

Table of Contents

Introduction.....

Section 1: The Context for Change.....

Section 2: A Strategy for Social Development.....

Section 3: Summary of Strategic Directions.....

Appendix A: Demographic Trends.....

Appendix B: A Chronology of the Social Development Strategy.....

Appendix C: Social Development Strategy Steering Committee.....

Appendix D: Community Consultation on Social Development.....

Appendix E: *Preserving Our Civic Legacy*—Summary Report.....

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Introduction

As we enter the 21st century, Toronto remains one of the world's best places to live. Canada's largest metropolis is one of the wealthiest cities in the world, well-placed to adapt to the changes sweeping cities everywhere. The future offers Toronto, as part of one of the fastest growing city-regions in North America, tremendous opportunity to be a dynamic centre of innovation and prosperity. But the future also holds many challenges, as growing social polarization and inequalities threaten to erode the progress we have made.

The Social Development Strategy (SDS) is part of Toronto's plan for the future. As the social component of the city's Strategic Plan, the Social Development Strategy describes some of the challenges Toronto faces, enunciates the shared values that bind us together as a city, and describes the principles that should underlie our approach to social development. It also lays out a set of specific strategic directions to guide Toronto's course.

The Context

The buoyant economy of the late 1990s has produced wealth for many Torontonians, but the benefits of the boom have not been shared equitably. Income disparities in Toronto are growing. Alarming numbers of Toronto families and individuals are poor or are at risk of falling into poverty and homelessness. Single-parent families—who are most at risk and who are usually headed by women—are on the increase, their numbers rising faster than they have in 25 years. Nearly 40 per cent of Toronto's children are living below Statistics Canada's low-income cut-off point.

Growing numbers of people are homeless or at risk of being homeless. In 1999, nearly 30,000 men, women and children lived in emergency shelters at some point during the year. One hundred thousand people are waiting for subsidized housing. An average of over 100,000 people use food banks every month. Tied to the growing polarization in incomes is a diminution of opportunity for those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged. The income gap severely and disproportionately affects ethno-racial groups. The gulf between Toronto's haves and have-nots is widening, threatening the quality of life for all residents of the city.

The growing social and economic polarization is caused in part by changes in the labour market brought about by fundamental shifts in the global economy. Changing family structures also play a role. But equally significant in creating the growing social and economic gaps is the retreat of the federal and provincial governments from key areas of social programming. In recent years, reduction of fiscal deficits has become the guiding priority for senior levels of government, while programs that address social deficits have been allowed to erode. Tax reduction, rather than income redistribution, is the priority. Funding for income support programs, such as employment insurance, social assistance and social housing has been dramatically reduced. Tenant, employment and environmental protections have been weakened, and support for education and community services has been cut.

As part of the refocusing of their priorities, senior levels of government have downloaded new responsibilities—along with substantially increased costs—to municipalities. The City of

Toronto has assumed stewardship for a range of services, but has not been given the fiscal capacity to properly carry out its new responsibilities. At a time when Toronto faces increased needs, more is expected from both the city and community sectors, but there are fewer resources to cope with rising expectations. The city has little flexibility beyond raising property taxes, imposing user fees, or cutting services.

The Challenge of Change

Toronto *can* adapt to change; we have done so before. A hundred years ago, when the city was in the midst of its industrial transformation, Toronto's slums were home to legions of urban poor. Many children did not survive infancy. A sense of security and opportunity grew as Toronto met the challenges of the day. As the decades passed, governments and the community working together invested in a social infrastructure—a complex system of resources, programs, facilities and social networks—to provide Torontonians with an improved quality of life. The social infrastructure is now as diverse as the needs it was developed to address. It consists of bricks-and-mortar facilities such as hospitals, social housing, schools, libraries, nursing homes and recreation, arts and cultural centres, as well as services such as child care, public health, social assistance and children's aid.

Underpinning the development of the social infrastructure has been the city's social cohesion: residents' sense of inclusion, based on a respect for their differences, and their understanding of the things they have in common that bring them together. Toronto has defined itself by including newcomers, children, young people, Aboriginal people, senior citizens and persons with disabilities. Strong communities support social inclusion, using public resources to meet the needs of those who face hardships, discrimination and other barriers to participation. A cohesive community benefits everyone, because people who feel part of a larger community have an investment in the public good.

The new City of Toronto—created in 1998—has assumed stewardship for vital parts of our social infrastructure. Working side by side with school boards, community organizations and senior levels of government, the city has the opportunity to reaffirm its longstanding commitment to the public good, both as a service provider and funder and as an advocate for social justice. Social development offers us the opportunity to maintain both our stewardship and our commitments.

Principles of Social Development

According to the 1995 United Nations' World Summit for Social Development, "the ultimate goal of social development is to improve and enhance the quality of life of all people." The World Summit adopted the Copenhagen Declaration and Program of Action, which was signed by Canada and more than 100 other nations. The declaration lays out a set of goals, two of which are central to Toronto's Social Development Strategy:

- [to] promote democracy, human dignity, social justice, and solidarity...
- [to] promote the equitable distribution of income and greater access to resources through equity and equality of opportunity for all.

The City of Toronto’s Strategic Plan states that social development “encompasses principles of social equity, social well-being and citizen engagement, and is an important determinant of healthy communities and quality of life.”

Toronto’s Social Development Strategy recognizes that well-being is a social achievement, and not exclusively an individual one. The aim of the SDS is to democratize prosperity and opportunity, so that all those who live in Toronto can lead healthy lives in a safe, socially cohesive urban environment. It values diversity and reaffirms the goals of achieving access and equality of outcome for all residents as expressed in the city’s access and equity action plan. Movement towards these goals must be guided by five principles:

Equity – the fair distribution of resources, free from discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender, socioeconomic background, race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation

Equality – equal, effective and comprehensive rights for all

Access – fair and equitable access to all services, so that no one falls below minimum standards that include adequate income, sufficient nutritious food, adequate and affordable housing, and sufficient clothing

Participation – the opportunity to participate fully in the life of the city and the decision making that will determine our collective future

Cohesion – the fostering of social trust, mutual care, and respect for diversity as the foundation for supportive communities.

Strategic Directions

To build a healthy, inclusive and sustainable community in which residents have access to good jobs and to the services they need, we must strike a balance between social development and economic growth. While markets may promote efficiency, it is up to people—their communities and governments—to promote equity. Our strategy sees wealth as a means to an end: ensuring that all Torontonians enjoy healthy, worthwhile lives. This quality of life significantly contributes to Toronto’s economic position by helping the city attract investment and retain a skilled workforce.

Toronto has the opportunity to articulate a shared vision of a liveable, prosperous, attractive and creative 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 cooperative 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, progress towards Toronto’s social development goals will be realized by the

city pursuing the proposed set of 11 strategic directions which are laid out in this document. The directions are grouped under three general headings:

Strengthen Communities

- Actively support the building of community capacity
- Encourage participation in communities and government
- Increase access to community space

Invest in a Comprehensive Social Infrastructure

- Identify areas for strategic investment in social development
- Increase the effectiveness and co-ordination of planning activities
- Extend social monitoring and reporting
- Evaluate program success
- Seek more fair and flexible sources for city revenue

Expand Civic Leadership and Partnership

- Work towards a joint strategy for social development in the Greater Toronto Area
- Work with other municipalities to develop a national urban agenda
- Strengthen the city's role as advocate

Section 2 contains a discussion of the strategic directions. Section 3 contains a full summary of the directions.

Section 1: The Context for Change

Every nation that permits people to remain under the fetters of preventable disease, and permits social conditions to exist that make it impossible for them to be properly fed, clothed and housed... and that endorses a wage that does not afford sufficient revenue for the home, a revenue that will make possible the development of a sound mind and body is trampling a primary principle of democracy under its feet.

– Dr. Charles Hastings, Toronto’s Medical Officer of Health, 1910–29

A City Transformed

During its history, Toronto has been remarkably successful in struggling with the issues of urban life. So successful, in fact, that it emerged as an urban model for other North American cities—a place where people have been able to build a secure and satisfying quality of life, a place where prosperity became democratized.

We have now entered the 21st century. Looking back over the past 100 years shows how far we have come. At the beginning of the last century, housing was at times wretched, sanitary conditions were primitive and disease threatened everyone.

The city’s problems were particularly devastating for children, many of whom died at an early age. Municipal charity in the form of food or coal did exist, but could be withheld on the advice of middle class volunteers who visited poor homes to assess the worthiness of destitute families.

The past 100 years have brought vast improvements in the overall health and well-being of Torontonians. Public health, child care, public housing, social assistance and care for the elderly have all improved our quality of life. Over the course of the century the municipalities that now comprise the City of Toronto, working together with senior levels of government and locally with community agencies, have built an effective social infrastructure designed to meet the needs of a diverse and rapidly growing population.

The savage inequalities of the Victorian era were whittled away as government responded to public pressure for services. But as a new century begins, we must continue to adapt if Toronto is to avoid the worst effects of social polarization and provide its people with the services they need.

Services for People

The city now delivers—by itself and in partnership with others—a vast array of programs and services that affect the quality of life for 2.5 million Torontonians. At a cost of over \$6.1 billion a year, the city provides traditional services such as waste collection and disposal, roads and transit; protective services like police, fire and ambulance; and the human services such as public health, parks and recreation, arts and culture, emergency hostels and child care. It is particularly these human services that enable the continuing social development of the city.

Over the years, a complex and sophisticated human service delivery system has evolved in Toronto, involving both the city and the community-based sector. In some program areas such as the payment of social assistance, the city is the sole delivery agent, operating out of a network of local offices throughout the city. In other areas such as child care there is a mix of service providers. In addition to directly operating its own child care centres, the city contracts with hundreds of centres, both commercial and non-profit, as well as with several home child care agencies to provide subsidized child care. Through programs such as the Community Services Grants Program, the city provides grants to community-based organizations for a broad range of services such as elderly persons' centres, youth leadership programs and services for ethno-racial communities.

The scope of the city's human services role is huge. It directly operates 58 licensed child care centres; 10 long-term care facilities; 98 public library branches; 44 cultural facilities including theatres, galleries, museums and arts centres; 140 community centres; and five emergency hostels. Through the new Toronto Community Housing Corporation, the city is also responsible for 60,000 social housing units.

But it is in the complex web of city-community partnerships that the real strength of the human services system lies. Working with community service agencies, ethno-racial groups, cultural organizations and many others, the city has been able to reach out to all parts of Toronto to identify needs and develop flexible and innovative ways of meeting them.

New Ground Rules

The past decade has been a time when governments at all levels, in many parts of the world, have focused on eliminating deficits and reducing debt. As deficit-cutting came to dominate government agendas, social spending became a victim of fiscal restraint.

In Canada, the federal government has succeeded in reducing program spending (as a percentage of GDP) to the levels of the late 1940s, when the social safety net was just starting to be developed and Canada had minimal public pensions and no Medicare. Ottawa has shifted a significant portion of the cost of health care and social services to the provinces and forced cities like Toronto to bear the cost of immigration and settlement and other services. The government of Ontario has concerned itself with lowering its own tax rates. It has financed the tax reduction in part by shifting to municipalities increased costs for social housing, libraries, public transit, welfare and employment services, child care, emergency hostels and ambulances.

Between 1997 and 1999, in a series of sudden and dramatic moves, the provincial government significantly altered Toronto's municipal landscape. The government ordered the amalgamation of six area municipalities and the regional government, Metro, into a new "megacity." It also radically realigned longstanding provincial-municipal cost-sharing arrangements. One of the effects of the realignment was to remove part of the cost of education from the property tax base. The provincial government also intended to rationalize roles and responsibilities for the funding and management of community services—a goal that had been under study for many years. Some significant changes resulted from the new ground rules.

The city is now fully responsible for funding social housing. Provincial-municipal cost-sharing for social assistance benefits remained 80:20 but the city now also shares the cost of the provincial Ontario Disability Support Program. The child care funding envelope was broadened so that the funding of family resource programs and programs for special needs children is now cost-shared.

The funding realignment and downloading have profound implications now and for the future. Toronto's (non-Catholic) public schools used to be funded entirely by local property taxes. In 1997, the province removed part of the cost of education funding from the municipal tax base and stripped the power of local school boards to levy taxes. It also introduced a new province-wide funding formula. While the new system has the potential to increase funding equity in other parts of the province, the Toronto public school system, which has a unique set of costs, has suffered a major funding cut which it has no means of recouping from local sources.

The trade-off for removing education costs from the property tax base has put Toronto at a significant disadvantage. The city must now fund transportation infrastructure (transit and roads) and income redistributive programs (social assistance and social housing) from local property taxes. The trade-off has been far from revenue-neutral and will be even less so if economic conditions continue to deteriorate. Downloading has increased city costs by over \$250 million and will result in much higher costs should the current economic downturn drive up welfare caseloads and reduce transit revenues. The added burden on local taxpayers could be enormous.

As well as changing cost-sharing arrangements—and shifting a significant burden of new costs onto the city—the provincial government also passed many new responsibilities to municipalities. The City of Toronto continues to manage the social assistance program—Ontario Works—and the subsidized child care system, but in addition has picked up management of social housing, and a broader range of children's services.

While the city now manages most aspects of program operation, the province retains the policy and regulatory authority to set the ground rules. And the experience to date is that the provincial government is exercising that authority in a way that increasingly limits municipal flexibility for managing and providing the service. In Ontario Works, for example, the province set rigid targets for participation along with financial penalties for municipalities that do not comply. As a result, the City of Toronto has very limited flexibility in administering this cornerstone of provincial social policy.

The process of amalgamating the seven municipalities into one big city has posed many administrative and political challenges. In areas like parks and recreation and public health, separate bureaucracies had to be integrated into single departments and their policies and services rationalized. In some instances the rationalization has not been easy. For example, the former municipalities had varying policies on charging user fees for parks and recreation programs and has required some difficult political decisions to develop a new user fee policy for the whole city.

The flexibility of the new Council in meeting all the challenges posed by increasing need, downloading and amalgamation was constrained by its decision to freeze municipal property

taxes during the first three years of the new city's existence. Although some savings will be realized from amalgamation, Toronto faces many fiscal challenges in the years to come. In facing those challenges, the city lacks the capacity of senior governments to raise revenues other than through property taxes or user fees. The cumulative effect of the recent changes is that the city is faced with growing needs but has fewer resources and less flexibility with which to deal with them.

The city's partners in the community-based sector are facing a similar squeeze. 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. Senior governments must be persuaded to use the policy and fiscal levers at their disposal to address broader systemic issues—such as housing, income, employment access—that are beyond the capacity of local communities to solve with the tools available to them.

The City in the Region and the Nation

The fortunes of the city and the rest of the GTA are inextricably linked. Although Toronto is growing, the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) outside Toronto is expanding three times as fast. More people now live in the suburban regions than in the city. As population growth continues, there are serious implications for the natural environment: loss of farmland, wildlife habitat and watersheds. The shift in population balance also affects the geography of regional social development. Toronto will still shoulder responsibility for a higher proportion of the city-region's disadvantaged people. It will continue to have a disproportionate share of the region's social needs. The rest of the GTA, however, will increasingly face the challenges with which Toronto is now dealing. A social development strategy can be instrumental in managing growth and change in the region.

According to a study prepared for the Greater Toronto Services Board, the GTA has the seventh highest incidence of low-income families (18.2 per cent) among 24 Canadian metropolitan areas. Although the outlying areas are growing rapidly and enjoyed a strong economic recovery by the mid-nineties, the number of households living in poverty still increased by 94 per cent between 1990 and 1995. In the same period the number of poor families in Toronto grew by 56 per cent. Just as poverty in Toronto clearly affects the "old" suburbs as well as the city centre, the "new" suburbs of the GTA are not immune to the problems that affect cities the world over. Nor are they immune to the negative impacts of provincial downloading which will increasingly constrain their ability to meet social needs.

Because of the central importance of the city-region in the national and provincial economies, it is vital that the GTA municipalities and federal and provincial governments devise common strategies for the development of the region as part of a new and more workable approach to governance. The province has taken preliminary steps in this regard by introducing tax pooling,

which has the effect of sharing the costs of social assistance and social housing throughout the GTA. In the long run, however, a more co-ordinated and comprehensive urban policy framework will be needed to ensure the future health and vitality of the region.

It is also important that major cities be recognized as a distinct order of government and that they develop direct relationships with the federal government. To achieve this, cities must begin to form alliances and make common cause on the problems they face. Progress in this direction has already begun through the work of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which has forged much closer ties between Ottawa and the cities. Big city mayors have also formed an alliance to argue for direct federal assistance to cities. If the challenges to Toronto's social infrastructure are to be met, this progress must continue.

Our Strengths

Notwithstanding the complex set of challenges facing Toronto, amalgamation and other restructuring have provided the new city with the opportunity to build on its many strengths. Cities have a crucial asset: the capacity to pinpoint local problems and to assist in identifying solutions. Senior levels of government tend to be remote from the everyday reality of local needs of people and their communities. They have difficulty understanding the nature of local resources and limitations. City governments—particularly those whose sensitive antennae keep them in close touch with communities—are well-placed to develop the most appropriate strategies, policies and plans. Local authorities, together with an active citizenry, can respond effectively and directly to the needs of individual Torontonians and their organizations.

The approach to governance and social development evolved somewhat differently in each of the municipalities which merged to form the new City of Toronto. Some took a more active role in expanding the scope of public health and community-based human services and in supporting community development, but all used a variety of strategies including new service models, discretionary grants, planning policies and monitoring tools to meet emerging social needs.

The disparate histories and cultures of the former municipalities are now being reconciled in the new city government and a much more complex understanding of governance and social development is emerging. Further change is underway as the new city assumes increasing responsibility for managing service systems—systems which depend on many different configurations of government and community participation—as well as delivering services directly. The corporation is being challenged to demonstrate accountability for the decisions it makes in funding and managing services, and there is a growing recognition of the need for more co-ordination between sectors in the planning and delivery of services. In the future there will be a premium on co-operation, innovation and accountability.

The Challenges Ahead

The role of Toronto's city government has changed dramatically. The city is being challenged to lead in areas that once may not have been considered the interest or responsibility of municipal government. Traditional city functions have been supplemented by new ones.

As we shape the new city we must ensure that Toronto develops in directions that are socially sustainable, but we must be prepared to do this with resources that are severely constrained. The crux of the problem:

- The federal and provincial governments have retreated from their traditional funding responsibilities for social programs—particularly those focusing on income redistribution and housing.
- Funding and management responsibilities for these income redistributive social programs have been shifted to municipalities, which must at the same time continue to manage and pay for their traditional social obligations such as public health and parks and recreation.
- Senior levels of government have access to the resource base and the legislative and regulatory tools which can effectively respond to changing needs and economic circumstances.
- The city has not been given the fiscal and policy tools necessary to meet its new social development responsibilities.
- Even in good economic times, the city is being stretched to meet its obligations; in the event of a prolonged downturn, the city will not be able to respond to the increased demand for social assistance and shelter accommodation.
- The impacts of a diminishing social infrastructure are increasingly evident in our city — increased poverty and homelessness. 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.

The Social Development Strategy builds on the policy development work of several task forces and subcommittees established since amalgamation, including the Mayor’s Homelessness Action Task Force, the Task Force on Community Safety, the Seniors’ Task Force, and the Children and Youth Action Committee. The SDS is one among a number of strategic planning initiatives that the city will use to help shape the social and physical environment of the new city. Along with the Strategic Plan, the Environmental Plan, the Culture Plan, and the Economic Development Strategy, the SDS will serve as a roadmap to the future. We may not follow it exactly, but our destination is clearly in sight. Section 2 discusses the strategic directions which will help chart the road ahead.

Section 2: A Strategy for Social Development

Toronto now faces challenges that will determine its future. To meet these challenges we must build on our city's strengths. But it is clear we must do so in a way that positions Toronto's residents to flourish in a new millennium. Fortunately, the social vision and civic values that have underpinned Toronto's approach to social development provide an enduring basis for moving forward; for putting social development into action. By drawing on these values, the Social Development Strategy identifies how city government, in concert with communities and residents, can get to where we want to be: a Toronto that balances social equity, prosperity and social inclusion.

Toronto's strengths are clear: A diverse population. Resilient communities. A dynamic economy offering abundant opportunity. Safe, attractive neighbourhoods where people from all ethno-racial backgrounds live side by side. A strong social infrastructure created through the mutual efforts of government and community. Public engagement and civic participation as fundamental values. Openness to learning from each other's forms of cultural expression. Plentiful opportunities to rebuild the city to accommodate more homes and jobs. A willingness to invest in a better future.

At the same time, there are clear signs the city's social well-being is increasingly at risk. Exclusion, polarization and diminished potential belong to a future none of us want. Central to the Social Development Strategy is the conviction that the city must show leadership by making positive and proactive choices.

Social Development in Action

Toronto's Social Development Strategy is animated by a social vision that foresees improving the quality of life in Toronto by fostering caring communities, by ensuring access to services and opportunities, and by shaping a healthy and safe urban environment through investment in social infrastructure. The SDS addresses the needs of all citizens and proposes a vision for social life in the city—how people interact with their communities, with city government, with each other. Social development is about how all of us live in and contribute to a city with a unique character—a place where the social landscape and built form are equally important. And where the strong urban fabric and sense of community is a product of the thousands of everyday activities and interactions that bring people into contact with each other.

While the SDS goes well beyond being a social service and policy blueprint, the services that the city funds, manages and delivers represent a key ongoing commitment to social development. Our parks, libraries, and cultural and recreation centres are part of a social infrastructure used by all Torontonians. And the city has long provided critical services and supports to our most vulnerable residents.

Reflecting the city's civic vision, the Social Development Strategy speaks to Toronto's role as an urban government concerned with social equity, prosperity and social inclusion. It focuses on the city as a broker, planner, advocate, facilitator, initiator, catalyst, funder, builder, manager and provider. And it asserts an ongoing commitment to the city's social infrastructure through

strategies that aim to mobilize all available resources, from the dedication and ingenuity of individuals to the collective strength of communities to the powers, responsibilities and financial clout of senior governments.

To realize the city's potential, the Social Development Strategy sets out strategic directions in three inter-related areas: Strengthen Communities, Invest in a Comprehensive Social Infrastructure, and Expand Civic Leadership and Partnership.

Strengthen Communities

The social cohesion of Toronto's communities underlies much of the city's historic success. The inclusive and supportive nature of our communities forms Toronto's legacy as a liveable city. The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto made this point in *Preserving Our Civic Legacy* (See Appendix E), its report on the first phase of the public consultation on the Social Development Strategy:

During the past four decades, the world has come to recognize Toronto's civic capacity to create an urban community of social diversity living in relative harmony. The unique social fabric of Toronto, contributing to a high quality of urban life, is one of the city's great civic and economic assets... Preserving the social cohesion of Toronto means sustaining the civic capacity to strengthen communities and to eliminate social vulnerabilities across the new city.

As part of the SDS public consultation, key community stakeholders were canvassed about the specific attributes of successful, supportive communities. Their responses, as encapsulated in *Preserving Our Civic Legacy*, suggest that supportive communities:

- are places of belonging and pride
- are inclusive environments
- provide opportunities for community and civic engagement
- have capacities for care.

Strengthening communities and ensuring that they are supportive is fundamental to the continuing social development of Toronto. The characteristics described by consultation participants suggest several strategic directions related to how this can be done.

Community Capacity Building

Sustaining Toronto as a highly liveable city requires collective citizen action through neighbourhood associations, issue-oriented groups and grassroots coalitions. Nurturing the development of such groups is part of building "community capacity" which the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration of the United Nations summit on social development defined as strengthening "the capacities and opportunities of all people, especially those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable, to enhance their own economic and social development, to establish and maintain organizations representing their interests and to be involved in the planning and implementation of government policies and programs by which they will be directly affected."

The better organized the community, the more likely that local issues can be resolved locally in a manner that meets local needs and concerns. The city encourages the formation of community groups and networks, employing community development staff to assist citizens in organizing themselves and providing support to ensure stable community infrastructure. Working in partnership with the City of Toronto, these organizations and agencies deliver services and programs, advocate on behalf of residents, and help to build social cohesiveness within communities.

Over the years a sophisticated service delivery model has developed within Toronto. It is an “alternative” model that has moved away from a constrictive reliance on centralized service delivery. It relies on partnerships between the city, community organizations, and for-profit service providers. Depending on the sector, the city may act as a service manager and funder, through grants or purchase service agreements with community organizations, or as a direct service provider. Toronto’s human services system, because of its mixed and flexible nature, can provide accessible services effectively and economically.

The community-based sector which is so central to the service delivery system requires secure and stable funding to continue its work. Disinvestment in social infrastructure by senior levels of government is undermining our ability to respond to community needs at a time when those needs are growing. This threat to the system not only erodes the capacity to provide service to some of the most vulnerable in our city, but it also undermines one of the most effective means for communities to pull together toward the common goal of improving the well-being of all community members.

This is not to suggest, however, that communities should be expected to shoulder the responsibilities of meeting the social needs of residents on their own. The city must continue to foster partnerships within the sector, and work in tandem with the service sector to continue ensuring an appropriate mix of service delivery to most effectively and efficiently meet the needs of residents. The further development of partnerships and linkages between community agencies should also be encouraged.

Strategic Direction

- **Actively support the building of community capacity**

The city must:

- 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;
- provide stable funding to support the functioning of a flexible and responsive community infrastructure;
- maintain an effective balance between its dual roles as a manager of service systems and as a direct provider of service;
- help build strategic partnerships, alliances and networks among community-based organizations and institutions to provide effective services and advocacy; and
- provide staff resources to support community capacity building.

Participation and Decision-Making

Governments work best for all residents when people know and understand what issues are being considered and how decisions are being made. How citizens can effectively participate must be equally clear.

Social development is underpinned by democratic governance—the institutions, processes and traditions that shape how city governments work, how decisions are taken and how residents have their say. This does not simply mean voting every three years or getting involved in formal decision-making at City Hall. It also means having the opportunity for regular participation at the community level in all aspects of civic life. A democratic city is one that encourages and enables people to develop public values by taking advantage of public forums—attending meetings on issues of local concern, sitting on advisory committees, making deputations to Council, lobbying, making their views known. The amalgamation of seven municipalities into the new City of Toronto offered the citizens and their government an opportunity to reaffirm their traditional commitment to citizen participation. Council has adopted a policy, *Framework for Citizen Participation in the City of Toronto*, that recognizes citizen participation as an “integral element of the city’s governance structure.” To further encourage participation, the city should undertake a program of information and education that builds a “civic consciousness” about how the city works and how residents can become involved in its functioning.

Advisory committees represent one direct way in which residents can contribute their ideas and energy to the city. They must be inclusive and representative of Toronto’s linguistic, racial and ethnic communities, people with disabilities and people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. The mandate, authority and selection of advisory bodies must be clearly stipulated and circulated widely in all communities in a way that is easily accessible. Participants in formal advisory bodies must have access to resources and support sufficient to make their work effective.

To facilitate public input and participation, the city must find creative and effective ways to communicate with all residents. Participants in the public consultation on the draft SDS emphasized repeatedly that information on city services and policy proposals should be available in an appropriate range of languages and formats. This is important in informing newcomer groups about what the city does. The use of various formats such as websites, posters and electronic media will help ensure that the city’s message is reaching youth and others who may not be attuned to or able to access print media. Similarly, the city must ensure that people with disabilities have access to its services and decision-making processes.

Local governance in a city as large as Toronto must strike a balance between the needs of neighbourhoods and particular communities and the needs of the city as a whole. Both are important. Neither should routinely take precedence over the other, and achieving the right balance often involves difficult compromises. Achieving this balance becomes even more important because of the size of the new city wards. With only 44 councillors to represent a city of 2.5 million, the need for inclusive and responsive governance mechanisms at the ward level becomes acute. Residents must feel that they are able to express their concerns to their councillors and that councillors are responsible for the decisions they make.

Good governance must also recognize the “louder voices” phenomenon. Some groups have better access to decision-makers than others. It is not sufficient to simply be committed to participation without taking this fact of political life into account. Wealth, lobbying skills, facility with the English language, familiarity with all the informal ways of getting things done or influencing how things get done—these are unevenly distributed in any community. The result is sometimes an inequitable distribution of resources or the disadvantaging of certain groups. Toronto must make every effort to level the playing field. All residents must also have the assurance that city consultations are not merely *pro forma* exercises, that their input is valued and that their views will be considered when decisions are made.

Strategic Direction

- **Encourage participation in communities and government**

The city must:

- actively foster the participation of all sectors of the community in the decision-making process;
- help shape a “civic consciousness” among residents by providing information and education about how the city works and how they can become actively involved;
- use creative and flexible outreach and communication techniques to reach all parts of the community;
- ensure community access to publicly owned facilities for meeting, recreational, cultural, and educational purposes;
- encourage political responsiveness and accountability at the neighbourhood level; and
- seek and respect community input on issues of public concern.

Community Use of Space

The continuing availability of facilities in which to hold meetings and to stage cultural, recreational and educational activities is key to civic vitality. The community-based sector also requires access to affordable space in which to operate programs. It became very clear during the first phase of public consultations on the draft Social Development Strategy that reduced access to community space has become a major concern. The supply of affordable space has been diminished, largely as a result of changes to the provincial education funding formula. Schools, which were once prime locations for community meetings and activities, must now charge fees which many groups have been unable to afford. Access to this vital community asset must be restored.

Similarly local community recreation and cultural centres, museums, libraries and other civic buildings are important community resources which must be accessible for public use. As well as being available for occasional use by the public, city-owned space should be made available on reasonable terms to the community-based sector to operate ongoing programs.

Strategic Direction

- **Increase access to community space**

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

- making city-owned space available for public use on reasonable terms; and
- 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

Social infrastructure must be understood to include the whole system of government and community resources, programs, facilities and social networks that contribute to people's health, safety and well-being. The city must take a leading role in developing a deliberate strategy of planning and investment to preserve and enhance the social infrastructure.

Toronto has a long, much-admired history of actively shaping urban form and providing a high quality of life for its citizens. This has been due to a combination of private initiative and active public involvement in regulating the built environment and fostering social development. The city has been successful in the past because of the involvement of all three levels of government.

The retreat by senior levels of government from their traditional roles and responsibilities coupled with radical reductions in spending has dramatically curtailed re-investment in social infrastructure like child care centres, social housing, and education. As a consequence, Toronto's quality of life and social cohesion are in jeopardy.

Everyone has a stake in Toronto's continued success. The city is a vital engine of the Canadian and Ontario economies and its continued competitiveness is key to national productivity. But that competitiveness must be based on broad vision of what constitutes successful communities. An approach to competitiveness that ignores health, education social well-being, and the quality of jobs available is ultimately self-defeating, nothing more than a race to the bottom in which short-term profits may be gained but longer-term viability is lost. A healthy, well-educated, socially cohesive population will make Toronto an attractive place to invest. In an era in which capital is mobile, it is vital to ensure that people want to keep living and working here. Being a place that skilled people are reluctant to leave is a significant competitive advantage.

Strategic Investment

Many U.S. cities have recently used substantial federal assistance to make major re-investments in their eroded physical infrastructure. We must do the same, keeping in mind that re-investments in physical infrastructure must be matched by similar commitments to social infrastructure.

In determining social investment priorities, the city must take a long-term view. Over the next 30 years, the city will grow by more than half a million people—most of them new Canadians. While this growth will generate new revenues and create opportunities, the social infrastructure,

which is already under considerable stress, will have to accommodate the increased demand for service that new residents will make.

Decisions about investment must be based on the principles of social development—ensuring equity, equality, access, participation and cohesion—and be aimed at raising the city’s level of health and well-being. Failure to invest now in children’s programs, housing, public health and other services will have serious implications for the future. If we allow standards of health and well-being to deteriorate, we will eventually have to pay for more expensive services such as policing, corrections, shelters and health care. A well-planned program of investment in social infrastructure will help prepare the city for the challenges of the new century.

The city’s task forces and policy work groups have already laid much of the groundwork for identifying investment priorities. Established early in the term of the first Council of the amalgamated city, they have taken a broad look at the major policy and service issues facing the new city. They have pointed out the shifts in social balance which put our future at risk and the systemic difficulties in dealing with those risks.

The report of the Mayor’s Homelessness Action Task Force (which was followed by the Report Card on Homelessness), and the Toronto Report Card on Children highlighted the growth in poverty in Toronto, the impacts on our most vulnerable citizens, and the strains that are being placed on city and community-based services as they attempt to meet increasing needs. The Youth Profile charted the changing demographic make-up of Toronto’s youth and described their sense of exclusion from the mainstream of city life. The Community Safety Task Force, the Mayor’s Task Force on Young Offenders and the Action Plan on Youth Violence in Schools reported on growing concerns about safety and security and the need to take a balanced, inter-sectoral approach to violence prevention. The Task Force on Community Access and Equity made broad recommendations on how the city could better serve its diverse communities.

Other reports produced in collaboration with the city also highlighted issues that must be addressed. For example, “Ethno-Racial Inequality in the City of Toronto,” prepared by Professor Michael Ornstein, identifies ethno-racial groups experiencing significant disadvantage in education, employment and income. Deliberate investment in social infrastructure is required to meet the varied challenges the city faces.

Through the work of its task forces and other political initiatives, City Council has identified, at least in general terms, a set of social priorities. It is the responsibility of city service managers to translate the priorities into a coherent set of systems and programs. They must do this in an environment of constrained resources and heightened expectations about accountability to both taxpayers and senior levels of government. It is important, however, that accountability in human services delivery be understood to go beyond crude measurements of cost per unit of service. Achieving positive outcomes such as the improvement of public health and well-being are equally important. Accountability in a human services context must encompass notions of quality and effectiveness as well as efficiency.

Strategic Direction

- **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.

Planning Co-ordination

As Toronto grows, the city must work with its communities to ensure that social programs and facilities are available where they are required and in a form that meets the needs of its diverse population.

Good planning must precede growth and development. New residential construction should be planned in a way that ensures the expansion of social infrastructure as well as adequate access to community space. This may include the city's using planning and regulatory tools to ensure that new publicly and privately-funded development makes space available to the community for programs and activities.

System planners must increasingly take a holistic view of the services they provide and look for ways to co-ordinate programs and activities and to share existing facilities. We must move beyond the existing "silos" that compartmentalize the work of the various sectors providing human services.

We must also build on the many existing service partnerships that involve the city, the school boards and community organizations. The use of Toronto 's schools provides a model of how sectors can work together. Schools are not only centres for learning but also have become the homes to child care centres, family resource services and nutrition programs. They often share facilities with recreation centres and host countless community activities. New initiatives are underway to develop models for a "seamless" school day in which families' educational and child care needs would both be met.

The many potential relationships between service providers—no matter whether they are city, school board or community-based—must be encouraged to grow and flourish. Community organizations must be increasingly involved in planning the social development of local areas and should be encouraged to develop appropriate indicators of community capacity and well-being.

Strategic Direction

- **Increase the effectiveness and co-ordination of planning activities**

- The city must use all available planning and regulatory tools to encourage the expansion of social infrastructure.
- 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.

- Community-based agencies and planning organizations must be funded to undertake community planning initiatives, and to develop indicators of community capacity and well-being.

Social Monitoring

There should be an expanded use of social reporting tools such as report cards, which gather information on community well-being, using a consistent set of indicators and set targets for improvement in various program areas. These reports can measure the city's progress in improving health and well-being and can guide politicians and policy-makers as they make decisions about spending and resource allocation. They can also guide the system planning decisions of operating departments. The city has already reported on the situation of children and on its progress in reducing homelessness. Such report cards are valuable planning tools and should be developed in other areas.

Strategic Direction

- **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:

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

Evaluating Progress

Monitoring tools such as report cards should be used to inform policy and budget decisions and to guide system and service planning. They must also be used to identify desired outcomes—targets for improvement in social health and well-being. The effectiveness of programs and services must be assessed on the basis of these expected outcomes.

Strategic Direction

- **Evaluate program success**

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

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

Funding of Services

Innovation must also be brought to the search for more diverse and equitable sources of revenue to support city services. The current reliance on property taxes and user fees disadvantages many

renters, low-income families and those on fixed incomes. More targeted and income-sensitive forms of taxation should be examined as well as some form of tax relief to lower-income homeowners.

Property taxes and user fees does not give the city the fiscal capacity it needs to adequately fund its social and physical infrastructure. Many of the city's fiscal difficulties would be eased if it had access to other forms of revenue-generation such as a share of provincial income tax or consumption taxes.

If there is no change to the current system of revenue generation, then municipal-provincial cost-sharing arrangements must be modified to ease the City of Toronto's burden in paying for income redistributive programs.

Strategic Direction

- **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

Regional Urban Strategy

The search for ways to expand the city's fiscal capacity to meet social needs must involve the entire urban region. Toronto's post-war success has been based in part on the principle of broadening responsibility for services and extending the use of pooled tax revenues beyond physical infrastructure like roads and sewers. The city's social infrastructure—education, social services, community development—was seen as equally important by provincial governments that recognized the need for integrated planning in the city-region.

Resources and service mandates have gradually shifted from smaller municipalities to larger metropolitan governments so that costs could be distributed over a larger population and tax base. Sharing the burden between assessment-rich areas and those with fewer resources helped Toronto to avoid the poverty, crime and social dislocation that have plagued many American city-regions whose core cities and old inner suburbs were abandoned by the middle class.

Toronto is at the heart of an integrated regional economy whose outer edges have benefited from much of the job creation of the past two periods of economic expansion. Just as the prosperity of the outlying regions is essential to the GTA as a whole, downtown Toronto's strength is a regional asset. It is clearly in the best interests of the outlying communities to have a socially, economically and culturally strong urban core. Sharing the benefits of economic prosperity and quality of life across the whole GTA requires sharing responsibilities, including costs.

The pooling of the costs of social assistance and social housing among the GTA municipalities has been important. It recognizes that there is a concentration of both need and services in the City of Toronto and that there is a collective responsibility to meet that need and to pay for those services. Ultimately, though, a new co-ordinated regional strategy will be required.

Strategic Direction

■ 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.

National Urban Agenda

The scope for potential urban alliances extends beyond the immediate region. The city has been making common cause with other cities and regions through the activities of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the through the coalition of big city mayors which has been calling on the federal government to play a more active role in supporting urban physical and social infrastructure. This work should continue with the objective of increasing focus on the needs of cities and developing a national urban agenda.

Strategic Direction

■ 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:

- redefine the powers of cities and their relationship with other orders of government; and
- 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.

Advocacy

It is very difficult for the city, by itself, to prevent the fraying of Toronto's social fabric. The city lacks the full complement of fiscal and regulatory powers to influence the patterns of income distribution that are so crucial to maintaining social cohesion and preventing the exclusion of disadvantaged citizens. Senior levels of government have eroded measures that had been gradually established to regulate the market and provide services the market does not distribute equitably. These governments have decided that market relations are the principal way to determine our collective future, abandoning or curtailing commitments to social housing and the democratization of prosperity. The city, restricted to relying on the property tax base and user fees as revenue sources and forced to operate within a provincial legislative framework, does not have the ability to take up the slack.

In July 2000, Toronto City Council requested that the Province of Ontario enact a city charter for Toronto to help redefine the relationship between the city and senior levels of government. Charter status would give the City of Toronto more local autonomy, provide it with long-term financial sustainability by broadening its revenue base, and enable it to communicate directly with the federal government on matters of mutual interest.

Until the city's status is formally changed, Toronto must continue to make strong representation to senior levels of government in all forums that are available to it. It must take the lead in reminding other governments of their responsibilities for social infrastructure and social equity. As it did when it played such a major role in putting homelessness on the national agenda, the

city must continue to point to the fault lines in our community. In its advocacy, the city must encourage citizens to speak on their own behalf and consistently involve the voices of affected individuals and communities. Together they must identify what the city needs from senior levels of government, consistently promoting policies designed to promote social cohesion.

The city must make the case to senior levels of government that to meet the needs of its population, it must have adequate funding support for the programs it delivers particularly in such areas as social and affordable housing, child care and immigration and settlement services. The city also requires new forms of revenue generation that are both sustainable and equitable.

The city must also advocate constructive, achievable solutions as Toronto continues to take the lead in areas where it does have control. Although solving the shortfall in social and affordable housing is beyond the city's capacity, initiatives such as the Let's Build program show that it can play a key role in facilitating the development of affordable rental housing through new construction.

Strategic Direction

■ 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:

- the provincial government must commit to funding support for vital parts of the social infrastructure such as social and affordable housing; and
- 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.

The Road Ahead

At a time when social polarization and inequality are growing, Toronto's reputation as a successful city depends on our ability to provide our citizens with the services and support they need to contribute productively to the economy and community life in general. Our social development strategy is by necessity concerned with service delivery. We must house, feed, educate and care for a population that is becoming larger, older, more diverse, more polarized and more vulnerable. The strategy recommends investment in our social infrastructure to ensure the continuing viability of the programs and facilities Toronto residents need. But the SDS also recognizes that the city's responsibilities of stewardship extend well beyond the planning, management and delivery of service. A balanced approach to social development also requires a civic commitment to building community capacity, encouraging civic participation, building partnerships and playing a strong advocacy role to make sure that it has the resources it needs.

Committing to this multi-faceted approach to social development will enable Toronto to maintain its distinctive tradition as a vibrant, caring and safe place to live and work.

Section 3: 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

◆ **Actively support the building of community capacity**

The city must:

- 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;
- provide stable funding to support the functioning of a flexible and responsive community infrastructure;
- maintain an effective balance between its dual roles as a manager of service systems and as a direct provider of service;
- help build strategic partnerships, alliances and networks among community-based organizations and institutions to provide effective services and advocacy; and
- provide staff resources to support community capacity building.

◆ **Encourage participation in communities and government**

The city must:

- actively foster the participation of all sectors of the community in the decision-making process;
- help shape a “civic consciousness” among residents by providing information and education about how the city works and how they can become actively involved;
- use creative and flexible outreach and communication techniques to reach all parts of the community;
- ensure community access to publicly owned facilities for meeting, recreational, cultural, and educational purposes;
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- seek and respect community input on issues of public concern.

◆ **Increase access to community space**

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- making city-owned space available for public use on reasonable terms; and
- 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

◆ 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.

◆ Increase the effectiveness and co-ordination of planning activities

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◆ Evaluate program success

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

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

◆ 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

◆ 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.

◆ **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:

- redefine the powers of cities and their relationship with other orders of government; and
- 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.

◆ **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:

- the provincial government must commit to funding support for vital parts of the social infrastructure such as social and affordable housing; and
- 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.