

November 1, 2001

To: Community Services Committee
From: Acting Commissioner, Community and Neighbourhood Services
Subject: Social Development Strategy

Purpose:

To seek City Council approval of the Social Development Strategy (SDS).

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial impacts. Implementation of the strategic directions in the Social Development Strategy would take place within the context of the City's multi-year fiscal framework and the annual budgeting process.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) Council adopt the Social Development Strategy as the social policy component of the City's Strategic Plan;
- (2) the Social Development Strategy be forwarded to Policy and Finance Committee for its information; and
- (3) the appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

At its March 4, 1998 meeting, City Council approved a report which outlined the purpose and key components of a Social Development Strategy for the City. The report identified that the strategy's ultimate purpose should be to support the maintenance of a strong social infrastructure that meets the diverse needs of communities and residents. The Social Development Strategy is intended to provide the necessary strategic framework for co-ordinating, and integrating the responsibilities for human services in the City of Toronto. It will also serve as the social policy component of the Strategic Plan.

At its October 28, 1998 meeting, City Council approved a report which outlined the elements, timelines, processes and preliminary budget for the Social Development Strategy and explained more fully its relationship to the City's Strategic Plan. The report also identified the specific objectives of the SDS:

- (a) to set the direction for social and community development in the new City of Toronto by establishing a set of clearly articulated goals and monitoring systems;
- (b) to involve communities, clients, funders and policymakers, in defining community social needs and priorities;
- (c) to channel the results productively into a comprehensive and coherent vision for the future;
- (d) to improve the service co-ordination and linkages and to establish broad outcomes to assist in assessing the effectiveness of programs and services in meeting social and health needs across the new City of Toronto; and
- (e) to maintain and enhance the reputation of Toronto as the best city in the world to live through the development of a dynamic, responsive social policy and the provision of effective services and programs.

City Council directed that the Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services develop a draft vision and principles document which would be the subject of consultation with the community and stakeholders. The draft was prepared by the Social Development and Administration Division under the guidance of an inter-departmental staff reference group.

At its meeting of August 1, 2 and 3, 2000, City Council adopted the overview of the draft Social Development Strategy containing goals, principles and proposed strategic directions. Council also approved contracting with the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (CSPC-T) to assist in the strategy, design, co-ordination and support for the first phase of a community consultation process on the draft SDS. A steering committee composed of City Councillors, staff and community representatives was established to guide the consultation process.

The CSPC-T organized a total of 22 focus groups held throughout the city between November 2000 and January 2001 to discuss the proposed strategic directions. These included 13 local-area sessions involving community leaders and service providers and 9 sectoral groups involving representatives of city-wide organizations. The findings of the sessions were outlined in "Preserving Our Civic Legacy," a report prepared by the CSPC-T.

At its meeting of June 26, 27 and 28, 2001, City Council approved a report from Councillor Irene Jones, chair of the Social Development Strategy Steering Committee which forwarded the CSPC-T report and sought approval for the second phase of the public consultation on the draft SDS.

At its meeting of July 24, 25, and 26, 2001 Council adopted the draft Social Development Strategy as a basis for further consultation with the community on Council's strategic priorities and directed the Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services to report to Council by the end of 2001 to seek final approval for the SDS.

In October 2001, public consultation meetings were held for each of the six community council areas to gather broader public input on the proposed strategic directions. Staff also made presentations and distributed material on the SDS to appropriate advisory committees and task forces. Comments gathered through this phase of the consultation process have been incorporated into the final draft of the SDS.

Discussion in both stages of the public consultation has revealed considerable concern about increasing social needs within the city and about diminishing capacity to effectively deal with those needs. While there was substantial support for the proposed strategic directions, many participants were concerned about implementation and whether the necessary resources would be available to actively pursue the proposed directions.

Comments:

The final and recommended draft of the SDS draws on the findings of 22 focus group sessions, the six public meetings as well as comments from Council advisory committees and task forces to refine strategic directions contained in the draft documents presented to Council in August 2000 and July 2001. The draft both reflects and elaborates upon Council's Goals for the Community as expressed in the Strategic Plan.

Content:

The SDS lays out a set of principles to guide the strategy and proposes 11 strategic directions which can help Toronto preserve the social cohesion which is one of the cornerstones of the city's reputation as a vibrant, attractive, liveable city. The strategic directions are grouped under three general headings: Strengthen Communities, Invest in a Comprehensive Social Infrastructure, and Expand Civic Leadership and Partnership:

Strengthen Communities:

- (1) Actively support the building of community capacity;
- (2) Encourage participation in communities and government; and
- (3) Increase access to community space.

Invest in a Comprehensive Social Infrastructure:

- (4) Identify areas for strategic investment in social development;
- (5) Increase the effectiveness and co-ordination of planning activities;
- (6) Extend social monitoring and reporting;
- (7) Evaluate program success; and
- (8) Seek more fair and flexible sources for city revenue .

Expand Civic Leadership and Partnership:

- (9) Work towards a joint strategy for social development in the Greater Toronto Area;
- (10) Work with other municipalities to develop a national urban agenda; and
- (11) Strengthen the city's role as advocate.

The Social Development Strategy will provide the basis from which City Council can identify strategic priorities for the human services system and can, within the context of the fiscal framework, integrate these into its multi-year planning process. Within the Community and Neighbourhood Services Department, the SDS will serve as a strategic plan to help guide divisional budget-setting and service-planning activities. The SDS will also provide a concise statement of the City's social principles as well as a tangible expression of the City's commitment to work in partnership with community-based agencies to improve the quality of life of Toronto residents.

The SDS warns that social cohesion in Toronto is threatened by growing social and economic polarization and that the city's capacity to deal with increasing need in such areas as poverty and homelessness is being eroded. Senior levels of government have cut funding to income support programs and withdrawn from social housing. The City now has stewardship for a much wider range of social programs and services than ever before but the increased responsibilities have not been accompanied by sufficient resources to meet the growing demand for service. While senior levels of government have devolved traditional areas of responsibility to municipalities they have not devolved the funding for the services or the fiscal capacity to raise the revenue required to pay for them. The social infrastructure maintained by the City of Toronto and its community-based partners is already suffering from the adverse impacts of funding cutbacks and devolution. If there is no renewal of intergovernmental partnerships and if the city is not given the tools it needs, the inevitable result will be an erosion of the quality of life for all residents.

Conclusions:

As the social policy component of the City's Strategic Plan, the Social Development Strategy will provide a framework for the planning and operation of the human services system in Toronto. It will also serve as a statement of the City's ongoing commitment to improve the quality of life of its residents.

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Acting Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services

List of Attachments:

Attachment 1: Summary of Strategic Directions
Attachment 2: Draft Social Development Strategy

Summary Of Strategic Directions

Toronto has the opportunity to articulate a shared vision of a liveable, prosperous, attractive city in which public effort combines with individual initiative to enhance the quality of life of all residents. This vision should guide the City in leading an effective and constantly evolving human services system—a system that must be based on co-operative partnerships and sustained by the commitment and financial support of all levels of government.

Social development is based on an integrated understanding of the challenges facing Toronto at the beginning of this new century. Although there are no simple or isolated solutions to the challenges we face, Toronto's social development goals will be realized by the City taking action in the following strategic areas:

Strengthen Communities

(1) Actively support the building of community capacity

The city must:

- (a) renew its commitment to a mixed system of human services in which both the city and community-based agencies share the responsibility for delivering programs and services;
- (b) provide stable funding to support the functioning of a flexible and responsive community infrastructure;
- (c) maintain an effective balance between its dual roles as a manager of service systems and as a direct provider of service;
- (d) help build strategic partnerships, alliances and networks among community-based organizations and institutions to provide effective services and advocacy; and
- (e) provide staff resources to support community capacity building.

(2) Encourage participation in communities and government

The city must:

- (a) actively foster the participation of all sectors of the community in the decision-making process;
- (b) help shape a "civic consciousness" among residents by providing information and education about how the city works and how they can become actively involved;

- (c) use creative and flexible outreach and communication techniques to reach all parts of the community;
- (d) ensure community access to publicly owned facilities for meeting, recreational, cultural, and educational purposes;
- (e) encourage political responsiveness and accountability at the neighbourhood level; and
- (f) seek and respect community input on issues of public concern.

(3) Increase access to community space

The city must commit itself to increasing the availability of community space by:

- (a) making city-owned space available for public use on reasonable terms; and
- (b) advocating that the provincial government acknowledge that schools are a community asset and recognize in its education funding formula the costs associated with the community use of schools.

Invest In A Comprehensive Social Infrastructure

(4) Identify areas for strategic investment in social development

In consultation with the community, the city must determine the key areas for investment that will significantly improve the health and well-being of individuals and communities. Investment decisions must be guided by both community need and the principle of equitable access to services and facilities throughout the city.

(5) Increase the effectiveness and co-ordination of planning activities

- (a) The city must use all available planning and regulatory tools to encourage the expansion of social infrastructure.
- (b) All sectors that provide human services must work together more closely in planning service systems to better meet local and city-wide needs. The various sectors must also do more to co-ordinate and integrate the planning and delivery of their services and to share facilities.
- (c) Community-based agencies and planning organizations must be funded to undertake community planning initiatives and to develop indicators of community capacity and well-being.

(6) Extend social monitoring and reporting

Community and Neighbourhood Services must continue to play a lead role in the development and updating of social monitoring and reporting tools such as report cards. Report cards should contain comprehensive sets of indicators which are linked to specific targets for improvement. These tools will help to identify areas in need of strategic investment and to guide departmental system planning.

Key monitoring indicators include:

- (a) indicators assessing the health and well-being of individuals and communities with a particular focus on vulnerable populations; and
- (b) indicators measuring the progress of social development which are clear and direct enough for broad community understanding and usefulness.

(7) Evaluate program success

As part of its commitment to a flexible and responsive human services system, the city must:

- (a) continue to develop and refine evaluation techniques which regularly measure the effectiveness and cost efficiency of programs in achieving defined outcomes; and
- (b) use the findings of evaluation to continuously improve service planning and delivery.

(8) Seek more fair and flexible sources for city revenue

The city must seek the authority to implement new revenue-generating and sharing mechanisms that are both fair and appropriate to its stewardship responsibilities.

Expand Civic Leadership And Partnership

(9) Work towards a joint strategy for social development in the Greater Toronto Area

Toronto must work together with other municipalities in the GTA to find a co-ordinated approach to social development and the delivery of human services.

(10) Work with other municipalities to develop a national urban agenda

The city must continue to work in partnership with other municipalities in the GTA, Ontario, and the rest of Canada as well as with municipal organizations to:

- (a) redefine the powers of cities and their relationship with other orders of government; and

- (b) persuade the federal government to develop a national agenda on urban issues and to play a more active role in supporting urban social and physical infrastructure.

(11) Strengthen the city's role as advocate

Working with all sectors of the population, the city must advocate with senior levels of government to provide adequate authority and resources to manage and fund community and social services. The city's advocacy must be based on the premises that:

- (a) the provincial government must commit to funding support for vital parts of the social infrastructure such as social and affordable housing; and
- (b) the federal government must re-assert a national leadership role in important areas of social responsibility such as housing, child care and immigration and settlement services.