

inclusive
cities

CANADA - BURLINGTON

**Community Voices,
Perspectives and Priorities**

MARCH 2005

Report of
The Burlington Civic Panel

Prepared By
Community Development Halton

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



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The Burlington Civic Panel gratefully acknowledges the work of the many residents of Burlington who made this report possible. The names of those who participated in this study are found in Appendix A.

Burlingtonians gave generously of their time, expertise and reflection to participate in focus groups, local soundings, the Burlington survey and one-on-one interviews exploring the state of social inclusion in Burlington.

Participants frequently voiced the perception that community members are often unaware of, or unconcerned about, the needs of their neighbours. However, they themselves provided ample evidence that we are also fortunate in having many residents who share a deep understanding of our community and a sincere commitment to building an inclusive Burlington.

We express particular gratitude to those who, although new to Canada and our community, took a leap of faith by trusting us with their stories, their hopes and their thoughtful advice on building inclusion in our community.

A special thank you to those members of the Burlington community who responded to the study survey and those who have preferred to participate without recognition. They, of course, remain anonymous.

We also thank the Burlington and Halton organizations that have assisted us by freeing staff time to participate in focus groups or soundings, or that provided additional information, contacts and suggestions.

The aim of *Inclusive Cities Canada* is to strengthen the capacity of cities to create and sustain inclusive communities for the mutual benefit of all people. *Burlington: Community Voices, Perspectives and Priorities* reflects only the beginning of this project locally. We have spoken with and listened to many members of our community. However, we know there are voices we have not yet heard. The ongoing work of building a socially inclusive Burlington will require additional processes and continuing consultation with members of the community.

The Civic Panel wishes to acknowledge Community Development Halton's leadership in carrying out the study research. A very special thank you goes to Research Associate, Glynis Maxwell as principal investigator in unfolding Burlington's story.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An inclusive community is one that provides opportunities for the optimal well-being and healthy development of all children, youth and adults. Social inclusion is key to individual and collective well-being. All members of the community gain from social inclusion – those who are vulnerable for reasons of poverty, racism, or fear of difference – as well as the broader community that benefits when everyone is able to participate as a valued and contributing member of the community. Inclusive cities and communities are recognized as critical not only to the well-being of individuals, but also to the social and economic health of nations.

Inclusive Cities Canada: A Cross-Canada Civic Initiative (ICC) is an innovative and timely project to examine and enhance social inclusion in cities and communities across Canada. The aim of *Inclusive Cities Canada* is to strengthen the capacity of cities to create and sustain inclusive communities for the mutual benefit of all people.

Inclusive Cities Canada is a collaborative venture of five social planning organizations across Canada and the social infrastructure sub-committee of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). In each participating city, municipal and community leaders have come together to form a Civic Panel, to provide leadership and direction to the initiative locally. Local research, analysis and reporting by each of the five social planning partners is based on a common framework and methodology.

Inclusive Cities Canada – Burlington: Community Voices, Perspectives and Priorities reports on the first phase of the project in Burlington, and includes both qualitative and supplementary quantitative research. The report integrates the perceptions of 244 community members who participated in focus groups, local soundings and a survey. Statistical information pertaining to inclusion in Burlington has been added. The report contains several sections:

The Changing Face Of Burlington provides a statistical profile of the community.

Common Areas of Inquiry summarizes participants' observations and suggestions for change regarding the areas of inquiry discussed in all the participating cities: health care; crisis services; publicly funded education; early childhood development; recreation, arts and culture; transportation and mobility; local government; policing and justice; income and employment; housing; community safety; public spaces; and community capacities.

Local Soundings report on additional small-group discussions and interviews conducted with newcomers, seniors and youth, in order to clarify, and make more profound, the understandings gathered in focus groups.

Barriers To Social Inclusion. During this study, participants were asked to identify both what is being done well and what areas need improvement. They found that there are many strengths supporting inclusion in our community. However, certain broad themes arose in discussions on diverse areas of inquiry and local soundings, which have assisted in the identification of underlying barriers to social inclusion in our community, and have been useful to the Civic Panel in developing its recommendations. They are:

Underfunding Of Social Infrastructure

Despite services of generally good quality, participants believe that access and quality, particularly in health care, home care and education, have declined significantly over the past decade or more, due to underfunding. Major issues identified include:

- Shortage of family physicians, specialists and psychiatric professionals and services
- Insufficient range of, and access to, home care services for the frail elderly and those living with disabilities, attributed in part to a funding shift toward long term care
- Ongoing erosion in overall quality of education, in programs which nourish the whole person and in special education and student services
- Shortage of affordable and appropriate child care

Poverty And Housing

One or both are raised in most areas of inquiry. Participants observe:

- That poverty compromises social inclusion in the community and has impacts on health care; crisis services; early childhood development; opportunities in education; housing; transportation and mobility; access to recreation, arts and cultural activities; civic engagement; and access to public spaces
- That there is a severe shortage of affordable housing, accessible housing and affordable supportive housing
- That the impact of poverty is exacerbated by living in an affluent community
- That there are insufficient financial and social supports for low-income families and individuals
- That family poverty compromises child development
- That, despite some shelter space, there are shelter gaps for youth, seniors and those with mental illness

Income and Employment

Certain issues arise in the discussions:

- Barriers to newcomers in achieving recognition of foreign credentials
- Low social assistance rates and low minimum wage
- Barriers to getting off Ontario Works
- Shortage of secure employment with adequate wages and working conditions

Transportation

In almost every area of inquiry, participants express concerns that inadequate public transportation, both within the community and to areas outside the community, compromises social inclusion. The major issues include:

- Cost
- Inadequate routes and hours of local service
- Deficiencies in transportation to other parts of the Region of Halton

Physical Planning And Accessibility

Despite some positive initiatives in city planning, participants express concerns about:

- “Car-based planning” and “building big”
- Loss of neighbourhood amenities, and concentration of amenities in larger facilities on major thoroughfares
- Insufficient sidewalks and bicycle paths
- Need for improvement in sidewalk design for those with disabilities
- Physical barriers to mobility in public spaces, public and private buildings and residences

Being “Priced Out”

Participants express support for free programs and festivals, and believe that social inclusion is compromised by:

- Decline of free activities in schools
- Insufficient free and low-cost activities in the community
- Shortage of subsidies; attitudinal, capacity or awareness barriers to applying for subsidies; subsidies which are not sufficient to ensure affordability

Policing and Justice

Participants believe there are “two realities of policing.” They observe:

- Generally high level of respect for police in the community
- Police efforts to reach out to youth, seniors and diverse cultural and racial groups
- Commitment to outreach and antiracism at the highest levels of the police service.

Nevertheless, there is widespread agreement that:

- Youth are over-policed, both by the public police force and by private security
- Both youth and some cultural and racial groups may be targeted by police and are disadvantaged in the courts.

Communication And Awareness

Three aspects of communication and awareness are raised in nearly every area of inquiry:

- Gaps in the public’s awareness of available programs and services
- Gaps in providers’ awareness of needs (diversity competence)
- Gaps in the public’s awareness of important issues, such as poverty and the lack of affordable housing

Certain specific issues are frequently mentioned:

- Weak media coverage of local issues
- Lack of information on diversity in official publications
- Lack of orientation for newcomers
- Shortage of information and services in languages other than English
- Over-reliance on automated telephone attendant systems and Internet

Community Attitudes

Participants observe several attitudes they believe are widespread among community members and that work against social inclusion:

- Lack of awareness and concern about poverty; reluctance to accept the realities of poverty
- Viewing low-income individuals as either “deserving” or “undeserving”
- Lack of awareness and concern about the shortage of affordable housing, accessible housing and affordable supportive housing
- Reluctance to accept differences, primarily those of income
- Fear of youth
- NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) syndrome

Civic Engagement

Despite noting some strengths, such as an approachable City Council, advisory committees, free festivals, parks and public spaces, participants articulate concerns that social cohesion and civic engagement are compromised by numerous factors, including:

- Voter apathy and lack of time in a “commuter community”
- Insufficient civics education in schools
- Selection processes for membership of City committees
- Few free and low-cost activities
- Unwelcoming attitudes toward youth
- Deficiencies in transportation
- Erosion of community members’ commitment and sense of control over local issues, due to the presence and powers of the Ontario Municipal Board

Recommendations have been developed by the Burlington Civic Panel to contribute to building social inclusion, and are addressed to all levels of government, community agencies and organizations.



RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BURLINGTON CIVIC PANEL

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION

- 1. The Civic Panel recommends the continuation of its work through the establishment of an Inclusive Burlington Civic Panel. Membership should include the City of Burlington, Regional Municipality of Halton, human service agencies¹, community groups² and others which represent the various diversities³ of Burlington. Its mandate is to monitor and evaluate the state of social inclusion and to recommend and advocate policies and practices, to all levels of government and to the public, that continue to ensure a socially inclusive Burlington.**

COMMUNICATION, AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE

- 2. In order that the City of Burlington, local authorities⁴, human service agencies and the community develop an institutional capacity to embrace the growing diversity of our community – an asset that enriches us all – the Civic Panel recommends:**
 - a. that the City of Burlington commission a social profile of Burlington to enhance awareness of the city's growth and changing socio-demographic characteristics. This will be available to businesses, human service agencies, community groups, residents and local media as a tool for understanding and change.
 - b. that local authorities integrate or continue to integrate diversity-competence training into existing continuing learning programs for their staff in order to understand better how to include the various diversities of the community.
 - c. that the Ministry of Education review and revise the 1993 Ethno-cultural Equity Policy to reflect the diverse Canadian community (class, sexual orientation, as well as culture/faith) and that the Ministry create a department to support diversity in education issues and initiatives and provide support and funding to school boards specific to staff training in diversity competency.
 - d. that the City of Burlington, in recognition that newcomers bring skills and knowledge that enrich our community, work to establish ongoing partnerships among local authorities, human service agencies and community groups to orient and assist newcomers to Burlington.

Potential considerations of these partnerships are:

- i. awareness of and access to settlement, housing, health care, education, crisis services, social services and City services.
- ii. access to information in various languages about local services, programs and government functions and processes
- iii. awareness of the roles and responsibilities of the various levels of government, and how to contact them
- iv. support in attaining recognition of foreign credentials
- v. appropriate English language training and skills upgrading to enable newcomers to work in their chosen field
- vi. support for Investor Class immigrants in researching and finding appropriate investment opportunities in the community
- vii. support for newcomers in their job search

3. The Civic Panel recommends that Citizenship and Immigration Canada review and change current immigration policies and practices to ensure that immigrants and refugees become part of our community by:

- a. providing appropriate and comprehensive information and contacts in all Canadian diplomatic missions abroad and at all points of entry regarding settlement and employment in Canada including, where possible, information specific to individual communities.
- b. providing comprehensive information on its website and in printed matter to fully inform immigrants about significant challenges to employment for immigrants and the complexities of investment opportunities in Canada.
- c. pursuing a partnership with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to acquire and provide information and contacts regarding settlement services for individual municipalities.
- d. providing funding to human service agencies and other levels of government to provide social supports for newcomers.

4. In recognition that knowledge and understanding of the purpose, roles and functions of all levels of government is one of the pillars of active participation in civic affairs, the Civic Panel recommends:

- a. that the City of Burlington, local authorities and community organizations partner to develop and disseminate educational materials and programs to enable civic knowledge for action.
- b. that the Ministry of Education for Ontario in conjunction with Boards of Education and the partners of Inclusive Cities Canada:

- i. evaluate the level of student awareness of the functions of all levels of government, and the processes by which young citizens can be engaged
- ii. evaluate the civics curriculum and TAG (Teacher Advisory Group) programs as vehicles for enhancing student engagement in political, social and economic processes

5. In view of the common perception that available services are not well understood or easy to access, the Civic Panel recommends

- a. that the City of Burlington, Regional Municipality of Halton and human service agencies actively support the Halton 211 Steering Committee to implement a 211⁵ system for Halton.
- b. that the City of Burlington, working with the Regional Municipality of Halton and human service agencies, explore the implementation of a 311⁶ service.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

6. The Civic Panel recommends that the City of Burlington, Regional Municipality of Halton and human service agencies endorse and advocate for the following recommendations to reduce poverty, with its deep social and economic consequences.

- a. that social, educational, recreational and transit programs and services be strengthened, recognizing that these services have a redistributive effect that narrows inequality.
- b. that the Government of Canada in partnership with the provincial governments and nonprofit sector develop and support a high quality National Early Learning and Child Care and Development Strategy which is co-ordinated, universal, accessible and transparent.⁷
- c. that the Province of Ontario, in partnership with Boards of Education and Teachers Federations, determine and ensure the level of funding necessary to provide adequate special education, arts, sports and physical education in the school system.
- d. that the Province of Ontario reassess the funding of provincially funded and mandated social services to ensure that all regions or municipalities in the GTA receive equal per capita funding.
- e. that the Government of Ontario maintain Social Assistance and Disability Support payments at a level at least equal to the Low Income Cut Off for Halton as defined by Statistics Canada.
- f. that the Government of Ontario review regularly and adjust the minimum wage so that everyone working full-time will earn a living wage that at least provides for their basic needs.

7. The Civic Panel, in order to meet basic human needs that encompass physical security (food, housing, clothing, protection against violence and physical/sexual abuse), health, home care and education:

- a. endorses and supports the process of the Roundtable on Funding Matters convened by the Regional Chair to “address and resolve the issues of inadequate and diminishing infrastructure faced by Halton nonprofit and voluntary organizations.”⁸

and recommends:

- b. that the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario, and the Regional and Municipal Governments of Canada commit to developing a National Housing Strategy to ensure the building of sufficient affordable and accessible housing in Canada.
- c. that the City of Burlington and the Regional Municipality of Halton partner with human service agencies and community groups to identify and fill gaps in services to the population of Burlington, including, but not limited to:
 - i. the need for safe emergency housing for youth aged 16 to 18 years
 - ii. the need for a 24/7 mobile emergency crisis team to address the needs of people with mental illness
 - iii. the need for a shelter capable of serving people with mental illness
 - iv. the shortage of options in supportive housing
 - v. the shortage of affordable accessible housing
 - vi. engaging the Province of Ontario in reviewing the current model of funding for Long term care facilities and in-home care, both acute and chronic, with a view to increasing in-home supports, with greater flexibility to adapt to individual needs, thus reducing the need for institutionalization
 - vii. engaging the Province of Ontario in developing a strategy to provide for the long-range need for affordable, supportive housing for the seniors population and those with disabilities, including a review of the Ontario Building Code
- d. that Inclusive Cities Canada, with the support of all Civic Panels, address our diminishing social infrastructure by recommending to the Federal and Provincial governments that these two senior levels of government restore their investment in human service programs, including their support of community based nonprofit and voluntary organizations, and that these reinvestments be as important a priority as reinvestment in Medicare.

8. The Civic Panel recommends that the City of Burlington, Regional Municipality of Halton, Provincial and Federal Governments

- a. promote participation in appropriate life and/or employment skills training and participation in the labour market by ensuring access to high quality affordable child care.

- b. continue to support economic development which creates employment opportunities that provide adequate income and working conditions, enabling community members to support themselves and their families with a sense of security.

9. The Civic Panel, in recognition that limitations to transportation services compromise access to employment, health care and other services, inhibit the participation of residents in cultural, recreational and civic pursuits and constrain economic opportunity recommends:

- a. that Burlington Transit, community agencies and service providers consult and partner to evaluate hours of service, routes and costs with reference to providing adequate service to all those in the community, and that the City of Burlington provide the financial and other support necessary to Burlington Transit to accomplish the above task.
- b. that all levels of government view transportation as an essential social and economic service and that public transit be affordable, accessible and increasingly funded from the tax base.
- c. that the Province of Ontario and municipalities which provide transit in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) adopt financial and regulatory policies that will integrate land use and transportation planning. This should include both local transit and transit across the GGH, so as to build a base for more efficient, effective and accessible public transit services. In particular, this should be accomplished through: intensification and compact mixed-use development in key transportation corridors; and investing in transportation infrastructure to allow easy access between and within urban centres.
- d. that the Province of Ontario, in recognition that transportation needs to be integrated to be effective through the Region of Halton and the Greater Toronto Area, move on the development of a Greater Toronto Transportation Authority such that a continuous transportation web exists across the Greater Toronto Area.

10. The Civic Panel recommends that the City of Burlington, in partnership with community agencies and the Inclusive Cities Canada Civic Panel for Burlington review the recreational and arts programs and activities in Burlington with reference to accommodating the diversities of the community to:

- a. ensure a vital recreation program and arts culture in which people of all income levels and abilities participate
- b. ensure the development of recreational and arts programs and activities that reflect and celebrate the diversity of Burlington.

11. The Civic Panel recommends that the City of Burlington review its city planning programs and procedures to ensure that they:

- a. meet evolving social needs

- b. provide full public access to planning decision making, and
- c. generally are consistent with the Inclusive Cities initiative

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY PROBLEM-SOLVING

12. The Civic Panel recommends that Burlington residents and organizations, in conjunction with the City of Burlington, actively engage in increasing their community knowledge and strengthening community organizations, and engaging in community problem-solving as follows:

- a. that the Civic Panel meet with representatives of the print, television and radio media to develop strategies to ensure more and better media coverage of civic life in Burlington.
- b. that the City of Burlington explore the development of an innovative Internet-based Burlington news service that gives full coverage of civic life in Burlington.
- c. that the City of Burlington regularly assess the degree of staff support, resources, and regard provided to Council Advisory Committees to ensure they can effectively formulate positions and influence public policy issues.
- d. that the City of Burlington develop a model for acquiring effective advice on seniors' issues.
- e. that the City of Burlington use an inclusion framework in the work of all City committees and staff and as a lens in the development and implementation of City policies and programs.
- f. that Inclusive Cities Canada research ways in which local municipalities can implement and use community councils at the ward and neighbourhood levels to enhance broad based engagement of residents in the life of their community.
- g. that Inclusive Cities Canada research and assist municipalities to pilot participatory budgeting processes as an expression of resident concerns, priority setting, and direct political participation in local democracy.
- h. that the Government of Ontario, in partnership with Boards of Education and municipalities in Ontario, develop a model which fosters the use of schools as community centres or hubs to promote community capacities and social cohesion.
- i. that the Ministry of Education reassess the value of the compulsory 40 hours of community involvement for secondary students.

CIVIC PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS - DEFINITIONS AND NOTES

¹ Human service agencies are a category of the nonprofit and voluntary sector that provide both health and social services

² Human service agencies and community groups are part of the nonprofit and voluntary sector, often described as the third pillar of Canadian society and its economy. Katherine Scott in her study, *Funding Matters: The Impact of Canada's New Funding Regime on Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations* (2003), describes the organizations of the sector as ranging from "small community-based groups to large, national umbrella organizations, all enriching the lives of Canadians in various ways. Some provide services such as health, education, social services, and arts and culture, while others have an essentially representational role, working on issues specific to particular causes or groups. Some advance religious faith and practice; others raise funds and provide financial support to other voluntary organizations. Together, voluntary organizations play an essential role in promoting active citizenship and building bridges between communities and cultures, across regions, and between Canada and other countries... Generally speaking, the nonprofit and voluntary sector is made up of organizations that exist primarily to serve others... and the broader public interest... They rely to a significant degree on volunteers in conducting their activities and overseeing their affairs. And lastly, nonprofit and voluntary groups can be said to be guided by values that set them apart from market and state, namely philanthropy, altruism, charity, reciprocity and mutuality" (Shields and Evans, 1998:89).

³ For purposes of this document, "diversity" is defined according to the Terms of Reference of the Halton Diversity Advisory Committee, as follows: "'Diversity' shall mean the inherent value in the distinctive characteristics, qualities and elements of an individual, a group of individuals, or a community. These characteristics, qualities and elements include ethno-racial, faith, gender, mental ability, physical ability, literacy/educational level, age, sexual orientation and economic circumstances" (Regional Municipality of Halton, Halton Diversity Advisory Committee, Terms of Reference).

⁴ For purposes of this document "local authorities" refers to both public and quasi-public bodies, such as City and Regional governments, school boards, police services, hospital boards, etc.

⁵ "211 is an easy to remember telephone number that simplifies access to the 'first-stop' for information. Trained information and referral specialists respond to telephone calls and provide, or mediate, a non-clinical assessment of the callers' needs. Callers receive information about community, government, health and social services that will address their needs" (Halton Social Planning Council, Halton 211 Feasibility Study, June 2002).

⁶ The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has approved the joint application by the Regional Municipality of Halton and 5 other municipalities, that 311 be assigned for telephone access to non-emergency municipal government services. "The Municipalities provided examples of the various functions of the proposed 311 service. Citizens could dial 311 to report dangerous road conditions (i.e. potholes, missing manhole covers), traffic light / street light outages, water main breaks, blocked / broken sewer mains, stray animals, abandoned vehicles, and noise complaints. Further, citizens could make inquiries regarding garbage / recycling, water quality / safety, public transit schedules, development and building permits, property tax bills, parking tickets, and recreation facility schedules. The proposed 311 service could also provide referrals to the mayor's / aldermen's offices, handle general service complaints and compliments, and provide access to all police / fire non-emergency services" (CRTC, Telecom Decision CRTC 2004-71, Ottawa, November 2004).

⁷ The Civic Panel advises that this be undertaken with reference to the OECD report "Early Childhood Education and Care Policy: Country Note for Canada, Oct. 26, 2004" and the Campaign 2000 report "One Million Too Many: Implementing Solutions to Child Poverty in Canada (2004 Report Card on Child Poverty in Canada)"

⁸ "The mandate of the Citizen's Roundtable would be to take a meaningful and profound look at the non-profit and voluntary sector. Their comprehensive review will encompass three broad areas in which to make recommendations: the funding system and structure that exists in Halton; the importance and impact of the nonprofit sector on the Halton economy and quality of life; the necessary components and status of the agency infrastructure necessary to support the non-profit and voluntary sector (e.g. staff development, volunteer coordination and training, board governance and operation, visioning and planning)" (Regional Municipality of Halton. Draft Terms of Reference for Citizens Roundtable, SS-57-04 Attachment #1, 2004)

INTRODUCTION

Social inclusion is the capacity and willingness of our society to keep all groups within reach of what we expect as a society — the social commitment and investments necessary to ensure that all people are close to (within reach of) our common aspirations, common life and its common wealth.¹

Social inclusion is key to individual and collective well-being.

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

Population health research has taught us that inequality hurts everyone, not just those at the bottom. Similarly, while inclusion provides obvious dividends to individuals and groups who are marginalized, it benefits everyone – both in terms of the vitality a society derives when all its members fully contribute and by removing the liabilities associated with exclusion.²

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

The social and economic future of countries is increasingly being determined in their urban areas . . . Two alternative scenarios are emerging: one of cities characterized by increasing poverty, social exclusion and decline; the other of inclusive cities characterized by equitable and sustainable growth.³

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

In Canada, social inclusion has the potential to act as a guiding framework for two inter-related creative projects: advancing the well-being of Canadians and urban nation-building. People's well-being is closely tied to where they live. Therefore, it is in cities and communities across Canada that

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

² “Social Inclusion: A New Way of Thinking?” Backgrounder for Towards a Vision of Social Inclusion, November 2001 Conference sponsored by the Laidlaw Foundation and the Canadian Council on Social Development.

³ The Cities Alliance. “City Development Strategies: The Cities Alliance Perspective,” [undated] <http://www.citiesalliance.org/citiesalliancehomepage.nsf>

children, youth and adults first experience inclusion or exclusion. The quality of neighbourhoods and communities, the common public spaces where people interact and share experiences, and the adequacy of a city's social infrastructure all contribute to creating environments that either welcome and include, or reject and polarize.

The federal government's social development ministry recognizes the important link between well-being and social inclusion. Social Development Canada describes its mandate as:

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

Recognizing that "Canada's quality of life depends on strong, vibrant and sustainable cities and communities", the federal government has introduced the New Deal for Cities and Communities. One of its key components is to "start to deliver stable, predictable, long-term funding for cities and communities in urban and rural areas."⁴ To date, \$1.3 billion in new revenues, to be shared among municipal governments in Canada, has been committed to maintain and replenish infrastructure programs, such as public transit.

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

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

In contrast, municipalities developing "strong" infrastructure will integrate physical and social planning and development and will invest adequately in both.

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

⁴ In addition to funding, the components are: vision, relationships, and cities and communities lens. New Deal for Cities and Communities, http://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/ndcc/index_e.shtml

Introducing Inclusive Cities Canada: A Cross-Canada Civic Initiative

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

Specifically, its goals are:

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

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

- Social Planning and Research Council of BC
- Edmonton Social Planning Council
- Community Development Halton
- Community Social Planning Council of Toronto
- Human Development Council of Saint John

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

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

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

Social Inclusion and the Dimensions of an Inclusive City

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

As an outcome, an inclusive city is one that “provides opportunities for the optimal well-being and healthy development of all children, youth and adults.” Practical expressions or ways of promoting inclusion are: universal access to meaningful opportunities in education, the arts, culture and recreation; relevant health services; school curricula adapted to specific needs and strengths; family support services and respite; safe streets and parks; and responsive governance on all levels.⁵

Inclusive Cities Canada builds on previous research and community development work undertaken by the Laidlaw Foundation and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, including a series of local soundings in 10 cities.⁶ Based on this research and a review of Canadian and international literature, ICC defined the following five dimensions of inclusion as central to building inclusive cities and communities:

1. *Diversity*

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

2. *Human Development*

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

3. *Civic Engagement*

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

4. *Living Conditions*

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

5. *Community Services*

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

These dimensions became the basis for the research questions that explored people’s perceptions of their city’s “inclusivity.” Community focus groups, local soundings, feedback forums and electronic surveys were used in different ways by local ICC partners to examine the level of inclusion in key areas such as: public education, recreation, transportation, policing and justice, local government, early childhood development and community safety.

⁵ Adapted from the Canadian Institute of Child Health Communique, “Towards a Vision of Social Inclusion,” January 2002. http://www.cich.ca/Communique_Jan02.html

⁶ The findings and recommendations are in the 2003 report, *Building Inclusive Communities: Cross-Canada Strategies and Perspectives* (www.inclusivescities.ca).

Local Research, Analysis And Reporting

The first phase of the project involved research, analysis and reporting by each of the five social planning partners, based on a common framework and methodology developed by the National Steering Committee. Each of these reports, entitled *Community Voices, Perspectives and Priorities*, reflects and analyzes what was heard, identifies formative themes and issues, and puts forward priorities for local action.

Burlington: Community Voices, Perspectives and Priorities reports on the first phase of *Inclusive Cities Canada* as conducted in Burlington, and includes both qualitative and supplementary quantitative research. The report integrates the perceptions of social inclusion in Burlington expressed by 244 community members who participated in focus groups, local soundings and a survey. Statistical information pertaining to inclusion in Burlington has been added.

The City of Burlington, Ontario, is located at the western end of the Greater Toronto Area and borders the City of Hamilton. It is one of four municipalities, with Oakville, Milton and Halton Hills, which make up the Region of Halton. Thus, Burlington is served by four levels of government: the City of Burlington; Regional Municipality of Halton (with responsibility for social housing, social assistance, public health and additional social and other services); the Province of Ontario; and Government of Canada.

Focus Groups

Each local partner conducted 10-12 community focus groups of approximately 8-12 participants to explore people's perceptions of the inclusivity of their communities. Focus group participants reflected the social and cultural diversities of the partner cities and communities, and provided strong insights from a wide range of experiences and perspectives. A trained facilitator employed a structured process that provided an opportunity for both individual and collective input. Focus group participants were also asked to identify what positive changes are needed at the policy and practice levels.

In each community, two or more focus groups were conducted on each dimension of inclusion, exploring three areas of inquiry:

1. *Diversity*
Areas of inquiry: local government; publicly funded education; policing and justice
2. *Human Development*
Areas of inquiry: early childhood development; publicly funded education; recreation, arts and culture
3. *Civic Engagement*
Areas of inquiry: local government; public spaces; community capacities
4. *Living Conditions*
Areas of inquiry: income and employment; housing; community safety
5. *Community Services*
Areas of inquiry: health care; crisis services; transportation and mobility

In Burlington, 10 focus groups were held during May and June 2004, with a total of 98 participants. Each focus group consisted both of residents, with interest and expertise in the areas of inquiry discussed, and representatives of community agencies and organizations. The composition of each focus group drew as broadly as possible from the various diversities that make up the community.

The section on **Common Areas of Inquiry** reports individually on each of the common areas of inquiry, and includes the views of focus group, local soundings and survey participants. In focus groups, participants were also asked to identify key strengths and weaknesses within the community, reported as **Key Observations**, and to identify positive changes that are needed, reported as **Suggestions from Participants**. These appear at the end of each area of inquiry.

Throughout this report, *italics* indicate direct quotes from participants. Additional material added by the authors is shown in regular type in text boxes.

Local Soundings

In addition to the community focus groups, informal local soundings were held in all the partner cities to provide greater focus and understanding of issues facing diverse populations.

In Burlington, focus group discussions indicated that further local soundings were needed with youth, seniors and newcomers. Local soundings were conducted between July and September of 2004. Ninety-four youth participated in interviews conducted at various public and semi-public spaces. A group of five seniors and another of seven newcomers engaged in small-group discussions on issues of social inclusion.

Responses are summarized in the sections on **Local Soundings**. Those related to individual areas of inquiry are also reflected in the relevant sections of **Common Areas of Inquiry**.

Inclusive Burlington Survey

In Burlington, an additional survey was developed, to broaden the exploration of social inclusion and exclusion in Burlington. Surveys were sent out in August 2004 to 168 community members, 40 of whom responded (a 23.8 % response rate). Responses have been reflected in the section **Common Areas of Inquiry**.

Identifying Barriers to Social Inclusion

In the focus groups and local soundings, certain broader themes emerged, which thread throughout diverse areas of inquiry. These have assisted in beginning to identify the underlying sources of social inclusion and exclusion in our community, and have been of use to the Civic Panel in developing its recommendations. They are reported in the section **Barriers to Social Inclusion**.

Feedback Forum

In October 2004, those who had participated in focus groups, local soundings and the survey were invited to attend a meeting at which preliminary findings were presented. The objective was to

ensure that the preliminary findings correctly reflected the comments and analysis of participants throughout the consultations. Through individual comment and group discussion, the preliminary findings were accepted as an accurate reflection of the observations that had been made by participants.

Recommendations

Recommendations were developed by the Inclusive Cities Canada Burlington Civic Panel during the Fall of 2004.

Next Steps

Civic Panels in the four other partner cities have produced reports based on a civic audit process similar to that conducted in Burlington. A cross-national report, highlighting similarities and differences between cities, will be produced and presented at a national roundtable in Ottawa in June 2005. The focus of the roundtable will be on the importance of engaging the federal government in building and sustaining a strong social infrastructure.

In the Fall of 2005, *Inclusive Cities Canada* will invite other municipalities and communities to become part of the cross-Canada initiative in building inclusive cities. This will include convening a national symposium or regional symposia to lay the foundation for building increasing constituencies and alliances. Civic partnerships and public engagement are vital towards reconstructing the social infrastructure, sustaining civic capacity, and preserving social cohesion. These are the foundations of strong, supportive and inclusive communities.

Working Together to Build an Inclusive Burlington

Inclusive Cities Canada – Burlington: Community Voices, Perspectives and Priorities builds on previous work done in the community that contributes to the understanding of social inclusion in Burlington. A selection of resources is shown in Appendix C. Some are referred to in the body of this report.

During this study, participants were asked to identify both what is being done well and what areas need improvement. They find that there are many strengths in our community; however, as the pages that follow reflect, the most detailed responses were generated by discussion of areas needing improvement.

The purpose of these discussions has been not to criticize individual bodies, programs or services, but rather to foster discourse and reflection, and contribute to the development of a vision for an inclusive Burlington. Participants are abundantly aware of financial and other constraints that affect the provision of services in the community. However, they were asked to put such considerations aside, and not limit their discussions to the immediately practical, but to stretch their imaginations.

Throughout this process, it has been clear that the participants' eagerness to engage in discussions of social inclusion in Burlington arises from a high level of confidence in the will and capacity of local authorities, agencies, services and individuals to bring about positive change, and an optimism that our community is receptive to hearing their voices, perspectives and priorities.

THE CHANGING FACE OF BURLINGTON

One of the common themes emerging from study focus groups and surveys is that participants feel they have an insufficient understanding of diverse groups in our community and of their situations. Repeatedly, participants express a desire for a better understanding of who “we” are.

Population

In the five years between 1996 and 2001, Burlington’s population increased by just over 10%, from 136,040 to 149,735. As Figure 1 illustrates, Burlington will continue to grow to a population of 184,500 by 2021.

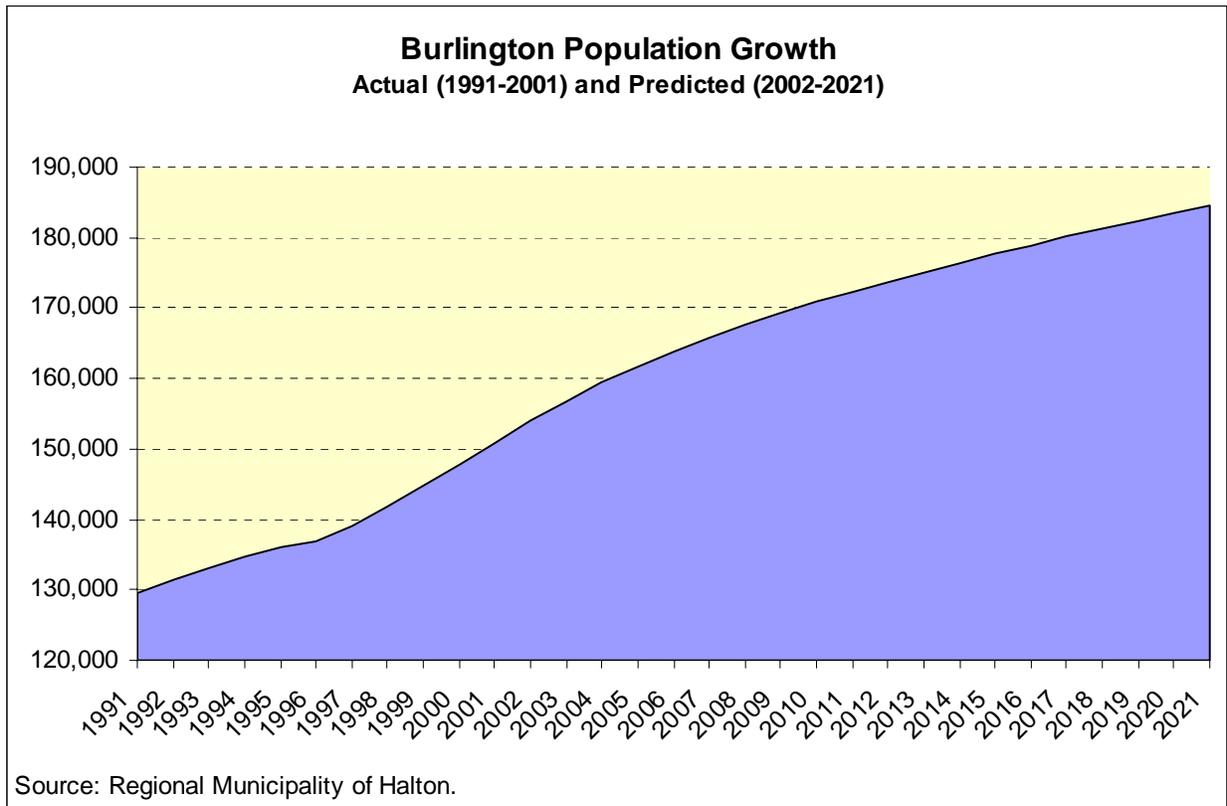
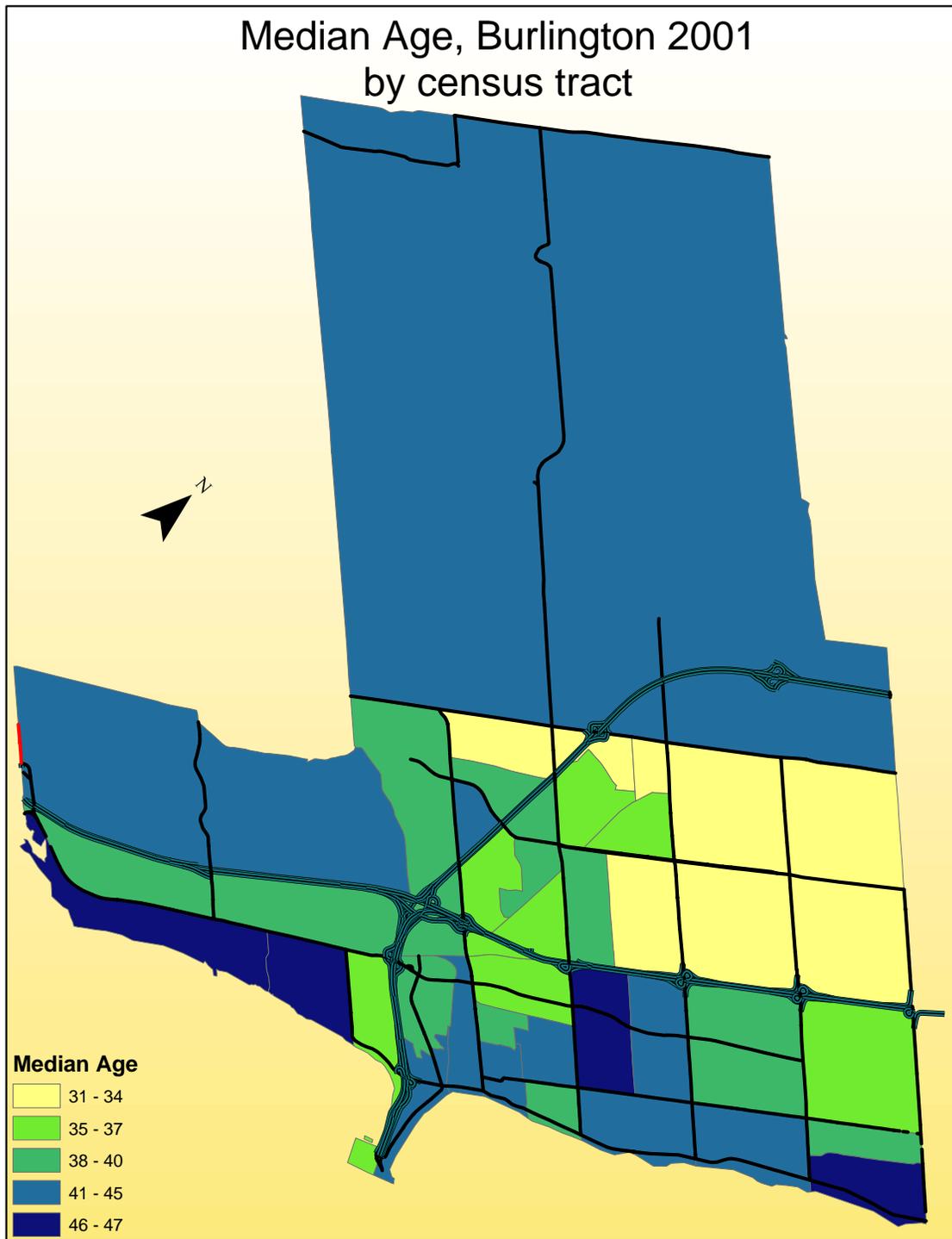


Figure 1 - Burlington Population Growth

Burlington’s median age in 2001 was 38.4 years. Figure 2 shows the median age⁷ in Burlington and illustrates that the population is younger in the most recently developed parts of Burlington. The age pyramid, as displayed in Figure 3, displays the “baby boom bulge” (35-60) that, as it continues to age, will have many implications for services.

⁷ “Median” refers to the mid-point, the number which half of the population fall below and half fall above.



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census.

Produced by Community Development Halton, 2004

Figure 2 - Map of Median Age, Burlington 2001

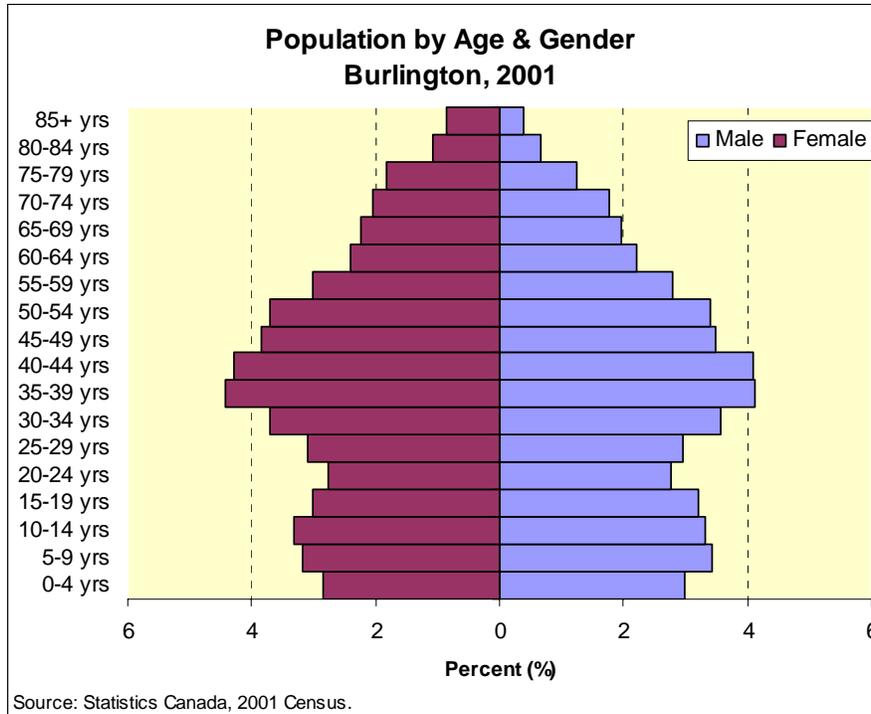


Figure 3 - Population by Age & Gender, Burlington 2001

Burlington continues to experience significant growth in the seniors population, from 17,645 seniors in 1996 to 21,235 in 2001. This is a growth rate of 20% over a five year period (Figure 4). Seniors in Burlington make up 14% of the total population.

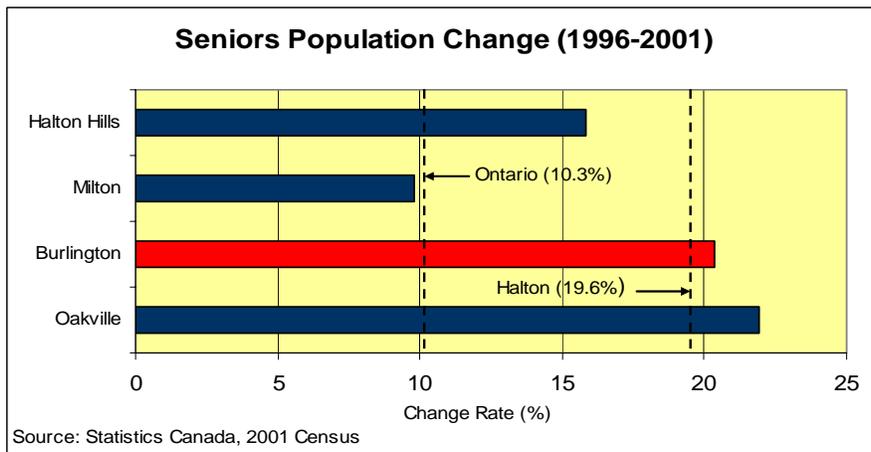


Figure 4 - Seniors Population Change, 1996-2001

Figure 3 also shows a slight “echo” of children and youth aged 5-19. Between 1996 and 2001, the 0-14 population increased by nearly 7% (Figure 5) and the youth population (aged 15-24) by just over 4% (Figure 6).

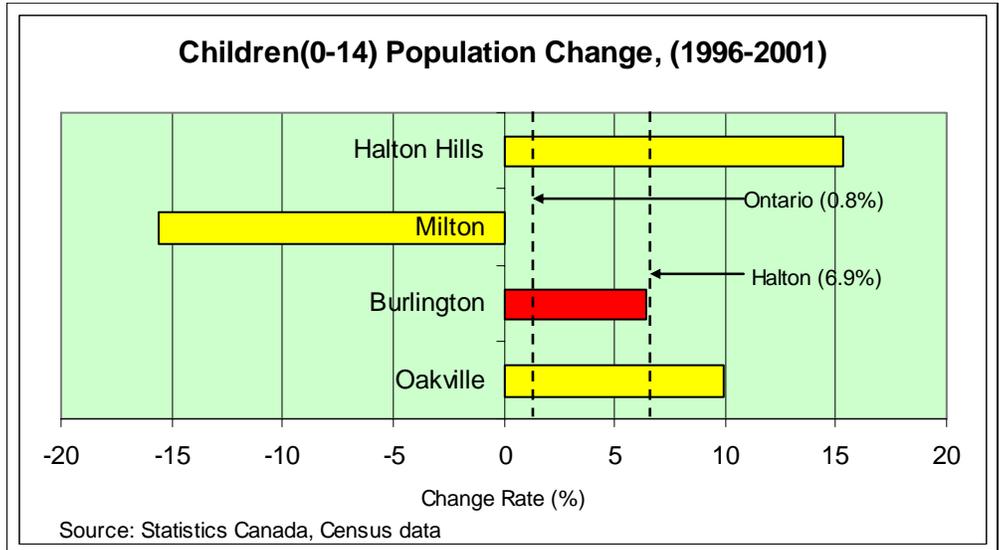


Figure 5 - Children (0-14) Population Change

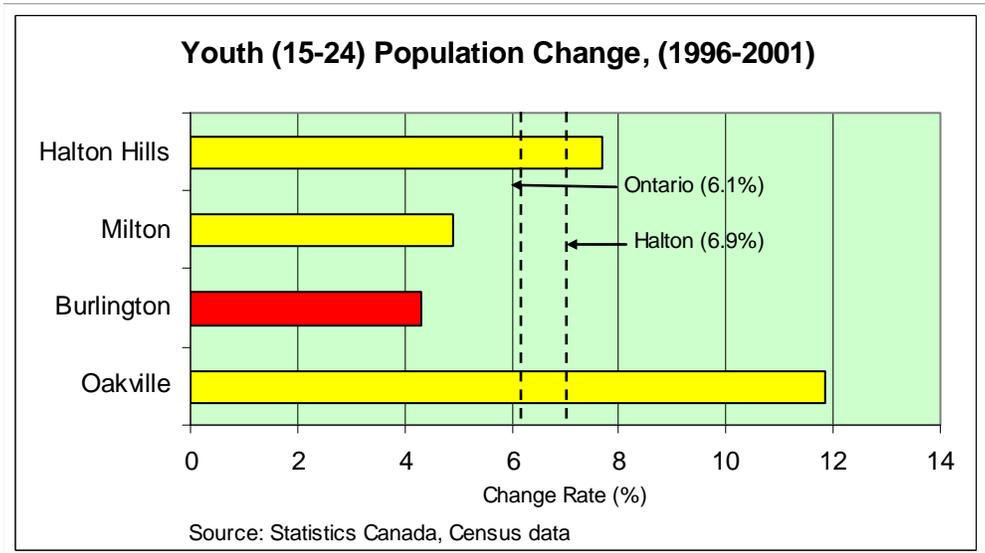


Figure 6 - Youth (15-24) Population Change

Visible Minority Population

Burlington’s total visible minority population in 2001 was 11,260, or 7.5% of the population. Figure 7 shows that this represents an increase of 61% (4,270 persons) from 1996, the largest increase of any municipality in the Region of Halton.

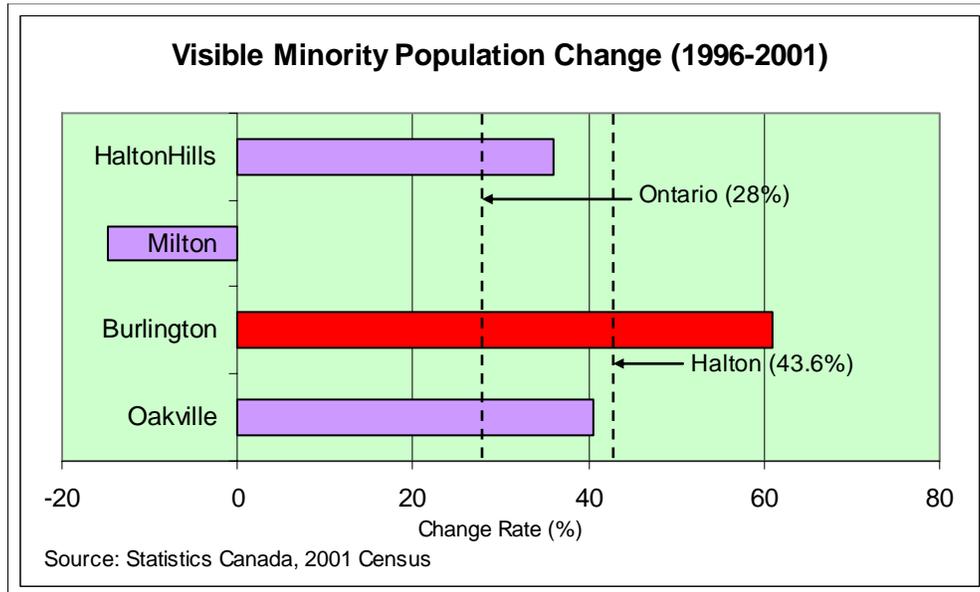


Figure 7 - Visible Minority Change, 1996-2001

In both 1996 and 2001, the largest single groups among the visible minority population identified themselves as South Asian, that is, Indian, Pakistani or Sri Lankan (28.7% or 3,235 persons in 2001), followed by those identifying themselves as Black (20.5% or 2,305 persons), Chinese (12.8% or 1,440 persons) and Arab (7.1 % or 795 persons) . However, between 1996 and 2001, these visible minority groups have declined or remained relatively stable as a percentage of the total visible minority population.

In contrast, Burlington has experienced a significant increase in the number of those identifying themselves as Latin American. The number of Burlington residents who identify themselves as Latin American increased from 230 to 665 between 1996 and 2001. Although a relatively small segment of the visible minority population as a whole, this represents an increase of over 200% over the five-year period. In fact, in Burlington, the percentage of the visible minority population represented by those of Latin American descent is greater than it is in Halton as a whole, in Ontario or Canada-wide.

Figure 8 maps the location of Burlington’s top five visible minority populations, who live largely in new residential developments north of Upper Middle Road and between Brant Street and Walker’s Line.

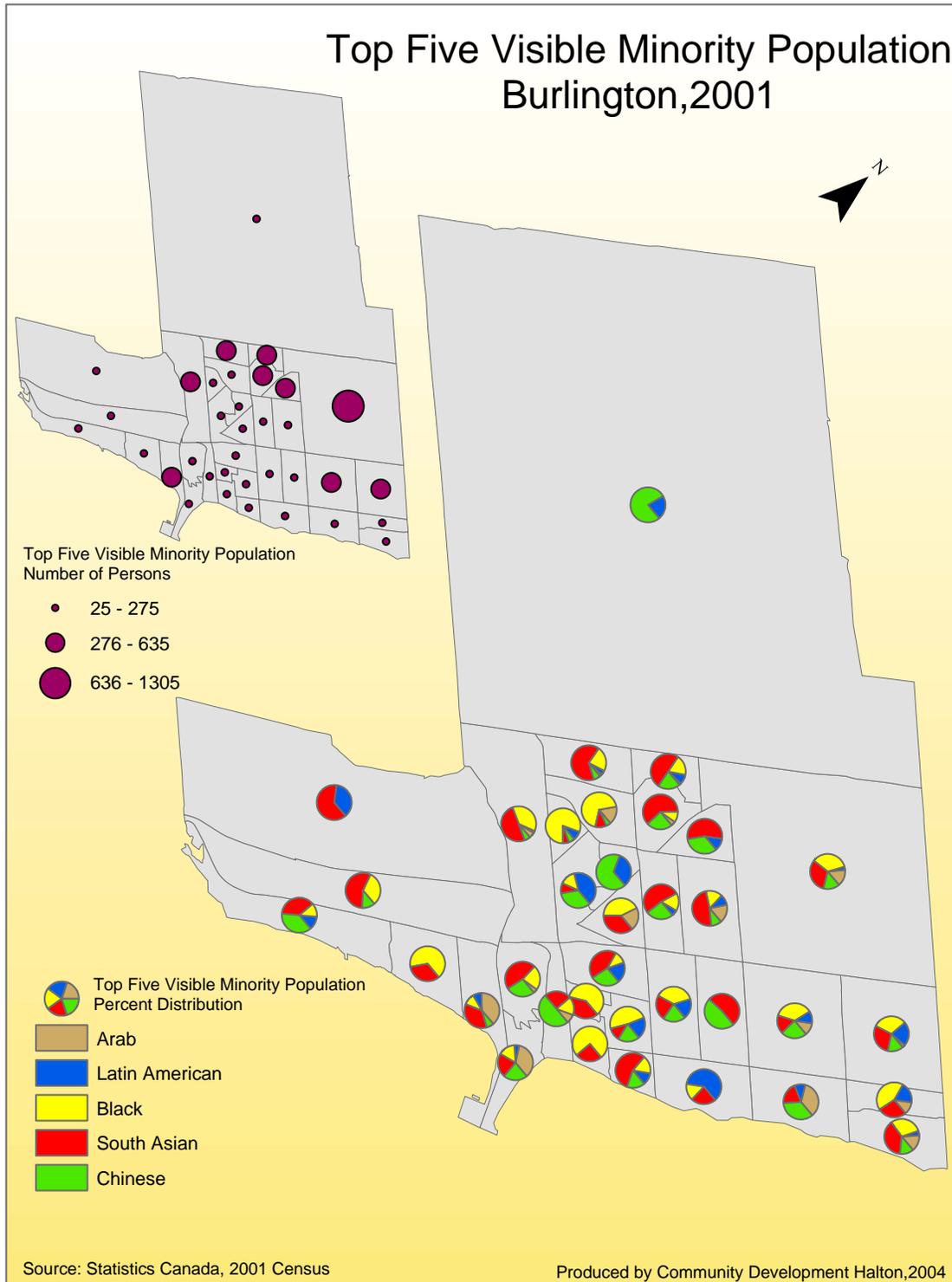


Figure 8 - Top 5 Visible Minority Groups

Religion

According to the 2001 census, 78% of Burlington residents identified themselves as Christian, 1.0% Muslim, 0.7% Sikh, 0.5% Hindu, 0.4% Jewish, 0.3% Buddhist, 0.1% Pagan and 16.6% as following no religion. Figure 9 maps the five most common non-Christian faiths.

The percentage of Burlington’s population represented by followers of non-Christian faiths was lower than that of the neighbouring community of Oakville, but higher than that of Milton and Halton Hills.

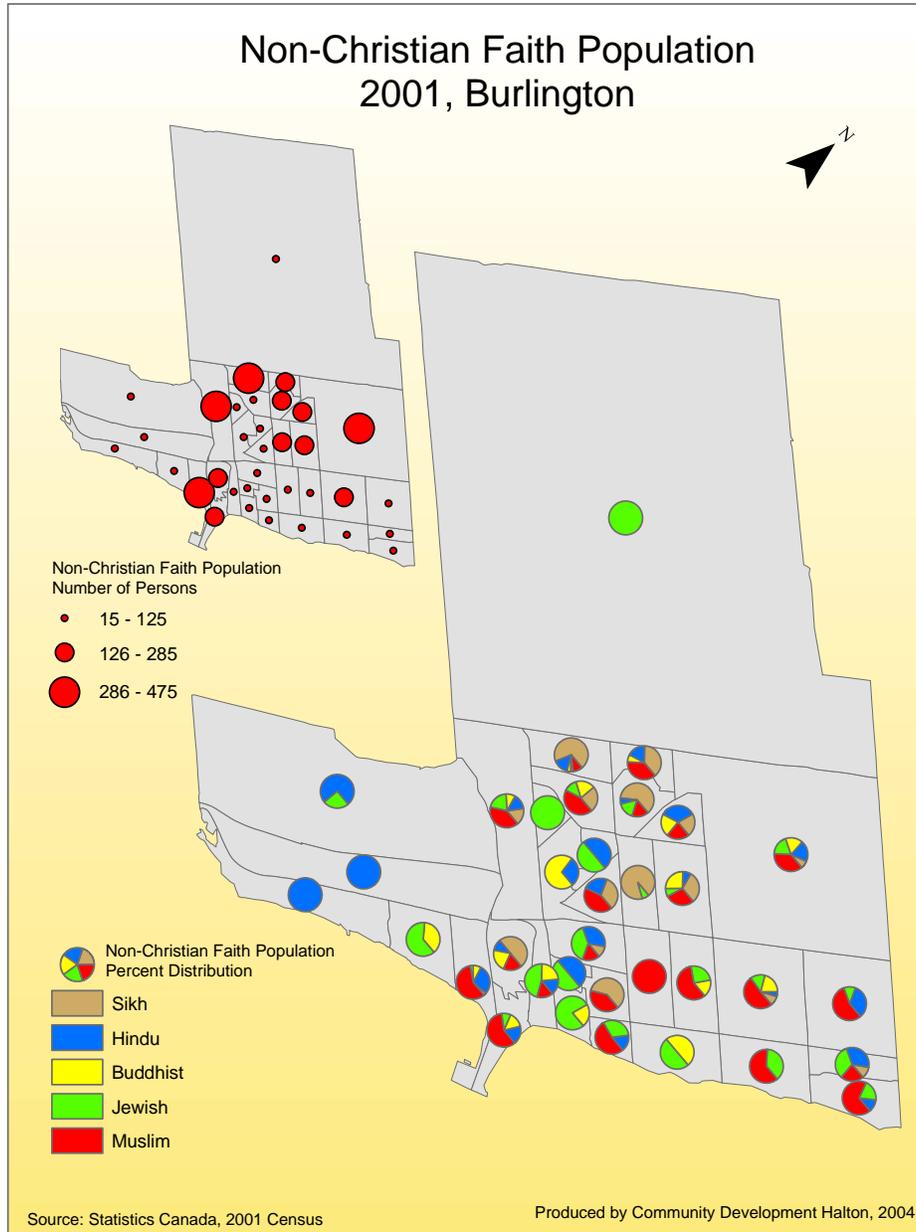


Figure 9 - Non-Christian Faith Population

Newcomers To Canada

Figure 10 shows that between 1996 and 2001, the top five countries from which immigrants came were India (11.6%), United Kingdom (10.7%), China (8.1%), United States (5%) and Korea (4.1%). Between 1991 and 2001, immigration from Asian countries (China, India and Korea) became more common than that from Europe and the United States. India overtook the United Kingdom as the most common country of birth of immigrants arriving in Canada between 1996 and 2001.

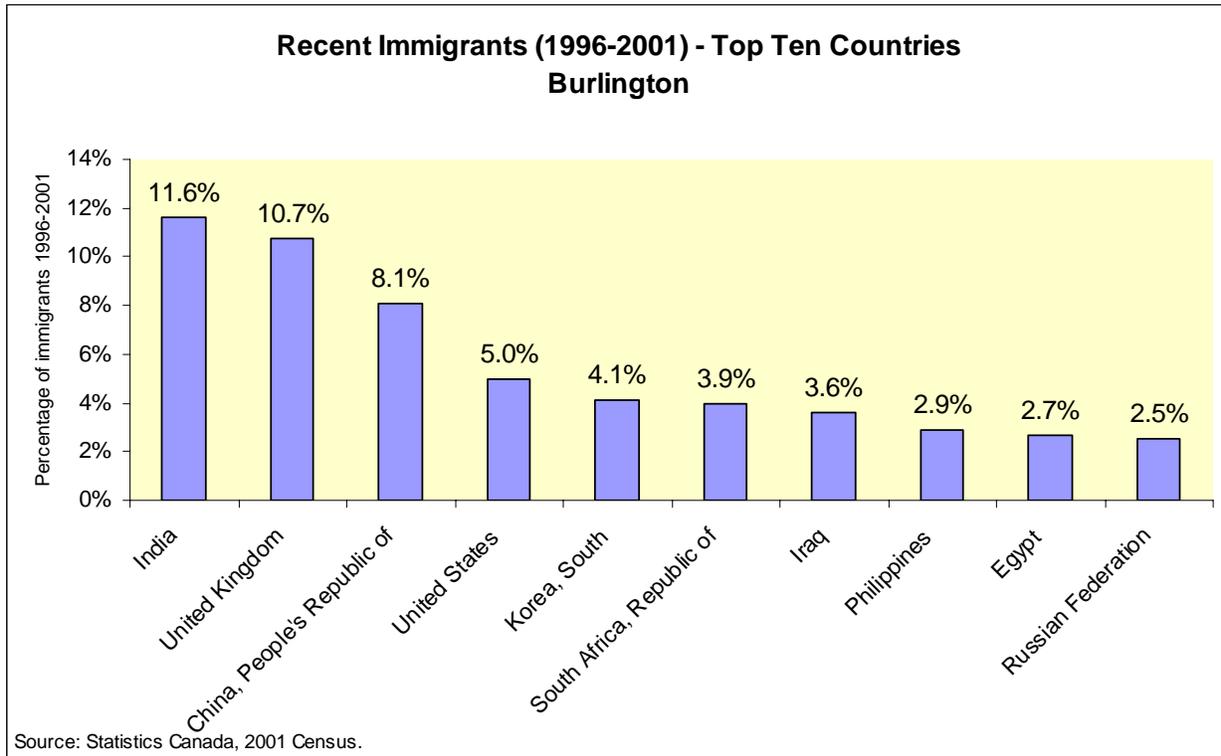


Figure 10 - Recent Immigrants to Burlington, 1996-2001

Income

Burlington’s median individual income was \$31,339 in 2000, compared to Ontario’s median individual income of \$24,816 (Figure 11). Burlington’s median family income in 2000 was \$78,198, compared to Ontario’s median family income of \$55,000.

Lone-parent families continue to have median incomes that are less than those of two-parent families. In 2000, female-led lone-parent families had a median income of \$40,875 and male-led lone-parent families had a median income of \$58,081 (Figure 12). These are significantly higher than the Ontario median incomes for lone-parent families.

There were 2,265 low-income families (6.1% of all families) and 15,705 unattached low-income individuals (27.2% of all unattached individuals) in 2000. Figure 13 shows the distribution of low-income families in Burlington.

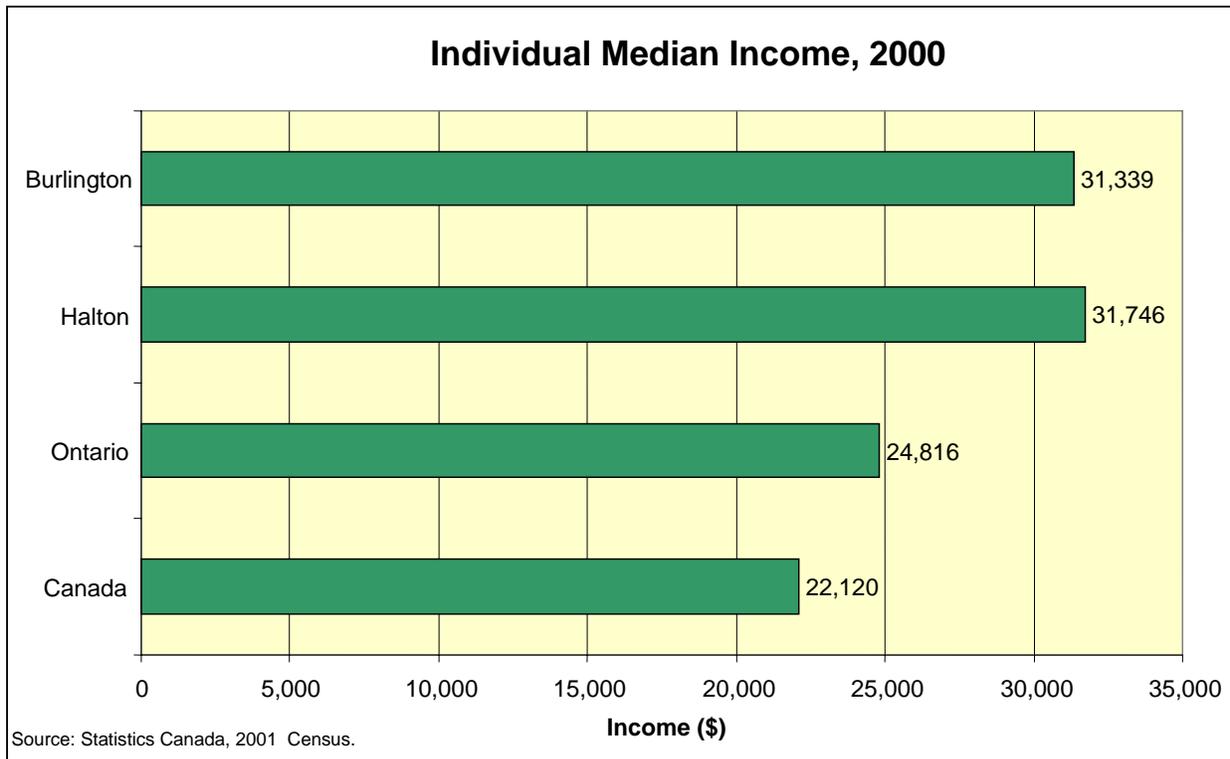


Figure 11 – Individual Median Income, 2000

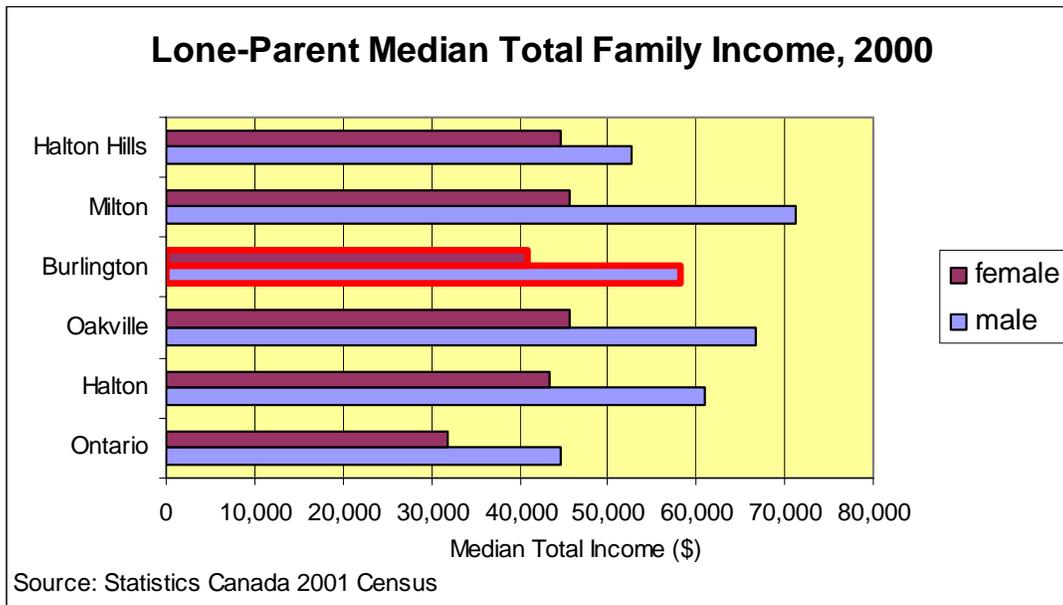


Figure 12 - Lone-parent Family Median Income, 2000

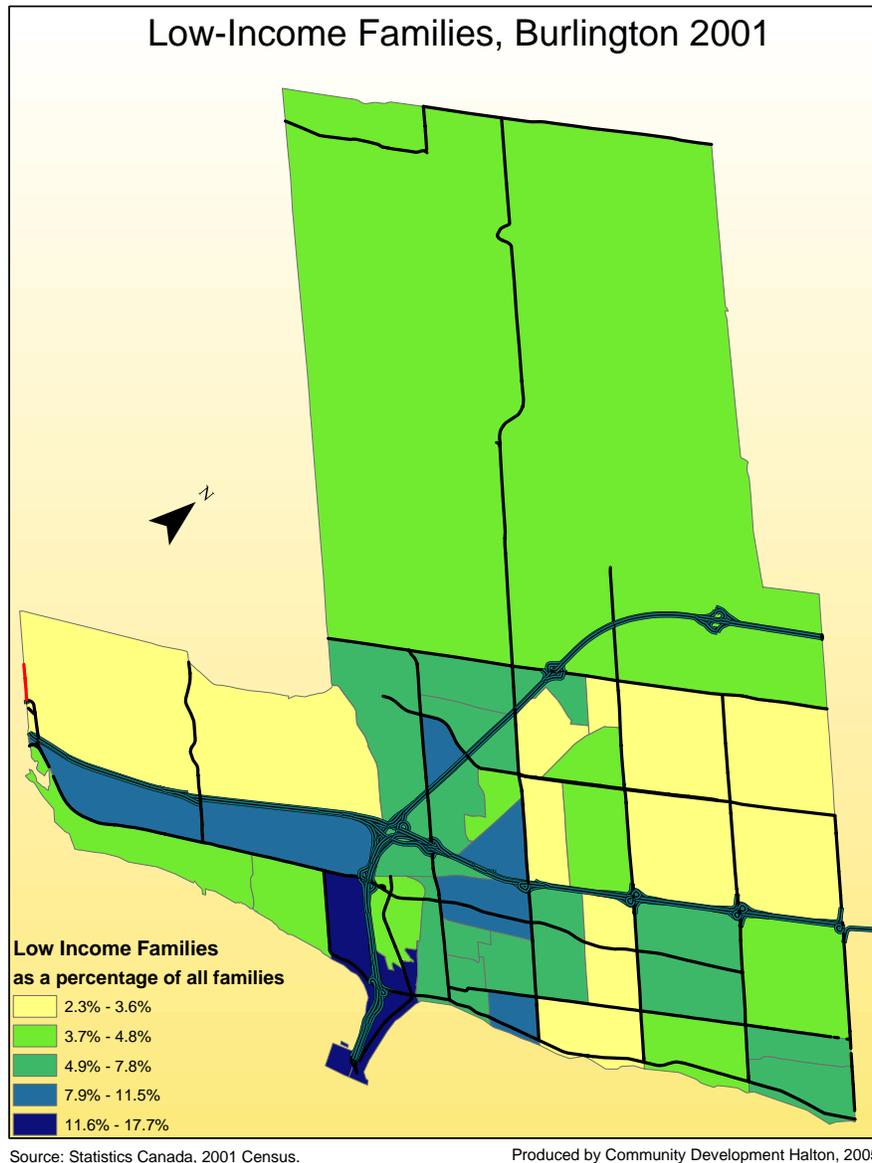


Figure 13 - Map of Low-income Family Distribution, Burlington 2000

Disabilities

Figures are not available for the number of Burlington residents living with mental, physical or developmental disabilities. However, some, but not all, are reflected in the approximately 3,000 Halton residents currently receiving Ontario Disability Support Program payments (Regional Municipality of Halton, ODSP office, January 15, 2005).

Mental Illness

In Burlington, chronic mental illness patients comprise 16% of the practice population of family physicians (Halton-Peel District Health Council, 2004 p. 29).

WHAT DOES AN “INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY” MEAN?

In the focus group process, participants were asked to reflect on the dimensions of inclusion and areas of inquiry, determined commonly for the Inclusive Cities partners across Canada (see **Introduction**). In the Burlington survey, respondents were also asked to define what an “inclusive community” means to them, and to suggest benchmarks for determining true “inclusion.” Their responses affirm the dimensions and areas of inquiry the study explored, and provide an insight into the priorities of Burlingtonians. Some are shown below:

- *“The ability for all people to participate fully in the daily life of our city.”*
- *“No barriers – housing, employment, access to clubs, groups, etc.”*
- *“When seniors don’t feel isolated from the community.”*
- *“A place where everyone can enjoy all the amenities. Where poor children can participate in sports and arts and crafts alongside rich children. A place where people have lived all their lives and don’t have to leave because taxes are high, because rich people live here in greater numbers and raise house prices.”*
- *“[When] citizens are able to maintain adequate quality of life, that is, lifestyle and health and knowledge and a sense of purpose through involvement in work opportunities, lifelong learning and sufficient access to essential services. It’s truly inclusive when all these objectives are met and income level gaps are narrowed to reduce levels of poverty.”*
- *“An inclusive city has leadership and staffing policies and practices which espouse, reflect and promote diversity racially, by sexual preference, gender and ability.”*
- *“Being allowed to enjoy all activities within the city, go anywhere in the city free of discrimination.”*
- *“Allowing citizens to have opinions about policies, development, plans, spending of tax dollars.”*
- *“An inclusive city provides for residents of different ages, abilities, faith, marital status, employment status, income levels and sexual orientation.”*
- *“[When] community programs, facilities are accessible to all, irrelevant of income [and] affordable housing is available, no matter what the perception of a city is regarding higher median income.”*
- *“[When] all citizens have an equal opportunity to access all services available and are encouraged to contribute to a community’s well-being.”*
- *“When people become involved in issues that impact the community as a whole, not just affect them personally.”*
- *“When all citizens have access to all facilities, both public and private.”*
- *“[When] residents and visitors feel welcome and safe – [and] all residents perceive access and can actually access all programs and services offered by the city and other organizations.”*

COMMON AREAS OF INQUIRY

The following are summaries of the perceptions of Burlington participants in focus groups, local soundings and the survey, related to the common areas of inquiry explored by all Inclusive Cities partners across Canada. Each of the thirteen areas of inquiry is dealt with individually. At the end of each are two additional pieces generated by focus groups.

Key Observations outlines key strengths and weaknesses in the community that participants identified as central to the social inclusion issues under discussion. Participants were not asked to assign these an order of priority.

Suggestions from Participants arise from a process that took place at the end of each focus group, when participants were asked to work in groups to develop written suggestions for positive change, and indicate who should be involved in implementation of change (shown in parentheses). These suggestions have informed the Civic Panel in its development of recommendations. They appear here in the participants' own words.

In many cases, these suggestions range beyond the scope of the formal discussion and, therefore, do not necessarily follow directly from the discussion notes that precede them; nor were participants asked to indicate an order of priority. Some initiatives suggested by participants may already be planned or, indeed, may already exist in the community. If the latter, their presence here may indicate they are not sufficiently well-known.

The terms "participants" and "respondents" are used interchangeably. "Newcomers" refers to newcomers to Canada: that is, recent immigrants and refugees. All statements in *italics* are direct quotes from participants.

HEALTH CARE

Participants emphasize that many factors, apart from health services alone, affect population health, particularly for members of vulnerable populations. In health care, as in nearly every inquiry in this study, participants note that poverty and the lack of affordable housing are essential factors to consider.

Participants also frequently observe the need for self-advocacy in health care, and emphasize the difficulty of doing so for the frail elderly and those with limited English-language skills, impaired cognition, developmental disabilities or mental illness. Further, they believe there is a false assumption, in health care and generally, that information can be accessed by everyone via Internet or automated attendant telephone systems. Respondents observe that this assumption compromises access to care for those “*not connected to the electronic age.*”

Transportation is often raised as an issue affecting access to health services. Respondents believe that “*car-based planning*” of the city and services erodes access to services for those who lack a car or the money for other suitable transportation.

Hospital Services

Participants feel fortunate to have what many, but not all, consider a good local hospital, with an additional broad range of services available in Hamilton. However, they believe there are drawbacks to the centralization of services. They voice concerns that, despite efforts by medical professionals to ensure communication, continuity of care may be compromised for patients who must go to Hamilton for some services.

Respondents also observe that travelling to Hamilton via public transit may be prohibitively costly for some, and too difficult or complex for others, particularly the frail elderly and the cognitively impaired. Consequently, they believe that centralization of services exacerbates unequal access to health care between those with, and those without, cars.

The prospect of private hospitals is considered a threat to the quality of care. Concerns are raised that private hospitals would put profit before the public interest, and reduce the ability of patients and their families to advocate for good care. Participants compare this threat to problems they perceive in for-profit long term care facilities, as illustrated in the following comment:

“You can see where they’re pulling the profit from – the bottom line is that the profit comes first.”

Physician Availability

Respondents identify problems of waiting lists for treatment and a shortage of medical professionals, particularly family physicians. This concern is reinforced by the Ontario Ministry of Health and

Long Term Care, which has determined that Burlington has a shortage of 26 physicians (Regional Municipality of Halton, Media Release Sept. 21/04). The shortage of physicians also gives rise to concerns regarding continuity of care for those who, unable to find a regular family doctor, go to a Hamilton physician or use walk-in clinics. Respondents note that some with special needs, such as those with developmental disabilities or mental illness may find it particularly difficult to find a suitable doctor.

Participants express concerns about the barriers immigrant and refugee medical professionals face in acquiring recognition of their credentials. They observe that, if newcomers are unable to receive medical services in a language they understand, they will be limited in their access to information and ability to advocate for themselves. Further, respondents believe that if newcomers could more easily become licensed to practice in Canada, the shortage of medical professionals for the entire population could be alleviated.

Mental Health Services

Participants identify a shortage of local mental health services as a major problem, particularly in the area of psychiatric services for adolescents, and the lack of a 24/7 mobile crisis response team for mental health crises. They maintain that those with mental illness find it stressful if they must access psychiatric services located in an emergency department, and that those suffering from mental illness often relocate to Hamilton to access the services they need.

“Halton and Peel have a long history of their mental health systems being insufficiently resourced. As a result of having limited mental health resources consumers from Peel and Halton have “drifted” to Toronto, Hamilton and other more urban centres where services are more abundant relative to their home communities. As a result... these less urban communities have gone significantly under-served while more urban areas have experienced more service and support enhancement as [a] result of the increased demand. Dangerously, this trend is cyclical in nature and can only serve to reinforce the paucity of services in less urban centres, such as Halton and Peel.”

(Halton-Peel District Health Council, 2004 p. 30)

Community Health Facilities and Programs

Those taking part in discussions of this issue frequently single out the Caroline Medical Centre, and Urgent Care Clinic, as valued assets in health care delivery in the city, and identify the need for more community health clinics, with a broad range of services, such as those of psychologists, social workers and nurse-practitioners.

Programs operated by the Regional Municipality of Halton, such as “Healthy Babies, Healthy Children,”⁸ are applauded as strengths of our community, in providing services which benefit the entire population and help to redress the impact of differences in living conditions.

⁸ “Healthy Babies, Healthy Children” is a prevention program of the Halton Region Health Department, linking families with young children (prenatal to age 3) to services they need to ensure healthy child growth and development

However, participants are concerned that certain health services and programs in the community are available only to those in certain age groups. They believe that this “silo” approach hampers children and youth who need fluid ongoing support, a theme that is echoed in several areas of inquiry.

Further, they believe that, although there are numerous health facilities and programs, there is insufficient co-ordination between them, and that there is a need for centralized communication regarding available services. Respondents believe that the need to self-advocate, and to organize numerous services from various providers, compromises access to care for those who may find doing so difficult: of particular concern are the frail elderly, newcomers and those with mental illness.

Home Care

Home care provides in-home supports, such as bathing, dressing and homemaking, for the frail elderly and those with mental or physical disabilities. In Ontario, publicly financed home care is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, and co-ordinated by regional Community Care Access Centres (CCACs).

Although participants note with approval that there is no shortage of long term care beds, they feel this has been accomplished at the expense of home care. Respondents believe that home care has been seriously compromised by underfunding and a regressive policy shift that favours institutionalization, particularly of the elderly into long term care facilities. They find that both the range of services and the number of hours of service available are insufficient. Participants also state that low wages in the community exacerbate home care problems: that the need to work longer hours prohibits family members caring for their loved ones themselves.

Eligibility requirements, such as the need for, and consent to, personal care such as bathing and dressing, are considered to limit access to other home supports which may be as urgently required, and perhaps more appropriate to individual needs.

Respondents perceive that a two-tiered system of services is being created: that those who cannot pay privately for additional home care supports or a private retirement residence, and are unable to wait years for subsidized supportive housing, may find entering a long term care facility to be the only viable option.

Further, participants maintain that the erosion of home care, and the difficulty some have in managing the arrangements for home care, place additional burdens on crisis services and hospital beds. As with health services in general, the need to self-advocate and to organize the provision of home care is repeatedly cited as a difficulty for many vulnerable groups.

Participants also suggest increased funding for in-home palliative care, and identify the Carpenter Hospice for the terminally ill as an important asset of the community.

Additional discussion on home care can be found in the section **Local Soundings – Seniors**.

HEALTH CARE

Key Observations

Focus group participants were asked to identify the observations that were central to the discussion and that indicated key strengths and weaknesses in the community. Participants were not asked to indicate order of priority.

Key Strengths:

- Good local hospital
- Broad range of services within a reasonable distance
- Community Health Clinic (Caroline Medical Centre)
- Urgent Care Clinic
- Regional Health Department programs such as Healthy Babies, Healthy Children
- Carpenter Hospice

Key Weaknesses:

- Shortage of physicians, psychiatrists
- Shortage of full-service health clinic models
- Continuity of care
- Transportation
- Service gaps for those suffering from mental illness
- Gaps in services for certain age groups
- Deficiencies in home care
- The need for individuals' awareness of services and capacity to self-advocate and to organize health and home care services from a variety of providers

Suggestions From Participants⁹

Focus groups were asked to develop written suggestions for positive change, and who should be involved in implementation (shown in parentheses). These suggestions have informed the Civic Panel in its development of recommendations:

- Increase, broaden and provide funding for a continuum of care options with special attention to home care and chronic care, and assistance in accessing regional medical centres, etc. (Federal & Provincial Governments, service providers, community groups)
- More options of affordable, supportive housing (Region, service clubs, faith groups)
- Build a stronger community network for psychiatric support (Ministry of Health, service providers)

⁹ Throughout all areas of inquiry, the suggestions from participants often range beyond the scope of the formal discussion, and therefore do not necessarily follow directly from the preceding discussion notes. Participants were not asked to assign suggestions an order of priority. Some initiatives suggested may already be planned or, indeed, may already exist in the community. If the latter, their inclusion by participants here may indicate they are not sufficiently well-known.

- Increase information and advocacy with regard to health and establish patient advocates in the province (all levels of government, community, family members, health providers)
- Expansion of services, recognizing Joseph Brant Hospital is too small for the city
- Implementing direct access to nursing service
- Reducing wait times
- Recruiting more medical specialists at hospital
- Implementing integrated, prevention-based health service with flexible hours and no fee
- Reform and fund the Community Care Access Centre to guarantee services for those in need (community organizations, Provincial government)
- Improve communication between community groups and health care providers, and eliminate duplication of services and resources
- No privatization of health care
- Support for end-of-life care

CRISIS SERVICES

Respondents identify numerous community assets: Halton Women's Place;¹⁰ Halton Child and Youth Services; Halton Regional Police Victim Services and Elder Abuse Prevention programs; Tele-Touch;¹¹ Telecare;¹² and Information Burlington.¹³ The services provided by Children's Aid Societies and Halton Child and Youth Services are highly valued.

Access to Crisis Services

Participants note that there is a distinction to be made between crises requiring emergency services and the non-emergency crises that deal with life circumstances, such as death of spouse, failing health in the elderly or teen pregnancy.

In regard to emergency services, participants find that the means of accessing such services through a 911 call is well-known and simple, and that the quality of services is, generally, excellent. However, they highlight some gaps, notably the lack of a "24/7" mobile crisis response team trained specifically for mental health crises.

In regard to non-emergency crises, related to life circumstances, respondents note that an entire "basket of needs" may result: for example, that death of spouse may rapidly lead to financial problems, loss of housing or other outcomes, and that adequately addressing the crisis may require a broad spectrum of supports.

They also advise that any discussion of this type of crisis must first consider crisis prevention: that for family members struggling to act as caregivers, for example, lack of health or social supports can precipitate a crisis for both the caregiver and the recipient of care. Participants believe that a diminishing service network has contributed to increasing the number of crises in our community. In this regard, the shortage of home care and respite services is cited as of particular concern.

Participants observe the erosion of social supports in nearly all areas of inquiry. They attribute this to years of underfunding by government. Some note that, locally, the situation is exacerbated by a funding model that provides lesser per capita funding for social service providers in Halton than for those in some other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area.

In discussions of access to services for non-emergency crises, participants consider that, despite several initiatives to ensure universal awareness and access, the process of acquiring information and referral is not always simple or quick. Opinion is divided on how well individuals are directed to

¹⁰ Halton Women's Place provides emergency shelter, crisis services and support to physically, sexually, financially and emotionally abused women and their dependent children.

¹¹ Tele-Touch is a non-profit organization where volunteers provide regular telephone calls to seniors, individuals with disabilities living alone, and their caregivers. .

¹² Telecare Burlington is a non-profit, volunteer-run organization that provides a 24-hour telephone distress line.

¹³ Information Burlington is a charitable organization which offers a free, confidential point of access for information on community, social, health and government services for the citizens of Burlington and ensures that the public is aware of the programs and services offered in the community.

appropriate service providers. The “multi-door access point” developed by some members of the service sector is identified as a strength, but many feel that individuals may still be “bounced around” before, eventually, being directed to the needed service.

Participants express support for the implementation of a 211¹⁴ system for community information and referral to community, government, health and social services, as a means of making all services, including crisis services, more widely known and easier to access.

They note that some experience impediments to contacting police and other services. For some newcomers, for example, the lack of information and services in languages other than English, or attitudinal barriers, may act as particular obstacles. Consequently, participants consider that a high level of respect for police and the efforts of the Halton Regional Police Service to reach out to diverse communities, including seniors and youth, are strengths in the provision of emergency and crisis services in the community. This is covered more fully in the section **Policing and Justice**.

Emergency Housing

Participants believe that emergency housing is generally available and that emergency foster care is available with no waiting lists for children and youth up to the age of 16.

Halton Children’s Aid Society confirms that emergency placements, but not necessarily suitable longer-term placements, can be found immediately for all children and youth needing protection.
(Response to inquiry, Halton Children’s Aid Society, January 15, 2005)

Halton Women’s Place does, at times need to refer women to other shelters due to lack of space.
(Response to inquiry, Halton Women’s Place, January 19, 2005)

No specific information is available for the number of Burlington residents who may be turned away from the Lighthouse Shelter, for which records are kept on a regional basis. However, male beds at the shelter are usually near or at capacity and men may be turned away from time to time due to lack of space (Response to inquiry, Lighthouse Shelter, March 14, 2005).

However, participants also identify some serious gaps, such as a shortage of emergency housing suitable to the needs of seniors, for youth over 16, for those living with mental illness, and those with developmental disabilities. They also express concern that crisis services related to shelter and emergency food supplies in Burlington are heavily dependent on the continued willingness and ability of the Salvation Army to provide them.

Participants note that there are few options for youth who are over 16, and not eligible for assistance from Children’s Aid Societies, but under 18, and therefore too young to sign a lease. They express concerns that, for these teenagers, there are few options but to go to the shelter in Oakville, which

¹⁴ “211 is an easy to remember telephone number that simplifies access to the ‘first-stop’ for information. Trained information and referral specialists respond to telephone calls and provide, or mediate, a non-clinical assessment of the callers’ needs. Callers receive information about community, government, health and social services that will address their needs” (Halton Social Planning Council, Halton 211 Feasibility Study, June 2002).

has no accommodation strictly for youth. They find that many are sleeping on rooftops or “couch surfing” at the homes of friends. The Bridging the Gap program of Transitions for Youth, which links youth with host homes, is considered an important initiative in serving the needs of this group of youth.

Poverty and the Shortage of Affordable and Accessible Housing

Although they were not asked specifically about poverty and housing, participants raised these issues as central to a discussion of crisis services. Participants note that major crises are often precipitated by poverty and a lack of accessible and affordable housing, and express concerns that crises in the community are increasing as a result of low wages and stagnant social assistance rates, and the discontinuation of government investment in affordable housing in the 1990’s.

“In the last 10 years, many of the progressive things done in the last 40 years have been undermined from a lack of funding.”

They argue that there are many homeless in our community, and echo much of the discussion included in the **Income and Employment** section of this document, including concerns about low minimum wage. Respondents believe that the community tends to deny the existence of crises, and of poverty and housing issues. One summarized the beliefs of many:

“[The community] has the opinion that we don’t have any of these problems.”

They value the efforts of faith groups and community organizations to provide help to those in crisis, but note that providing such assistance can contribute to masking problems from the community at large. Consequently they applaud the efforts of those faith and community groups that seek to heighten community awareness of poverty and housing issues.

Respondents state that people of all ages, whose basic needs are unmet, are pushed into the health care system, and that the shortage of housing for those with mental and/or physical disabilities puts additional pressure on hospital beds.

Participants observe that many residents experiencing a crisis are pushed out of our community and go to Hamilton or Toronto, where less costly housing and more services are available; they find that this migration contributes to the tendency of community members to deny that crises related to income and housing exist in Burlington. Respondents state that many people with disabilities also need to leave the community, due to a shortage of accessible housing. They indicate that these migrations place additional burdens on Toronto and Hamilton, and that community members should recognize an obligation to contribute financially, and be more supportive of the pooling of costs.¹⁵

“Hamilton and Toronto take on many of our problems – it’s only fair that we send them some of our dollars.”

“Burlingtonians don’t see problems or want to pay for other people’s problems...it’s time for Burlington to accept that ALL citizens have responsibility for ALL citizens.”

¹⁵ The City of Burlington participates in cost-pooling with Toronto, but not with Hamilton.

Diversity

Participants believe that crisis services need to enhance their capacity to serve a culturally and linguistically diverse population. However, they believe a trend toward project funding, rather than core funding, of human services is reducing the capacity and flexibility of organizations to develop cultural sensitivity training and outreach to diverse groups. They suggest that understanding the needs of newcomers must be basic to the work of all services, rather than time-limited projects.

Respondents observe that newcomers are isolated and often unaware of what crisis services and programs are available to them. Further, they note, in cases where newcomers rely on their children as translators, a desire to protect the children from knowing about a crisis may prevent contact with needed services.

Participants feel there is a need for a more concerted effort to reach out to diverse communities and inform them of available services. They suggest that linkages between newcomers and English as a Second Language (ESL) training be used to communicate more effectively about crisis services. Culturally sensitive services provided by some faith groups are considered an asset to the community, as are translation facilities available through Children's Aid Societies and schools.

CRISIS SERVICES

Key Observations

Focus group participants were asked to identify the observations that were central to the discussion and that indicated key strengths and weaknesses in the community. Participants were not asked to assign these an order of priority.

Key Strengths:

- High level of awareness and access for emergency services such as ambulance, fire, police
- Halton Women's Place; Children's Aid Societies; Halton Child and Youth Services and its emergency mobile service for youth; Tele-Touch; Telecare; Halton Regional Police Victim Services; Information Burlington; Bridging the Gap
- Respect for police and police outreach to diverse communities
- Range of emergency housing for children
- Shelter space available for some, but not all, groups
- Faith groups are responsive to, and act on, community problems
- Culturally appropriate supports available through some faith groups and agencies
- Proximity to Hamilton for some special services

Key Weaknesses:

- Reluctance of community members to accept that the community has crises and problems of poverty, housing and accessibility, and to accept those with problems
- Access to crisis information still requires improvement
- Crises are exacerbated by lack of single access point for multiple needs
- Shortage of respite services produces stress in families
- Some groups have attitudinal barriers to approaching police in a crisis
- Shelter gaps for youth, mentally ill, seniors and those with disabilities
- Insufficiency of home supports for seniors
- Poverty and low minimum wage
- Shortage of culturally-sensitive crisis services
- Lack of affordable housing, accessible housing and supportive housing for those with disabilities and mental illness
- Work of community organizations, and access to housing and services in Toronto and Hamilton, mask many Burlington problems
- Diminishing service network

Suggestions From Participants

Focus groups were asked to develop written suggestions for positive change, and who should be involved in implementation (shown in parentheses). These suggestions have informed the Civic Panel in its development of recommendations:

- Increase community awareness of services and create a single point of entry for crisis services (community, City, Information Burlington, crisis lines, 211)
- Cultural awareness and provision of diversity training for service providers (Region, cross-Region co-operation, Provincial government and inter-agency, need to share resources)
- Enhance supports to elderly (community, Provincial government, municipality)
- More affordable housing as well as accessible and supportive housing shelters that are appropriate for those of varying ages, cultures and physical capacities and additional respite care opportunities
- Mental Health mobile crisis teams (Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital through provincial funding)
- Shelters for those with mental illness (Provincial government)

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Respondents emphasize that early childhood development is affected by circumstances related to other areas of inquiry, such as income, housing and health, and note that parents who are struggling may find it difficult to engage in their children's development and education. As an example, one participant cites the difficulties faced by parents living with mental illness *"who are struggling to manage waits for treatment, transportation and finances on disability support payments which have remained static for a decade."*

Child care

Participants believe that high-quality child care is widely available, but largely unaffordable for low-income families.

"Quality is high, but affordability is low."

They find that, despite a large number of child care spaces in general, there are waiting lists for subsidized child care; and that the financial eligibility ceiling for subsidized child care is too low, so that many have to cash in their assets, such as RRSPs, in order to qualify.

In Halton, the waiting list for subsidized child care is two to three weeks.
(Response to inquiry, Regional Municipality of Halton, January, 2005).

Respondents observe that inflexible hours of child care providers, and additional fees for pickup and drop-off out of regular hours, add to child care problems for working parents. They also believe that many parents without cars find transportation to child care to also be an obstacle.

Participants recognize that unlicensed child care contributes to the underground economy; however, they raise concerns that unlicensed child care offers neither "quality control" nor significant cost advantages, but note that some families may prefer a home setting to the more institutional, for reasons unrelated to cost.

Child Care and Diversity

Respondents believe that immigrant and refugee families may face barriers of language, transportation or a lack of awareness of the available options in child care. Further, they find that child care providers may not fully understand these barriers and the needs of the newcomer community, despite the efforts of some to do so.

Question asked of focus groups:
"Do newcomers have access to early child development programs with appropriately trained and culturally sensitive staff?"

Response:
"What planet are you living on?"

Participants suggest that it would be useful if former newcomers could act as intermediaries for more recent immigrants and refugees, and that child care providers can reduce barriers by choosing a transit-accessible location, assisting families to become familiar with their new environment, and providing help with paperwork and language skills. Meeting newcomers “on their own turf” is considered helpful: as an example, participants refer to the success of police outreach at festivals and places of worship.

Respondents find child care for children with special needs, and training for those working with them, to be in short supply. They believe that the child care funding model encourages providers to refuse children with special needs, whose additional requirements reduce the resources available for overall service.

Child Development Programs and Supports for Parenting

Several initiatives are singled out for praise by participants knowledgeable about child development programs in the community. In particular, the “Healthy Babies, Healthy Children” initiative and programs offered by the Ontario Early Years Centre are viewed as important community assets. However, participants feel that some child development programs in the community are not sufficiently well-known, and require more outreach.

“Children born into conditions of poverty are often at risk of beginning life in environments that are less healthy, safe and stimulating than children in families with greater economic advantages. Parents and caregivers from all income groups need access to appropriate parent education and support groups to be able to provide adequate nutrition and safe and stimulating environments that children require at this critical stage of development.”

(Regional Municipality of Halton. Our Kids, The Early Years (2004)
A Vision for Children in Halton: Report Card. p. 9.

Making the Transition to School

Participants express high regard for several initiatives that help children and families in the community to make the transition to school, in particular: pre-kindergarten visits; the DEIPP¹⁶ program; the Even Start school-readiness program for children without pre-school experience; the Ready-Set-Go school readiness calendar; programs offered by the Ontario Early Years Centre; and the Early Development Instrument.¹⁷ In fact, the implementation of the Early Development Instrument is considered an accomplishment that “*should be on the national radar.*”

¹⁶ The Developmental Early Identification and Prevention Program (DEIPP) is a partnership of community service providers which offers free consultations for children newborn to 5 years in the areas of speech, hearing, behaviour, preschool development and infant development.

¹⁷ The Early Development Instrument is a developmental checklist, completed by Kindergarten teachers and designed to measure a child’s developmental readiness as he/she begins school

However, some deficiencies are noted. Participants express concern that space in some programs may be limited, and that there are weaknesses in the area of early intervention: they believe that there is a need for the DEIPP program to continue beyond the age of five, and that waiting times for intervention and treatment, and decreases in special education funding in the schools, reduce the potential benefits of early identification.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Key Observations

Focus group participants were asked to identify the observations that were central to the discussion and that indicated key strengths and weaknesses in the community. Participants were not asked to assign these an order of priority.

Key Strengths:

- Good availability of high-quality child care for those who do not experience cost as a barrier
- Child development programs such as Healthy Babies, Healthy Children
- Implementation of the Early Development Instrument
- School readiness and transition programs; however, adequate funding to fill the need in some programs is an issue
- Early assessment and intervention initiatives

Key Weaknesses:

- Shortage of affordable/subsidized high-quality child care for low-income families
- Low eligibility ceiling and waiting list for subsidized child care
- Barriers for newcomers (paperwork, transportation, lack of outreach)
- Transportation
- Shortage of child care for children with disabilities
- Barriers for those with mental illness in accessing child care, participating in parenting programs and engaging in their children's education
- Age limits on some intervention programs and decline in special education funding

Suggestions From Participants

Focus groups were asked to develop written suggestions for positive change, and who should be involved in implementation (shown in parentheses). These suggestions have informed the Civic Panel in its development of recommendations:

- Increase number of subsidized child care spaces and encourage nonprofit providers (Region, Provincial Government)
- Raise cut-off for subsidies (Region, Provincial Government)
- Support and increase monitoring of home child care providers (Halton Region Health Dept., Child Services)
- Encourage formation of "on-site" business daycare
- Encourage and provide opportunities for stay-at-home parenting (community, parents, Federal tax incentives, social values)
- Collect data about the needs of local families and the availability of services (Region, Provincial Government)
- Reach out to all parents and raise awareness of support services (school staff, community)
- Recruit child care staff from diverse communities (Provincial Government, Region, City)
- Provide more early literacy programs that focus on diverse populations (community agencies, users)

- Educational materials that reflect diverse cultural communities (Region, City)
- Target outreach to under-serviced groups, such as newcomers and special needs children (community, users)
- Increase the number of assessment programs (e.g. DEIPP) and reduce waiting time for assessment (Region, Provincial Government)
- Improve marketing of educational material for parents by service providers (Region, City, community service providers)

PUBLICLY FUNDED EDUCATION

Participants express high praise for educators, but are adamant that Provincial Government underfunding over the past number of years has seriously eroded the quality of education for all students, and particularly for students with special needs of all kinds.

Quality of Primary and Secondary Education

Participants are unequivocal in their view that underfunding, the implementation of standardized testing and an emphasis on “core” subjects have diminished or eliminated other offerings important for students, especially for those who do not fit into the academic mainstream.

“As soon as you don’t fit the middle of the academic road – it’s curtains”

They observe: a reduction in programming essential to a high quality of life, such as physical education, arts and music; shrinking of course offerings; a backsliding in the holistic approach to students and education; reduction in cost-free intramural sports; and fewer opportunities for children from low-income families to engage in school trips and other activities.

Respondents believe that alternative learning programs available in the Halton District School Board provide much-needed flexibility, but raise concerns that the programs cannot accommodate the number of students who wish to attend, and that they have insufficient infrastructure. The gifted program in elementary schools is highly valued – however, participants lament the lack of a similar program for secondary students. Although the offering of the International Baccalaureate program is considered an asset, neither it nor the streaming of students into Applied and Academic programs is considered a substitute for a secondary school gifted program.

Participants also express serious concerns about rapid changes in curriculum over the past years, increased demands on children, the number of students experiencing difficulties in math, and that standardized tests create the inclination for teachers to “*teach to the tests.*” They observe that teachers have also experienced negative effects, such as increased workload and lack of training and resources to adapt to new curriculum.

Further, respondents believe that the political climate surrounding education over past years has had great impact; that “*teachers have been under attack, creating a decline in morale which spreads like a cancer throughout the school.*”

Participants often raise the issue of school closures, and believe that closure of neighbourhood schools disrupts programs and students, removes the heart of communities and creates larger schools with diminished capacity to deal with students as individuals.

Educating the “Whole Person”

Participants believe that underfunding and the emphasis on testing and “the basics” have not only undermined the ability of schools to provide programming which nurtures the physical and

emotional well-being of students, but have siphoned off resources from all other areas: special education; instructional assistants; guidance; and other important services. However, the provision of services for speech-language pathology is seen as a “good-news story” in education.

Study participants believe that children with special needs have been affected more than any others by the changes in education. They note that some children with special needs have parents who are also facing challenges of their own, which compromise their ability to act as effective advocates. It is these children, participants say, who will suffer most in the system.

Further, respondents indicate that underfunding of social service agencies in the community has put additional pressure on educators to try to fill the service gap, and deal with problems they have neither the time, resources, nor skills to address. They welcome the efforts of the Region’s Our Kids Committee to ensure access to supports for children and youth.

Schools and Diversity

In every discussion of diversity, regardless of the specific area of inquiry, participants applaud the work of the Halton District School Board’s Diversity Co-ordinator, and diversity initiatives within the Halton Catholic District School Board. These endeavours are identified as major assets in the community, as is the work of YouthNet Halton, which works in schools to encourage youth to discuss mental health issues.

Respondents believe that there has been progress in implementing a curriculum that affirms and celebrates the ethnic, cultural and racial diversity of Canada. However, they consider that more work is needed; that too much depends on the initiative of individual teachers; and that teachers do not necessarily receive strong support for their work on diversity. Participants note with approval that materials on diversity are available in school libraries; however, they find that the promotion and use of these materials is compromised by cutbacks in the number of teacher-librarians.

Education and the Newcomer Population

Participants feel that newcomer families could often use more help in acclimatizing to Canadian education. Some suggest a “buddy” system to help newcomer parents understand the education system and what is expected of parents, and to help with paperwork.

Respondents believe that the Halton Catholic District School Board’s provision of ESL education in all schools is preferable to the more centralized model used by the Halton District School Board: the public board directs students to a school which may be outside their neighbourhood for the duration of their ESL education, then back to their home school, and this is believed to compromise the social adjustment of newcomer children and youth. Some newcomer participants observe that English as a Second Language (ESL) training provided in schools is too short-term for older children.

Opportunities for Post-Secondary Education

Respondents believe that access to post-secondary education is limited both by cost and by heightened admission criteria.

Participants believe that cost barriers, due to both increased tuition and increased interest rates on student loans, are causing post-secondary education to be out of reach to students who do not come from middle and upper income families.

They find heightened admission criteria to be largely an outcome of the “double cohort” entering post-secondary institutions, which was created by the elimination of Grade 13 in the Province of Ontario, and observe that, for those who cannot gain admission to a community college or university, the cost for alternative private training programs is “*exorbitant*.”

Respondents feel there is a strong cultural preference in Burlington for university education, and that options such as trades, occupational training and apprenticeships, as well as direct entry into the workforce, are wrongly disparaged.

Participants strongly approve of co-operative education programs in schools, but express concerns that some students may not be able to afford the transportation to participate, particularly in post-secondary co-ops, which may require a car.

In discussions of government training programs, respondents identify numerous problems, including: inconsistent accuracy in assessing current labour market needs; a tendency to focus on some sectors at the expense of others; and lack of programs in languages other than English.

PUBLICLY FUNDED EDUCATION

Key Observations

Focus group participants were asked to identify the observations that were central to the discussion and that indicated key strengths and weaknesses in the community. Participants were not asked to assign these an order of priority.

Key Strengths:

- School readiness and screening programs
- Educators
- Diversity Co-ordinator and initiatives of the Halton District School Board
- Halton Catholic District School Board diversity initiatives
- Self-reliant programs
- Gifted program in elementary schools

Key Weaknesses:

- Erosion of arts and sports both in curriculum and as co-curriculars due to funding cuts
- Decline in course availability due to funding cuts
- Decline of special education, instructional assistants, guidance due to funding cuts
- Transfer of focus from the “whole person” to “basics” due to funding cuts and standardized testing
- Increased demands on students and teachers
- Decline of teacher morale

Suggestions From Participants

Focus groups were asked to develop written suggestions for positive change, and who should be involved in implementation (shown in parentheses). These suggestions have informed the Civic Panel in its development of recommendations:

- Increased funding for support staff, special education, special needs, ESL, instructional assistants, guidance and teacher-librarians (Provincial government and Federal transfer payments)
- Investment in holistic education, with support for music, arts, physical education and sports, civics, Canadian history and accommodating varied styles of learning (Provincial and Federal governments, community at large)
- Increased funding for social supports in schools (Provincial and Federal governments)
- More time spent by policymakers at grassroots level (Provincial and Federal governments)
- Encourage public awareness of educational constraints
- Enhance community partnerships that support schools and young people
- Transitional program from secondary school to post-secondary (Provincial and Federal governments)
- Secondary school gifted program (Provincial and Federal governments)
- Support community-based schooling and the use of schools for community activities (Provincial funding formula, Federal transfer payments)

- Support community volunteers in schools (Boards of Education, community)
- More ESL classes for newcomers (Provincial government)
- Change funding formula so that Boards do not need to close existing schools in order to build new ones (Provincial Government)

INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

Participants believe poverty compromises social inclusion in nearly every area of inquiry, including health care, housing, recreation, opportunities for educational experiences and civic engagement.

Some feel that Burlington has a relatively low number of people on Social Assistance, attributing this to a shortage of affordable housing which forces people to move out of the City. Others feel that, in Burlington, it is possible to be completely unaware of those whose living conditions are quite different from one's own.

“There are two Burlingtons, based on your socio-economic status.”

The Stigma of Poverty and Social Assistance

Participants observe that the national media and some governments, particularly those espousing neo-conservatism, have targeted those on social assistance benefits, particularly single mothers. They find that a stigma remains for all those on social assistance, and that they are generally not respected and valued for their contributions to the life of the community.

Respondents believe the stigma is worse for those who are relatively young and have neither age nor disability to “explain” their need for social assistance.

“They aren't willing to give people the benefit of the doubt...everyone [in trouble] is considered a 'welfare bum.'”

Some opportunities for single parents, such as the Halton District School Board's Teen Education and Motherhood Program, and the existence of some subsidized daycare, are noted as strengths of the community. However participants identify more problems than assets: for example, the difficulties faced by young single parents trying to get off Ontario Works; the shortage of affordable child care spaces; the difficulty of getting child care to cover night work hours; and extra fees for pickup and drop-off out of regular child care hours.

Opportunities for Children and Youth from Lower Income Families

Participants value the City's provision of subsidies for its sports and recreation programs, and note that City program costs are also partially subsidized by the tax base. They consider the YMCA to be a major community asset and observe that it, too, makes financial assistance available in its recreation programs.

“Burlington is a terrible place to be poor.”

“Single moms and low-income parents may feel guilty if their kids don't have as much.”

However, they also express concerns that parents may not be aware of possible financial assistance or may not request it, fearing lack of confidentiality, or that their children will be labelled as poor. Further, respondents believe that, even with a subsidy that reduces the cost, an activity may still be financially out of reach.

Respondents also note that financial assistance is not available for many programs in the community, such as some sports programs run by community organizations, and programs in the arts. Music and art programs are fully funded only in schools and these programs, along with physical education, “*have taken a beating*” in the view of participants.

Programs such as the City’s Summer Activity Camps are highlighted as community assets, serving the dual purpose of providing very low-cost recreation opportunities for children, while providing their parents with summer daycare. The Cadets programs in the City are considered to be excellent opportunities for youth, providing free programs during the year and free camps in the summer, where members are fed, clothed, housed and even paid.

In schools, respondents note that staff and administrators make efforts to help families pay for activities by, for example, using the principal’s discretionary fund, and they feel it is easier for parents to ask for help in a smaller school, where there is more personal contact, than in a larger school, or from a big organization such as the YMCA or from the City.

Nevertheless, participants reiterate the same concerns as are raised in regard to subsidies for community activities: that parents may not be sufficiently aware that financial help is available, or may not request it for fear of their children being stigmatized. Participants are confident that there are students who never go on school trips because money is an issue, and they raise questions as to whether subsidies are also available for the most expensive, such as a Grade 8 trip to Quebec.

Respondents believe that the overall affluence of the community exacerbates the difficulties faced by poor families, by increasing expectations in schools and community groups that parents can pay more for activities. Further, they observe that underfunding of education has been the source, not only of user fees, but also of increased fundraising by schools, placing additional pressures on low-income families.

Employment for Newcomers and Members of Minority Groups

Throughout this study, regardless of the area of inquiry, participants identify as a major issue the difficulties faced by newcomers in acquiring recognition of foreign and out-of-province qualifications. They believe that this hurts not only newcomers themselves but the community as a whole which, they feel, would benefit greatly from the presence of more qualified professionals.

Respondents note a number of significant barriers, including the difficulty of finding specialized English-language training, and requirements for Canadian experience, often imposed by professional organizations. Participants believe that, for some highly-skilled newcomers, their qualifications may in fact prove to be an impediment to any type of employment: unable to work in their field, they may nevertheless be rejected as “overqualified” by other employers. More on the issue and newcomers and employment may be found in the section **Local Soundings – Newcomers**.

Although participants recognize the value of equal opportunity policies in the workplace, they observe that these policies may not filter down to all levels:

“It’s easy to say at a corporate level that ‘we are an equal opportunity employer’ but when you get right down to it, it is the people who make the decisions on who gets hired—what kind of people they are and what their views are about immigrants.”

Many find that there is discrimination on the part of some employers, although it may be disguised as a requirement for Canadian work experience, Canadian qualifications or accent-free English.

“Employers say, ‘our customers have little patience for accents, except British accents.’”

Participants find that, for newcomers who do not have fluency in English, it is difficult to find even volunteer placements, which are often the first step in a job search.

Over- and Underemployment

Respondents believe that there are high levels of both underemployment and overemployment in the community: that is, that there are high numbers of people unable to find adequate, full-time work, who substitute with several low-paid, no-benefit, part-time jobs; and, conversely, others in regular full-time employment who are burdened with too much workload or overtime.

Participants observe that low wages, combined with the cost of living, and the trend for employers to hire on a contract basis to avoid payroll taxes and benefits, weakens the employment situation for workers, and ultimately their quality of life. Participants believe that efforts must be made to attract employers that provide full-time, regular employment.

They also note that students are under pressure to work excessive hours, compromising both their education and recreation time, in order to meet multiple demands: to fulfill social expectations of consumption; to fund their post-secondary education; or to satisfy their employers. Meeting social expectations is considered to be all the more difficult in a generally affluent community such as Burlington, and students from low-income families are believed to be under increased pressure to work long hours to provide their own spending money, cover the increasing cost of post-secondary education or acquire the “status” clothing common to their peer group.

INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

Key Observations

Focus group participants were asked to identify the observations that were central to the discussion and that indicated key strengths and weaknesses in the community. Participants were not asked to assign these an order of priority.

Key Strengths:

- Teen Education and Motherhood program
- Existence of subsidies for activities for low-income children and youth
- Cost-free programs such as Summer Activity Camps, Cadets

Key Weaknesses:

- Stigma experienced by those on social assistance
- Poverty, made particularly difficult by the surrounding affluence in the community
- Barriers to getting off Ontario Works
- Lack of awareness of, and reluctance to ask for, subsidies
- Difficulty of acquiring recognition of foreign and out-of province qualifications
- Discrimination in hiring practices
- Over- and underemployment, due to downsizing, low wages and increase in contract work

Suggestions From Participants

Focus groups were asked to develop written suggestions for positive change, and who should be involved in implementation (shown in parentheses). These suggestions have informed the Civic Panel in its development of recommendations:

- Fund schools for all their needs
- More communication between schools and community groups for career education
- Provide a forum for information sharing and networking and coordinating services among social service providers and nonprofit organizations (City, Region)
- Clearer paths for transfer of qualifications (Federal government, professional organizations)
- Legislation to limit use of part-time and contract work (Provincial government)
- Increase Social Assistance rates (Provincial government)
- Raise minimum wage (again) (Provincial government)
- Continuing education for all ages, for young people including child care opportunities (Federal and Provincial governments)
- Incentives (such as continuing dental and drug coverage) for those coming off Ontario Works

HOUSING

Access to Housing

Study participants believe that the shortage of affordable, accessible and affordable supportive housing is a major issue that affects almost all areas of inquiry and all vulnerable groups. They observe that, over many years, no new social housing was built by either Federal or Provincial levels of government, and contend that the current deficit of affordable, accessible and supportive housing is part of a general shrinking of all support systems: local, regional, provincial and federal.

“The social contract has been broken – everyone wants to take their tax money out.”

Participants find that housing, even in “lower- rent” areas, is extremely expensive and often poorly maintained and that large numbers of residents are paying far too high a percentage of their income on housing. They note that both renters and homeowners on reduced incomes are vulnerable, and that high housing costs, compounded by high utility costs, have led to increased food bank use and homelessness. Respondents observe that the inability to find accessible and/or affordable housing forces many to leave the community.

In Burlington, 40% of those who rent pay more than 30% of their income, the rate generally considered “affordable” for housing (Statistics Canada, 2001 Census).

The average one-bedroom apartment in Burlington will cost more than 50% of the income of a senior couple whose income is limited to Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement. (Regional Municipality of Halton. Halton Housing Advisory Committee (2002). *2002 Report to Regional Council*. Chart, p. 6.

Waiting lists for social housing fluctuate. However, the average wait for subsidized housing in Halton is typically a minimum of two years, and may be as many as seven years or more depending on individual requirements.

“There are people living in pretty homes in a pretty town, but they are poor.”

Participants are also concerned about the “service gap” in housing for youth aged 16-18. This group has limited access to Social Assistance, and respondents believe that, for some, the only housing option may be to go to a shelter or to a group home. Participants feel that the lack of financial and housing supports for these young people makes it particularly difficult for them to stay in school, and may force some back into abusive situations. One participant captured the fears of the group:

“If you are a teenager who can’t prove you are abused, you don’t have a soft place to stay.”

Participants suggest that the development of affordable housing is blocked by a number of factors: insufficient government funding for affordable housing development; NIMBY¹⁸ syndrome; a lack of concern among community members; and lack of interest among developers.

They believe that both City and Regional levels of government are concerned about the housing situation, and applaud the City's policy of mixed densities in housing, as increasing the vacancy rates and creating a downward pressure on rental cost: however, they express concerns that the Ontario Municipal Board has the power to overrule City plans for housing development.

Feeling Welcome

Participants feel that the community at large opposes both the presence of and funding for affordable housing and group homes. They believe that this opposition is based on a fear that neighbourhood property values will decline, and a general lack of acceptance of the poor, especially those who are not considered "deserving," those whose poverty is not "excused" by age or disability.

"There's hatred of the poor, especially poor white men, who represent the ultimate failure in the eyes of members of this community...there's no recognition that a twist of fate could put them in the same position."

Participants find that some lower-rent areas, and even some higher-density complexes located in the midst of single-family homes, carry the stigma of poverty or of being "problem areas." Some feel that co-operative housing is viewed more favourably than other models of social housing.

In general, participants observe that feeling excluded from neighbourhoods is primarily a function of income, rather than of race, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

"If you can afford to buy a house here, you're in!"

Youth, however, particularly visible minority youth, are believed to often be unfairly targeted by police, particularly if they are in the "wrong" neighbourhood: that is, a neighbourhood where they do not live.

Participants express concern that, as low-income immigrants and refugees move to lower-rent areas in search of more affordable housing, certain areas currently stigmatized as "poor" may instead become stigmatized using terms related to race or ethnicity.

¹⁸ NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) syndrome refers to the opposition of community members to group homes, affordable housing and other social developments near their homes.

Supportive Housing

Respondents consider the presence of some supportive housing, such as that provided by Summit House for people with mental illness, to be an important community asset. However, they find that in general there are long waiting lists and few choices for those requiring permanent supportive housing, and that eligibility criteria may be excessively rigid. Further, they observe that while awaiting permanent housing many must reside in emergency housing, which may be provided in a motel. Concerns are also raised about the lack of legislation governing conditions in private group homes for adults

Participants note that, for seniors, the Region operates supportive housing at market rent, and that there is an abundance of supportive housing in private retirement residences, for those who are able and willing to pay high costs. However, they observe that a major shortage of subsidized supportive housing for seniors, with waiting lists of several years, forces many to resort to institutionalization in long term care facilities.

HOUSING

Key Observations

Focus group participants were asked to identify the observations that were central to the discussion and that indicated key strengths and weaknesses in the community. Participants were not asked to assign these an order of priority.

Key Strengths:

- Existence of some services, such as Summit House, Bridging the Gap, and some affordable and subsidized housing
- Abundance of supportive housing for those who can pay private rates

Key Weaknesses:

- Serious shortage of affordable housing
- Serious shortage of accessible housing
- High cost of utilities
- Shortage of housing options for youth over 16
- Barriers to developing affordable and supportive housing
- NIMBY
- Attitude of residents toward poverty and the poor, including the working poor
- Stigma imposed on some lower-cost developments

Suggestions From Participants

Focus groups were asked to develop written suggestions for positive change, and who should be involved in implementation (shown in parentheses). These suggestions have informed the Civic Panel in its development of recommendations:

- Ontario Municipal Board should not be able to change City designation of lands slated for commercial development which produces jobs (Provincial government)
- Create affordable housing throughout city, not clustered (City, Region, Provincial and Federal governments)
- Policies to encourage private development of affordable housing (Region, City)
- Encourage subsidy/purchase program (Region, City, nonprofit agencies)
- Shelter and transitional housing (Region, City)
- Education to fight stigma (nonprofit and community organizations, Region, City)
- Act on established knowledge of affordable, accessible and supportive housing shortages, and proceed with a political will (Region, City)
- Address future housing needs for seniors
- Improve co-ordination of social services (nonprofit agencies)

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

In every focus group discussion, regardless of whether or not transportation and mobility were on the agenda, they were identified by participants as “hot issues.” Participants believe that transportation and mobility affect virtually every other area of inquiry, from access to health care and crisis services to education, employment, citizen engagement and community interaction.

Public Transit

Participants indicate that certain groups, particularly the elderly, youth, the poor and those living with disabilities, use local public transit the most and are most affected by the quality and cost of transit in the community. Some are perplexed that transit is not more of an issue in municipal elections; others suggest that many in the most affected groups are “*focused on surviving*” and have no time to bring transit issues to the fore.

“The poor and marginalized use public transportation. There’s a difference in service for the ‘deserving’, such as seniors, who are somewhat served, and the ‘undeserving’”

Respondents believe that public transit in the community is insufficient, both in routes and hours of service, and that the cost is not universally affordable.

They observe that, for those who use the bus because they can’t afford a car, cost presents an obstacle; conversely, they feel that those who do own vehicles might opt to use local buses were it not for long wait times and insufficient routes. Participants note that some service is less frequent or non-existent on evenings and weekends. For those with an alternative, the local transit system is considered to be “*totally inadequate.*”

Respondents maintain that many parts of the city, especially newer developments, are not readily accessible by bus, and that there are some areas in which people simply will not reside without a car. They observe that public transit is particularly difficult for those traveling north or south.

Opinion varies on the impact City planning has on transit services: some feel planning is conducive to the provision of transit services; others, that the city is ill-defined and suffers from sprawl.

Participants recognize that the car is the predominant vehicle of choice or, some suggest, of necessity; they also note that current bus ridership may not provide an economic basis for increased service. However, several suggest that public transit should be considered and funded as a social service. They believe that better public transit for those who require efficient, affordable transportation to work is compatible with the City’s economic development objectives, and that better, well-used transit would not only serve the needs of many groups, but alleviate growing traffic congestion.

Respondents identify poor transportation to other parts of the Region of Halton as a major problem, compromising the cohesion of the Region and limiting access to services provided on a regional

basis. However, the GO system¹⁹ is considered an important asset to the community, although access for those with physical disabilities is considered a problem.

Special Needs Transportation

Participants express appreciation of the efforts of Burlington Transit in providing low-floor buses, Handi-Van services and taxi scrip services for those with physical disabilities, and note that accessible taxis are available. However, they believe that there is not a high level of satisfaction with transportation for seniors and those with disabilities, and consider hours and routes of Handi-Van to be insufficient. They also note that there is a service gap for some, such as those with cognitive impairments, who may not be eligible to use the Handi-Van service unless they have a physical disability as well.

Respondents consider it a positive step that new buses have space for wheelchairs, although they find wheelchair users are more likely to use Handi-Van or taxi scrip. However, they also express concern for bus drivers who, when assisting those with mobility problems, may need to deal with passengers who are “miffed” at the delay, especially during busy hours.

Despite transfer points to the Hamilton DARTS²⁰ system, using public transit to get to Hamilton for medical appointments is found to be difficult and complex, presenting particular problems for seniors and those with cognitive impairment. Volunteer drivers available through the Red Cross and Canadian Cancer Society are highly valued. However, participants note that the availability of volunteers, many of whom are seniors, may be subject to seasonal fluctuation, as some go away for the winter.

Mobility

Participants observe that there are insufficient sidewalks, even on major thoroughfares, compromising mobility for pedestrians, especially those with disabilities, and the safety of both pedestrians and of cyclists, who must move onto the roadway when encountering a pedestrian on the shoulder.

A shortage of bicycle paths is considered to encourage cyclists and skateboarders to use sidewalks, thus endangering pedestrians, particularly the elderly, visually impaired and those with disabilities.

Respondents find that curbs which drop abruptly and bumpy or cobblestone sidewalks cause many with motorized scooters to use roads even when a sidewalk is available, presenting a hazard to traffic and to themselves. They recommend smooth sidewalk surfaces and more curb cuts which slope down to the roadway. However, they note that such slopes would be safer if the sides were square-cut to allow a level resting place for a cane, and that all curbs should be painted in a contrasting colour for visibility. Winter maintenance of surfaces is also cited as a problem.

¹⁹ The GO system provides train and bus service from Burlington along an east/west corridor between Hamilton and areas east of Toronto. It is used extensively by commuters and others.

²⁰ Disabled and Aged Regional Transportation System

Some recommend more audio signals on traffic lights, and believe more driver awareness about these signals is needed; others, that crossing guards should be provided at busy intersections to provide safer mobility for the blind and cognitively impaired. Innovations in other countries, such as Britain's overhead pedestrian walkways, are considered worthy of study.

Respondents state that there is a need for more bus shelters, especially at exposed locations, and benches en route to bus stops. As an example, they note that residents of St. Luke's Close could use a resting point on their way to the bus terminal. Further, they observe that there are few places anywhere in the city for seniors to sit, noting that even in the downtown area there are few benches where tired seniors, or others, can rest.

Participants identify major arteries, such as the QEW and 407 highways, as obstacles to pedestrians and cyclists, and suggest that more bicycle paths and sidewalks be developed to enable people to use overpasses more safely; participants believe this would encourage people to use non-motorized vehicles as their regular mode of transportation, particularly to work.

Respondents raise numerous concerns about barriers to access to, and inside, both public and private buildings, such as:

- Slippery floors and handrails
- Handicapped parking which is too far from entrances to public buildings
- Heavy doors in public buildings
- Handicapped parking with insufficient space to get onto the ramp
- Washrooms which are intended to be accessible, but that fail due to design flaws
- Elevator doors that close too quickly
- Building Code requirements that new homes have a step at the doorsill.

This topic is also addressed in the sections on **Public Spaces** and **Local Soundings – Seniors**.

Some observe that mobility is not always taken into consideration in planning events, even those intended for seniors.

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

Key Observations

Focus group participants were asked to identify the observations that were central to the discussion and that indicated key strengths and weaknesses in the community. Participants were not asked to assign these an order of priority.

Key Strengths:

- GO train
- Handi-Van service (although some improvements are recommended)
- Volunteer-based transportation to medical appointments

Key Weaknesses:

- Inadequate hours and routes of buses
- Cost of bus fares for low-income core users
- Poor and non-existent north-south service in City and in Region
- Waiting times for buses further reduce ridership
- Low usage of mass transit increases traffic problems
- Insufficient sidewalks and audio signals
- QEW and 407 highways a barrier to accessing all parts of the city for pedestrians and cyclists
- Insufficient bike paths
- Access to work difficult for those without a car

Suggestions From Participants

Focus groups were asked to develop written suggestions for positive change, and who should be involved in implementation (shown in parentheses). These suggestions have informed the Civic Panel in its development of recommendations:

- More affordable transportation system through fee reduction (City)
- Provincial income support programs (Province)
- Increase public transit services (City, Province)
- Improve Regional transportation (Region, Province)
- Planning with grid patterns in new developments, traffic calming, safer bike routes, north-south bike routes (City, Region, Provincial and Federal governments)
- Encourage trains not trucks to transport goods (Federal governments)
- Wheelchair-accessible buses and trains (all levels)
- Better partnerships between cities for user-friendly disabled transit (City, Handi-Van, funders)
- More sidewalks: wider, flat, not cobblestone, and improved accessibility of sidewalks and ramps
- Encourage sustainable and “refreshed” volunteer base for transportation to appointments, food banks, etc.; time off with pay to volunteer in the community (employers)
- Green incentives such as cheaper gas and parking for fuel-efficient vehicles, (City, private sector); carpooling (everybody)
- Educate, advocate and plan for sustainable growth (all levels of government)
- Place services in more transit-accessible locations

RECREATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

Equal Opportunities for Arts, Recreation and Cultural Activities

Participants value the large number of community centres and parks, and the wide variety of activities the City and community organizations seek to provide for residents, including youth, seniors and those with special needs. They also recognize the efforts made by the City and organizations to try to ensure that these activities are affordable for all members of the community. The Sound of Music Festival is raised in numerous areas of inquiry as an event that provides a free opportunity for all members of the community to gather together.

However, participants believe that many residents are prohibited by cost from participating in activities and events, particularly those related to the arts, and are particularly concerned about how this affects children of low-income families. This is discussed more fully in the section on **Income and Employment**. Respondents state that they would welcome the provision of more programs and activities that are fully funded and free of charge.

“Arguments in support of user fees for important services, such as recreation, are short-sighted and do not consider the social costs associated with marginalized youth and ultimately, the future well-being of children in our society”

(Halton Social Planning Council (May, 2000). *Community Dispatch* Vol. 4 No. 3, “User Fees: A Practice Revisited” p. 4).

Respondents observe that the community enjoys a wide range of organized team sports for children and youth, but fewer opportunities for individual sports and in the arts. They welcome the proposal to create a Performing Arts Centre to provide more arts and cultural programming.

The Burlington Art Centre; Parks and Recreation Department programs in arts and Student Theatre; and the Teen Tour Band are highly praised, particularly as they are considered to be among the few arts and cultural programs available for youth; programs such as Learning Through the Arts²¹ are applauded, and community arts programs are felt to be especially needed due to the decline in arts education in schools. Respondents observe that Canada would do well to learn from European models, where “*culture is affordable.*”

Serving a Diverse Population

Participants believe that seniors, low-income families, those with disabilities and others relying on public transit find getting to activities and events, especially those held in the evening, to be difficult or impossible.

²¹ Learning Through the Arts establishes long-term partnerships between teachers and specially trained artist-educators who serve as change agents within the school, promoting collaboration, risk taking, and continuous learning by teachers and students alike.

Respondents note that the needs of diverse groups need to be considered in recreation planning. One example suggested is the possible need for a female-only swim to serve the needs of Muslim girls. Some feel that activities in the community are not effectively promoted to diverse groups, nor planned with a diverse population in mind. There is a general feeling among participants that activities can and should be created and promoted specifically in order to provide opportunities for the diverse population to gather together. They suggest general events that everyone can relate to, such as festivals celebrating the traditions and arts of various cultural communities, and providing information kiosks, as used in European cities, where events can be promoted in various languages.

RECREATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

Key Observations

Focus group participants were asked to identify the observations that were central to the discussion and that indicated key strengths and weaknesses in the community. Participants were not asked to assign these an order of priority.

Key Strengths:

- Many activities and organizations, particularly related to sports and recreation
- Some subsidies available from City and Y (and possible others)
- City-supported arts programs such as Student Theatre
- Burlington Art Centre
- Sound of Music Festival
- Proposed Performing Arts Centre
- Teen Tour Band

Key Weaknesses:

- Cost may be a barrier
- Subsidies may not be accessible to all
- Transportation, especially for evening events
- Arts and culture programs in the community less available than sports and recreation
- Outreach to diverse groups
- Need to proactively include diverse community in conception, planning, and promotion of activities

Suggestions From Participants

Focus groups were asked to develop written suggestions for positive change, and who should be involved in implementation (shown in parentheses). These suggestions have informed the Civic Panel in its development of recommendations:

- Some corporate and other sponsorship for all programs of interest to children and youth to reduce overall user fees; investigate models in other countries (City, corporations, local business)
- Encourage lobbying for more funding for arts programs (local arts community)
- Individual subsidies and promotion of subsidies (City)
- Subsidize “higher level” entertainment (e.g. opera, live theatre) for low-income people (Provincial and Federal governments, City)
- Development of programs and more creative marketing of programs, to reach new users, assess needs and celebrate skills of diverse communities (City, community groups, Halton Multicultural Council, faith groups)
- Reduce transportation barriers to participation, with reference to affordability, schedules, extended hours, accessibility, Handi-Van eligibility (City)
- Involve more community groups in promoting arts and culture (City, community groups)

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Valuing Local Government

Study participants believe that City Council functions well, that it is highly respected, and is more accessible and probably more trusted than other levels of government. They praise the efforts of some Councillors to hold regular meetings with their constituents and suggest that they would welcome closer contact with upper levels of government. Respondents state that community organizations “*have a real recognition of the role the City plays in their success to achieve their mandates and make Burlington a better place to live.*”

In discussions of local governance, the central issue raised by participants is that of citizen apathy toward local government and elections and, in fact, toward civic participation in general.

Registered voter turnout in the Burlington municipal election 2003:

16.55 %

(Response to inquiry, City of Burlington, Sept. 20, 2004)

They believe the causes limiting citizen engagement to be:

- Lack of free time to engage in local political processes, related in part to a high number of residents commuting to work
- That residents tend to be more concerned about the issues which fall under Provincial and Federal jurisdiction, although local government has a major effect on everyday life
- Lack of awareness of City responsibilities and processes
- That citizens may lack awareness of serious local issues, such as poverty and the shortage of affordable, accessible and affordable supportive housing.
- Uncertainty about respective roles of City and Regional government; perception of passing the buck among levels of government, resulting in cynicism, apathy and distrust
- That residents feel “*the good ship is sailing smoothly,*” and there is no need for their participation until a problem arises which affects them personally.
- Acclamation in municipal elections, particularly for the office of Mayor
- That, when there are acclamations, there are usually no debates to provide an opportunity to discuss local issues.
- That people may feel their involvement is meaningless or pointless: participants feel a major contributor to this is the power of the Ontario Municipal Board to overrule local planning decisions.
- That, for newcomers, the lack of services and communication in languages other than English, and a lack of awareness of City functions and protocols make it difficult to understand and participate in local government.

“You don’t have a problem with pigeons until one poops on your head.”

Participants feel that local media provide shallow and scant coverage of social concerns and that this is an impediment to citizen engagement in local issues. They believe that those who are living with

such issues are too busy to engage in civic processes, and that others are largely unaware or unconcerned.

“There are two pockets: the affluent, who are more complacent, and those too busy struggling with poverty or health issues, about which there is stigma and denial.”

Respondents observe that both newcomers and long-term residents are uncertain about the respective functions of the City and Region, and how to approach City and Regional staff with a problem; they suggest there is need for a mechanism through which the City could communicate quickly on “hot button” issues.

City Council and a Diverse Community

Although the small size of City Council is considered useful in helping Council set a direction, participants speculate on whether there should be more Councillors to provide the best representation of residents.

“There is something wrong with a city of 150,000 people having only seven people representing you, and this adds to the apathy that is already there.”

Participants note that low-income individuals find cost to be a barrier to running for office. They also observe that diverse ethnic and cultural groups and visible minorities are not represented on City Council; respondents suggest that this may result from the small size of Council, but also may reflect relatively small ethnic and racial constituencies in the community. They comment that members of visible minority groups, or from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, tend to be elected where there are larger minority constituencies looking for a voice in local governance.

Respondents believe that the City is at a disadvantage in bringing together diverse groups, whose engagement often arises around issues of social services, which are under Regional jurisdiction. They believe that the Region’s Diversity Advisory Committee is a positive initiative in engaging diverse groups; respondents suggest that the City develop a similar committee, and specific policies on diversity, and that city publications be used to enhance public awareness of the makeup of our community.

Participants applaud existing initiatives which support diversity, such as the City’s support of Pride Week, and suggest the enhancement of sensitivity training for all City staff, including those at community centres and pools, regarding language and cultural practices and how to assist those with disabilities.

Access to City Council and its Committees

Participants consider access to Council committees uncomplicated and straightforward and value the existence of Advisory Committees to Council. However, opinion varies on how much impact Advisory Committees and citizen delegations have on Council decisions. Some feel that, in

Burlington, “*business is a sacred cow*” and that business interests take precedence over those of individual citizens.

The application procedures for appointment to advisory committees are believed to favour those with previous civic experience and to perhaps discourage others. Some respondents express concern that some members of advisory committees feel unheard, even within their own committees.

Youth Engagement in Local Governance

Some feel that youth don’t believe that participating in City and Regional youth committees will make much of a difference, and that this is a common feeling in youth committees that are run by adults. Participants believe the Mayor’s Youth Advisory Committee is a good initiative, but that primarily “engaged” youth are represented.

The Youth Vote Program²² is highly praised as an innovative program to encourage youth participation in elections. However, the neglect of municipal affairs in secondary school civics courses is seen as an impediment to youth engagement. Some youth participants believe that the best way to engage youth is for information on municipal issues to be sent to schools and discussed in civics or other classes.

²² The aim of the Youth Vote Program is to raise the awareness of the youth in the community on the democratic voting process by asking them to vote on questions which are of a non-political nature but serve to capture opinions and trends important to the community.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Key Observations

Focus group participants were asked to identify the observations that were central to the discussion and that indicated key strengths and weaknesses in the community. Participants were not asked to assign these an order of priority.

Key Strengths:

- Council respected and considered effective
- Advisory Committees
- Access to Council and Councillors
- Community meetings held by Councillors
- Attempts to engage youth, including Youth Vote Program and Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee
- Support for Pride Week
- Support for community organizations

Key Weaknesses:

- Small size of Council
- Citizen apathy
- Promotion, application processes and effectiveness of Advisory Committees
- Need to involve less readily engaged youth
- Some neighbourhoods lack sense of identity
- Lack of diversity committee or policy
- Lack of publications and services in languages other than English
- Lack of awareness of roles and functions of City and Regional levels of government
- Need for more awareness by staff at all City facilities in dealing with disabilities and diversity
- Ontario Municipal Board undermines citizen desire to be involved

Suggestions From Participants

Focus groups were asked to develop written suggestions for positive change, and who should be involved in implementation (shown in parentheses). These suggestions have informed the Civic Panel in its development of recommendations:

- Educate community about issues of poverty, diversity, seniors, etc. (Government, media, Boards of Education, community services, police)
- Action on community issues, real effective response to citizens' concerns (City, Region)
- Voter awareness and incentives to vote, such as tax deduction for voting, as in Australia (Provincial and Federal governments)
- Identify and attract diverse persons and youth to participate (citizens, City Council, community organizations, schools)
- High school civics curriculum to include comprehensive piece on local governments (Region, Boards of Education, Provincial government)
- Local government support for community volunteer groups (funding for programs and in-kind donations for meeting space)
- Promote involvement in local democratic forums (City)

POLICING AND JUSTICE

Participants indicate that “*there are two realities of policing.*” They believe there is a high level of respect for local police, and praise police initiatives to reach out to diverse communities and to youth and seniors, as well as the DARE²³ and community policing programs. Participants repeatedly praise the outreach efforts of the police service at schools, festivals and cultural activities. Seniors express appreciation of police support services, such as the Elder Abuse Prevention program.

However, participants also express serious concerns in regard to the treatment, by police and in the justice system, of youth; visible minorities; newcomers, especially newcomer women; and those with mental illness. They observe that police do not necessarily have the training or resources to deal appropriately with someone experiencing a mental health crisis.

It should be noted that these concerns are raised among some who also applaud police efforts in outreach to, and recruitment from, diverse communities.

There is general agreement that, at senior levels and in policy, the Halton Regional Police Service is fully committed to equity and to reaching out to the diverse racial, cultural and age groups of the community.

However, many participants believe that practices are not yet fully in line with policy. In some cases, participants feel there are a few “bad apples” but others believe that discriminatory practices are more extensive. Some believe that residents of the community may have widely divergent views of the police, depending on personal experience.

Youth

There is a high degree of unanimity in the belief that youth are over-policed by both public police officers and private security personnel, that police and security personnel have become more assertive with youth, and that youth are targeted unfairly and called upon to explain their presence. In almost all cases, both youth participants and adults of all ages, drawing on personal experiences or those of people they know, believe this to be true. However, they also share instances of exemplary police treatment of youth.

Of those few who feel that youth are not over-policed, two comments in particular should be noted: first, that an authoritative police presence may be the only and much-needed voice of discipline or authority in a young person’s life; and secondly, that police must maintain a sufficiently authoritative demeanour in order to be able to perform their function.

The perception that youth are treated unfairly by both public police and private security is so widely articulated across such a broad spectrum of youth, the middle-aged and seniors that it deserves further study. Relations with police formed a major part of the soundings with youth and are discussed more fully in this study’s section, **Local Soundings – Youth.**

²³ DARE is the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program which the Halton Regional Police Service offers to elementary schools

Participants believe that youth who are in contact with the justice system also face greater difficulties than adults, and that they do not receive sufficient supports in rehabilitation and prevention.

Equal Treatment of Newcomers and Visible Minorities

Participants applaud police for their efforts to reach out to newcomers and members of minority groups. They also recognize that there are still major obstacles to overcome in helping those whose experience of police in their countries of origin has been negative or even traumatic gain confidence in approaching police for crisis and other services. A particular strength recognized by study respondents is that the Chief of Police is involved from the beginning in investigations of hate crime.

However, respondents widely articulate a belief that despite “*good policies at the top*” racism has not been completely eradicated at the level of individual officers and that visible minorities, in particular black youth, are sometimes targeted by police.

In discussions about the justice system, participants applaud the work of the police force’s Victim Services program, which provides translation services for victims of crime. However, they note that, for those who have been charged with a crime, the justice system typically provides translation services only at trial and that tenant eviction and pension cases are dealt with by tribunals which do not provide interpreters.

Low-income Residents

Some respondents believe there is a bias against low-income residents throughout both the policing and justice systems. They contend that police are more apt to question and detain a person of low-income and that, in all courts, including family court, the cost of obtaining competent counsel is a barrier to equal treatment under the law for low-income residents.

Some also believe that calls to police may be treated differently in various parts of the city: for example, that property crimes in wealthy areas receive a more thorough response from police than similar crimes in low-income areas.

Treatment of Women

Participants believe there is a tendency for women to be dismissed in the courts and that, throughout the justice system, they don’t receive the support they should when laying complaints.

Some find that female newcomers to Canada, especially if they are not fluent in English, are often dismissed in the courts and their complaints ignored by police, particularly if their complaint is against a Canadian-born partner.

Diversity of Police Personnel

Participants express concern at the low level of racial diversity on the police force, but recognize that the police continue to make efforts, and that some progress has been made, in recruiting from visible

minority populations. One respondent expresses the view that recruitment may be hampered by visible minority groups having a cultural preference for entering the professions, or by negative attitudes toward police arising from experiences in other countries. Some feel it is difficult for women to find the funding to enter the police training program.

Complaints Process

Participants, in general, believe that a process in which police investigate themselves is intimidating, awkward and difficult for those who wish to lodge a complaint, even more so for women or members of a racial minority.

They note that legal aid is not available for laying a complaint against police, and that those of low-income may consequently not have the assistance of a lawyer. Participants consider this a barrier to equity in effectively filing a complaint, which particularly affects those who are illiterate or living with a disability or mental illness, who may not be able to file a complaint at all without assistance.

POLICING AND JUSTICE

Key Observations

Focus group participants were asked to identify the observations that were central to the discussion and that indicated key strengths and weaknesses in the community. Participants were not asked to assign these an order of priority.

Key Strengths:

- Respect for police
- Police initiatives to reach out to youth
- Police initiatives to reach out to newcomers and diverse communities
- Involvement of Chief in hate crimes investigations
- Good policies concerning racism, diversity, recruiting
- Efforts by police to recruit from diverse populations
- Translation services for victims of crime

Key Weaknesses:

- Over-policing of youth, by both police and security personnel
- Insufficient support and services for prevention and rehabilitation of youth in the justice system
- Attitudinal barriers of some newcomers in approaching police
- Residual racism in police force
- Translation services for defendants only at trial
- Bias against low-income people in police and justice system
- Women, especially newcomers, dismissed and unsupported by police and justice system
- Low level of diversity in police personnel
- Lack of awareness of how to lay complaint against police
- No independent police complaints process
- No legal aid for those laying complaints against police
- No translation at housing or pension tribunals

Suggestions From Participants

Focus groups were asked to develop written suggestions for positive change, and who should be involved in implementation (shown in parentheses). These suggestions have informed the Civic Panel in its development of recommendations:

- More in-depth cultural diversity, cultural competence training for police (Police, community partnerships, nonprofit agencies)
- More public education around processes affecting civilians, especially for diverse community (Police)
- Continue efforts to recruit women and from diverse community (Police)
- Continue community partnerships (Police, community)
- Continue great work and intensify interaction with diverse communities, with pamphlets in different languages (Police)

- Continue specific programs to interact with diverse community, e.g. programs for high school students (Police)
- Research more on justice issues (Inclusive Cities Canada project)
- Make complaint procedures independent of police, known and more user-friendly (Police, Attorney-General)
- Increase awareness of diversity issues within policing and justice system
- More funding for legal aid and other legal services for marginalized individuals (Provincial Government)
- Provide translation at housing and pension tribunals (Provincial Government)
- Address bias toward low-income people in justice system
- Improve public awareness of crime statistics (media, Region)

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Participants express an overall sense that Burlington is a safe place to live. They believe that, although some parts of the city may have a higher rate of property crime than others, violent crime is rare everywhere in the city. Some believe that certain areas had previously had reputations of being more dangerous, but that a heightened police presence has addressed this.

Respondents believe that, in general, people tend to overestimate the amount of violent crime. However, they note that women are always somewhat vulnerable, wherever they are, and that a sense of safety is compromised for members of minorities targeted in incidents of racist graffiti at various locations in the community.

Police leadership in elder abuse prevention, community policing and outreach to youth and diverse cultural communities is considered a model of good relationship-building, enhancing community safety. However, participants, both young and old, believe that youth, those with mental illness and some visible minority youth and adults may feel vulnerable to being targeted by police and security personnel. This topic is covered more fully in the sections on **Policing and Justice** and **Local Soundings – Youth**. Participants believe the sense of safety for those with mental illness would be improved by the provision of a 24/7 mobile crisis team trained to safely and appropriately handle mental health crises.

Health inspection and environmental safety were topics also raised under this area of inquiry. However, participants said little about these issues, apart from noting that no pest control services are provided by the public sector.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Key Observations

Focus group participants were asked to identify the observations that were central to the discussion and that indicated key strengths and weaknesses in the community. Participants were not asked to assign these an order of priority.

Key Strengths:

- Personal safety throughout the community
- Police outreach to youth, elders, diverse communities
- Community policing

Key Weaknesses:

- Some groups feel targeted by police and security personnel
- Women are always somewhat vulnerable
- Minorities targeted in racist graffiti incidents feel vulnerable
- Lack of publicly-provided pest control

Suggestions From Participants

Focus groups were asked to develop written suggestions for positive change, and who should be involved in implementation (shown in parentheses). These suggestions have informed the Civic Panel in its development of recommendations:

- 24/7 mental health crisis response team (Police, nonprofit sector and community mental health organizations)
- Continue and enhance training for police about youth and vulnerable populations (Police, schools)
- Media coverage to reduce stereotypes about prevalence of crime (media)
- Youth complaints process with peer support (Police, community agencies and nonprofit sector)
- Form a youth council to encourage youth and police interaction (City, Police)
- Emphasize education on civics (schools)
- Continue and enhance youth police programming geared to policing streets
- Continue and enhance police recruitment from diverse populations
- Education on bullying (schools, parents)
- Continue and enhance police cultural sensitivity and diversity-competence training (Police)

PUBLIC SPACES

Schools as Hubs of Community Activity

Participants state that some schools are well-used by the community, especially those which are host to continuing education programs or have swimming pools used by the public. However, they observe that it is community centres such as Tansley Woods, more than schools, which act as community hubs and centres of community cohesion.

Although, respondents note that “*structurally, schools aren’t built for community life,*” they feel that schools could be making much better community use of space than they are currently. Some believe that “*it is very hard to work with schools in partnerships, and they aren’t equal partnerships.*”

Participants find that there is insufficient outreach to let people know that schools are available for use. In fact, they believe that school boards discourage the use of schools, even by school-based groups, through high and continually rising rental rates; consequently, they note that meetings and activities tend to take place in churches, and that only a narrow range of people, in terms of age, income and culture, use schools as community centres.

School closures are often raised as an issue, both in relation to the loss of community space and to the disruption of students and programs.

Participants believe that a lack of affordable space for community groups seriously limits their ability to provide programs.

“Our group brings together people of various faiths in Burlington for dialogue and to discuss social issues. We don’t charge for our programs and our funding is minimal. We really need to meet in a secular location, but there’s no longer anything we can afford. So we wind up meeting in churches and, occasionally, the Mosque. We know this is really hampering our efforts to bring people together in a place where everyone feels comfortable.”

The Inclusion of Youth

There is a remarkable unanimity in the discussions concerning how welcoming Burlington’s public spaces are to youth. With few exceptions, both young and older participants agree that youth are over-policed, and often made to feel unwelcome in public and other spaces, unless someone wants their business; even then, they believe, young people are often made to feel unwelcome and mistrusted. Signs reading “no more than 2 students at a time,” or asking students to leave their backpacks at the door, and the actions of private security personnel, are seen as indicators that youth are trusted less than other members of the community.

“Any time it looks as if you might be out of place, you may be interrogated.”

Participants of all ages find that “*if there are more than three young people in one place, people get nervous.*” They attribute this to prevalent misconceptions in the community that there is a high level of youth violence, a perception respondents believe is acquired from national media and not countered in local media.

Most adult participants believe that “*adults are afraid of youth.*” Yet none of the participants indicated that they themselves share this fear; instead, they showed a high degree of sympathy with, and respect for, youth and awareness of the issues they face.

“Many rude adults should take a look at youth and their good manners.”

In fact, in discussions of youth issues, identical themes and many of the same comments arise in both the predominantly adult focus groups and in the soundings with youth.

While special facilities for youth, such as the skateboard park, are welcome, some ponder whether youth activities should be isolated from the rest of the community in special facilities, instead of being incorporated into the regular life of parks and other public spaces. Others note that youth prefer spaces where they can be away from the rest of the community and feel less supervised, and that ordinary parks and public spaces frequently lack anything for them to do.

Respondents frequently raise the issue of cost as a barrier to youth participation in activities, noting that cover charges for the City-run Velocity youth centre and the YMCA, when added to the cost of snacks and transportation, may put certain activities out of reach. The punk concerts at Central Park, however, are universally acclaimed as an activity that is affordable, easy to get to, and appealing to a broad spectrum of youth.

Youth issues related to public spaces are discussed more fully in the section **Local Soundings – Youth.**

Access to Public Spaces

Participants believe that there are conscientious attempts, aided by the work of the City’s Accessibility Advisory Committee, to improve physical access, and that regulations and practices have improved. However, some feel that accessibility is still a neglected issue, noting that the Ontario Building Code does not provide sufficiently rigorous standards to ensure that even new buildings are accessible.

Respondents find that physical access to public spaces is improving in the community, as demonstrated in the renovations to the Central Library and Burlington Art Centre, and improvements to Spencer Smith Park. On the other hand, they observe that there are still some noteworthy deficiencies, and refer, in particular, to Central Arena and some schools. Participants add that an inaccessible school or other public building not only affects access to events and activities, but also to political engagement, by limiting access to public meetings or polling stations located there.

Respondents suggest that security and other staff at public buildings require enhanced training to appropriately assist those with disabilities.

Participants echo the concerns discussed in the section on **Transportation and Mobility**, such as: a shortage of bicycle paths, sidewalks and audio crossing signals, the need for sidewalk and curb improvements, and that there are barriers to accessing the GO train.

“Cost is the most significant barrier to public space.”

Participants often cite financial obstacles to participating in activities in common public spaces. They state that there are few free activities, and that this is a function of what the community is willing to pay in terms of taxes.

“Society has a ‘for-profit’ mindset rather than an awareness of common goals.”

Free activities that do exist, such as the Sound of Music Festival, are very highly valued by respondents, and are frequently mentioned in numerous areas of inquiry.

Bringing a Diverse Community Together

Many participants who were asked specifically to address this topic note that they are unclear about the degree of diversity in the community. Consequently, they are uncertain how to respond. They have the general impression that Burlington has a low degree of diversity, or perhaps of visible diversity, but that the community is accepting of what differences exist. However, additional key informant interviews suggest that community attitudes cause some, such as those with developmental disabilities, to feel unwelcome in public spaces.

Lack of awareness about the diversity of the community is a current that runs through many areas of inquiry. Some participants had previously given little thought to our community’s diversity, while others were well aware of diverse groups and social inclusion issues; however, both groups feel that more information about the diverse makeup of our community needs to be widely available. They suggest that the City publication *CityTalk* be used to provide substantive information about the community and local issues.

Respondents believe that free public events such as the Sound of Music Festival provide gathering places for diverse groups, and suggest that a multicultural festival could serve as a means of enhancing cultural awareness and exchange. The waterfront redevelopment is seen as a positive contribution toward providing opportunities for the community to gather together.

PUBLIC SPACES

Key Observations

Focus group participants were asked to identify the observations that were central to the discussion and that indicated key strengths and weaknesses in the community. Participants were not asked to assign these an order of priority.

Key Strengths:

- Some schools are used for community purposes
- Skateboarding Park and punk rock shows
- Physical accessibility is improving; some audio signals at intersections
- Perception that there is comfortable interaction among diverse groups
- Waterfront redevelopment

Key Weaknesses:

- Cost of schools and other activity locations; lack of free space
- Youth feared, feel unwelcome in stores and other locations
- Insufficient free activities for youth
- Perception that police confront youth and over-police them
- Accessibility problems persist, including public and commercial buildings
- Need for sensitivity training for staff at public facilities in dealing with diverse cultural groups and people with disabilities
- Need for more audio signals at intersections
- Shortage of bike paths pushes cyclists to use sidewalks, creating hazards
- There are still hazardous sidewalk surfaces and curbs
- Accessibility of GO train
- Possible shortage of activities to appeal that diverse groups

Suggestions From Participants

Focus groups were asked to develop written suggestions for positive change, and who should be involved in implementation (shown in parentheses). These suggestions have informed the Civic Panel in its development of recommendations:

- All should have safe, barrier-free access to public buildings (City)
- More and larger bike lanes to protect pedestrians (all levels)
- Crossing guards for pedestrians with mobility challenges, visual and cognitive impairment (City)
- Language services at City Hall for diverse groups (City)
- Improved winter maintenance, especially sidewalks (City)
- Seniors Centre should be more affordable
- More transportation specific to seniors needs (City)
- Seniors liaison to ensure all groups and income levels included (City)
- Larger, more welcoming, more modern libraries (City)
- Provide funding to schools to support community use (Provincial government)

- Design and promote schools to also be community centres (City, school boards, community)
- Promote the “good” of youth, stop fearing and promote a positive relationship between youth and police (Police, City, Region, citizens)
- Educate youth about their rights (School Boards, Federal government, community)
- Provide free indoor spaces for youth (City)
- Encourage spaces which promote the gathering of diverse groups, restaurant district, commercial centres (City, Region, Chamber of Commerce, Burlington Economic Development Corporation)
- Promote “Art in Public Spaces” (City, Burlington Art Centre)

COMMUNITY CAPACITIES

Opportunities to Volunteer, Participate and Contribute to Community Life

Overall, participants believe there are many opportunities to contribute through both community-based organizations and City-run committees and activities. According to respondents, non-involvement is often related more to the lack of free time in a bedroom community than to lack of opportunity. They also feel that a shortage of spare time causes people to become more selective and focused in their volunteering, and that both the quality of volunteering and level of individual commitment may have improved as a result.

Although the City provides a Civic Recognition Award, participants note that there is no financial support that they are aware of, from either the City or Region, to celebrate the contribution of volunteers during National Volunteer Week.

Community Involvement Hours for Students

In discussions of the 40 hours of community involvement, which is required of students for completion of a secondary school diploma, participants were unanimous: no positive comments whatsoever were made by youth, adults, teachers or members of community agencies. The overwhelming opinion is that the requirement is ill-conceived as a way of fostering voluntarism, and that neither schools nor agencies have the resources or interest to link students with volunteer opportunities for such a short span of time.

Further, respondents believe that the requirement has not only failed to increase youth volunteerism, but that some youth, who were already volunteering from a genuine desire to do so, feel their contributions are now less highly regarded. All participants agree that there are high levels both of incompleteness and of false claiming of community involvement hours.

Bringing a Diverse Population Together in Community Organizations

Participants believe that the well-developed sports and recreation opportunities in the community are good mechanisms for bringing together children and youth of diverse backgrounds, and that neighbourhood projects, such as the Plains Road beautification project, and neighbourhood associations are successful in building a sense of community.

Organizations such as the Burlington Art Centre are considered to foster the bringing together of diverse groups. However, participants feel they would also like to see more outreach by City Hall to bring together those of diverse backgrounds.

“We need activities where there is a true bringing of people together and communicating, fostering engagement. The Library’s ‘Take Flight and Write’ contest for teens is a good example of a program that truly engages different people.”

The Seniors Centre is highly valued and often mentioned for the programming it provides for seniors; however, some participants hold the view that the social atmosphere is “*cliqueish*,” and that less affluent seniors sometimes feel socially excluded.

Recognizing the Importance of Community Organizations

In general, participants feel that the City and Regional governments recognize the importance of nonprofit agencies and community organizations, and listen to their views and advice. However, opinion varies regarding whether that advice is acted upon. Some feel that local levels of government consider the input of agencies and organizations as “*just a little more information to add to the pile.*”

Participants value the assistance the City provides to community organizations, citing examples of City assistance in the building of St. Luke’s Close, an affordable housing development for seniors, and in removing certain by-laws restrictive of group homes.

Funding for Organizations

Some participants note that many local organizations get little or no funding from Provincial or Federal levels of government and that local sources of funds are limited; others feel that the “politics of fashion” come into play in funding decisions and that, even locally, an ideological bias on Regional or City Councils can impede funding for some groups.

Respondents observe a need for more information about how funding decisions are made at all levels:

“*Who gets funded, why do they get funded and what type of work do they do?*”

Respondents believe that organizations often experience difficulties in even applying for funds. They observe that many don’t know where and how to apply; that the application process itself is often arduous; and that some organizations lack sufficient staff to devote to funding applications.

Additional key informants note that social service providers in the Region of Halton are funded by the Province of Ontario at a lesser per capital rate than are those in other parts of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), compromising the access of Halton residents to equal social services.

Engaging Community Members in Social Advocacy and Civic Affairs

Before considering funding issues related to advocacy, the first concern of many participants is whether advocacy is obstructed by attitudes in the community.

“*Do people really want to deal with these issues in Burlington?*”

“*Do citizens really value the notion of helping others regarding something they can’t relate to?*”

“*Some are seen as ‘deserving’, others are ‘undeserving.’*”

Nevertheless, funding problems are seen to have had an impact. Participants believe that organizations have lost some of their effectiveness in advocacy, and that “advocacy chill” has set in.

“Over the past decade they have to offer more services with fewer resources.”

“Mandates are stretched, especially when other organizations go under.”

Participants identify a spin-off effect, through which one body’s reduced funding may curtail the resources available to others, eroding the capacities of community organizations and, ultimately, the quality of community life. One, as shown below, cited the effects of provincial downloading on the City, and ultimately on community groups:

On provision of free space in community centres:

“When downloading started, the City couldn’t afford it any more – each of those facilities had to become self-sustaining. Organizations now have to pay expensive rent for meetings.”

COMMUNITY CAPACITIES

Key Observations

Focus group participants were asked to identify the observations that were central to the discussion and that indicated key strengths and weaknesses in the community. Participants were not asked to assign these an order of priority.

Key Strengths:

- Good opportunities for participating
- High-quality of volunteers
- Sports and recreation provide a venue for social cohesion
- Neighbourhood projects build community identity
- Sound of Music Festival
- City's recognition of the importance of community organizations
- City support of projects sponsored by community organizations

Key Weaknesses:

- Lack of time for people to volunteer and participate
- Lack of City funding for volunteerism and other support to celebrate National Volunteer Week
- Low number of cost-free activities
- Community organizations have less impact on decision-making concerning those programs and facilities run in partnership with Boards of Education
- Uncertainty re: criteria and fairness of government and other funding
- Perception of attitudinal barriers to advocacy in the community
- Erosion of advocacy work due to funding cuts
- Pressure on City to fund organizations due to lack of funding from senior levels of government
- Spin-off effects of funding cuts, further affecting community organizations and quality of life

Suggestions From Participants

Focus groups were asked to develop written suggestions for positive change, and who should be involved in implementation (shown in parentheses). These suggestions have informed the Civic Panel in its development of recommendations:

- More and adequate funding and organizational support for nonprofit social services agencies (all levels of government)
- Reduce rates for community groups for meeting places (all levels of government)
- Increase public education for social awareness (City, schools, nonprofit agencies, community groups)
- Events to bring diverse people together (community groups)
- Outreach initiatives to introduce community service groups and ideas to underserved areas (City website)
- Leadership on volunteering, financial and proclamation support for National Volunteer Week (City, Region)

- Training, opportunities and networks for volunteers (City, Boards of Education, nonprofit agencies, Volunteer Halton)
- New initiatives to make funders aware of what organizations are doing in their community (community organizations, nonprofit agencies all levels of government)
- Active encouragement of citizens' groups (City, organizations)
- Cultural diversity on City Committees (City)
- Planning of neighbourhoods without interference, abolish Ontario Municipal Board
- Team approach to sensitivity training on diversity and disabilities for all staff who deal with the public (City, community groups, codes of conduct, procedures, training, recruitment)

LOCAL SOUNDINGS – YOUTH

Efforts were made to include young participants in focus groups as much as possible. However, issues related to youth inclusion were flagged by all participants as of such importance that the Civic Panel determined there was a need to speak directly to a larger number of young people, in order to better understand the experience of youth in Burlington. Recognizing that a unique approach would be needed, two young graduate students were asked to go to places where young people congregate, and to ask them questions about their experience of social inclusion in Burlington. The sites selected include the YMCA punk show, malls, parks, parking lots and Burlington Student Theatre. Members of the Mayor's Youth Advisory committee were also contacted for their responses to the questions.

Youth respondents were asked questions pertaining to five areas of inquiry:

- (1) Public Spaces;
- (2) Semi-Public spaces;
- (3) School/Education;
- (4) Engagement in politics and government;
- (5) Community Involvement Hours.

Ninety-four young people participated in these soundings. Most provided thoughtful and candid responses to the questions. Despite the diversity and number of the youth questioned, there were prominent similarities and themes in their responses about inclusion in Burlington.

Public and Semi-Public Spaces

“Public Spaces” refers to those fully public locations where anyone can go without paying an entrance or other fee. These spaces, such as parks or streets, are governed by public law. In contrast, “semi-public spaces” refers to those locations that are open to the public with the expectation or condition of consuming a product, and which are governed by rules particular to the establishment. This would include spaces such as coffee shops, malls or stores. Public and semi-public spaces are of particular importance when considering the social inclusion of youth, who use these spaces so often.

For the youth soundings, questions regarding public spaces were asked separately from those on semi-public spaces. However, the experiences of youth in each have enough significant similarities that they are discussed together in this section.

Over-Policing

The most prominent theme that arises from conversations with youth about public spaces is their feeling that they are over-policed. Experiences relating to over-policing range from reports of police abuse to a sentiment that police subtly harass youth by paying them particular attention. Some also express a sense that police abuse their power. One explains:

*“Cops stopped us at Spencer Smith Park and checked our bags.
When we asked what they were searching for, they said ‘drugs and alcohol.’
We didn’t know that they weren’t allowed to do this.”*

According to the respondents, the public police force is not the only entity over-policing youth in Burlington. They repeatedly indicate that the experience of over-policing is compounded by the actions of private security officers, and governance by adults and store clerks/ managers.

A major concern of youth is their lack of redress for such treatment, and that private security personnel are not governed by any regulatory body:

“Why are they allowed to do that to us? Who holds the police and ‘rent-a-cops’ accountable?”

Most youth feel this over-policing is unrelenting and unwarranted and they commonly conclude that youth are not welcome in these locations.

“I’ve gone out for a smoke at Tim Horton’s and ‘rent-a-cops’ have come up to me and told me that I would have to move, even though I was a paying customer, and even though it is normal for customers to go outside for a smoke at this non-smoking Tim Horton’s. When we said ‘no’ they called the cops. They do it because I am young.”

Youth observe a common experience of being ushered from place to place throughout the evening, by various authority figures such as police, security guards and other adults. In the following, one youth explains the sentiment of many:

“No, we can’t go anywhere without being harassed – in the parks we have trouble with the cops, and in the malls we have trouble with the store owners...it’s like they are programmed to think that we are violent, or gonna steal, or something.”

Many youth speak about the intense surveillance they experience in malls and stores. While adults are rarely, if ever, asked to surrender their bags or purses upon entering stores, young persons are routinely asked to leave their school bags at the counter or with the cashier. A common example that the youth respondents cite as discriminatory is the policy set by certain store managers or owners to limit the number of students admitted into the store at a time – this policy is often communicated by a sign in the window reading: “No more than two students allowed in the store”

A conversation with the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC), on Sept. 29, 2004, reveals that they receive many calls about ‘No more than two students’ signs from all over Ontario. Section One of the Ontario Human Rights Code provides that *every person has a right to equal treatment with respect to services, goods and facilities*, without discrimination based on age. However, the OHRC says it has not responded to these signs.

Many youth feel that adults, in general, have a “fear of youth” or “treat youth differently” because of their age. This view is widespread, indeed almost uniform, among youth respondents. Different young people have varying explanations for this phenomenon. Some consider it a fear of youth asserting their rights. Others observe that the media create and perpetuate negative images and stereotypes of youth, on which adults base their attitude to youth.

The belief that (other) adults are afraid of youth is echoed by adult participants in this study; they agree that this fear can be largely attributed to images perpetuated in the media.

Being “Priced Out”

The second theme most commonly identified in the youth soundings is that cost is a barrier to youth participation in recreational and social activities. While youth identify the entertainment at Youth Fest, YMCA punk shows and the skate park as recreational activities that are positive and affordable for youth to attend, there is also a widespread sentiment that there are not enough affordable places for youth to go.

“Stuff is expensive – everything costs money. The punk show is reasonable.”

School and Community Involvement Hours

The most common response from youth is that schools tend to favour those who fit well into the education system, and that students who “struggle,” fail to get the support that they need. Moreover, there is a sense that schools do not include youth in decision making processes, creating a sense of disengagement among students.

There is consensus about youth experiences with the community involvement hours required to complete a secondary school diploma.

The Ontario Secondary Schools: Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999 (OSS) requires every student to complete a minimum of 40 hours of “community involvement” as a condition of qualification for an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). The rationale and purpose for this “mandatory volunteerism” was “to encourage students to develop awareness and understanding of civic responsibility and of the role they can play and the contributions they can make in supporting and strengthening their communities.” (Ontario Ministry of Education, Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999)

The researchers were mindful of the stated purpose of mandatory community involvement hours in designing questions for the Youth Soundings.

The program does not appear to have affected the dynamics of volunteerism among youth in Burlington. There still are youth who want to be involved in volunteering, and those who do not: some would volunteer with or without the mandatory community involvement hours.

“I already do stuff around the neighbourhood so I really didn’t need this ‘program’ to be involved in the community. It may be good for other youth who need to get out there.”

“The ones who do it, often do it because they want to, and they enjoy what they are doing.”

These respondents feel that mandatory “volunteer” hours devalue volunteering and the work they already do in the community.

Students who are not willingly engaged in volunteering consider the mandatory community involvement hours to needlessly infringe on time they feel would be better spent working for pay or doing other things. One explains:

*“It is a hassle and a waste of time, especially since I am working at a job too!
I didn’t gain any skills and this was frustrating.”*

These respondents have sometimes had someone “sign” for their community involvement hours without actually performing them.

Youth often complain that the only volunteer positions available are for manual labour, but that there are many opportunities for youth to perform manual labour for pay.

*“People need to feel like what they are doing matters.
We need more meaningful volunteer opportunities for everyone.”*

Government And Politics

Almost all the youth respondents consider themselves “political.” However, they feel as though their opinions or ideas “don’t matter.”

*“Voting doesn’t really affect us because it doesn’t matter who wins
– they [politicians and government decision makers] don’t listen to us.”*

Youth participants indicate that low voter turnout among youth is strongly related to a lack of meaningful choice among politicians. Indeed, many conceive of politicians as corrupt. One youth gave an equation to explain his lack of interest in politics:

“I don’t care because we think politics = old people = liars and institutions.”

Diversity And “Un-Uniqueness”

An important thread that is woven through youth responses, on all areas of inquiry, is a belief that Burlington has few alternative life styles and “does not deal well” with difference or diversity. One explains:

“Being young in Burlington, you are taught and trained to be ‘un-unique.’”

The sentiment that there is social pressure in Burlington, pushing youth to be “mainstream,” can be linked to responses about how Burlington deals with racial, ethnic and cultural diversity.

“People who aren’t white are given funny looks and stared at. If you are a brown person and you went into that mall, there would be people who would stare and treat you different.”
“For sure if you were an immigrant or a person of colour, you’d have a rough time fitting in here.”

According to youth respondents, people who are not white and mainstream in appearance are treated differently, and caused to feel that they do not belong.

Advice From Youth

Public And Semi-Public Spaces

- There needs to be an accountability process for the public police and private security.
- Rules like “only two students” allowed in the store should be abolished.
- There is a need for youth-friendly places. The skate-park is a positive place for youth, but is only for skaters.
- More free community events.

Schools And Community Involvement Hours

- Schools should involve youth more in planning of activities.
- Community Involvement should bring about meaningful opportunities for youth to volunteer.

Engagement in Politics and Governments

- Proportional representation.
- More diverse and sincere politicians.

LOCAL SOUNDINGS – SENIORS

The sounding was conducted with a small group of people who are seniors themselves, and involved in seniors issues in the community. This was an undirected discussion of issues of importance to seniors, as the participants chose to raise them. The conversation focused on two main areas: issues related to planning, accessibility, transportation and mobility; and issues related to income, housing, home care and long term care. In contrast to focus groups, participants were not asked specifically to identify both strengths and weaknesses of the community; consequently, they tended to focus on areas that they feel are in need of improvement. Many of their comments pertained to the **Common Areas of Inquiry** in this study, and have been included there.

Participants particularly value the Seniors Directory and, if money could be found to print it in sufficient quantities, would like it to have broader distribution. They suggest that it might be delivered with the City's publication *CityTalk*, to complement its current distribution through libraries, the Community Care Access Centre and Seniors Centre. Participants note that the Seniors Directory is needed both by seniors and by family members or others seeking information or assistance on someone else's behalf.

In general, participants applaud the Burlington Seniors Centre for its variety and scheduling of programs. They view the Centre as a non-threatening place for seniors to meet. Some, however, feel they would like to see its recreation programs expanded, and they affirmed the statement made in focus groups that some seniors may feel socially excluded there.

Planning, Development And Amenities

Much of the discussion centred on planning and development and how the physical attributes of the community affect senior residents. This group of participants feel that demographic projections affirm an aging population that "*needs a smaller scale in which to operate,*" but that planning is not being done on this basis. They echo a belief, common in focus groups, that planning is geared to cars rather than people, and note a trend in the city toward "*tearing down small and building huge.*"

Participants observe that this not only creates large stores and other facilities that are difficult for those with limited mobility to use, but also tends to drown smaller operations, forcing them out of business. They state that, as a result, shopping and other amenities are becoming concentrated in fewer, larger centres on major thoroughfares, so that some areas, for example, no longer have a grocery store. Consequently, they find that seniors must travel farther to use less senior-friendly stores and facilities, and that public transit, already an issue, becomes even more of a problem.

In regard to downtown development, participants feel that infill is, in general, a good approach. However, they note that planning needs to anticipate the ensuing increase in demand for services and amenities, and address the threat that increases in downtown property values will pose to the viability of amenities such as grocery stores. Respondents believe that the recent building of a large number of retirement residences not only provides for the needs of long-time residents, but is also attracting an older and less able population from outside the community. They observe that this creates an even greater need for services and amenities to serve older residents.

Accessibility And Mobility

Participants feel that there is often the money to enhance accessibility, but poor planning is often a problem. They reiterate comments made in numerous focus groups, concerning exterior obstacles to access and mobility, and identify numerous interior barriers as well. Their observations on this subject have been included in the section on **Transportation and Mobility**.

Participants appreciate the delivery services provided by some grocery stores and pharmacies and suggest that a positive step would be for grocery stores to sponsor a bus to bring seniors to shopping. In particular, they feel that some such service would be particularly useful for areas with high concentrations of seniors far from amenities. One particularly innovative recommendation is that special transportation be provided through areas with a high concentration of seniors to take them to labs and other services.

Much of the discussion centred on building design, including that of private homes. Respondents cite deficiencies in the Ontario Building Code as compromising the accessibility of housing, and particularly note the requirement that new homes have a step up to the doorsill. One participant notes that eight acquaintances suffering from Multiple Sclerosis had to leave Halton due to their inability to find suitable housing. Participants in this sounding believe that adjustments to the Ontario Building Code to foster accessibility would be a benchmark by which we could measure progress toward social inclusion.

Income, Affordable Housing, Supportive Housing and Long Term Care

Participants believe that seniors are finding it increasingly more difficult to make ends meet, due to a combination of increasing cost of living with reduced interest rates on investments and inadequate public pensions.

“Even if people felt comfortable five years ago, they are not comfortable now.”

They worry that those who moved to retirement residences a few years ago, feeling it would be affordable in the long term, may now be finding the cost unsustainable.

Participants support models such as the Oakville Senior Citizens Residence, which allow for a transition from affordable independent living to supported living, where residents can be provided with meals, assistance with medications, etc.

They express grave concern over the long waiting list for rent-geared-to-income supportive housing for seniors. They note a large deficit of subsidized supportive housing for seniors.

Overwhelmingly, participants feel there is a need for more supports and a broader spectrum of supports for seniors, especially low-income seniors.

Waiting list for subsidized supportive housing for seniors is five to seven years.

(Response to inquiry, Regional Municipality of Halton,
Halton Access to Community Housing, Sept. 29, 2004)

They state that some seniors need just a little support in daily life, such as friendly visiting or assistance with shopping, going to appointments or bill-paying to assist them to remain independent in their own homes. Respondents believe there is a need for more volunteers and a system to match volunteers' abilities with needed services; they consider Seniors for Seniors and the matching service provided by the Multiple Sclerosis Society to be good models.

For those who need more support, participants suggest that “*perhaps we should be looking more at a visiting nurse sort of setup*” to enhance personal support and homemaking services currently available under the CCAC, to help people continue to live independently rather than have to move to a supportive facility.

Participants are adamant that we need to provide a greater continuum of in-home supports rather than pursuing institutionalization of individuals, described by one participant as “*putting them in a box.*” Respondents feel that the emphasis has been disproportionately placed on providing long term care facilities at the expense of home supports.

Further, they observe that long term care facilities are funded on the basis of 40% of rooms being ward, 60% private and state that “*the private rate provides the profit, whereas the government subsidizes the ward rate.*” Those who took part in the Seniors Sounding are concerned that long term care facilities, which are government-licensed but privately operated on a for-profit basis, may put the profit motive ahead of providing the best possible quality of life:

“*If someone has to make a profit, something has to go in terms of care, food or both.*”

Civic Engagement (“Are We Listening To Seniors?”)

Participants note that buildings in which polling stations are located, in particular some schools, may be inaccessible. They recommend that this be addressed, and that better publicity is needed to inform people of voting alternatives, such as voting by proxy or, in Federal elections, having the ballot sent to their home.

Respondents highly value the work of the Regional Elderly Services Advisory Committee. However, they are deeply disappointed that there is no longer a Burlington Seniors Advisory Committee, and feel that this has eliminated any guarantee of a “seniors lens” being brought to bear in City committees. One asks, “*Are we listening to seniors?*” However, they also recognize that a review of how seniors' issues are to be handled is imminent.

They believe that there were problems with the City's Seniors Advisory Committee, but that there are several ways to help seniors contribute productively to committees: creating an atmosphere which promotes a “comfort level”; retaining a core of members to maintain continuity, rather than wholesale turnover; re-evaluation of selection processes; and recognizing the particular difficulties faced by seniors in doing committee work, such as night driving. This group reinforced the views expressed in focus groups that there needs to be a re-evaluation of the process by which members of advisory committees are selected.

Advice From Seniors

Planning, Accessibility, Transportation and Mobility

- Planning which discourages concentration of amenities
- More accessible design and surfaces in private and public buildings
- That the publications of the MS Society inform planning for accessibility
- Changes to the Ontario Building Code to improve accessibility
- Improved routes and hours of service for Burlington Transit and Handi-Van
- Special transportation through areas with a high concentration of seniors to take them to labs and other services.
- More bus shelters and benches throughout the city

Income, Housing, Home Care and Long term care

- Increased home care supports
- Increased accessible housing
- Increased affordable supportive housing
- Broaden distribution of Seniors Directory

LOCAL SOUNDINGS – NEWCOMERS

This sounding was conducted with a small group of newcomers, comprising recently-arrived refugees and Investor Class immigrants. The need to conduct the sounding in English determined, to large extent, the makeup of the group. All speak English as a second language, are highly educated, articulate and accomplished, and need only some initial assistance to find their footing in a foreign environment. Other refugees and immigrants may face different situations and obstacles: those who arrive without facility in English will likely find the difficulties related to communication and awareness which are identified in this sounding to be more pronounced.

Participants, particularly refugees, were reluctant to criticize. Instead, they preferred to express their appreciation of Canada. However, when pressed for their suggestions on how we can help newcomers, they had many thoughtful contributions.

Question asked of Newcomers Sounding: “What would make you feel as if you were included? As if you were truly at home in Burlington?”

Responses:

“To be able to work as soon as possible.”

“Communication -- to know about the programs of the city and what the city is thinking about diversity and newcomers.

If you don't know, you don't belong.”

Welcome To Canada?

All participants in the sounding found that the information they were able to acquire, prior to coming to Canada, did not prepare them for the difficulties they would face, or help them to find the specialized language training and other tools they need in order to acclimatize. They feel that insufficient orientation to the Canadian environment and, in particular, the lack of an initial contact for getting established creates great difficulties for newcomers.

“The government needs to know we're here.”

All newcomer participants were among those who had eventually come into contact with the Halton Multicultural Council, a nonprofit organization that provides settlement services. However, on arrival, regardless of the port and mode of entry, all the participating refugees and Investor Class immigrants had been given either no information or very little.

In some cases, cursory information, such as a contact number for a shelter or other service, was given only if the new arrival requested it, and typically did not include information about local organizations which assist in settlement, or about facilities for English language training.

Refugees, who must apply for Ontario Works while awaiting a work permit, were given no information about how to do so. Participants feel that, for refugees, who have been forced to flee their home country, these unexpected obstacles prove to be particularly difficult. Many initially stay at shelters that they find to be often short-staffed and lacking in awareness of refugees' needs.

For those, such as Investor Class immigrants, who had the opportunity to select from various possible destinations, the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website was pivotal in making Canada their choice. One investor was mystified that, having been attracted toward Canada's investment opportunities by Government of Canada websites, upon his arrival he was provided with no contact information for the business or investment community, to assist him in adjusting to the Canadian business climate or seeking out investment opportunities:

"I chose Canada over Australia and New Zealand because of education for my children. The Government website talks about business opportunities. Who determines that there is a business opportunity for me? My money is here, but before I invest I need to get to know the business environment...I sold my car, my house, my other properties in order to come here, and I can't even learn the terminology. Don't welcome us and then push 'Stop.'"

-- Investor Class immigrant

Newcomers find that the prevalence of automated telephone attendant systems makes it even more difficult to acquire information on important services. However, sounding participants believe that more refugees, if not business class immigrants, are now aware of the services available through the Halton Multicultural Council, since the Council asked Ontario Works to ensure that refugee clients are given this information.

Participants strongly feel that an effective way to orient and integrate newcomers into the community is to have a "welcoming committee" or regular welcoming sessions, to provide basic information and contacts about the functioning of the community. They recommend that these include representatives of the City, Region, human service agencies, school boards and community organizations, and that there also be an information newsletter to provide this basic information.

Income And Employment

For refugees, the first step is Ontario Works benefits, as they volunteer, study, acclimatize and wait for a work permit. Newcomer participants feel that many refugees find dealing with Ontario Works to be intimidating, unwelcoming and lacking in flexibility. It is described as being "like a wall."

Some believe that Ontario Works dismisses the abilities of newcomers, and undervalues their ability to contribute:

“Someone I know was a lawyer in his home country. However, he feels Canadian law is too different for him to qualify here, so he has decided to focus on his second area of expertise, as a consultant. For this, he needs about four university credits to adapt his qualifications to Canada, after which he can set himself up in independent professional practice. His [Ontario Works] social worker suggested that, instead, he take a course on small engine repair.”

Throughout this study, participants discussing employment, health care and diversity express concerns about the difficulties foreign professionals face in acquiring recognition of their credentials. Respondents feel this not only deprives newcomers of the ability to practice in their fields, but that the entire community loses their skills.

Newcomers themselves echo these views, and find the difficulties of getting their credentials recognized and finding work in their field to be extremely frustrating. They observe that it is difficult to see logic in the system and believe that some basic assistance in their efforts to qualify should be seen as an investment, allowing newcomers to successfully settle and integrate, and enabling them to be independent and contribute to the community.

“If you know our abilities, you can use us as a human resource.”

They cite the experiences of many in the newcomer community who feel hampered in their efforts by the lack of this basic investment. Most agree that the situation is most difficult for physicians. One participant shared the story of a surgeon who is a refugee:

“Having left everything behind when he left his home country, Ontario Works is the only source of income for his family, as he studies the specialized language skills for his profession and prepares for his exams to qualify him to practice in Canada.

However, the Ontario Works payments are not sufficient for him to adequately support his family, and certainly not to save about \$ 1,000 toward his exams. He is also very uncomfortable relying on Ontario Works rather than having an independent income to support his family.

If he seeks work outside his chosen field, he will have the satisfaction of being off Ontario Works, and possibly be able to save money to pay for the exams. But he fears he would not then have the time for the English and medical studies he needs in order to prepare.

He is considering a middle route – giving up his plans to practice in his area of specialization and instead to train as a medical technician.”

In cases such as this, participants in both focus groups and the Newcomers Sounding assert that the community is in danger of losing an experienced professional for the lack of a minimal investment, perhaps a loan of as little as \$ 1,000 for exam fees, that can make all the difference.

All participants in this sounding are aware of doctors who are now nurses, administrators who are now file clerks and specialists who are now technicians. Respondents observe that those who work with newcomers often find themselves having to convince refugees to reluctantly stay on Ontario Works for the full period of entitlement, in order not to compromise their own futures and the benefits their skills can bring to the community.

“We don’t want advantages. We want opportunities.”

Participants feel the City, or another body, should consider a program of repayable loans to assist newcomers as they pursue the Canadian recognition of their qualifications. Further, they note that it would be extremely helpful if newcomer professionals could network with their Canadian counterparts as they acquire specialized language skills and acclimatize to the Canadian milieu.

Respondents believe that governments, corporations, educational institutions and professional organizations need to work together to address obstacles newcomers face in qualifying to work in the Canadian environment.

They would also welcome a matching service to team Investor Class immigrants with business organizations, and other immigrants and refugees with local companies, for job preparedness, apprenticeship or volunteering. Participants observe that this would also allow newcomers the opportunity to learn the culture and language within a work environment. Further, they note that volunteering, which newcomers are encouraged to do as an initial step in job search, is only meaningful if they are able to find volunteer positions related to their own fields.

Participants suggest that the Regional Government needs to take action to bring such programs together, and that incentives might be considered for those companies that hire newcomers, to assist non-professional newcomers in finding work.

Stress and Isolation

Those who participated in this sounding observe that stress is an immense problem for newcomers. They identify the foundations of this stress as isolation and, for newcomers on Ontario Works or working for low wages, poverty:

“You have no language, no money and no friends.”

They believe that the impact of stress and isolation on the newcomer community is severe, and that low income and the inability to work in one’s own field increase the likelihood of social problems, depression, family violence and family breakdown.

“I did a presentation on the signs of stress — depression, anxiety, family breakdown, illness. You had to see the faces of all my clients. They suddenly knew what was wrong with them.”

-- Settlement worker

Respondents in this sounding state that the stress is particularly great for immigrant and, especially, refugee adolescents, who “have cut their friendships and all their roots”; they are concerned about the potential for teenage suicide in this group.

Participants recognize that some stress is unavoidable for those who have uprooted themselves from everything they have ever known. However, they are also clear that there is a great deal of unnecessary stress, caused by lack of information, low-income, and frustration over credentials and employment.

Education

Participants note with approval that the Halton Catholic District School Board provides ESL in each school; they believe the Halton District School Board’s practice of clustering ESL in certain schools impedes children’s social development, by removing them from their neighbourhoods for two years of ESL, then uprooting them again as they return to their local community school.

Some feel that a two-year limit on English as a Second Language (ESL) education for children may be insufficient, particularly for older children and teens. One Investor Class immigrant, who “*came to Canada expecting good opportunities*” for his children as well as himself, finds the clustering and two-year limit on ESL training to be particularly frustrating. He feels his children’s education and social development may be compromised, and is supplementing ESL with private tutoring.

Participants note that, although basic ESL training is readily available, it is extremely difficult to find language classes for the specialized language skills required for certain trades and professions.

Policing and Justice

Participants in the sounding observe that newcomer women who are abused may have their complaints dismissed, particularly if their complaint is laid against a Canadian partner. These echo comments already noted in the section on **Common Areas of Inquiry: Policing and Justice**. Newcomers suggest that more research is needed on how immigrant and refugee women are treated in the police and justice systems.

Advice From Newcomers

- Welcoming committee or sessions, to orient newcomers to the community
- More information on Government of Canada websites, and at embassies and consulates abroad, to provide details on settlement and recognition of qualifications
- More contact information on Government of Canada websites, at embassies and consulates, and at ports of entry, to direct newcomers to settlement and other services in their destination community
- Facilitating recognition of foreign qualifications, involving governments, professional organizations and others
- Networking and support for newcomers in investing, job search and in seeking the recognition of foreign qualifications
- More extensive English as a Second Language training for children and youth
- More specialized English language training for specific trades and professions

“This is a new situation for cities, so you need new policies.”

“The Federal Government has a vision of Canada – but they don’t go to the provinces and municipalities who are dealing with problems.

This needs more integration.”

“The government should be using immigrants to increase the richness of the country, not to increase poverty.”

BARRIERS TO SOCIAL INCLUSION

In the preceding accounts of discussions of common areas of inquiry and of local soundings, certain broader themes are apparent, which thread throughout diverse areas of inquiry. These have assisted in beginning to identify the underlying barriers to social inclusion in our community, and have been useful to the Civic Panel in developing its recommendations.

Underfunding Of Social Infrastructure

Despite services of generally good quality, participants believe that access and quality, particularly in health care, home care and education, have declined significantly over the past decade or more, due to underfunding. Major issues identified include:

- Shortage of physicians and psychiatric services and professionals
- Insufficient range of, and access to, home care services for the frail elderly and those living with disabilities, attributed in part to a funding shift toward long term care
- Ongoing erosion in overall quality of education, in programs which nourish the whole person and in special education and student services
- Shortage of affordable and appropriate child care

Poverty And Housing

One or both are raised in nearly every area of inquiry. Participants observe:

- That poverty compromises social inclusion in the community and has impacts on health care; crisis services; early childhood development; opportunities in education; housing; transportation and mobility; access to recreation, arts and culture; civic engagement; and access to public spaces
- That there is a severe shortage of affordable housing; accessible housing; and affordable supportive housing
- That the impact of poverty is exacerbated by living in an affluent community
- That there are insufficient financial and social supports for low-income families and individuals
- That family poverty compromises child development
- That, despite some shelter space, there are shelter gaps for youth, seniors and those with mental illness

Income and Employment

Certain issues arise in discussions of numerous areas on inquiry

- Barriers to newcomers in achieving recognition of foreign credentials
- Low social assistance rates and low minimum wage
- Barriers to getting off Ontario Works
- Shortage of secure employment with adequate wages and working conditions

Transportation

In almost every area of inquiry, participants express concerns that inadequate public transportation, both within the community and to areas outside the community, compromises social inclusion. The major issues include:

- Cost
- Inadequate routes and hours of local service
- Deficiencies in transportation to other parts of the Region

Physical Planning And Accessibility

Despite some positive initiatives in city planning participants express concerns about:

- “Car-based planning” and “building big”
- Concentration of amenities in larger facilities on major thoroughfares
- Insufficient sidewalks and bicycle paths
- Need for improvement in sidewalk design for those with disabilities
- Physical barriers to mobility in public spaces, public buildings and residences

Being “Priced Out”

Participants express support for free programs and festivals, and believe that social inclusion is compromised by:

- Decline of free activities in schools
- Insufficient free and low-cost activities in the community
- Shortage of subsidies; attitudinal, capacity or awareness barriers to applying for subsidies; subsidies which are not sufficient to ensure affordability

Policing and Justice

Participants believe there are “two realities of policing.” They observe:

- Generally high level of respect for police in the community
- Police efforts to reach out to youth, seniors and diverse cultural and racial groups
- Commitment to outreach and antiracism at the highest levels of the police service.

Nevertheless, there is widespread agreement that:

- Youth are over-policed, both by the public police force and by private security
- Both youth and some cultural and racial groups may be targeted by police and are disadvantaged in the courts.

Communication and Awareness

Three aspects of communication and awareness are raised in every area of inquiry:

- Gaps in the public’s awareness of available programs and services
- Gaps in providers’ awareness of needs (diversity competence)
- Gaps in the public’s awareness of important issues, such as poverty and the lack of affordable housing

Certain specific issues are frequently mentioned:

- Weak media coverage of local issues
- Lack of information on diversity in official publications
- Lack of orientation for newcomers
- Shortage of information and services in languages other than English
- Over-reliance on automated telephone attendant systems and Internet

Community Attitudes

Participants observe several attitudes they believe are widespread among community members, and that work against social inclusion:

- Lack of awareness and concern about poverty; reluctance to accept the realities of poverty
- Viewing low-income individuals as either “deserving” or “undeserving”
- Lack of awareness and concern about the shortage of affordable housing, accessible housing and affordable supportive housing
- Reluctance to accept differences, primarily those of income
- Fear of youth
- NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) syndrome

Civic Engagement

Despite noting some strengths, such as an approachable City Council, advisory committees, free festivals, parks and public spaces, participants articulate concerns that social cohesion and civic engagement are compromised by:

- Voter apathy and lack of time in a “commuter community”
- Insufficient civics education in schools
- Selection processes for membership of City committees
- Few free and low-cost activities
- Unwelcoming attitudes toward youth
- Deficiencies in transportation
- Erosion of community members’ commitment and sense of control over local issues, due to the presence and powers of the Ontario Municipal Board

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANTS

**Noha Abbas
Mel Aravena
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Harry Bowers
Maryon Brechin
Marianne Bromley
Kathy Brown
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Siddiq Burney
Elizabeth Carmichael
Abdul Chaudry
Esther Clark
Ann Coburn
Roy Cooper
Barb Daize
C.E. Kim Darby
Kay Davison
Olivia Demone
Brenda Deshane
Yvette Dhillon
Michelle Dwyer
Daisy Earle
Helen Ferguson
Joan Gallagher
Aleida Garcia
John Gaul
Dr. Valerie-Dawn Girhiny
Staff Sgt Brenda Glass
Nicki Glowacki
Cliff Goodall
Margaret Goossen
Hugh Greenwood
John Guest
Cheryl Gustaffon
Arnold Hagglund
Samantha Heiydt
Bob Hicks
Les Horne
Marie Jacobs
Wendy Jefferies
Wesley Kellar
Mira Khattab
Anne King
Wendy Kormos
Barb Krukowski
Martha S. Lara
Cheryl Lenover
Carole Leppan
Marina Lloyd
Nancy MacGillivray
Diane Maia
Nick Malo
Matthew Marsh
Mary Marshall
Lily Lumsden
Patrick Ma
David McKay
Gayle Meehan
Arleen Midriak
Douglas Muir
Carlos Nader
Cathryn Newcombe
Tracey Newton
Veerla Nott
Helaine Ortmann
Jackie Oxley
Maggie Pagotto
Isabel Pena
Ross Plant
Lilian Pringle
Judy Pryde
Patricia Purshouse
Cathie Pym
Inez Rios
Anne Robinson
Eric Robinson
Jean Round
Abby Salole
Marjorie Sanchez
Brenda Shin
Marianne Singh-Waraich
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Kim Soth
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Kathleen Szoke**

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Nina Truscott
Veronica Tyrrell
Ron Voss
Melanie Walker
Roy Walsh
Carole Ward
Diane Weitzel
Toni Wells
George Whale

Eldon Wheeler
Pat Windeler
Ernest Wong
Karen Young
Donna Zachariah
Helen Zdriluk
Joan Zhang

Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee
Members of Student Theatre

APPENDIX B: NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

Co-Chairs

From municipal government and Federation of Canadian Municipalities:
Michael Phair, City Councillor, City of Edmonton

From social planning partners:
Joey Edwardh, Executive Director, Community Development Halton

Social Planning Partners

Nancy Henderson, Executive Director, Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC-BC)
Nicola Fairbrother, Executive Director, Edmonton Social Planning Council (ESPC)
Joey Edwardh, Executive Director, Community Development Halton (CDH)
John Campey, Executive Director, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (CSPC-T)
Randall Hatfield, Executive Director, Human Development Council of Saint John (HDC)

Civic Panel Co-Chairs from Municipal Government/Federation of Canadian Municipalities

Barbara Sharp, Mayor, City of North Vancouver
Janice Melnychuk, City Councillor, City of Edmonton
Robert MacIsaac, Mayor, City of Burlington
Pam McConnell, City Councillor, City of Toronto
Carl White, City Councillor, City of Saint John

Civic Panel Co-Chairs from the Community Sector

Lewis Cardinal, Director, Native Student Services, University of Alberta
Amanuel Melles, United Way of Greater Toronto

National Coordinator

Christa Freiler, National Coordinator, Inclusive Cities Canada

Regional Coordinators

Sarah Slack, Assistant Executive Director, Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC)
Andrew Pask, Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC)
Phil O'Hara, Research Manager, Edmonton Social Planning Council (ESPC)
Samantha Sherkin, Researcher, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (CSPC-T)
Glynis Maxwell, Community Development Halton (CDH)
Randall Hatfield, Executive Director, Human Development Council of Saint John (HDC)

Ex-Officio Members/Resource Consultants

Peter Clutterbuck, Research and Field Consultant
Marvyn Novick, Research and Policy Consultant, Professor, Ryerson University

APPENDIX C: RESOURCES

Inclusive Cities Canada – Burlington: Community Voices, Perspectives and Priorities builds on previous work done in the community that contributes to the understanding of social inclusion in Burlington. Those referred to in the body of this report, and selected others suggested for further reference, are shown below.

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Halton Social Planning Council (2003). *Building Hope Together: Strategies for Creating Housing in Uncertain Times*.

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Halton-Peel District Health Council (2004). *Population Growth and Demographic Changes in Halton-Peel: Phase 3: Community Mental Health: Translating Population Growth and Demographic Changes Into the Need for Health Services*.

Regional Municipality of Halton (2004). *Strategic Plan 2004-2006*.

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Regional Municipality of Halton. Elderly Services Advisory Committee (2001) *Halton Seniors Survey Results: Housing, Transportation and Support Services*.

Regional Municipality of Halton. Elderly Services Advisory Committee (2002). *Strategic Planning to Improve Quality of Life of Current and Future Seniors in Halton: Opportunities for Action.*

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Regional Municipality of Halton. Our Kids, The Early Years (2004). *A Vision for Children in Halton: Report Card.*

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APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP TOOLS

At the beginning of each focus groups session, participants were provided with a “**Focus Group Survey,**” a series of statements which would indicate a high level of inclusion related to the areas of inquiry they were discussing. They were then asked to indicate, anonymously, their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement as a descriptor of the situation in Burlington. These responses were compiled to provide a starting point for discussion and help the group facilitator to identify when views or important points had perhaps not yet been vocalized in the session. Definitions (shown below) were provided for the terms used.

Please note that some areas of inquiry were discussed in more than one dimension of inclusion, and that, in each of those dimensions, different questions were developed for that area of inquiry.

DEFINITIONS OF INCLUSION

DIMENSIONS OF INCLUSION

Living Conditions

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

Community Services

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

Human Development

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

Civic Engagement

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

Diversity

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

AREAS OF INQUIRY

Crisis Services:

Responsive and high quality services available for personal and family emergencies and distress.

Transportation & Mobility:

The availability of affordable, accessible and regular public means for all city residents of traveling throughout the city for purposes of work, shopping, personal business and leisure-recreational activity.

Income & Employment:

Policies and programs that provide adequate income support and decent employment that enable community members to support themselves and their families with a sense of security.

Housing:

Affordability, security of tenure, safety, pride and dignity in physical living arrangements for individuals and families in the community.

Healthcare:

Services and supports that meet the full range of personal, family and community health needs equitably and without barriers to access.

Publicly Funded Education:

Elementary and secondary schools, post-secondary institutions, and community learning programs mandated to provide educational services to children, youth and all members of the community requiring growth and development to participate socially, economically, culturally, and politically in community life and civic affairs.

Policing & Justice System:

The governance, command and community practice of law enforcement, crime prevention and protection of public safety and the administration of justice through the courts and correctional system.

Early Childhood Education:

The provision of caring and stimulating programs to pre-schoolage children based on models of developmental growth and preparing children and families for the transition to the school system.

Community Capacities:

Community services, networks, and resources provided by the City and the nonprofit sector to respond to the social support needs of community members.

Public Spaces:

Accessible open spaces and facilities for both programmed and informal use by community members.

Community Safety:

Communities in which residents live free of fear and apprehension about the quality of the environment, relationships within their community, or external threats to their personal, family or community well-being.

Local Governance:

The democratic structures, processes, and practices of local authorities mandated to provide services and to support public participation in planning and decision-making.

Recreation/Arts/Culture:

Organized programs and activities and other opportunities for children, youth, families and individual community members to participate in a variety of leisure pursuits that promote social interaction and personal growth and development.

COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT SURVEY QUESTIONS

INCLUSION DIMENSION: DIVERSITY

Each focus group survey begins:

“Based on your experience or the perspectives of people in the community with whom you are engaged, please circle the response that indicates your degree of agreement/disagreement with each of the following statements:”

Area of Inquiry: Local Governance

- (a) The local municipal council tends to reflect the social and cultural diversity of the city.
- (b) In general, City Council recognizes and respects the full diversity of the local urban area in its policies and practices.
- (c) City Council assumes an active role in addressing racism and other forms of discrimination and exclusion in the broad community.
- (d) Information and education about how the city functions are readily available to immigrants and refugees and other newcomers to the city.

Area of Inquiry: Publicly Funded Education

- (a) Schools in this city generally respond to the needs of students with particular learning challenges (e.g. students without official language skills; students with disabilities).
- (b) Parents of all social and cultural backgrounds are actively encouraged and supported to be involved in both governance and advisory roles in the local education system.
- (c) The program and curriculum of schools in this area affirm the full diversity of Canada.
- (d) Immigrants and refugees seeking language or job training skills have adequate opportunities to get into good quality adult education programs.

Area of Inquiry: Policing-Justice System

- (a) All members of the community are equally and fairly treated by the police.
- (b) The cultural and racial diversity of the community is reflected very well in both the personnel and the civilian governance of the local police services.
- (c) Community residents from diverse backgrounds have ready access to an effective civilian complaint process when they have issues with treatment by police.
- (d) Community residents from diverse racial and cultural groups receive fair treatment in the local court and justice system.

INCLUSION DIMENSION: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Each focus group survey begins:

“Based on your experience or the perspectives of people in the community with whom you are engaged, please circle the response that indicates your degree of agreement/disagreement with each of the following statements:”

Area of Inquiry: Early Childhood Development

- (a) Generally, families in the city have access to high quality and affordable childcare.
- (b) There are integrated early child development programs in the city with appropriately trained and culturally sensitive staff to serve young children with diverse needs in the community (e.g. children with disabilities, immigrant/refugee children).
- (c) Generally, public schools take an active role in helping children and families experience a smooth transition from early childhood programs to the first years of public schooling.
- (d) Early childhood development programs in the city encourage and support parents to create stimulating home environments for their children.

Area of Inquiry: Publicly Funded Education

- (a) Overall, children in the city receive a good quality education from primary school through secondary school.
- (b) In general, students in the local education system get the personal attention and instruction necessary to fully develop their individual talents and abilities.
- (c) Overall, students in the local school system get a well-balanced education in terms of intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and cultural development.
- (d) For local young people, there are a variety of accessible and affordable options for learning and education beyond secondary school (e.g. college or university, skilled trades, occupational training, etc.).

Area of Inquiry: Recreation-Arts-Culture

- (a) Arts, recreation and cultural activities in the city promote social interaction among children, youth, and families from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds.
- (b) In this community, local and senior governments recognize recreation, arts, and culture as an essential public resource for learning and human development.
- (c) Overall, children, youth, and families have access to a wide variety of publicly funded recreational, arts, and cultural programs and activities in this city.
- (d) Children and youth with certain vulnerabilities (e.g. low income, disability, newcomer status) experience few limits or barriers to participation in recreation, arts and cultural activities in this community.

INCLUSION DIMENSION: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Each focus group survey begins:

“Based on your experience or the perspectives of people in the community with whom you are engaged, please circle the response that indicates your degree of agreement/disagreement with each of the following statements:”

Area of Inquiry: Local Governance

- (a) Local residents tend to have a strong belief in the role and value of local democracy as expressed through their City government.
- (b) Community members feel that they have ready access to City Council and its committees for the expression of their views and concerns about municipal issues.
- (c) City Council makes a special effort to engage young people in civic affairs.
- (d) City Council and municipal officials regularly consult with community members in local area meetings.

Area of Inquiry: Public Spaces

- (a) Local schools are “hubs” or centres of community activity and are well connected to and used for many community purposes.
- (b) Youth are welcomed in public spaces throughout the city.
- (c) People in this city have easy, regular, and barrier-free access to a variety of well-maintained public spaces (i.e. libraries, parks, public buildings, sidewalks)
- (d) In most public places throughout the city, people of diverse social and cultural backgrounds interact with each other comfortably

Area of Inquiry: Community Capacities

- (a) Opportunities exist in most neighbourhoods for all residents to volunteer, participate, and contribute to community life.
- (b) Community organizations in this city are generally able to bring together people of diverse social and cultural backgrounds to work together on issues of mutual concern.
- (c) Municipal governments recognize community organizations as essential partners in creating a healthy and inclusive community.
- (d) Community and voluntary organizations are funded in a way that allows them both to provide direct services and to engage community members in social advocacy and civic affairs.

INCLUSION DIMENSION: LIVING CONDITIONS

Each focus group survey begins:

“Based on your experience or the perspectives of people in the community with whom you are engaged, please circle the response that indicates your degree of agreement/disagreement with each of the following statements:”

Area of Inquiry: Income & Employment

- (a) Lone parents on social assistance are generally respected within the community and valued for their social contributions to civic life.
- (b) Children and youth from lower income families are not denied opportunities or experiences in community life because of their economic situation (e.g. participation in recreation activities or school field trips).
- (c) People from ethno-racial minority groups or immigrants have an equal chance for employment for which they are qualified as anybody else in this city.
- (d) Very few people are over-employed and very few are under-employed in this city.

Area of Inquiry: Housing

- (a) Almost everyone in this city can live in affordable and well-maintained housing.
- (b) There are no neighbourhoods in our city where certain groups are excluded from residing or feel unwelcome.
- (c) For people requiring supportive housing, there are options regarding the type and location of their living arrangements.
- (d) There are no demeaning and stigmatizing labels used to identify those parts of the city largely occupied by members of minority ethnic or racial groups.

Area of Inquiry: Community Safety

- (a) All people are able to move freely on city streets, in public places and spaces throughout this city without concern for their personal safety.
- (b) All parts of the city are equally well protected by public health measures (e.g. pollution controls, inspection of commercial and public facilities, pest prevention and control).
- (c) People in this city do not stigmatize particular communities as “high crime” or “dangerous” neighbourhoods to be avoided.
- (d) The police are highly regarded and supported by all segments of the population in the city.

INCLUSION DIMENSION: COMMUNITY SERVICES

Each focus group survey begins:

“Based on your experience or the perspectives of people in the community with whom you are engaged, please circle the response that indicates your degree of agreement/disagreement with each of the following statements:”

Area of Inquiry: Healthcare

- (a) There are good hospitals available in this city for the emergency and acute medical care needs of all individuals and families.
- (b) Individuals and families in the city are able to benefit from a strong network of community health facilities and programs.
- (c) Frail elderly people and people with severe physical and mental disabilities have access to in-home health and social supports as an alternative to institutional placement.
- (d) People with higher incomes in this city do not tend to receive a higher standard of health care.

Area of Inquiry: Crisis Services

- (a) In general, when an individual or family has an emergency or crisis, they know where they can go for immediate help.
- (b) People experiencing physical or emotional abuse have ready access to safe alternative shelter with the appropriate service supports (e.g. women, children and youth, elderly people, people with disabilities, immigrant women, and refugees).
- (c) Anyone in the city without a permanent home can use a public emergency shelter overnight throughout the year.
- (d) Culturally sensitive crisis services are available to people of diverse social and cultural backgrounds.

Area of Inquiry: Transportation & Mobility

- (a) Individuals and families do not have to own a car to get around all parts of this city.
- (b) City buses and other forms of public transit are affordable for all city residents.
- (c) The city provides special transportation assistance to residents with mobility challenges as needed (e.g. people with disabilities, frail elderly).
- (d) This is a pedestrian friendly area, whether walking or in a wheelchair.

APPENDIX E: INCLUSIVE BURLINGTON SURVEY

Being Included...Includes YOU!

**Inclusive Cities Canada
Burlington
Social Inclusiveness Survey**

Information in this survey is kept confidential and your privacy is paramount. Please seal your completed survey in the envelope provided.

Please return by September 3, 2004, if possible.

Social inclusion and exclusion refers to the degree to which people feel a part of the larger community – that is, whether they feel included or excluded in various opportunities around education, work, housing and culture (among other things). Naturally, much of this is a matter of *personal* judgment – and that’s exactly what we’re interested in. We want to know what “being included” means to you!

2-1) So tell us, what does an “inclusive” city mean to you? How can we know if or when our city is truly “inclusive”?

2-2) Do you feel valued and recognized by your community?

Yes No Not sure

Comment?

2-3) Is it important to you to feel a sense of belonging to the larger community?

Yes No Not sure

Comment?

EXPERIENCES OF EXCLUSION

2-4) Have you ever felt left out, or discriminated against, in Burlington based on your:

Age?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Ability?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Visible Minority Status?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Faith?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Citizenship status?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Income level ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Employment Status?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Marital status?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Sexual Orientation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No

2-5) If you answered “yes” to any of the above, please briefly describe the

circumstances when you felt left out, or discriminated against:

2-8) Do you know of other people who may have felt discriminated against or excluded from the community?

Yes No

Comment:

2-9) Do you feel that PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY in Burlington:

Have equal access to opportunities in schools?
(such as field trips, extracurricular activities, etc.) Yes No

Have equal access to recreation and cultural opportunities? Yes No

Have equal access to health care? Yes No

Have equal access to services such as home care and help for those with disabilities or special needs? Yes No

Have equal opportunities to participate in local decision-making? Yes No

Have access to adequate and affordable housing? Yes No

Are able to move around the city easily? Yes No

Are respected and valued for their contributions to civic life? Yes No

Do you have any further comments?

2-10) BASED ON YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES or those of people you know: Are there any programs or services which are helpful to people living in poverty, to support themselves and their families with a sense of security? (please specify):

What problems, gaps in services, etc. still need to be addressed so that those living in poverty can support themselves and their families with a sense of security, and be full participants in the life of this city?

2-11) Do you feel that IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES in Burlington:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Have equal access to opportunities in schools?
(such as field trips, extracurricular activities, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have equal access to recreation and cultural opportunities? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have equal access to health care? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have equal access to services such as home care and help for those with disabilities or special needs? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have equal opportunities to participate in local decision-making? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have access to adequate and affordable housing? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have equal access to employment for which they are qualified? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have sufficient access to programs and services which help them to adapt to living in Canada? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have sufficient access to English language training? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have sufficient access to other skills training? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have sufficient affordable transportation and absence of barriers to be able to move around the city easily? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are respected and valued for their contributions to civic life? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Do you have any further comments?

2-12) BASED ON YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES or those of people you know:

Are there any programs or services which are helpful to immigrants and refugees to enable them to fully participate in the life of the city, and have full and equal access to services? (please specify):

What problems, gaps in services, etc. still need to be addressed so that immigrants and refugees are able to fully participate in the life of the city, and have full and equal access to services?

2-13) Do you feel that YOUTH AGED 15-24 in Burlington:

- Are welcomed and treated as if they belong everywhere throughout the city (e.g. at malls, in public spaces, by adults, by police)? Yes No
- Have sufficient access to recreation opportunities? Yes No
- Are encouraged to participate in local decision-making? Yes No
- Have sufficient transportation and absence of barriers to be able to move around the city easily? Yes No
- Are respected and valued for their contributions to civic life? Yes No

Do you have any further comments?

2-14) BASED ON YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES or those of people you know:

Are there any programs or services which are helpful to young people with regard to any of the questions above? (please specify):

What problems, gaps in services, etc. still need to be addressed for young people with regard to the questions above?

2-15) Do you feel that SENIORS in Burlington:

- Have equal access to recreation and cultural opportunities? Yes No
- Have equal access to health care? Yes No
- Have equal access to services such as home care and help for those with disabilities or special needs? Yes No
- Have equal opportunities to participate in local decision-making? Yes No
- Have access to adequate and affordable housing? Yes No

Have sufficient affordable transportation and absence

of barriers to be able to move around the city easily?

Yes No

Do you have any further comments?

2-16) BASED ON YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES or those of people you know:

Are there any programs or services which are helpful to seniors with regard to the questions above? (please specify):

What problems, gaps in services, etc. still need to be addressed for seniors with regard to the questions above?

2-17) Do you feel that PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES in Burlington:

Have equal access to opportunities in schools?
as field trips, extracurricular activities, etc.) Yes No (such

Have equal access to recreation and cultural opportunities? Yes No

Have equal access to health care? Yes No

Have equal access to services such as home care and
help for those with disabilities or special needs? Yes No

Have equal opportunities to participate in local
decision-making? Yes No

Have access to adequate and affordable housing? Yes No

Have sufficient affordable transportation and absence
of barriers to be able to move around the city easily? Yes No

Do you have any further comments?

2-18) BASED ON YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES or those of people you know:

Are there any programs or services which are helpful to people living with disabilities with regard to the questions above? (please specify):

What problems, gaps in services, etc. still need to be addressed for those living with disabilities with regard to the questions above?

2-19) Do people of all ages, income levels and cultural backgrounds have opportunities to come together in public spaces? Yes No

Do you have any further comments?

Are any specific programs or services particularly useful, or are there problems which need to be addressed, with regard to the question above?

2-20) Are people of all ages, income levels and cultural backgrounds made welcome in all parts of the city? Yes No

Do you have any further comments?

Are any specific programs or services particularly useful, or are there problems which need to be addressed with regard to the question above?

2-21) Are people of all ages, incomes and cultural backgrounds actively encouraged to be active in civic life, and local decision-making? Yes No

Do you have any further comments?

Are any specific programs or services particularly useful, or are there problems which need to be addressed with regard to the question above?

To conclude this survey, please tell us a little about yourself

1-1) What is your GENDER?

Female Male Trans

1-2) What is your AGE?

Under 18 18-24 25-34 35-44
 45-54 55-64 65-74 75 & over

1-3) What is your MARITAL STATUS?

Single Married Divorced Common-law

1-4) How many people are part of your HOUSEHOLD?

1 2 3 4 5 6 or more

(1-5) Do you have any CHILDREN?

Yes No If YES, how many? _____

For the purposes of this survey, a person with a disability is defined as someone who:
Has a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric or learning impairment.

1-6) Do you consider yourself to be a person with a DISABILITY?

Yes No

If you answered YES, please tell us what type(s) of disability _____

For the purposes of this survey, visible minority persons are: *“persons who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour, or followers of a minority faith identifiable by dress or physical appearance. Members of visible minorities may, for example, be persons of Canadian aboriginal, African, Asian, Arab or Latin ancestry”*

1-7) Do you identify yourself as a member of a VISIBLE MINORITY?

If YES, which one(s) ? _____

1-8) RESIDENT STATUS – Are you a

Canadian citizen Landed Immigrant Refugee

1-9) How long have you lived in Canada? _____ years

1-10) Do you belong to a **FAITH** which is a minority in Canada? YesNo
If yes, to which faith do you belong? _____

1-11) Is your faith visible by your attire or other aspect of appearance? Yes No

1-12) **SEXUAL ORIENTATION** – Do you identify yourself as any of the following: gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered?
Yes No

1-13) **EDUCATION**: What is the highest year or grade of school completed?

- Elementary school Some high school High school diploma
 College University

1-14) What is your present **EMPLOYMENT STATUS**?

- Full-time
 Part-time, but would like full-time work
 Part-time by choice
 Unemployed (but able to work)
 Unable to work due to disability
 Unable to work due to citizenship status
 Not employed by choice (eg voluntary stay-at-home parent)
 Retired

1-15) **HOUSEHOLD INCOME** refers to the combined *gross* income in 2003 of all members of your household (before taxes). What is your **annual household income**?

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> less than \$ 10,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$0,000-\$19,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000-\$29,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30,000-\$39,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000-\$49,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000-\$59,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$60,000-\$69,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$70,000-\$79,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$80,000-\$99,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 or more | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know | |

1-16) Do you **VOLUNTEER**? Yes No

If YES, how many hours a month do you volunteer? _____