



# TORONTO STAFF REPORT

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June 30, 2004

To: Ad Hoc Committee on the Development of a Long-term Fiscal Plan

From: Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services

Subject: Quality of Life Reporting

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to review work underway on the development of measures of quality of life.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications to this report.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

Background:

At its meeting of May 26, 2004, the Ad Hoc Committee on the Development of a Long-term Fiscal Plan requested that staff report on options for the creation of Quality of Life indices for the City of Toronto. Over the past decade an increasing number of jurisdictions have been using quality of life reports or “report cards” to track the health and well-being of populations as well the economic and environmental vitality of communities. This report discusses work done to date on the development of quality of life/sustainability reporting in the City of Toronto.

Comments:

Need for Monitoring and Reporting:

Many municipalities and organizations in the United States and the United Kingdom are now engaged in quality of life and sustainability reporting. The City of Toronto’s various sectoral strategic plans recognize the importance of monitoring the City’s progress. Extending social monitoring and reporting is one of the eleven strategic directions of the City of Toronto’s Social

Development Strategy (SDS). The strategy recommends the City produce “social monitoring and reporting tools such as report cards...[which] should contain comprehensive sets of indicators which are linked to specific targets for improvement.” It suggests that “these tools will help to identify areas in need of strategic investment and to guide departmental system planning.”

Similarly, the City’s Environmental Plan recommends that the City should produce, among other monitoring mechanisms, a State of the City report every three years that would track progress being made to achieve sustainability and improve environmental conditions and review the natural, social and economic environment. The Toronto Economic Development Strategy recommends that the City “evaluate progress in developing knowledge and skills, and advancing design and innovation, and provide international comparisons of Toronto’s competitiveness by identifying, monitoring, and reporting on a series of appropriate benchmarks.” The Culture Plan also recommends reporting on a regular basis to “benchmark the health of the Creative City.”

#### Report Card Initiatives:

Since 1999, the City of Toronto has produced the “Toronto Report Card on Children” which uses a variety of indicators to measure the health and well-being of children in the city. The report card produced by Children’s Services with the assistance of an inter-departmental work group also sets out a series of “benchmarks” or targets for improvement. The City has also produced three editions of the “Toronto Report Card on Housing and Homelessness” which contain a wide-ranging set of indicators to measure the nature and extent of the housing crisis facing Toronto. Using a mix of demographic and service data, the report cards serve as useful tools for service planning, resource allocation decisions and measuring progress in reaching targets for improvement.

Other program areas also produce regular monitoring reports using indicators. Toronto Public Health publishes “Toronto Health Status at a Glance,” an annual review of key indicators of Toronto’s community health status. Indicators include fertility and mortality rates, low birthweight babies, cigarette use, communicable disease rates and causes of death.

Economic Development publishes a monthly report on Economic Indicators which includes demographic and labour force data, retail sales information, financial activity and real estate transactions.

In addition to City initiatives, the Toronto Community Foundation produces an annual report card called “Vital Signs” which attempts to measure the health of the city by assigning grades in a number of key areas which the report card describes as “indicators most critical to Toronto’s quality of life for its residents.” Indicators include measurements of income gaps, health and safety, education accomplishment, housing, transportation, cultural and recreational opportunities, employment and the environment. “Vital Signs” is available online at [www.tcf.ca](http://www.tcf.ca) as well as in published form.

Despite these monitoring and reporting initiatives neither the City nor community organizations have produced a report on quality of life which incorporates indicators from a variety of sectors

to produce a comprehensive view of the social, environmental and economic health of the city and measures progress in meeting objectives.

#### Sustainability Indicators:

In the previous term of Council, the Sustainability Roundtable (SRT) established a staff-community workgroup which, after an extensive review of quality of life and sustainability monitoring systems used in other jurisdictions, developed a series of 26 high-level and strategic indicators and supporting measures. (See Attachment I) The series drew on indicators used in systems including the FCM QOLRS. In a communication to City Council, (Clause 35(c), Report No. 8 of Policy and Finance Committee to the City Council meeting of July 22, 23 and 24, 2003) the Sustainability Advocate recommended that:

- (1) the CAO coordinate an interdepartmental process to create a Sustainability Report using the Sustainability Indicators and measures set out in this report, with the objective of updating this twice each term of Council prior to the annual budget process; and
- (2) the CAO identify the appropriate lead and resources in the 2004 budget estimates to support gathering of data as required to compile and analyze the sustainability indicators and measures.

Council adopted these recommendations and requested the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer to report on the matter following the completion of a review by the Chief Administrative Officer.

The SRT intended that sustainability indicators and measures would “help the City of Toronto assess progress towards sustainability objectives, reinforce Council’s Strategic Plan and inform policy development and decision making processes.”

#### FCM Quality of Life Reporting System:

In Canada, the most comprehensive system of municipal quality of life reporting is sponsored by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). The Quality of Life Reporting System (QOLRS) measures, monitors and reports on the quality of life in Canadian urban municipalities using data from a variety of national and municipal sources. It provides a useful model for local monitoring and reporting initiatives.

Since 1999, the QOLRS has grown to include 20 municipalities. With 40 per cent of Canada’s total population, these municipalities comprise some of Canada’s largest urban centres, many of the suburban municipalities surrounding them, as well as small and medium-sized municipalities in seven provinces.

The first QOL report in 1999 looked at the social effects of the economic recession of the early 1990s. The second report in 2001 identified the beginning of an economic recovery in the second half of the 1990s. The first part of the third report, “Highlights Report 2004,” published in April, analyses six quality of life factors in 20 Canadian municipalities from 1991 to 2001. The indicators in the Highlights Report are grouped into ten “domains.” (See Attachment II) and are

part of a larger reporting system containing hundreds of variables measuring changes in social, economic and environmental factors. The QOLRS report allows comparison of conditions in the 20 municipalities involved. It was produced by FCM under the guidance of a technical team of municipal officials including staff from Toronto's Social Development and Administration Division. Planning is underway for several follow-up reports on theme areas such as homelessness, and/or community social infrastructure.

Some municipalities such as the City of Hamilton have adapted the QOLRS data for local use. Following the release of the FCM Highlights Report, the city issued a report titled "City of Hamilton Focus" which used data relevant to the city within the same theme areas reported on in the FCM report. Social Development and Administration will release a similar report for Toronto using relevant local data this summer. The Strong Neighbourhoods Task Forces is reviewing the use of the QOLRS as a model for its reporting on the status of certain neighbourhoods.

Conclusions:

The City of Toronto's sectoral strategic plans have all put an emphasis on monitoring and reporting. Several report cards and other monitoring tools have already been produced by City staff and considerable work has been done on the development of quality of life and sustainability indicators. These could provide the groundwork for a more comprehensive system of reporting on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the city.

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Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services

List of Attachments:

Attachment I — Sustainability Roundtable Sustainability Indicators and Measures  
Attachment II — FCM Quality of Life Reporting System (QOLRS) Indicators

**Attachment I — Sustainability Roundtable Sustainability Indicators and Measures**

Indicator	Measures	Associated Strategic Plan Goal
1. Community Involvement	1a) <u>Volunteerism</u> - % of population that volunteers; number of community volunteer placements within the City; why people volunteer (e.g., recreation, activism, obligation)  1b) <u>Sense of Belonging</u> - perception of the capacity to participate and connect with other members of the community and the opportunity to make a contribution	Goal 1: Community Capacity
2. Living Standards	2a) <u>Access to Quality Food</u> - number of food bank users; number/size of community gardens, kitchens; per capita fruit and vegetable consumption; cost of nutritious food basket  2b) <u>Appropriate Housing</u> - % of substandard housing units; % of population that is homeless; ratio of shelter costs to median income  2c) <u>Physical Health</u> - % of population that is active  2d) <u>Child Development</u> - readiness to learn (early development instrument); low birth weight babies	Goal 2: Well-being
3. Service Accessibility	3a) <u>Access to Services</u> - number and types of calls to Street Help Line and 211 service  3b) <u>Availability of Services</u> - level of awareness about the presence of services and perceptions about the accessibility of services (social, recreational, leisure, library, etc.)  3c) <u>Extent of Service</u> - ability of a senior or disabled individual to obtain reasonable services to allow them to live independently if they choose	Goal 3: Equitable Access
4. Community Diversity	4a) <u>Supports to Communities</u> - amount of community grants and % of City budget allocated to diversity initiatives  4b) <u>Acceptance</u> - perception of the degree to which ethnicity, culture and country of origin are not negative criterion in decisions	Goal 4: Diversity
5. Community Safety	5a) <u>Commitment to Community Safety</u> - % of City department budgets allocated to community safety and prevention initiatives  5b) <u>Security</u> - the sense of safety felt by Toronto's citizens	Goal 5: Safe City
6. Innovation & Entrepreneurship	6a) <u>Patents Registered</u> - number of new patents registered  6b) <u>New Businesses</u> - number of new businesses registered  6c) <u>R &amp; D</u> - investment in research and development	Goal 6: People

Indicator	Measures	Associated Strategic Plan Goal
	6d) <u>Adult Learning</u> - number and extent of learning opportunities available to adults; within City and community	
7. Attractiveness to Business	7a) <u>Economic Clusters</u> - size and strength of economic clusters relative to competitor cities  7b) <u>Education Level</u> - education level of the core labour force; literacy rates  7c) <u>Business Costs</u> - sum of standard operating costs for a business	Goal 9: International Image
8. Financial Flexibility	8a) <u>Wealth Creating Jobs</u> - amount of employment in industries which contribute new money to the financial resources of the community  8b) <u>Discretionary Income</u> - ratio of median income to average cost of living for total population (CAM 1); net domestic product  8c) <u>Wages</u> - median hourly wage adjusted for CPI	Goal 7: Generating Employment
9. Health of Local Economy	9a) <u>Diversity of Economy</u> - number of economic sectors employing significant share of labour force  9b) <u>Employment</u> - total employment by place of residence and by status (part-time, full-time)	Goal 8: Dynamic Economic Base
10. Eco-Efficiency & Innovation	10a) <u>Energy Consumption</u> - the per capita use of energy  10b) <u>Building Retrofits</u> - % of large buildings retrofitted (floor area) for energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements; City and privately owned buildings  10c) <u>Green Energy</u> - % of energy generated from low-impact or green sources; community and City purchased  10d) <u>Waste Creation</u> - change in garbage generated per capita	Goal 11: Environmental Sustainability
11. Green Action	11a) <u>Resource Conservation</u> - participation rate of citizens in energy and water conservation  11b) <u>Waste Diversion</u> - % of garbage diverted from landfill and incineration, by sustainable waste management solutions  11c) <u>Ecological Restoration</u> - ecological restoration, environmental stewardship and greening initiatives including brownfield remediation; City and community initiatives and participation	Goal 10: Environmental Awareness

Indicator	Measures	Associated Strategic Plan Goal
12. Breathability	12a) <u>Smog Days</u> - number of days per year that Smog Alerts are issued for Toronto  12b) <u>Green Fleets</u> - % of fleets converted to low emission and ultra low emission vehicles; community and City fleets  12c) <u>Air Quality Initiatives</u> - new and enhanced initiatives to improve air quality and reduce emissions (community and City initiatives); kilometres of bike lanes	Goal 12: Environmental Health
13. Biodiversity	13a) <u>Natural Habitat</u> - ratio of natural habitat to paved surfaces or built areas; diversity of natural community types and other greenspace as a % of the land base  13b) <u>Urban Forest</u> - change in canopy cover as a % of the City land base and health of the urban forest	Goal 12: Environmental Health
14. Useable Waters	14a) <u>Fishable Waters</u> - number of fish species able to complete a full life cycle in Toronto waters  14b) <u>Swimable days</u> - number of days when all Toronto beaches are open for swimming during summer months	Goal 12: Environmental Health
15. Information Accessibility	15a) <u>Availability of Information</u> - % of important city reports, agendas, background material and decisions made available to the public  15b) <u>Timely Information</u> - ability to access City documents in a reasonable time	Goal 13: Civic Participation
16. Representation	16) <u>Diversity in Governance</u> - % of elected and appointed officials and committees that represents the characteristics of the population (gender, age, race, ethnicity, physical ability)	Goal 4: Diversity
17. Public Engagement	17a) <u>Volunteer Satisfaction</u> - % of citizen volunteers in a governmental advisory capacity who are satisfied that their recommendations were carefully, respectfully considered  17b) <u>Public Input</u> - amount of public involvement in the generation of recommendations	Goals 13: Civic Participation
18. Interaction with Other Orders of Government	18a) <u>True Partnership</u> - ratio of intergovernmental committees/ taskforces City sits on as valid, full partner with other orders of government (not in an administrative capacity)  18b) <u>Recognition of Authority</u> - number of times in a year that the OMB overturns the Official Plan	Goals 14 & 15: Organizational Sustainability, Intergovernmental Affairs
19. City as a Learning Organization	19) <u>International Learning</u> - number of formal international opportunities per year for learning from and by the City	Goal 16: International Relations
20. Community Fundamentals	20) <u>Excellence of Core Services</u> - index of quality of life factors such as schools, health care and social safety net programs	Goal 18: Service Excellence

Indicator	Measures	Associated Strategic Plan Goal
21. Strategic Projects	21a) <u>Integrated Infrastructure</u> - % of City's capital infrastructure projects with multiple benefits  21b) <u>Resource Alignment</u> - % of the City budget allocated to priority activities as identified by Council	Goals 14 & 17: Organizational Sustainability, Infrastructure for a Successful City
22. Community and Cultural Footprint	22a) <u>Community Space</u> - amount of community space (floor area) available for use by the community at no charge; per capita and distribution; City and private space  22b) <u>Places and Personality</u> - number and nature of the organizations, institutions, groups and agencies supporting the arts and cultural realm of the city	Goal 17: Infrastructure for a Successful City
23. Effective Use of Land Resources	23a) <u>Location of Development Activity</u> - extent to which growth is taking place along avenues and in designated centres (intensification vs. sprawl)  23b) <u>Use of Urban Space</u> - % of space used by different urban activities; tracking activities not being accommodated such as hostels, community facilities, industry, open space or green energy	Goal 19: Smart Urban Growth
24. Mobility	24a) <u>Proximity to Transit</u> - % of population residing less than 250 metres from a transit stop  24b) <u>Effectiveness of Transit</u> - % of population able to access employment through 30 minute trip or less	Goal 19: Smart Urban Growth
25. Vibrancy	25a) <u>Cultural Opportunities and Investment</u> - change in number of cultural, arts, entertainment and sporting opportunities in a year; public support for arts, culture and heritage  25b) <u>Quality of Life Comparison</u> - comparison with other cities on urban quality  25c) <u>Public Leisure Opportunities</u> - extent and level of maintenance of the park system; number and accessibility of recreational programs, cultural activities and special events	Goal 20: Quality of Place
26. Community Attractiveness	26a) <u>Attention to Urban Design</u> - % of the space and budget of a project, public or private, devoted to urban design elements  26b) <u>Competitive Building Design</u> - % of times that a major building is subject to a design competition or peer review of some kind	Goal 20: Quality of Place

## **Attachment II — FCM Quality of Life Reporting System (QOLRS) Indicators**

The indicators are structured into the following domains:

### **Demographic Background Information**

This is a profile of population characteristics, population growth, cultural diversity, household income, and other variables intended to provide a basis for the monitoring long-term demographic changes in relation to the report's 10 domains.

#### **1. Affordable, Appropriate Housing**

Housing is one of the most important and variable components of consumer expenditure, and these indicators reflect the quality, affordability and availability of housing. The domain also includes a measure of absolute homelessness as a further indicator of housing affordability.

#### **2. Civic Engagement**

These indicators measure the involvement of citizens in the civic and political life of the community. They include voter turnout, women in municipal government daily and community newspaper circulation, volunteering, and charitable giving.

#### **3. Community and Social Infrastructure (CSI)**

The Community & Social Infrastructure Domain has the following objectives:

1. To indicate the size and extent of the social programs and delivery systems;
2. To reflect the proportion of the economy which is sustained by social programs and the role that such programs play in providing skills and services in these areas;
3. To examine the proportion of the population that directly receives services;
4. To identify service gaps or unmet needs; and
5. To establish a foundation to develop benchmarks or standards at a later date

CSI includes a community's social institutions such as local government, and social service organisations and community human resources demonstrated by organisational skills, technical expertise, educational levels, and the social, ethnic, racial and arts/cultural qualities of the community. The indicators that make up this domain measure the System Size & Extent, Investment In The System, and the Need For the Most Vulnerable.

#### **4. Education**

This domain presents a broad set of indicators related to education at different points in the life cycle, attainment levels, continuous learning, the quality of education, and education-related expenditures.

#### **5. Employment**

This domain provides indicators of the short and long-term level of the availability and quality of employment. The employment indicators reflect the distribution of opportunity and problems among different age ranges, and by gender.

#### **6. Local Economy**

This domain provides an indication of the health of the local economy measured in terms of bankruptcies, and building permits, and income-related outcomes of the local economy, measured in terms of average wages and income distribution.

### **7. Natural Environment**

This domain includes a series of indicators which signal changes in the natural environment, specifically in attributes of that environment which have been identified as important contributors to the quality and sustainability of life in Canadian communities. It is intended to enable municipal governments to understand the negative effects on the health and wellbeing of their residents when environmental conditions deteriorate.

### **8. Personal & Community Health**

These are measures of health-related life outcomes at the individual and community levels. They include the incidence of premature deaths, the proportion of babies born with a low birth weight, and workdays lost to illness or injury. The concept of Community Health is measured in terms of teen births, and suicides.

### **9. Personal Financial Security**

This domain identifies a combination of indicators that are consistently associated with negative economic outcomes for communities, families, and individuals. They include the gap between incomes and costs of living, the incidence of low income amongst different vulnerable population groups, and the extent to which household income is reliant on government transfers.

### **10. Personal Safety**

These indicators reflect the overall safety and physical security of the community. They include the rates of crime and violence in the community, as well as the rate of unintended injuries.