist, with racialized, particularly black male, youth disproportionately targeted; (b) lack of diversity in the police force; (c) need for a credible civilian complaints process; and (d) importance of community policing, including dismantling the “climate of fear”
- (iii) Welcoming schools: Participants expressed the need for various actions including: (a) renewal of tax and capacity (i.e. rehiring educational assistants and liaison workers, restoring ESL programs, programs to engage parents, and full-time elected school trustees, and renewing the School Board’s ability to set a portion of the tax rate); (b) exploring schools (particularly elementary), local and/or neighbourhood centres and/or organizations (such as ethno-specific community centres) as important community hubs, and developing collaborative efforts

between them; (c) ensuring that school curriculum reflects students of all genders, cultural and racial backgrounds; (d) assuring teacher accountability to parents and the larger public; (e) installing an Ombudsperson at the Board level; and (f) centering ESL programs

Participants at the second feedback forum focused on a wider set of issues. These ranged from transit and community capacities to restorative justice and immigration.

- (i) Transit: Suggested actions for change included: (a) increasing accessibility for all riders on buses (i.e. through kneeling buses) and subways and subway stations; and (b) extending the meaning of transit to include mobility, with a focus on sidewalks as well as buses and trains
- (ii) Community capacities: Participants called for ethno-cultural groups to build a greater voice in the community where they might promote leadership, identify important issues and engage in inclusion. Other suggestions included the need for: (a) specific funding for capacity building, rather than service provision; (b) adequate income for both working and non-working people; (c) increased effectiveness of unions to ensure appropriate employment of persons with disabilities; and (d) provision of decent jobs with decent wages
- (iii) Inclusive neighbourhoods: Participants stressed the importance of ensuring effective planning for and ongoing viability of inclusive neighbourhoods and relationships. This would entail, for instance, promoting mixed income housing/neighbourhoods, sidewalks, intensification, and community programs such as gardening and good food programs
- (iv) Education: Participants called for the integration of disabled persons in regular classrooms as well as greater resources for people with special needs
- (v) Police/justice system: Emphasis was placed on the need for restorative justice programs (similar to that being provided to Aboriginal people), conflict resolution processes, collaborative policing, and the role of faith communities in promoting racial justice
- (vi) Immigration: Participants voiced the need for CIC funding for settlement services, including both capacity building and direct services, and the need to abandon the current system of credential assessment

Additional comments included the removal of user fees for the community use of schools, development of community hubs in venues other than schools, and examination of current successes of inclusion in efforts to build on what exists rather than start anew.

Focus at the third feedback forum lay primarily on the need to change attitudes and institutions to be more welcoming to people with differences such as persons with physical and/or intellectual disabilities.

Specific issues that were raised included:

- (i) Barriers: Participants expressed the need to remove barriers for persons labeled having intellectual disabilities, such as segregation and stereotyping in schools, neighbourhoods and the workforce
- (ii) Funding: Greater funding is vital in order to enable persons and organizations speaking up for persons with disabilities to vocalize concerns and advocate for change
- (iii) Attitudes: Social attitudes must change, whereby differences would be valued as enrichment, and people with disabilities appreciated as equal. This would entail creating a “new normal”
- (iv) Accommodation: Participants highlighted the lack of accommodation in schools, with some schools and teachers more accommodating than others. Teachers were identified as the “main role players [in life]” and, as such, required continuing training and education, particularly in dealing with students with special needs
- (v) Resources: Participants acknowledged the importance of resources in ushering in change. However, greater effort is needed to lessen the “human struggle” afflicting persons with differences

D. SOCIAL INCLUSION ISSUES

‘Anytime that you don't know your neighbourhood, you're vulnerable.’ (Feedback Forum)

‘I discovered that we all have the same problems, just in different languages.’
(Local Soundings)

‘When we think about people with disabilities we think that making the place accessible is enough. We have to train people to change their attitude. (Feedback Forum)

The community findings from focus group sessions provide a mixed assessment on states of social inclusion in Toronto. There is general recognition that positive political and social climates are evident in the desire to advance inclusion in key sectors. Participants speak favourably about the new Mayor as a source of hope for more consultation and engagement. The participatory budget process introduced in 2004 is well received. People sense that a majority of City Councillors now recognize the importance of diversity issues. There are positive municipal responses to gay and lesbian communities. There is a desire at City Council to have youth more involved, as reflected in municipal support for the Toronto Youth Cabinet.

The strength of Toronto is the willingness to set municipal policies which address diversity. The weakness rests in the absence of institutional strategies, which can translate goals into new realities on the ground. As a result, local governance still does not reflect the presence of minorities or contributors from less advantaged backgrounds. There is a sense that the equity focus begins to stall when the requirement for institutional reflection of diversity reaches senior professional and management levels. Public grants run out when it comes to finding basic core funding for ethno-racial specific community agencies.

The same pattern is evident with schools. Participants acknowledge that Toronto has some of the best trained teachers in the world. Good models for teaching are developed, but educational resources for teaching are deficient. There is a strong desire in schools to offer quality education to all children. But textbooks and curriculum have yet to effectively recognize the diverse cultural histories and traditions of children in Toronto schools. Recent immigrant parents find it hard to become knowledgeable about schools for their children. The school-community resources to support new parents were deemed to be redundant by previous provincial regimes.

Participants frequently expressed their perspectives in very direct statements:

‘If you don't start thinking about schools as a welcoming place, you get a place called hell.’ (Feedback Forum)

‘We need to reopen our schools up. This idea that kids per square footage is worth so much is nonsense.’ (Feedback Forum)

‘The teacher told me I couldn't read. I was never accepted into normal high school. I went to college later and learned how to read and write. When it starts off that way, especially in neighbourhood schools, it grows into your life and you carry that label with you.’ (Local soundings)

‘My country (Afghanistan), there is twenty-five years of war, schools are closed to women. Here it is better for me and my children's future’. (Local Soundings)

Participants recognize that police relations with the gay community have improved. People with intellectual disabilities are perceived to receive better treatment from the police. New community models of registering complaints about police practices are being developed. Nevertheless, participants in community sessions repeatedly expressed concerns about police practices with racialized minorities and vulnerable youth. This contrasts with positive experiences continuously reported by more established residents. This leads to the inevitable conclusion that there are two perceived realities of policing in Toronto - one for white mainstream populations and another for racialized minorities. These perceptions on the dual realities of policing undermine progress towards an inclusive city. They lead to views of the police as hostile others rather than trusted sources of support. As one participant observed:

‘We need police that get to know the community and not be seen as just enforcers but rather be part of the community as people who are there to help with what they need.’ (Feedback Forum)

A significant strength of Toronto in promoting inclusion was seen to be in the quality of public facilities. Parks are reasonably open to communities, and are frequently full of diverse people. Libraries have become important spaces for youth and lower income families. Parents value the use of schools as community hubs, where this occurs. Recreation/arts/culture programs are areas where people can readily express their cultural and social distinctiveness. Participants noted that the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered presence is evident in arts and culture. A major civic strength in promoting an inclusive Toronto is that public facilities in lower income communities are of equivalent quality as those in communities with higher income families.

Of concern however are limitations in uses and availabilities of public spaces. Libraries in lower income communities need more resources such as computers that are less available in family homes. Some youth would value a wider range of cultural programs in community centres in areas of arts, poetry, and reading circles. Budget cuts have led to the loss of many community programs and reduced access to schools. This can limit resources available to support inclusive initiatives with newcomers.

‘User fees close the door on newcomer immigrant groups organizing, coming together, and meeting.’ (Local Soundings)

Participant views on transit convey similar patterns. The City has made impressive progress in areas of transport for seniors and the disabled. Yet serious issues remain. Costly fares impede access to services, such as drop-in centres, for low-income families. Eligibility for Wheel Trans services can be difficult. Movement around suburban areas is more difficult. As well, good intentions are not always reflected in regular practices.

‘They integrate the subways with elevators . . . but the month has thirty days and the elevators don’t work for twenty-eight.’ (Local Soundings)

Before focus group discussions began, participants were asked to rate their perceptions on levels of inclusion for the dimension they were to review. Living conditions in Toronto were viewed by focus group participants as the biggest barrier to social inclusion in the City.

One participant, reflecting broader sentiments, spoke about ‘class blindness’ within the last decade on issues of income, access, race, and poverty. People living in poverty, particularly when they require income support from social assistance, are targets of stigma, prejudice, and racism. Underemployment of visible minorities is prevalent, particularly for female immigrants. User fees have become a significant barrier for low-income children and youth in accessing school and community space. Neighbourhoods are seen to be generally welcoming to people in terms of race, with all areas of the City mixed to some degree. However, the welcoming pattern does not always extend to making housing available in all neighbourhoods to people on lower incomes. There are insufficient supplies and availability of affordable housing. One participant noted that people often misread the housing crisis.

‘To say there are vacant units in the city is like walking into a grocery store and saying there is no hunger crisis in the city, look at all this food.’ (Focus Group)

The Civic Panel reviewed the community findings, and identified a set of social inclusion issues drawn from the findings that they deemed to be of great significance to the City and its communities. These issues would become the focus for highlighting priority areas of change, and for developing recommendations on ways to advance these changes.

SECTION III: RECOMMENDATIONS

‘Around the world, women, people of colour, seniors, youth, immigrants and refugees, are paying the price of economic restructuring and globalization. Over the past decade the growing gap between rich and poor has become a dominant feature of urban life in the West. In Toronto, one of the most diverse of these cities, disparities are becoming entrenched along the lines of race, gender and geography.’ (Khosla, 2003: 7)

The capacity of cities to sustain civic communities of diversity living in states of vitality and harmony is a fundamental challenge to the future of Canada. It is within cities that basic states of social inclusion are cultivated and experienced. It is within civic communities that the relationships between citizenship and diversity are established. When social vulnerabilities and racial differences lead to serious disparities of circumstances and prospects, the diversity is stripped of dignity and citizenship is devoid of mutual solidarity.

During the nineties, when Toronto was being celebrated as an urban model, the foundations which sustained opportunity and inclusion began to erode. The federal government stopped funding social housing, eligibility for unemployment insurance were severely restricted, and direct federal cost-sharing of income and services for people in poverty ended with the unilateral termination of the Canada Assistance Plan. Homelessness and hunger in Toronto became visible legacies of federal disengagement. The provincial government cut social assistance rates were cut by 22%, public school budgets were depleted, the municipal property tax was asked to assume greater shares of social housing and transit costs, the creation of quality childcare places was severely constrained, core funding for community-based agencies was terminated, and fees for post secondary studies were allowed to rise steeply. During the same period, polarizations in wages and income grew. Increasingly, single parents with children, young families from racialized groups, and young immigrant and Aboriginal families have become the faces of poverty in Toronto.

With high levels of racial diversity among new immigrants and refugees, Toronto is uniquely challenged to develop conditions of equity in the opportunities and experiences of newcomers. When economic disparities intensify along racialized patterns, as in disproportionate levels of poverty among visible minorities, then conditions of economic equity deteriorate. If core public institutions such as the police and schools fail to eradicate persistent practices readily perceived as racially directed, then conditions of social equity deteriorate. If access to basic urban resources such as recreation and transit are increasingly privatized through higher fees, along with access to higher education, then conditions of common equity deteriorate. If processes of civic engagement and local governance continue to be dominated by established networks of influence in the City, then conditions of urban equity deteriorate.

The fundamental challenge which Toronto faces during the coming decade is the need to rebuild and strengthen the urban foundations of the City so that every resident whatever their origin and circumstance can experience the dignity and opportunity of full inclusion.

In previous periods, Toronto could count on significant investments from the federal and provincial governments. Tax cuts have generally depleted the public revenue base of senior governments. Federal surpluses are too precarious and limited to sustain major public investments beyond initial gestures. The province is hard pressed to meet its public service commitments while reducing annual fiscal deficits.

The primary source of political initiative to meet the challenges of Toronto will likely have to come from residents and local authorities. If residents value and desire a fully inclusive Toronto, then this will have to be demonstrated in local practices - how we define and promote civic citizenship in a city of diversity. What fiscal and statutory powers do we believe municipal government in Toronto should have? Are residents of Toronto willing to contribute the public revenues necessary to pay for common public goods? Can key urban institutions such as schools and the police become models of full inclusion? Will secure public funding become available for community-based agencies and services to immigrants and refugees? Will local government in Toronto become strong advocates for federal and provincial investments in housing, income support, early learning and childcare, transit? Will the City of Toronto actively work with the labour movement and interested economic partners to promote the development of good jobs?

The recommendations developed by the Civic Panel come from a process of review and deliberation. The Civic Panel was guided by social inclusion issues, which emerged, from the research findings. The strong community and professional backgrounds of Civic Panel members provided knowledge and perspective in shaping the content of recommendations. At first, specific initiatives were proposed by panel members. These were reviewed and revised until there was a prevailing sense among a majority of panel members that each of the proposed initiatives was appropriate and credible.

There was a persistent concern expressed by panel members that recommended changes be presented in a manner that was direct and clear. This can present some challenges since often recommendations require levels of precision to maintain their focus and credibility. It was decided that the goals of simplicity and clarity could be best pursued by clustering the thirty-one proposed recommendations into six priority areas. Each priority area responds to a fundamental set of challenges that were raised in the community findings.

Priority Area One - Make Civic Democracy Work

This priority area addresses issues of diversity and engagement. The recommendations flow from the recognition that opportunities for civic engagement have to be seen as available to all residents. Civic education and opportunities for civic contributions should be extended. In a city of immigrants and refugees, it is important that newcomers who live and work among us, and contribute public revenue to city services, have opportunities to become full civic citizens. Similarly, youth should be encouraged to become active in civic citizenship through a variety of opportunities, including the extension of the municipal franchise to an earlier age. Finally, public institutions and community agencies should reflect the full diversity of the civic environments they serve at all levels of employment and responsibility.

Recommendations

- Make democratic renewal in local governance a priority in the work of the Joint Ontario - City of Toronto Task Force with a mandate to recommend changes to the 1997 City of Toronto Act so that Toronto can acquire statutory powers appropriate to its significance and responsibilities.
- The City of Toronto should pursue equity-focused civic education strategies for newcomers and existing residents to include workshops in libraries, settlement houses, community centres and ethno-cultural agencies, and develop multilingual and multimedia education materials for household and general distribution as part of these initiatives.
- The Community Councils of Toronto should convene annual civic assemblies of residents at the electoral district level that take advantage of common boundaries for federal, provincial and municipal elected representatives to review issues of local significance
- Extend the civic vote to all residents regardless of national citizenship status.
- The Toronto District School Board should assess the scope and cultural appropriateness of civic education curriculum from elementary through to secondary school education.
- The Community Councils of Toronto should develop strategies for the creation of civic youth panels drawn from secondary schools, community centres and colleges that can review municipal governance issues of interest to youth and that can select area wide youth cabinets, which would report regularly to Community Councils of the City.
- The City of Toronto should request from the federal government that the New Deal for Cities and Communities include funding to support youth-initiated and youth-managed community projects.
- Lower the voting age to 16 years of age for municipal elections.

- In efforts to promote leadership equity strategies, provincial and municipal governments should require that civic institutions [hospitals, schools, universities] under their authority in Toronto develop benchmarks and timetables for the diversification of senior management and professional positions to reflect the diversities of the city. The United Way should be encouraged to require similar initiatives from member agencies.

Priority Area Two - Create Welcoming Schools for All

This priority area addresses issues of diversity, human development, and civic engagement. Schools are primary locations for the promotion of inclusion among diverse communities (Qadeer & Kumar, 2003). They are common settings in which children and youth directly experience the social and political meaning of differences in their lives. Dei (2004) contends that inclusive models of education value the distinctive cultural and social histories that children bring to school, and how these histories influence children's perception of experiences. Classrooms are places where children first learn about differences of race, gender, class, and orientation among families. Schools shape the life chances of children in how they foster the development of cognitive and social capacities, in how they respond to cognitive and behavioural difficulties, and in the life paths they open up for further learning and community life.

The welcoming school is a place committed to the well being of all students, with a respect for social differences and the capacity to engage parents of diverse cultural backgrounds, where important social resources are located for children and families, where second and third chance options replace policies of exclusion, and where schools are available as public spaces to support community activities.

Recommendations

- Restore school-parent advisors in communities across the city to engage all parents in their children's education, restore educational assistants in the classroom, and ensure that a full range of ESL programs are available in schools for children, adults, and seniors.
- In order to develop schools as community hubs, the City of Toronto explore assuming administrative and financial responsibility for the extended use of schools by all community members and thereby increase the availability of public spaces in city neighbourhoods.
- Ensure a 'seamless day' for young children by making public funds available to combine quality childcare and family resource programs in the school with junior and senior kindergarten programs.
- Introduce student feedback processes in secondary schools to assess and make recommendations regarding the extent to which different cultures and student experiences are reflected in the curriculum, classroom, and school.
- Eliminate Grade 10 literacy tests, review ways in which schools could better value the diverse

talents and intelligences that students bring to school, and respect the development of learning paths whether they lead to labour market training programs or postsecondary studies.

- We support initiatives in the community to revise the Safe Schools Act. This should include the creation of alternatives to zero tolerance approaches, the development of policies and programs which enhance peer support initiatives, and the introduction of anti-violence education and violence prevention strategies beginning in elementary schools.
- More investments are required to develop new practices in classrooms that support mentoring, work with children with disabilities, and proactive inclusion models for children having difficulties and in the process of dropping out.
- School boards should implement Identification and Placement Review Committee [IPRC] regulations, which state that the neighbourhood school is the placement of first choice for children labelled having an intellectual disability.

Priority Area Three - Develop a Collaborative Model of Policing

This priority area addresses issues of diversity, engagement, and living conditions. The police service in Toronto faces special challenges in carrying out what is inherently stressful work in a city of growing disparities. People value police services when they feel respected and protected in their relationships with front line officers. When police are perceived to operate without effective accountability in their relations with racialized and marginalized populations, then serious schisms develop in civic life.

It may be time to situate issues of policing in a broader set of questions. How effective is the current vertical model of policing, with a 'chief' as the focus of popular attention, in promoting better states of community safety. To what extent is the quality of community relationships with the police essential to crime prevention, and to the apprehension of violators. How important is it to create and invest in community-based structures devoted to crime prevention and safety (APCT, 2004). If horizontal approaches to policing have merit, what would this mean to the kind of leadership that the police service requires, and what designation might this leadership receive.

Recommendation

- The Mayor and the Police Services Board should explore the development of a collaborative model of policing, in contrast to the current 'command' model. This recommendation reflects an emerging view that public safety is a shared responsibility with communities. A collaborative model of policing would help communities acquire the capacities and resources to work with law enforcement officials, improve conditions of community safety, and enhance perceptions of collective security among all residents.

Priority Area Four - Strengthen Community Capacities for Inclusion

States of social inclusion are enhanced when civic communities are able to create environments of care and support when people are frail, ill, distressed, living in isolation, dislocated, settling into a new country, or worried about risks to their health. Community agencies mobilize civic residents to participate on local boards, contribute their services to others, and become connected to people who may be outside their usual social worlds. In its social development strategy, the City of Toronto highlights the importance of community agencies as sources of civic capacity (2001: 7):

‘Community agencies play a key role in the delivery of human services in Toronto. Because of their understanding of local needs and their flexibility of operation, community agencies can provide high quality services in an effective and accountable way. But like the city, their ability to deal with these needs is being increasingly constrained by diminishing resources and more rigid, targeted mandates and funding criteria. The community-based sector lacks the means to ensure its own future viability. The city must vigorously advocate with senior levels of government in support of the integral role of community agencies.’

Community agencies are essential parts of the social infrastructures of cities and should receive secure core funding each year in a manner similar to other essential public services. They are the social glue that holds civic communities of diversity and vulnerability together.

Recommendations

- The City of Toronto should explore new funding models with the provincial and federal governments which recognize that community based neighbourhood and ethno-specific agencies are essential civic resources in all parts of the city and require stable core funding in order to meet their responsibilities for local leadership development, volunteer recruitment, and social support.
- The Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario must come to an agreement on their respective roles in funding a full range of settlement services to support immigrants and refugees in Toronto.
- The Government of Ontario should increase the presence of community health centres in the city to assure all residents of access to primary care services and mental health resources, and to actively involve local communities in population health initiatives that address social, economic and environmental factors that determine peoples' states of well being.
- The Local Health Integration Networks for Toronto should conduct social audits of multilingual capabilities and cultural sensitivities of hospitals and crisis services within the GTA and make recommendations as appropriate

- The City of Toronto Public Health Department should work with local Community Access Centres to develop service targets for home care and home support requirements in Toronto and present a funding plan to the Government of Ontario for a timely implementation of the targets.

Priority Area Five - Reduce Growing Disparities in Health and Well Being

International population health research has clearly established that serious deteriorations in living conditions undermine states of personal health and collective well being. Single parents living on social assistance in Toronto report that poverty breeds exclusion, isolation, depression, psycho-social stress, insecurity, fear of public spaces, shame (City of Toronto, 2004c). Khosla reports on the experiences of women of colour living in poverty in Toronto (2003: 55).

‘Hunger and poor nutrition are too often behind the depression that women are grappling with. This means they frequently don't get enough to eat and are too often forced to decide between eating themselves, or feeding their children and families. . . . The stresses of single parenthood, poverty, poor housing, immigration stresses, racism and discrimination, as outlined earlier, all contribute to the poor physical and mental health of low-income women.’

Bryant (2004) contends that housing policy has to be viewed as a contributor to population health. Maintenance costs of poor housing are a source of economic stress. Housing that is publicly stigmatized is a source of shame. Housing locations with limited mobility can breed isolation and despair.

The Civic Panel is of the strong view that public officials from the City of Toronto have to make the physical and mental health impacts of growing disparities a public policy priority in their submissions to senior levels of government and to the public at large. The City also has a responsibility to create conditions conducive to population through the promotion of mixed income neighbourhoods across the City, and through the recognition of universal access to recreation as an important health enhancing initiative.

Recommendations

- The Mayor, City Council, and public health officials should clearly affirm by declaration and initiative that the deterioration in access to living wages, secure and affordable housing, food security, and sustaining incomes are serious threats to the health and well being of growing numbers of adults and children in Toronto.
- The proposed Mayor's Summit on good jobs address issues of underemployment, unemployment, and employment equity and develop strategies to address the following areas - the creation of jobs with living wages, full time hours, and employer benefits; mandatory access to labour market opportunities for people with physical and intellectual disabilities; the requirement of Canadian experience for labour market entry; and the non-recognition of foreign credentials.
- The City of Toronto Community and Neighbourhood Services Department and the City of Toronto Public Health Department should jointly identify social assistance and income support levels required to sustain the basic health of parents, children, and single adults unable to participate in the labour market, and request that the Government of Ontario meet these basic health standards in all provincial income security programs.
- The City of Toronto should review its official plan and zoning by-laws to determine whether these include a strong commitment for the creation of mixed income neighbourhoods. This would include advocating for tenant-protected housing, co-ops, supportive housing, fully accessible accommodation for persons with physical disabilities, and homelessness prevention strategies.
- The Mayor's Roundtable on Children and Youth should prepare a submission to senior levels of government on the need for sustained investments in financially accessible, culturally appropriate, and equitably distributed recreation programs across Toronto.

Priority Area Six - Extend Access to Transit and Inclusive Mobility

Environments of inclusion are varied and dispersed. Access to mobility is therefore an important resource for social inclusion. People with limited financial resources such as women alone with children, students, and seniors depend upon public transit systems that are affordable and dependable. Rising transit fares can create financial pressures for persons on low incomes, or deter mobility. Recent immigrants and refugees may need guidance and patience from transit personnel when seeking information on getting to destinations. Minority youth must feel assured that they will be treated without discrimination in their use of transit. People with mobility limitations need to know that special facilities such as elevators are available and in service.

Inclusive mobility recognizes that an inclusive city should create opportunities for many forms of mobility for a variety of life purposes - pure enjoyment, healthy living, social contact, cultural exposure. The

principle of universal design is to create diverse environments and amenities for mobility that together contribute to the flows and rhythms of urban life.

Recommendations

- The Mayor and City Council should insist that federal and provincial resources for cities should include sufficient funding to freeze transit fares and develop community transit services for mobility restricted families, adults, and youth.
- The Toronto Transit Commission should enhance diversity and sensitivity training for TTC personnel.
- The City of Toronto should pursue principles of universal design in the management of sidewalks, traffic signals, dedicated road lanes, green spaces and community gardens to promote inclusive mobility and activity for aging populations, persons with disabilities and parents with younger children, and to support extended mobility across the city for cyclists, runners, and active pedestrians.

SECTION IV: NEXT STEPS

The *Inclusive Cities Canada* initiative is a collaborative venture that aims to strengthen the capacity of cities across Canada to create and sustain inclusive communities for the mutual benefit of all people. This project has been organized in two stages. The first involved research, analysis and reporting. The second will focus on strengthening and expanding the cross-Canada civic alliance, and developing local areas as civic centres of social inclusion. Such efforts will involve solidarity building and information sharing between urban communities nationwide.

Civic Panels in all five partner organizations have produced civic audit reports on what works and what does not based on the analysis of focus group and related findings, and a review of relevant documents. Civic Panel members will actively pursue and promote recommendations to local authorities and community agencies through convening meetings, submitting deputations, and making official presentations to municipal councils.

In addition, a cross-national report, highlighting similarities and differences between cities, will be produced and presented at a national roundtable in Ottawa in June 2005. Participants will include project partners, strategic national organizations, federal civil servants and politicians, and people with working expertise in social inclusion and the communities' agenda. The focus of the roundtable will be on the importance of engaging the federal government in building and sustaining a strong social infrastructure.

In the fall of 2005, the *Inclusive Cities Canada* initiative will be hosting a cross-Canada symposium on building inclusive communities and cities. This symposium will invite municipalities, communities and people from across the country to bring their considerable knowledge and experience to discuss issues, perspectives and good practices around social inclusion, as well as lay the foundation for increasing constituency/alliance building. Civic partnerships and public engagement are vital towards reconstructing the social infrastructure, sustaining civic capacity, and preserving social cohesion. These are the foundations of strong, supportive and inclusive communities.

APPENDIX A: PROMISING INITIATIVES

The following examples are promising initiatives cited by participants in focus groups, local soundings and feedback forums. They highlight efforts by local authorities, public services, and community agencies to create foundations for a more inclusive Toronto.

- **Pathways to Education Program:** The Pathways to Education Program is a unique initiative of the Regent Park community and Board of Directors of the Regent Park Community Health Centre. This Program is the only one of its kind in Canada; it receives no government funding, but rather relies upon corporate, foundation and significant gifts, sponsorships, endowments and in-kind donations. Developed from years of research and community engagement, Pathways to Education strives to improve the overall health of the population. It attempts to break the cycle of poverty and unemployment in Regent Park by keeping children in high schools and encouraging them on to post-secondary programs. Pathways provides an innovative blend of supports including: academic supports (tutoring), social supports (group mentoring), financial supports (TTC tickets earned through school attendance, bursary money held in trust until graduation), and advocacy supports (student/parent support worker). The program was piloted in 2001/2002; over 400 young people participate. Program partners include York University, the Toronto District School Board, Frontier College, the Transition Year Program (University of Toronto), and numerous volunteers. Over 95% of eligible young people and their parents have registered and re-registered with the Program since its inception (www.p2e.ca/faq.html).
- **Somali Parents Liaison Coalition:** The Somali Parents Liaison Coalition is a city-wide group comprised of parents and community members from schools who identify a common interest in supporting and advocating for a specific program or matters of concerns to the Somali community. The Toronto District School Board formally recognized this Coalition in January 2002; it was incorporated in May 2002 (www.tdsb.on.ca).
- **Eva's Phoenix:** Eva's Phoenix is an innovative transitional housing and training facility located in downtown Toronto. Up to 50 youth between 16 and 24 years might live at Eva's Phoenix for up to one year, while up to 160 youth aged 16 to 29 years might participate in its employment and pre-apprenticeship programs. Eva's Phoenix works with business, labour and community partners to provide homeless and at-risk youth with opportunities to develop life skills, build careers, and live independently. Youth reside in shared townhouse-style units with access to common areas, and develop life skills through goal setting exercises, workshops, and participation in a training, employment or education program. In conjunction with a mentorship program, youth are able to construct stable support networks outside of the social service system. Follow-up support is provided to assist youth in maintaining housing and employment (www.evasinitiatives.com).
- **Graffiti Eradication Program:** Developed in 2000, the Graffiti Eradication Program strives to combat graffiti through a five-step strategy: (i) eradication, (ii) education, (iii) empowerment, (iv) enforcement and (v) economic development. Specific objectives include urban beautification, graffiti sub-culture erosion, stakeholder collaboration, crime and fear reduction, and increased property values, employment opportunities and tourism. The Graffiti Eradication Program is a vibrant partnership between community stakeholders, media persons, agency members and local politicians, and is guided by a coalition of 16 Police Service members. The Toronto Crime Stoppers has played a key role in program design, development and delivery (www.torontopolice.on.ca/graffiti).

- **For Youth Initiative:** For Youth Initiative (FYI) is a by-youth for-youth agency that utilizes popular culture to bring critical theory and social systemic change to the street. Initially the For Youth Project (1996 – 2000), it focused on increasing access to social recreational services. However, following incorporation in 2000 and staff turnover, its mandate expanded to include a variety of other services. Currently, FYI works to increase youth capacity, encourage civic engagement, and build life skills, community development, youth empowerment and other direct service provision. Specific attention is directed to encouraging participation from ethno-cultural youth and youth from other diverse communities. Due to high needs and a lack of services, FYI has expanded its programs and partnership projects beyond its initial catchment area of the former City of York, North Etobicoke and other parts of West Toronto (www.foryouthinitiative.com).
- **Toronto Youth Cabinet:** The Toronto Youth Cabinet (TYC) serves as the official voice for youth at City Hall, and strives to focus on youth programs and services. The TYC is a volunteer-based organization and its members range between 13 and 24 years of age and reside in the City of Toronto. The TYC advocates for various youth issues, and promotes youth activism and civic engagement (www.torontoyouth.com).
- **Participatory Budgeting:** Initiated by Mayor David Miller in 2004, participatory budgeting in Toronto was modeled on the Porto Alegre experience in Brazil. Participatory budgeting is an open and democratic process of participation that permits persons to consider and collectively contribute to the development of the City budget. Numerous meetings were convened in Community Councils across the City, where residents were invited to state what their priorities for City programs and services should be. Towards this effort, the City provided civic education on Toronto's financial circumstances in order to better inform its residents.
- **Scadding Court Community Education and Access to Police Complaints (CEAPC) Demonstration Project:** CEAPC aims to inform and educate marginalized communities about their rights and responsibilities when dealing with the police, and ways to access the police complaints system if needed. Project objectives include: creating a community-based, culturally sensitive, and linguistically accessible space where citizens can file complaints with the police complaints system; assisting citizens in filing complaints by offering needed supports and services; providing education and interpretation of the complaints system; encouraging and facilitating dialogue and communication between the community and police; ameliorating transparency and accessibility of the complaints system; assisting the Toronto Police Services in strengthening their presence in the community as well as reiterating their focus on crime prevention through appropriate methods of communication; and assessing this model's efficacy (www.scaddingcourt.org/programs/community.htm).
- **Peacebuilders International:** Peacebuilders International is a network of different peoples and cultures committed to building peace. It is a non-profit organization that offers training in conflict prevention, management and resolution through Peacemaking Circles. The Peacemaking Circle provides a safe space for a group dialogue process facilitated by two trained facilitator. Participants respectfully discuss the facts of the offence, its impacts and alternatives for resolution, reconciliation, reparation and reintegration. Potential solutions include, among other things, essays and letters of apology, community service, restitution, and anger management counselling. Following the discussion, the case is assigned to a coordinator who will monitor the case, follow-up and provide a report to the court. The program is currently in its pilot phase, and is intended to expand beyond the present catchment area. Currently, the offender must reside

within the area of Yonge Street to Broadview, Bloor to Lakeshore (www.peacebuildersinternational.com).

- **Labour Market Bridging Programs:** The Province of Ontario has created numerous bridging programs for foreign-trained workers to facilitate and quicken access to their professions and trades. Some current programs include: (i) International Pharmacy Graduate (IPG) Program (www.newontariopharmacist.com); (ii) Access to Midwifery Pre-Registration Program; (iii) Alternative Teacher Accreditation Program for Teachers with International Experience; (iv) Bridging Program to Prepare Internationally Trained Teachers for Employment in Ontario's Publicly Funded School System; (v) Bridges to Employment (Precision Machining & Tooling); (vi) Health Informatics & Financial Services Bridging Project: George Brown Computer Programmer Diploma; (vii) Preparation for Apprenticeship, Trades & Technology (PATT) (Construction and Manufacturing Trades); (viii) Preparation for Registration for Foreign-Trained Medical Laboratory Technologists; (ix) Creating Access to Regulated Employment (CARE) for Nurses Project; (x) Three Choices: New Options for Foreign-Trained Nurses Seeking Employment in Ontario; (xi) Access and Options for Foreign-Trained Health Care Professionals (Medical Radiation & Medical Laboratory Science Technologies, Respiratory Therapy); (xii) Vitesse Biotechnology Bridging Program for Foreign Trained Professionals; and (xiii) Pathways – Employment Experience Program for Internationally Trained Engineers (www.mcaaws.gov.bc.ca).
- **Project Amik:** This initiative is a joint effort of the New Frontiers Aboriginal Residential Corporation and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). CMHC provided an interest-free proposal development loan of \$75,000 to assist New Frontiers with the development of 74 primarily Aboriginal specific, affordable homes for low-income families, singles, seniors and persons with disabilities. In addition, under the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, CMHC provided \$942,000 to convert a former industrial building into 44 housing units, and to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities (www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca).
- **Across Boundaries – an Ethnoracial Mental Health Centre:** Across Boundaries provides a range of supports and services to people of colour in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) who are experiencing severe mental health problems/serious mental illness. The centre assumes a holistic approach to mental health care and operates within an anti-racism framework. It provides programs and new initiatives that integrate skills building, social and recreational activities, support groups, alternative and complementary therapies, art and creative expressions, community kitchen, individual support/case management services, family support and outreach programs that often occur within the community. Across Boundaries is dedicated to a community development approach, and believes in the active participation of communities of colour (www.acrossboundaries.ca).
- **The Sherbourne Health Centre:** The Sherbourne Health Centre is a non-profit community organization that strives to provide accessible and effective primary health care to diverse communities in southeast Toronto. The Centre combines traditional and complementary medicine; offers the City's first infirmary/recuperative care centre; is developing the first comprehensive primary care program for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and transgender; is elaborating a broad range of programs; and is renovating the old Central Hospital (www.sherbourne.on.ca).
- **The Gerstein Centre:** The Gerstein Centre provides crisis intervention to adults residing in Toronto who experience mental health problems. The Centre offers supportive counselling for immediate crisis issues and referrals to other services for ongoing, non-crisis issues. It provides a

community, non-medical, mental health service. All crisis calls of a medical nature (psychiatric assessment, severe self-harm or suicide attempts) are referred to hospital. The service is threefold: (i) telephone support, (ii) community visits, and (iii) a ten bed short-stay residence. All services can be accessed through the crisis line (www.gersteincentre.org).

APPENDIX B: NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

Co-Chairs

Michael Phair, FCM Co-Chair
City Councillor, City of Edmonton

Joey Edwardh, SPC Co-Chair
Executive Director, Community Development Halton

SPC Project Partners

Nancy Henderson, Executive Director
Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC-BC)

Nicola Fairbrother, Executive Director
Edmonton Social Planning Council (ESPC)

John Campey, Executive Director
Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (CSPC-T)

Joey Edwardh, Executive Director
Community Development Halton

Randall Hatfield, Executive Director
Human Development Council of Saint John (HDC)

Civic Panel Co-Chairs/Municipal Government/FCM

Barbara Sharp, Mayor
City of North Vancouver

Janice Melnychuk, City Councillor
City of Edmonton

Pam McConnell, City Councillor
City of Toronto

Robert MacIsaac, Mayor
City of Burlington

Carl White, City Councillor
City of Saint John

Community Sector

Lewis Cardinal, Director
Native Student Services
University of Alberta

Amanuel Melles
United Way of Greater Toronto

Christa Freiler, National Coordinator
Inclusive Cities Canada

Ex-Officio Members/Resource Consultants

Peter Clutterbuck, Research and Field Consultant

Marvyn Novick, Research and Policy Consultant
Professor, Ryerson University

Regional Coordinators

Sarah Slack, Assistant Executive Director*
Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC)

Andrew Pask
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Glynis Maxwell
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