Oakville

An Audit of a Community in Transition

Commissioned by the United Way of Oakville

Prepared by the Halton Social Planning Council and Volunteer Centre

1998

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Acknowledgements

The United Way of Oakville and the Halton Social Planning Council and Volunteer Centre would like to thank the individuals, groups and agencies that have so generously set aside time to participate in this study, *Oakville: An Audit of a Community in Transition*. We know that it is a busy, if not overwhelming period, facing those of us working in the not-for-profit sector. Our challenges are many. Our time to reflect on past, present and future trends and the overall needs of our community is negligible; however, we are convinced that as we forge a consensus on the issues and transitions facing our community, we will provide not only better and more useful assistance and service to its members but also generate the conditions essential for building and sustaining a healthy community.

We would particularly like to thank the members of the study Advisory Committee who, at a number of meetings, shared their knowledge and insights with us in order to contribute to making this study, *Oakville: An Audit of a Community in Transition*, as effective and useful as possible. We are grateful for their support. The participants in the Advisory Committee are:

Michael Cushing	Board of Directors, Halton Social Planning Council
Terry Delmore	Epidemiologist, Health Department, Regional Municipality of Halton
Bonnie Ewart*	Commissioner of Social and Community Services, Regional Municipality of Halton
Jeff Fernback	Labour Market Analyst, Human Resources Development Canada
Ellis Katsof*	Director of Planning and Evaluation, Division of Social and Community Services Department, Regional Municipality of Halton
Tim Kluke	Vice President, Charitable Corporation, Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital
John Meyerstein*	General Manager, Town of Oakville
Karen Ogle	Applications Specialist, Planning Department, Regional Municipality of Halton
Linda Rothney*	Executive Director, Halton District Health Council
Mary Anne Smith	Economic Development Officer, Town of Oakville
Lynne Simons	Human Services Planner, Social and Community Services Department, Regional Municipality of Halton

* These individuals resigned from their positions during the study. Mr. Ellis Katsof continues on the Advisory Committee as a Board member of the United Way.

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1. INTRODUCTION

We are living in times of great change. More and more is being asked of not-for-profit organizations providing human services, while the stable funding base of those same agencies dwindles year after year. New social issues and community needs continue to emerge, calling for a response. What are they? What are their root causes? How and where should they be addressed?

Oakville: An Audit of a Community in Transition is an effort to understand and respond to this situation, based not only on the ideas, concerns, questions, thoughts and experiences of individuals who live in Oakville and of organizations that serve its residents but also on recently released Census information in three areas:

- demographic characteristics
- household and family characteristics
- socio-economic characteristics

In addition, census information is displayed in a series of "equity" maps that illustrate spatially selected characteristics of the population.

This community audit grew out of conversations between the United Way of Oakville and the Halton Social Planning Council and Volunteer Centre. Each organization must understand the many changes occurring in Oakville and the meaning of those changes in order to adequately and appropriately make decisions about planning and programs.

Purpose

The audit explores with the community of Oakville their understanding of present community issues, problems and concerns, and how these are now manifest and, most important, how these issues will change or be displaced by new, emerging concerns over the next five to ten years. It explores their vision for their community's future. Furthermore, statistical information from Census data complements and portrays through time change in Oakville.

The identification of these issues, problems and concerns, by their nature evolving, dynamic and changing, contributes to the definition of social issues that need further consideration and the allocation of resources, human and financial. This process of identification is a necessary part of developing proactive strategies that will promote the healthy and sustainable development of Oakville.

The research identifies human service successes[1], a growing consensus of concern about our system of supports, perceptions of unmet needs, service gaps, and issues associated with benchmarks or standards of care essential to a healthy community. The outcome of this audit will be a series of recommendations that can inform the allocation decisions of the United Way and support the refocusing of present program energies in the not-for-profit sector.

Methodology

The research protocol employed in this study includes a number of research activities. The protocol served as the basis of the Council's understanding with the United Way of Oakville and as a guide to the Research Advisory Committee convened by the United Way. The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to offer suggestions that will improve and enrich all aspects of the research.

The research protocol establishes a multiple methods approach to data collection. It is comprised of seven means of gathering data: (i) analysis of statistical data from the Census, (ii) secondary sources, (iii) key informant interviews, (iv) structured interviews with agencies funded by the United Way of Oakville, (v) a questionnaire to community organizations in Oakville, (vi) a questionnaire to selected businesses participating in the United Way campaign, and (vii) a questionnaire to a random sample of residents of Oakville.

Constructing the Audit: What We Did

Secondary source materials describing Oakville and its changing social environment were reviewed to develop an understanding of past and present issues. This information often formed

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[1] Human services is the terminology used to include both health services and social services.

the basis of questions that shaped discussions with study participants. It also provided a perspective on areas covered and not covered in previous studies. Our desire was not to duplicate them, rather identify any consensus that might exist on the issues, their causes, and possible action strategies that might be implemented to resolve such concerns.

Statistical Data from the Census

Statistical data from the 1996 Census and, where appropriate, from previous censuses are used to create a demographic and socio-economic profile of Oakville. The implications of changes in variables comprising the profile are discussed. The 1996 Census data was compiled using Zephyr, a data product from Compusearch. This program allows for Census data to be investigated at various levels of geography and includes the ability to map variables for further comparison. The standard Census data set produced by Statistics Canada is used for this profile. More specific data requires special requests at additional costs.

Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews are an important aspect of a comprehensive overview of Oakville. We selected for key informant interviews, individuals who, from their vantage point, could contribute important information. We involved individuals from different sectors whose situation placed them in a position of 'insight' regarding Oakville. Ten individuals were interviewed.[2] An interview schedule was prepared to guide the conversation.[3]

The following individuals generously took time from their busy schedules to share their knowledge and perceptions about Oakville with us:

- Mr. Nelson Cusitar, President, Oakville Chamber of Commerce

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[2] This form of interview is called non-standardized. It incorporates the following elements: "1. Stressing the interviewee's definition of the situation; 2. Encouraging the interviewee to structure the account of the situation; 3. Letting the interviewee introduce to a considerable extent his notions of what he regards as relevant, instead of relying upon the investigator's notions of relevance." (Malcomb Spector (1980, p.102) cites Dexter (1970, no reference given).

[3] The interview schedule covered topics similar to those in the questionnaire designed for United Way-funded agencies. Ms. Lindsay Williams of the United Way of Oakville conducted all key informant interviews.

- Mr. Peter J. Campbell, Chief of Police, Halton Regional Police Service
- Ms. Bonnie Ewart, Commissioner of Social and Community Services, Regional Municipality of Halton
- Mr. Harry Henderson, Town Manager, Town of Oakville
- Dr. Bob Nosal, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Regional Municipality of Halton
- Mr. John Oliver, CEO and President, Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital
- Mr. Dusty Papke, Director of Education, Halton District School Board
- Ms. Francine Perinot, Director, Oakville Galleries
- Mr. Peter Wagland, Deputy Town Manager, Community Services, Town of Oakville;
- Mr. Fred Sweeney, Director of Education, Halton Catholic District School Board.

Interviews with United Way-Funded Agencies

Representatives of twenty-six of the twenty-eight Oakville United Way-funded agencies were interviewed by a member of the research team.[4] Interviews were conducted on-site in the agency. Most often, the Executive Director was the individual interviewed. The interviews were lengthy: one and one-half to two hours of free-flowing discussion guided by the interview schedule (See Appendix I for interview schedule of United Way-funded agencies). It explores:

> the perceptions and insights of community actors regarding their understanding of present community issues, problems and concerns and how these are manifest and, most important, how these issues will change or be displaced by new emerging concerns over the next five to ten years. (Research Protocol, 1997).

Interview data was organized and transcribed for analysis.

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[4] The research team conducting interviews was comprised of Halton Social Planning Council staff: Lynne Calderbank, Joey Edwardh, Ted Hildebrandt and Deborah Klassen.

Questionnaire to Community Organizations[5]

In order to assess the thoughts, experience, and perceptions of organizations in the community outside the funding umbrella of the United Way, a questionnaire based on the interview schedule for United Way-funded agencies was designed (See Appendix II for questionnaire). The questionnaire was mailed to 250 organizations along with a self-addressed, stamped, return envelope. A letter of introduction to the study accompanied this mailing. Approximately one month after the first mailing, a reminder letter was sent to those who had not returned the questionnaire. Thirty-nine organizations returned the questionnaire. For analytical purposes, all qualitative questionnaire data was organized into word processing files, while quantitative data was coded and entered into SPSS (Statistical Package of the Social Sciences), which is a computer program used to analyze information.

We remain perplexed as to why so few community organizations outside the United Way family did not return the questionnaire. Based on communications from these groups to our office, we speculate that many did not participate for the following reasons: i) workloads for staff and volunteers simply can not be extended further to include yet another piece of paperwork such as a questionnaire, ii) that the effort to be expended would be greater than the return, iii) the group did not feel they had appropriate information to contribute, iv) the questionnaire was too long and thought to be too time consuming, or v) the organization did not relate to the issues.

Questionnaire to Oakville Businesses, Campaign Contributors

Although not part of the initial research protocol, the Board of the United Way felt that a short questionnaire should be designed to collect information from selected businesses that participate in the United Way campaign, as their thoughts and perceptions are an important component of a complete picture of the community. The instrument was mailed to 67 businesses associated with the United Way. One questionnaire was returned. This data is not included in this report.

In retrospect, we recognize that research in any setting needs an entry that must be negotiated and that fits with the culture and practices of that group. Time was not allocated for this activity

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[5]The term "community organizations" is used to describe an array of community-based organizations including service clubs, self-support groups, churches and not-for-profit agencies.

with the Oakville business community. We realize that not only would a process of negotiated entrance to the business community be required in order to secure their participation, but that one-on-one interviews and/or focus groups would fit better with the business culture, especially when exploring the intersection of social and economic issues.

Questionnaire to Oakville Residents

A short questionnaire was designed for individual community residents to explore their perception of Oakville and assess whether they perceived the issues – past and present – in a similar manner as the key informants and the agencies and organizations of civil society[6] (See Appendix III). The questionnaire was sent to 500 residents randomly selected from a list of residents residing in each of Oakville's five forward sortation areas (FSA).[7] We believed that this area-based distribution would guarantee that the questionnaire went to distinct socio-economic areas, as grossly captured by FSAs. While the response of the residents was anonymous, the questionnaires were colour coded by FSA. Enclosed with the questionnaire was a letter explaining the purpose of the study and a self-addressed, stamped, return envelope. A reminder letter encouraging participation in the study was sent to all residents who had not returned the questionnaire within a month. Forty-five Oakville residents returned the questionnaire. For analytical purposes, all qualitative questionnaire data was organized into word processing files, while quantitative data was coded and entered into SPSS.

Anonymity of Respondents

The research protocol guarantees anonymity to all respondents. Their comments and observations are not identified in this report.

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[6] Several authors describe society as comprising three sectors – the market, the state and civil society. Each of these sectors has a distinct composition, function, power, media of exchange, and methods of acquiring resources. Civil Society is the sector where people 'live' as citizens, family members, workers, and members of communities. Cohen and Arato, in *Civil Society and Political Theory* (1992), state civil society is: "The sphere of social interaction between the economy and the state, comprised of the intimate sphere (especially the family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary), social movements and forms of public communication."

[7] In actuality, the total questionnaire sample was 463. Thirty-seven questionnaires were "returned to sender."

2. THE CHANGING FACE OF OAKVILLE: PAST PERCEPTIONS TO PRESENT REALITIES TO FUTURE THOUGHTS

This section develops a demographic and socio-economic profile of Oakville using quantitative information based on Census data from Statistics Canada. This demonstrates changes in Oakville over time. Where appropriate, projections related to demographic trends are presented and analyzed. It also explores complementary qualitative information based on the study participants' responses to questions in the interviews and surveys that focused on their current perceptions of the Town of Oakville and changes over the past two decades. Both the quantitative and qualitative information are presented in an integrated fashion, as each complements the other and together provide a more complete analysis.

Recent technologies allow the mapping of census variables to facilitate social area analysis that contributes to United Way or agency decision-making and program development. The mapping of selected variables allows us to overlay a series of maps that illustrate social phenomena in geographical space. Examples of maps that illustrate pockets of potential vulnerability can be found in Appendix IV.

Population Growth

Census data indicates that Oakville has experienced some of its most significant growth over the ten-year period of 1986 to 1996. As Figure 1 illustrates, the population increased from 87,107 in 1986 to 128,405 in 1996. This is an increase of 47.4%.

Figure 1 - Oakville Population, 1986-1996

**Oakville Population
1986 - 1996**

87,107   114,670   128,405

Legend: 1986, 1991, 1996

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data.
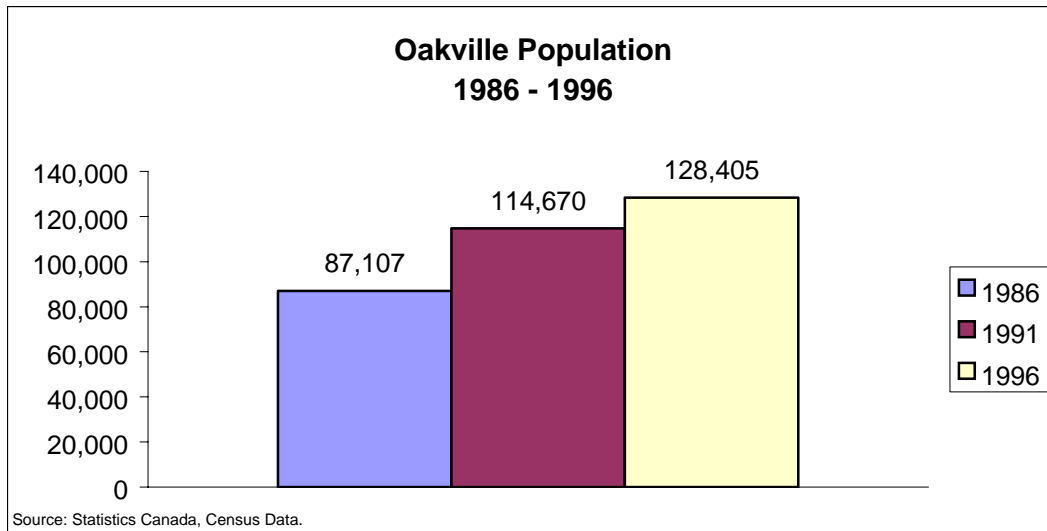
Figure 2 shows Oakville's share of the total Halton population increased from 32.1% in 1986 to 37.8% in 1996. Its share of Halton's population has increased in this ten-year period while that of the other three municipalities has decreased over the same time.

Figure 2 - Population Distribution, Halton Region

**Population Distribution
Halton Region, 1986-1996**

Halton Hills 12.5%
Milton 9.4%
Oakville 37.8%
Burlington 40.3%

11.8% 13.1% 10.2% 11.8% 36.6% 32.1% 43.0% 41.4%

Legend: 1986, 1991, 1996

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data.
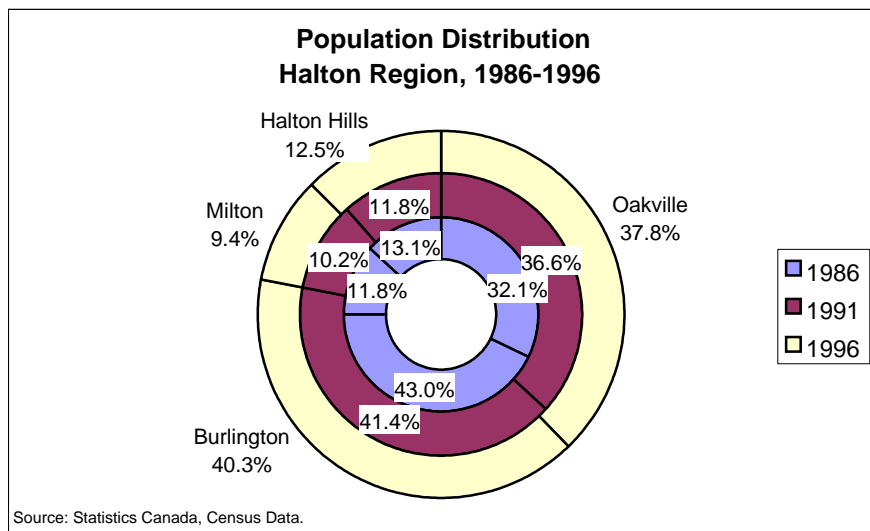
As Figure 3 indicates, Oakville is expected to have a growth rate of 67.4% from 1996 to 2016. For example, by the year 2005, the population is estimated to be 162,100; by the year 2010, it is

estimated to be 188,500. The growth rate is expected to peak in 2008 with 6,000 new residents that year. The reason for the expected increase in Oakville's population is the construction and settlement of new urban areas.

Figure 3 - Oakville Population Prediction
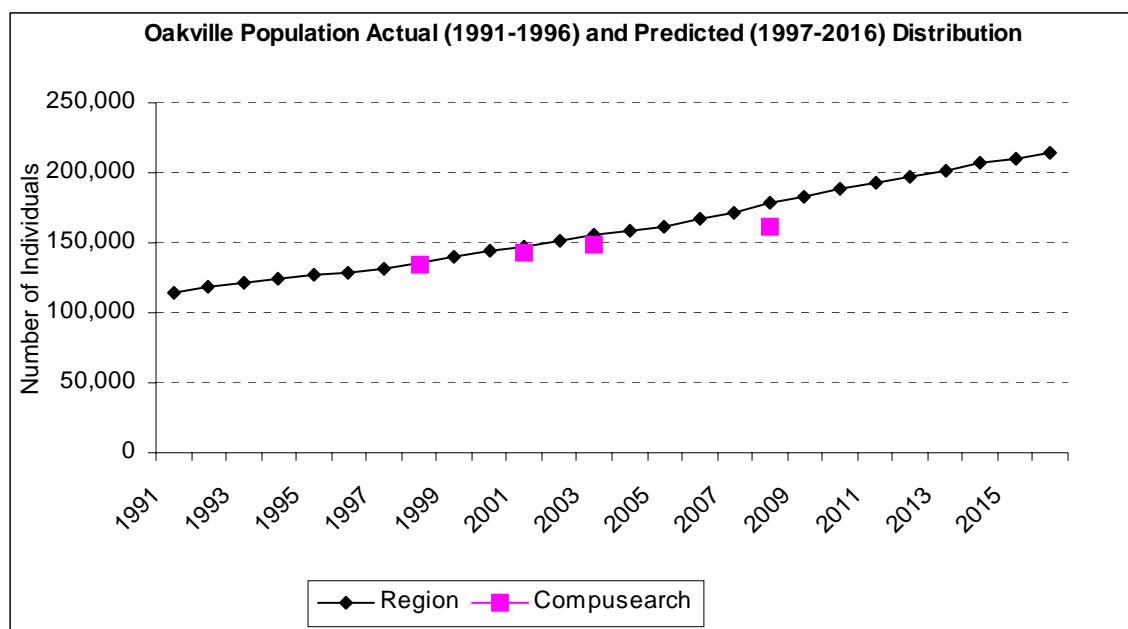
Projections are just that, best estimates taking into account a number of factors. For this reason, Figure 3 illustrates two different projections based on somewhat different assumptions. The Compusearch (a respected micro-marketing firm) information suggests Oakville will grow slower than the projections of the Regional Municipality of Halton. In either case, the demographic growth places enormous stress on the existing human service system. Projected growth will increase the need for all services in Oakville.

Age and Gender

Figure 4 illustrates the age and gender structure of Oakville in 1996. It shows that the "baby boomer" bulge is in the 30 to 54 age range. This large age group will continue to move up, meaning a growing older population. This figure suggests that the role of seniors along with their diverse needs represent a challenge to the Oakville community.

Figure 4 - Population by Age and Gender
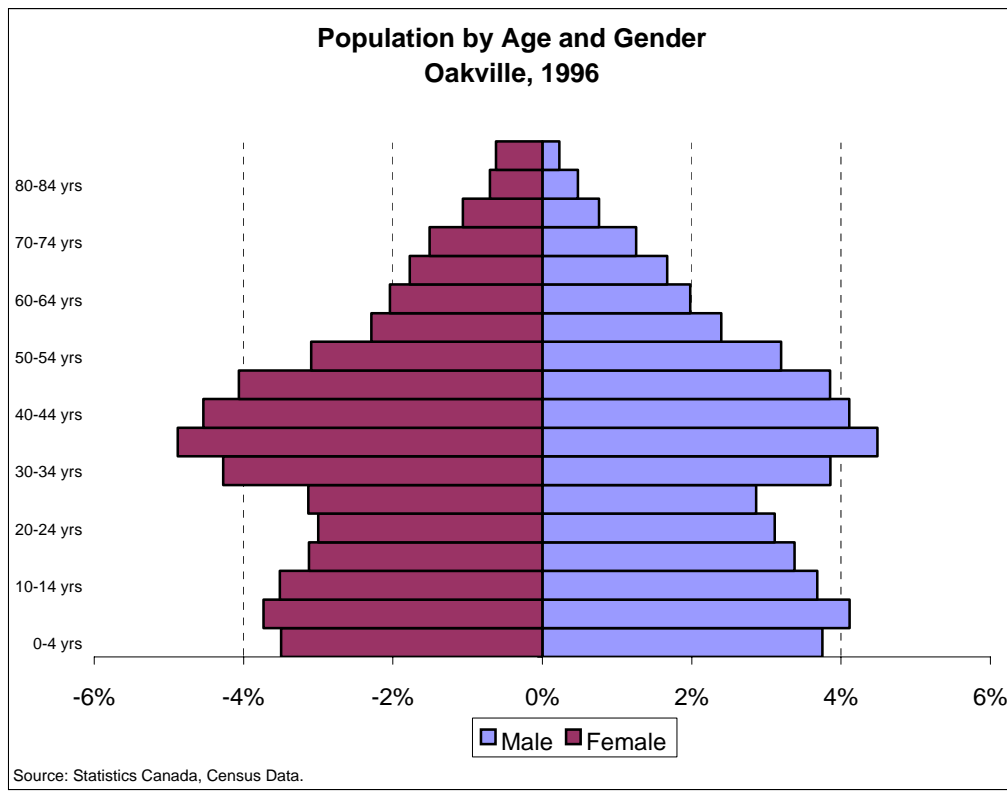
Figure 5 - Population by Age
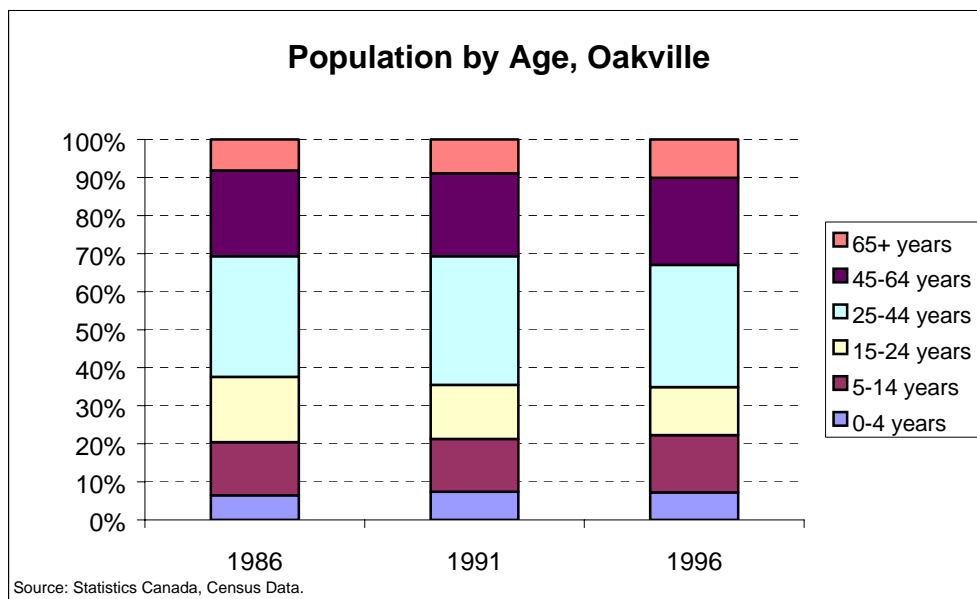
Figure 5 shows the age distribution between 1986 and 1996. The 65+ age group has increased from 8% of the population (7,130) in 1986 to 10% of the population (12,915) in 1996. The 15-24 age group, while increasing in absolute numbers from 14,945 to 16,190, decreased as a percentage of the total population from 17% in 1986 to 13% in 1996. The 0-4 age group changed slightly in its percentage share of the population in the ten-year period (6.5% to 7.2%), but increased by 64% in size (5,665 to 9,305). The 5-14 age group increased from 12,175 to 19,315 in the 1986-1996 period, a 59% increase. This age group constitutes 15% of Oakville's population in 1996.

Growth in the senior population will place increased pressure on long-term care, housing and transportation services designed to support independent living in the community. The increasing number of people in the older age groups will place increased demands on supportive living programs and institutional care. With a growing and aging population and continued emphasis on integrating people in the community, the demand for in home services will continue to grow in the coming years.

The higher proportion of females to males in the 65 and over age group places increased demand for human services sensitive to the needs and circumstances of older women. Furthermore, many of these women will be widows, a situation often leading to an increased demand for social supports, appropriate and affordable housing and activities associated with social integration.

Oakville's population 0-19 will continue to place increased demand for existing and new family services, schools, childcare facilities, parks, recreational facilities, health care and child mental health services.

Oakville's population aged 20 to 39 requires sufficient employment opportunities, housing, childcare and family services. Oakville's population 40 to 59 requires opportunities for retraining and employment upgrading to meet the demands of the workplace and to facilitate the continued economic and social integration of these residents.

Families

Figure 6 - Oakville Families with Children
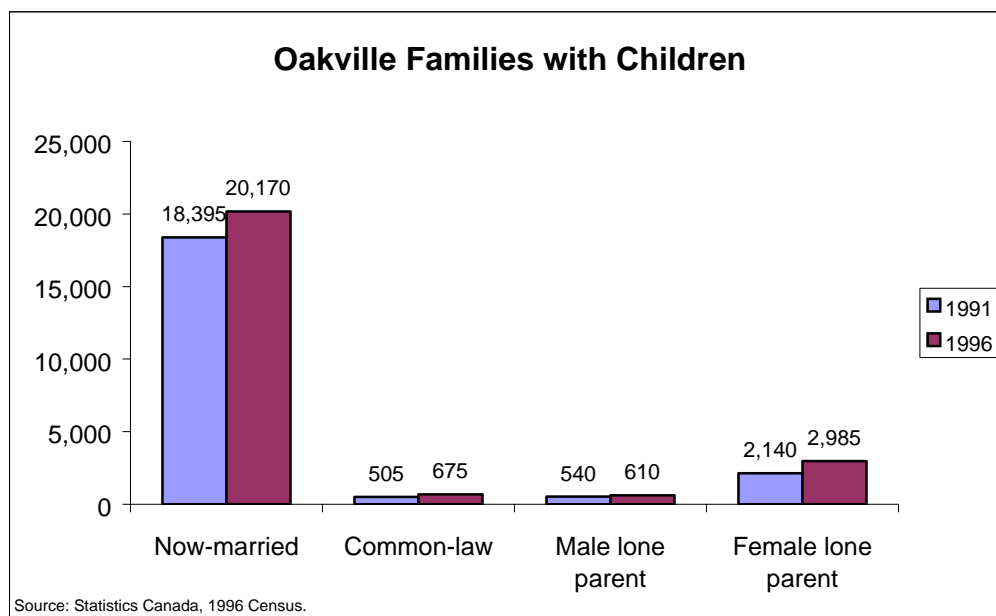
Figure 6 illustrates family structure for those families with children. The largest increase was in female lone-parent families. They increased in size by 40% between 1991 and 1996, constituting 12% of all families with children in 1996, an increase of 2% from 1991. Although there was a 10% increase in the number of now-married families with children, this category dropped 2% as a proportion of families with children. There was a 34% increase in common-law families and a 13% increase for male lone-parent families, although their proportions of all families with children remained virtually unchanged.

Lone parent families will continue to need affordable housing, childcare, training and support programs to address the economic difficulties and stress they face. This growing group represents an added demand on services to address the impact on people, particularly woman, who face family dislocation.

There will be continued need for childcare and programs designed to provide support to parents and families as the population increases. The growth of intergenerational programs to link people

of different ages for support and mutual benefit provide early intervention techniques to delay or reduce the need for more intrusive intervention.

While census data documents population growth and demographic change, it is also a topic mentioned by practically all respondents in the study. Oakville has grown dramatically over the past decade, in particular as a commuter community for Toronto. Most respondents are concerned with what they perceive as Oakville's high growth rates. They use words such as "booming", "explosive", "significant" and "rapid" to describe it. In addition to growth, high mobility is influencing life in Oakville.

One key informant comments, "There is a fairly high turnover of population. People do not develop deep roots and there isn't a corresponding commitment to or time for the community." A respondent from a funded agency says: "I don't know where the town centre is anymore. Oakville is mushrooming - too big and too fast. The town is not as connected for people because there are multiple centres in Oakville". Another states: "Oakville is a large, fast growing community, especially with the residential development in the north. This is one of its biggest challenges." "Rapid development will place greater strains on a good quality of community life" points out one community organization respondent. Figure 7 shows the response to the question about satisfaction with the pace of growth in Oakville today. It indicates that half of the respondents are satisfied with the pace of growth today. However, about one-third of the respondents are not satisfied with the pace of growth today and that 11% to 26% are not sure.

Figure 7 - Pace of Growth Today
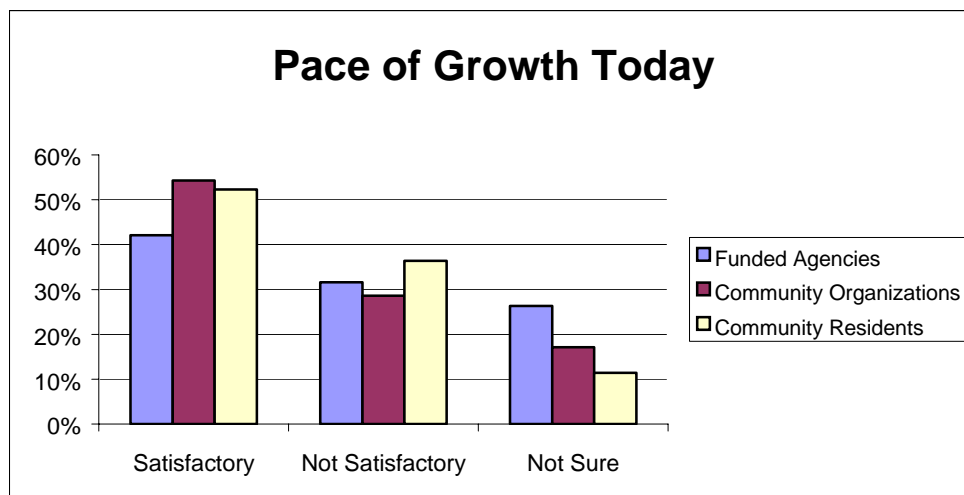
Respondents were asked what impact this rapid population growth would have on all aspects of the community. One respondent from a community organization believes that "population growth is ahead of the service growth which is needed to meet the needs of this community." Another community organization respondent assesses the impact this way: "Less sense of community. Much faster pace of life." Other respondents mention that Oakville is losing its town flavour, as it becomes a bedroom community for Toronto.

Increased service demand will include services currently funded through local funding mechanisms as well as increased demand for volunteers, transportation, housing, education and health services.

Multicultural Population

Figure 8 shows those in Oakville who indicate a single ethnic origin in the census. While English is the highest single ethnic origin indicated, it drops in numbers by 32%. While Canadian is the second largest ethnic group, it is a relatively new category employed in the Census and may account for the drop in the English, Scottish and Irish categories. Other groups that show increases are Chinese (+29%), Polish (+28%), Italian (+23%), East Indian (+11%) and Portuguese (+5%).

Figure 8 - Ethnic Origin, Oakville

**Ethnic Origin Single Responses
Top Ten, Oakville**

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data.
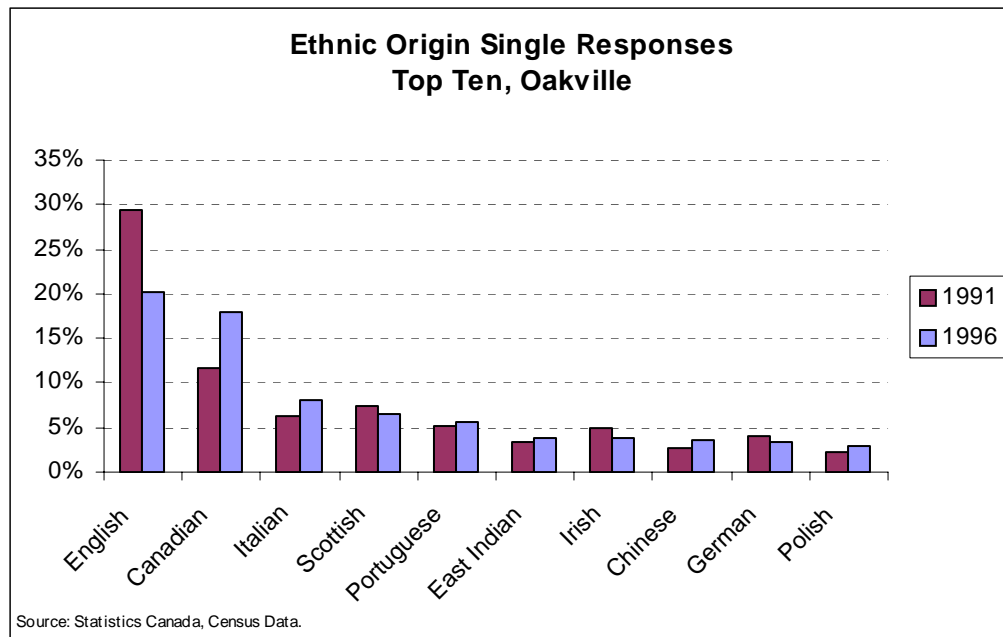
Figure 9 indicates the visible minority[8] population in Oakville for 1996. This was the first year that a specific question has been asked on the census relating to visible minorities. It shows that the highest visible minority population is South Asian, Chinese and Black.

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[8] Refers to the population group to which the respondent belongs. This question provides information about the visible minority population in Canada which is required for programs under the *Employment Equity Act* (1986). According to this Act, visible minorities are persons (other than Aboriginal persons), who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour. (*1996 Census Dictionary*, Statistics Canada.)

Figure 9 - Visible Minorities

Visible Minorities, 1996

(bar chart with values on y-axis from - to 5,000 in increments of 500; categories: Black, S Asian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, SE Asian, Filipino, Arab/W, Latin American)

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census.
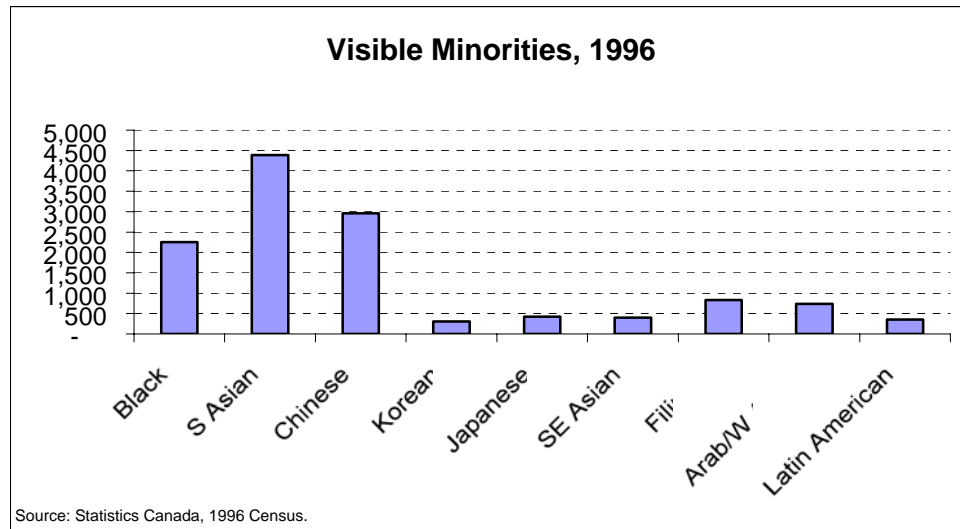
Figure 10 shows the top ten non-official languages in Oakville. Knowledge of language indicates a person's knowledge of the particular language, mother tongue indicates the language first learned by an individual and home language indicates the language most often spoken in the home. This last indicator (home language) is probably most accurate in describing languages used on a daily basis by persons. In 1996, the non-official language spoken most often in the home is Portuguese by 1,635 persons, followed by Chinese with 1,290 persons and Italian with 1,120 persons.

Figure 10 - Knowledge of Non-Official Languages

Knowledge of Non-Official Languages
Oakville, 1996

(bar chart; y-axis "Percentage of total population" from 0.0% to 4.0%; categories: Chinese, Croatian, Dutch, German, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Spanish, Ukrainian; legend: Knowledge of language, Mother tongue, Home language)

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census.
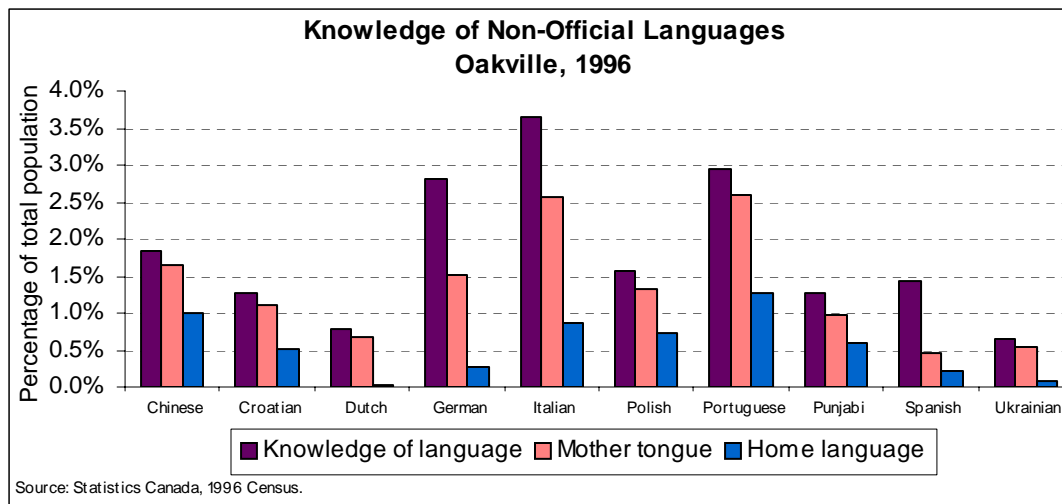
Figure 11 - Knowledge of Neither English nor French

Knowledge of Neither English nor French
Oakville

	1991	1996
	1,350	1,215

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data.
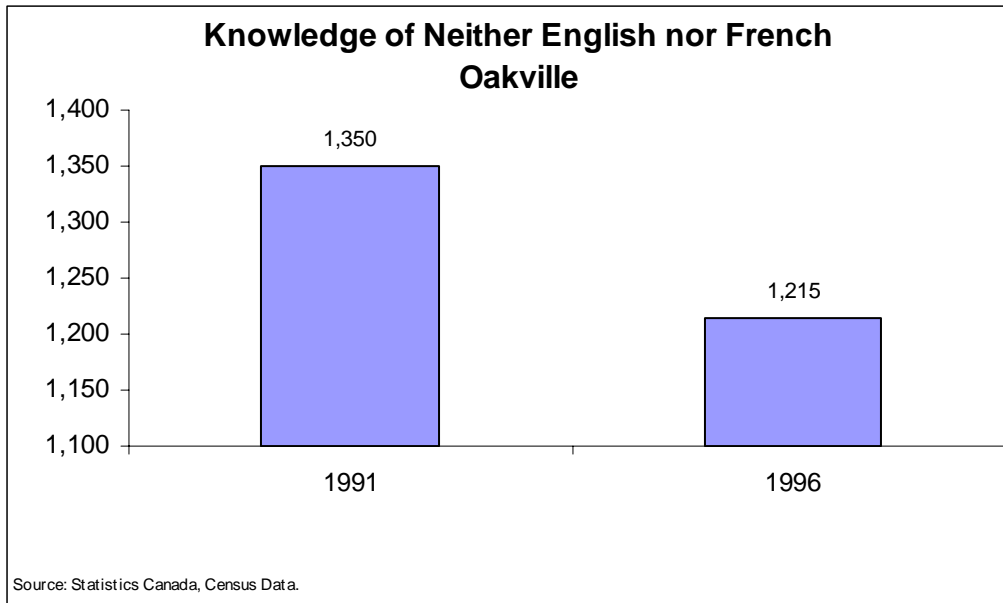
Figure 11 illustrates the number of persons in Oakville that do not have knowledge of either of Canada's official languages. This number has dropped between 1991 and 1996, an approximate 10% decrease.

Figure 12 - Period of Immigration

Period of Immigration
Oakville

Percentage of all immigrants

Before 1961	1961-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-1996

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data.
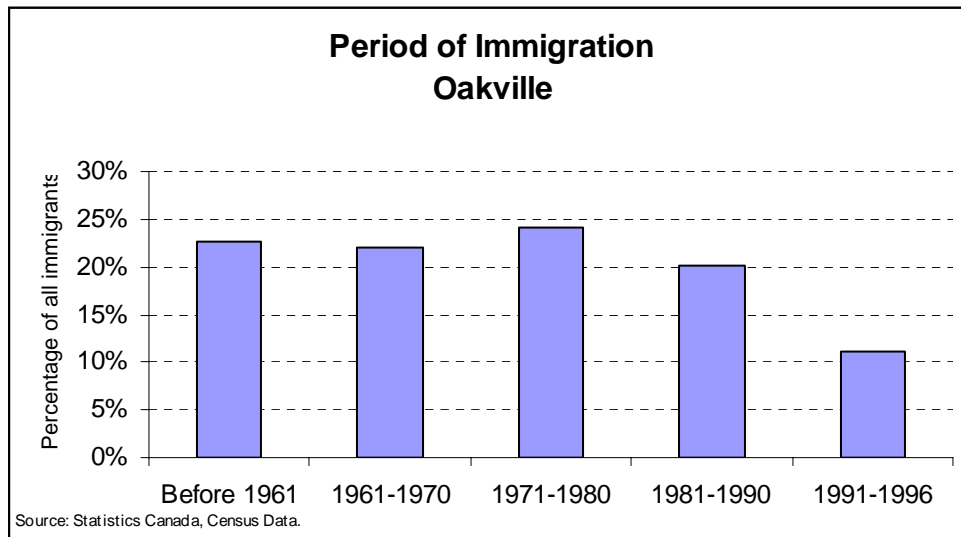
The number of immigrants in Oakville is 35,630. This is the total number of immigrants that reside in Oakville, regardless of how long they have been in Canada. Figure 12 indicates that 11% of immigrants in Oakville arrived between 1991 and 1996, with an additional 20% arriving between 1981-1990. This is a total of 11,160 immigrants between 1981 and 1996.

Figure 13 - Immigrants Place of Birth
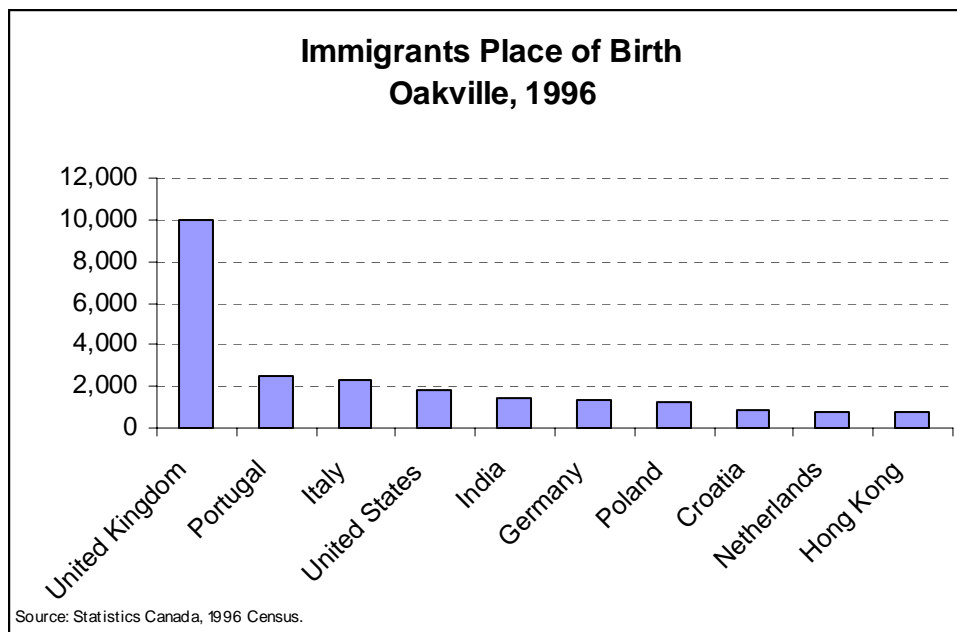
The country generating the highest number of immigrants is the United Kingdom. Figure 13 also shows immigrants received from Portugal, Italy, the United States and India represent the top five countries.

Study participants anticipate that with the growth in population has come greater ethnic diversity, which poses another challenge to the existing service infrastructure. One key informant states: "In terms of ethnicity, the numbers in Halton pale in comparison to Peel, but it is growing and will become more significant." A funded agency respondent says, "there is a larger ethnic population and a more diverse community" and another comments: "There is a changing ethnic mix. The multi-ethnic community has brought tensions. The changes also raise issues of service delivery."

Figure 14 shows the response to the question about the level of satisfaction with multicultural services today. As indicated in Figure 14, the level of satisfaction falls below 50% and a large percentage, ranging from 21% to 68%, are not sure about the quality, extent and accessibility of multicultural services provided in Oakville.

Figure 14 - Multicultural Services Today
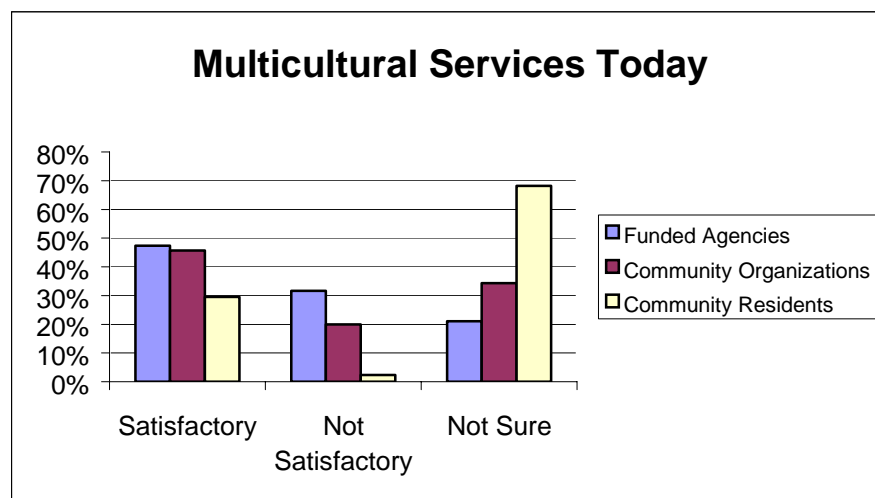
Changes in the ethno-racial mix and the development of new ethno-racial communities will attract more people from different cultures. This will have an impact on the need for settlement services, language services, such as English as a second language, cultural translation capacities in agencies and in cultural sensitivity training for service deliverers.

Professional and human service workers need to be sensitive to precepts of other cultures such as behaviour and practices, holidays, ceremonies and food. Human service and health planners need to understand ways in which people of other cultures use or do not use more traditional or 'mainstream' services.

Housing

Figure 15 - Percentage of Tenants/Owners with Shelter Costs more than 30% of Household Income
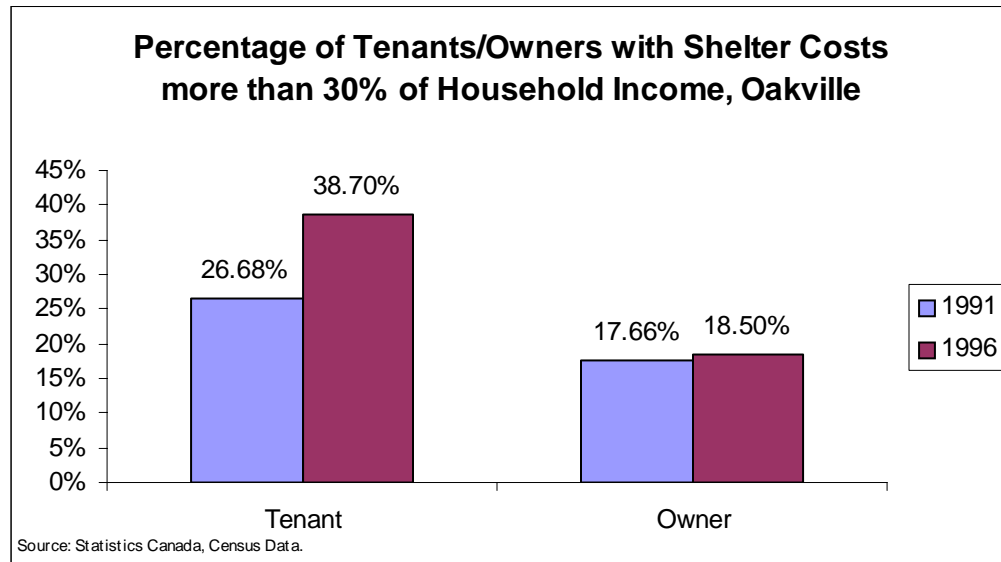
Figure 15 indicates the number of households, whether tenant or owner, where the residents are paying more than 30% of their household income on shelter costs. This is the affordability threshold as prescribed by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. As indicated by the census data, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of tenants paying more than 30% of their income on shelter costs. This implies that other basic necessities to be purchased will be satisfied with difficulty, if at all.

Complementing this housing information flowing from census is the perception of study participants that the supply of affordable housing is inadequate. Figure 16 indicates the level of respondent dissatisfaction with the current cost of housing in Oakville.

Figure 16 - Housing Costs Today

Housing Costs Today
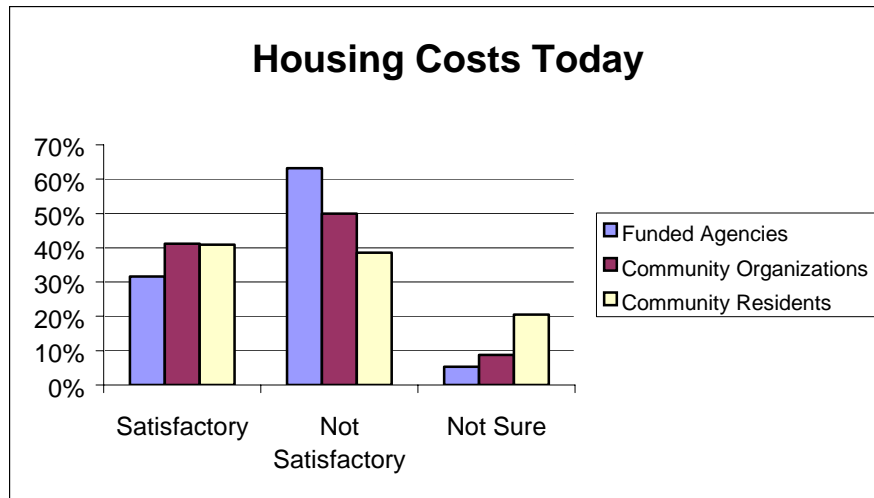
Shelter costs have a major impact on living costs in Oakville. The need for affordable rental and ownership housing will increase as the population grows. Options to address the affordable housing crisis need to be developed. Supportive housing programs that promote independent living will be needed for the growing senior population as well as other special needs groups such as the physically and intellectually challenged and the mentally ill.

Other Services

Figure 17 - Local Public Bus Services Today

Local Public Bus Services Today
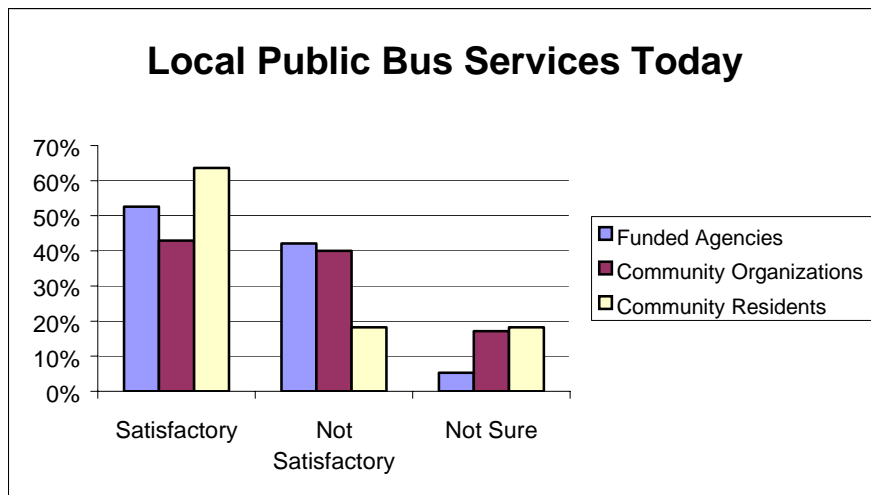
Another area of concern for study participants is municipal bus service, which has experienced cut backs in funding and a decline in overall service. Figure 17 indicates that at least 40% of the funded agency and community organization respondents do not feel bus services are satisfactory. Programs such as library services, public transit and recreation have all been cut back. This will impact low-income groups more than others, as they tend to be more dependent upon publicly funded services.

The transit system (bus) is seen as problematic, especially for children, seniors, and the poor. One community resident states, "Bus and transit services are being reduced; parks and recreation programs are suffering."

Recreational opportunities are also of a concern, albeit, the preoccupation is on issues of access for all income levels. There are few inexpensive opportunities. For example, many people think hockey is costly because of equipment and registration costs. In terms of recreation, there are broad opportunities and good utilization, although costs are becoming a concern. One funded agency respondent indicates, "Recreational opportunities are poor. There aren't a lot of inexpensive activities or areas. There are a lot of fancy health clubs in Oakville."

Respondents also talk about the effects of the high number of commuters in Oakville. They believe people have less time to spend at home with the family and in the community. As one funded agency respondent points out, commuting "taxes those who commute. It robs them of time with family and with community." This points to Oakville's transition to suburb of the City of Toronto.

The recession, the down loading of responsibility and the reduction in funding for services are accompanied by an increase in the need for service and subsidization. Current emphasis on user fees may create a two-tiered system of 'haves' and 'have-nots'. This has the potential to limit access to people or their ability to pay.

Town to Suburb

The experience of study participants corresponds with the magnitude of population growth documented by the census. They reflect on what these demographic changes mean to Oakville. For many study respondents, Oakville's striving to remain a town, despite its growth, is positive, and should be maintained. A key informant states, "there is a strong sense of community. Cuteness - still a Town." Other respondents feel this sense of community can be tapped to resolve social problems. Comments from funded agency respondents included these:

> "Small town atmosphere"

> "Juggling sense of small town versus large city"

> "Small town feeling of community. In the future Oakville will become bigger and will lose small community feel."

> "Oakville still maintains its small town feeling in a large city"

Nevertheless, not all is well. While the maintenance of the small town atmosphere is desired, this thinking creates aloofness among residents that appears to hamper addressing the changes occurring in Oakville. As evidence, respondents point to such things as the difficulty in maintaining human services as the population grows and providing services to diverse ethnic groups. In addition, respondents believe that the demands for bus services, recreation opportunities and for the alleviation of traffic congestion are not being addressed.

Local government plays an important role in promoting the small town atmosphere in Oakville. According to respondents, the municipal government is serving the community well and town council is reflective of the community. The majority believe that local government is good, interested in making Oakville a good place to live. While some respondents think that opportunities for citizen participation are adequate, others believe that more public input is needed.

United Way-funded agencies indicate that Oakville has a greater sense of identity than other municipalities in Ontario, in part due to its small town atmosphere. There is a sense of community, resulting in a good volunteer base. It is not as diverse ethnically as some

communities, and is a town that is "hard to be poor in" because of a lack of appropriate services. When compared to other municipalities in Halton, Oakville is seen as more sophisticated, but there is a sense of people being less connected to each other and the community. Its affluence and pace of growth also set it apart.

Human service funding will need to increase to reflect the population growth. Federal and provincial policy changes relating to the funding and delivery of serves need to be monitored for the implications to the community.

Volunteers are necessary to the community, not just nice to have. The management of volunteers needs to be recognized both in policy development and the allocation of resources (by both providers and funders). The community needs to engage in discussion about what is paid work and un-paid work.

Respondents from community organizations believe that Oakville differs from other municipalities in Halton and the rest of Ontario mainly due to its wealth and the average high level of education of its residents. Other factors that differentiate Oakville from other municipalities include its effective town administration, a strong work ethic, high quality of life, and its sense of identity. Because of its wealth, it is assumed that everyone can pay his or her way out of problems. Oakville residents are thought to be buffered from "inner city" issues, such as homelessness and violence.

Social Environment

Education

According to census data, Oakville is a community that is well educated and affluent. Figure 18 shows the level of education in Oakville in 1991 and 1996. It shows that 25% of Oakville's adult population (15+) has a university degree. This compares to 20% for Halton and 15% for Ontario. Figure 19 illustrates the percentage of youth aged 15-24 not attending school. While the percentage has dropped between 1991 and 1996, there is still one in four youth not attending school.

Figure 18 - Highest Level Of Education

Highest Level of Education (15+), Oakville

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data.
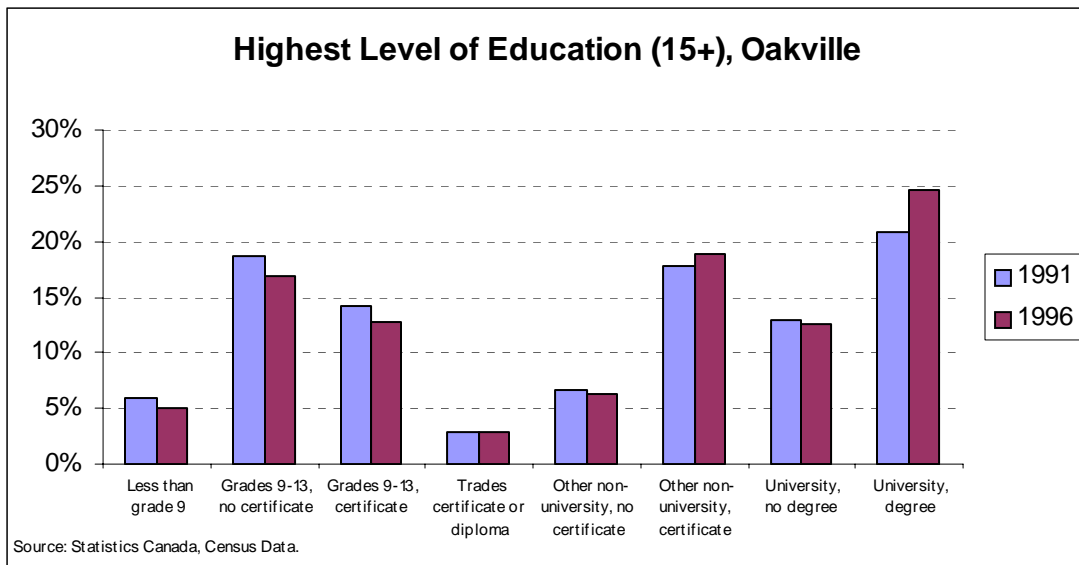
Figure 19 - Not Attending School, 15-24 Years of Age

**Not Attending School
15-24 Years, Oakville**

28.15%

25.40%

1991

1996

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data.
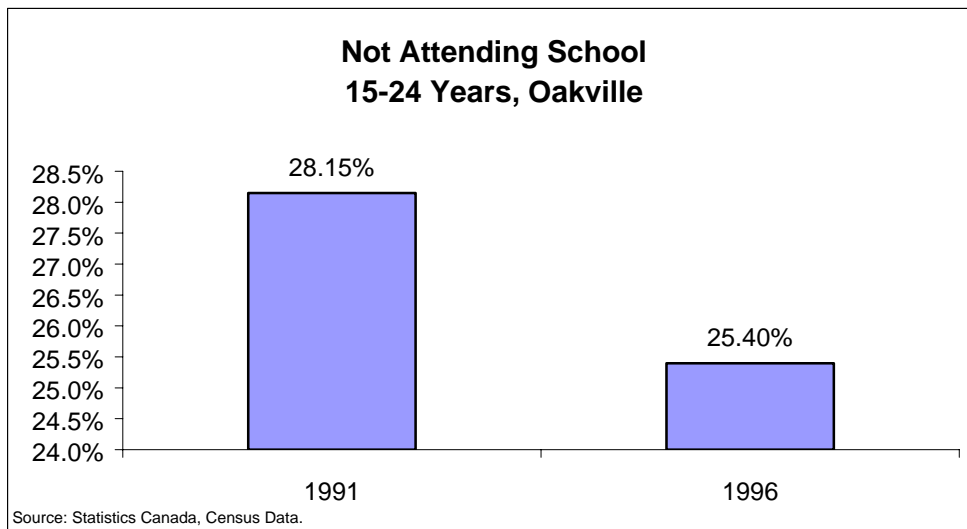
Education demands are high in new growth areas. Training programs need to reflect the labour market to enhance employment opportunities. There is a need to create an adequate number of appropriate employment opportunities to meet the demands of a well-educated workforce.

Income

Figure 20 - Average Family Income

Average Family Income, Oakville

$89,224

$81,094

$56,640

$100,000		
$80,000		
$60,000		
$40,000		
$20,000		
$0		
1986	1991	1996

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data.
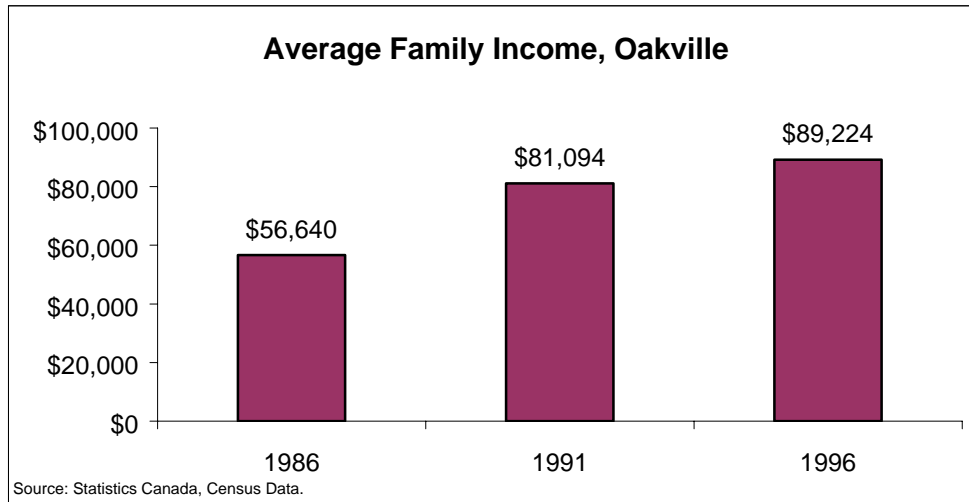
Oakville has a higher average family income than the average family income for Halton or Ontario. In 1996, Oakville had an average family income of $89,224 (Figure 20) compared to $79,930 for Halton and $59,830 for Ontario. Despite this, Figure 21 demonstrates that there has been an increase in the number of families that are low income. There is a very sharp increase of 81% in the number of poor families between 1991 and 1996 that is well above the rate of population growth for the same time period.

Figure 21 - Low-Income Families

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data.
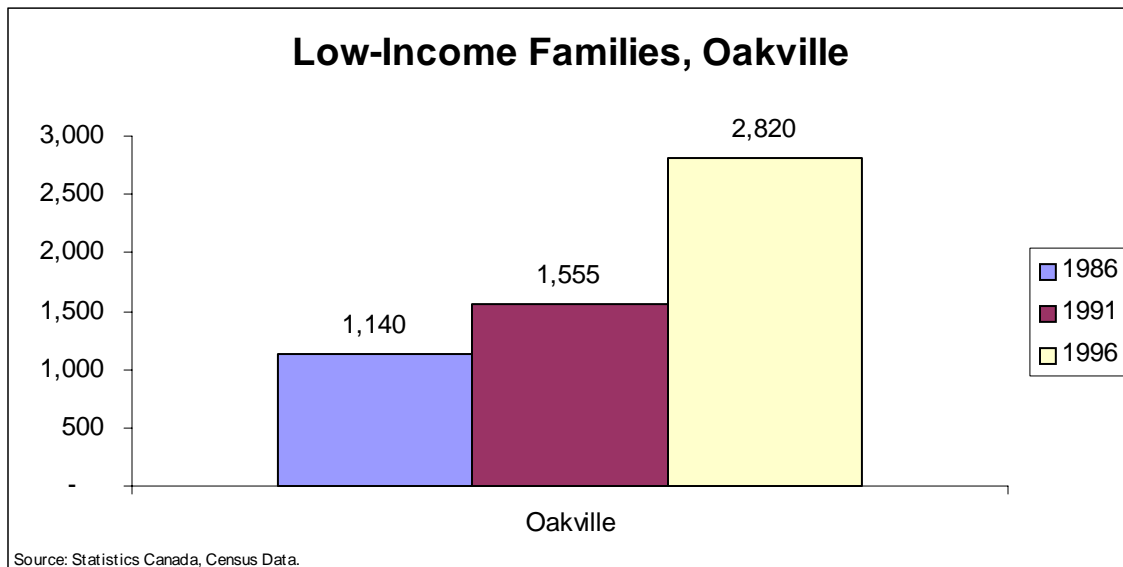
Figure 22 - Low-Income Individuals

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data.
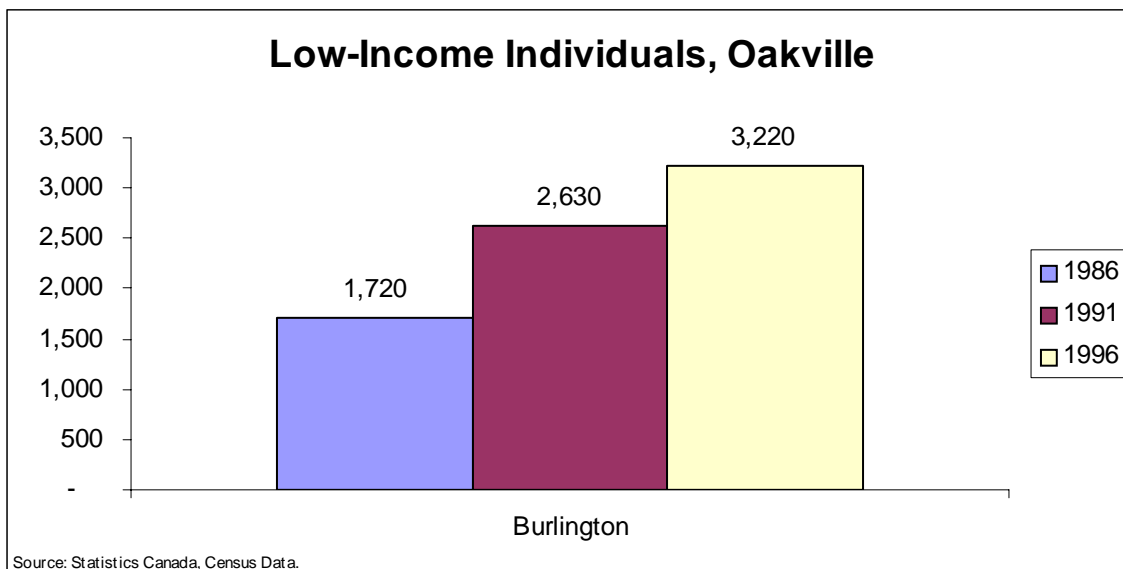
As well, Figure 22 shows that the number of low-income unattached individuals increased to 3,220 in 1996, a 22% increase from 1991. The Low Income Cut-Offs (LICO)[9] used by Statistics Canada for the 1996 Census are illustrated in Figure 23.

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[9] Measures of low income known as low income cut-offs (LICOs) were first introduced in Canada in 1968 based on 1961 Census income data and 1959 family expenditure patterns. At that time, expenditure patterns indicated that

Figure 23 - Low Income Cut-Offs (LICO)

Family Size	Size of area of residence 100,000 to 499,999
1	14,473
2	18,091
3	22,500
4	27,235
5	30,445
6	33,654
7+	36,864

Even though average incomes are high in Oakville, the incidence of low-income have increased. The need for services for this population group also continues. The need for 'basic needs' services such as food banks and affordable housing are critical to low-income families and individuals.

Preventative programs for low-income families, particularly children, are required to reduce the incidence of health, emotional and educational problems. The growing number of low-income unattached individuals will increase the demand for both income support and social support services.

Poverty for individuals, families and children challenges a community to develop proactive and preventative human services and employment possibilities in order to create the means by which these residents of Oakville can share in the opportunities of the community and, simultaneously, contribute to the development of Oakville.

Canadian families spent about 50% of their income on food, shelter and clothing. It arbitrarily estimated that families spending 70% or more of their income on these basic necessities would be in "straitened" circumstances. With this assumption, low income cut-off points were set for five different sizes of families.

Subsequent to these initial cut-offs, revised low income cut-offs were established based on national family expenditure data from 1969, 1978, 1986 and 1992. These data indicated that Canadian families spent, on average, 42% in 1969, 38.5% in 1978, 36.2% in 1986 and 34.7% in 1992 of their income on basic necessities. By adding the original difference of 20 percentage points to the basic level of expenditure on necessities, new low income cut-offs were set at income levels differentiated by family size and degree of urbanization. Since then, these cut-offs have been updated yearly by changes in the consumer price index. (*1996 Census Dictionary*, Statistics Canada)

The census portrayal of Oakville's social environment is corroborated when study participants are asked about their perceptions of Oakville. The key informants indicate that Oakville is an affluent and well-educated community. Few mention the "hidden" side of the community in the same way United Way-funded agencies do. One key informant says: "There are pockets of communities with different needs in the community but a lot of knowledge is needed to find them. They have no presence, no power." The majority of key informants focus on the stature and image of Oakville, although they do see Oakville as a divided community, with the QEW as the division between north and south. They describe the north as a commuter community with young families and children. This is the area where population growth is most evident, but the social infrastructure is inadequate. The southern part of Oakville is described by key informants as more stable in terms of population growth and where the "old money" and more established families live. This area is well-served by human services and is the centre of political power in Oakville. There is a strong sense of community in this part of Oakville.

Representatives of funded agencies are quick to point out that disparities do exist in Oakville. While those interviewed agree that Oakville is generally an affluent community, there are pockets of poverty that are hidden. One respondent observes that "bag people exist in Oakville" and another comments: "Oakville is very wealthy but real pockets of need and poverty do exist. However, it's hidden and this is a real problem." Respondents feel that residents in Oakville do not want to believe poverty exists in their community and that some have an upscale class-consciousness that wants to maintain an image of wealth. The statement of a community organization respondent, "poverty is hidden and not recognized by most residents," reinforces this observation. Another respondent suggests that "poorer people are not in a very good position and their plight is harder [here] than in other communities." Respondents see Oakville as a community where more concern is focussed on individual needs rather than on the common good.

Linked to this is some discussion of the differences between northern and southern Oakville, as new and old neighbourhoods that have developed distinctive personalities. Also, with the growth has come an increased ethnic mix. Some respondents indicate that there has been a loss of culture by second generation Canadians, especially in the Italian and Portuguese communities. A

key informant comments: "The south part of Oakville has a sense of belonging, a preserved sense of community. They like keeping their privileges. They want peace and quiet..."

An undermining of social cohesion marks the social environment. This is indicated by concerns about two-parent families where both parents work outside the home and the resulting effects on family and community life, such as growing isolation at all levels (community, family and individual).

Human Service Infrastructure

When addressing health and social services in Oakville, respondents seem to be divided as to whether the level and access to services is good or poor. There appears to be consensus that knowledge of the range of services is limited in the community and those who know about the services have access. In addition, a number of respondents indicate that services are not well co-ordinated in the community. As one funded agency respondent states, "Access is there for those who know the system, particularly around the issue of purchase of service. There isn't efficient service for those who can't afford it. This is especially an issue with population growth Oakville is experiencing." A combination of population growth and funding cutbacks has impacted negatively on the level of services. Volunteerism, access to health services and long term care are also raised as areas affected by population and funding changes. Finally, the perception of a two tiered system of services is indicated as being a by-product of the wealthy stature of the community. One funded agency respondent summarizes the issue of access: "Access is poor. There are many services but they are not well co-ordinated. Parents find it difficult to find the services they need. There are too many levels. This does not necessarily mean duplication of services, just that they are not well organized." A community organization response states, "Cuts to social services have hurt families and individuals."

There is good access to health and social services, although lagging behind the population growth. A key informant states, "The level of service is less per population. Access is good where services exist." Another key informant mentions, "Services are not open to other communities. You have to travel to get services. These seem to be geared to people with time and money. Services are a way of life for people who have the loudest voice." One funded

agency respondent states, "Because of the large commuter population in Oakville, who travel on a daily basis to Toronto, there is more demand for programs in late afternoons, early morning, like for 6 a.m. and on weekends." Another funded agency respondent said, "I worry about the problem of hidden poverty, that there aren't enough services for those who aren't affluent in Oakville, services for working class people. The existing services seem to be so skewed in a privileged direction."

The impact of increased demand and reduced funds, leads to slower service, longer waiting periods, increased stress on providers, increased demand for volunteers with less resources to allocated to their management and increased expectations of families to provide care.

Economic Environment

Employment

According to census data, Oakville has an unemployment rate that has been lower than the provincial rate but comparable to the Halton rate. In 1996, Oakville's unemployment rate was 5.6%, the same as Halton's and lower than the 9.1% unemployment rate for Ontario.

Figure 24 - Unemployment Rates, Oakville

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data.
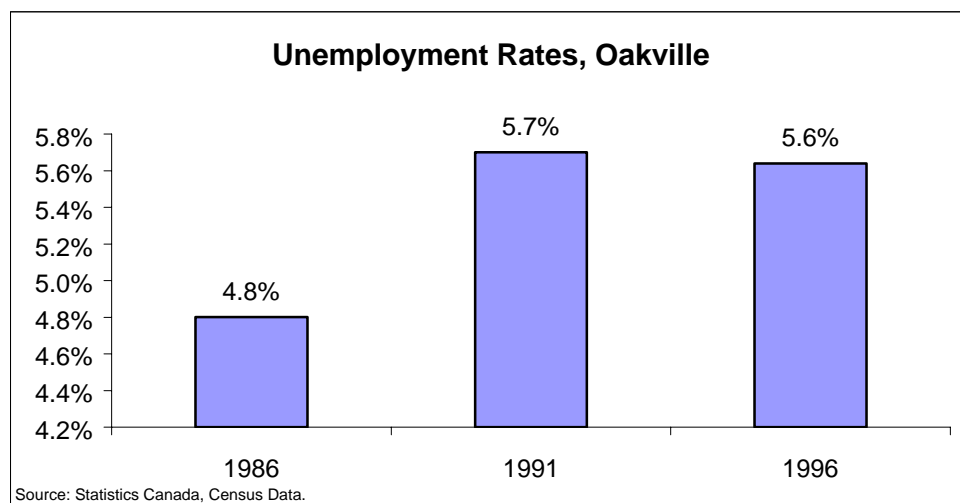
Figure 25 indicates that youth unemployment in Oakville is 14% in 1996, an increase of over 4% from 1991. This represents 1,500 youth in Oakville.

Figure 25 - Youth Unemployment Rates
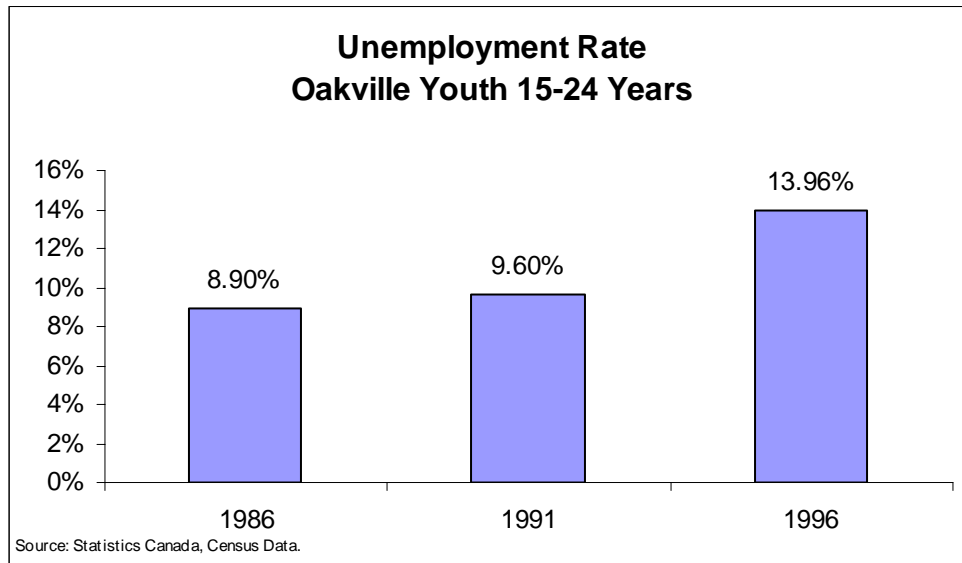
People At Work

Figure 26 shows the labour force by industry division in Oakville. This refers to the general nature of the business carried out in the establishment where people work. Those working in manufacturing make up the largest group, with over 10,000 persons employed (15% of the labour force) in this sector. However, this sector has had the largest decrease over the past five years, dropping from 18% of the labour force in 1991; that is, a decrease in just over 1,000 persons working in this sector. The largest increase is in wholesale trade, which has grown by just over 2%, followed by business services and health and social services.

Figure 26 - Labour Force by Industry Divisions

Oakville Labour Force by Industry Divisions

Source: Statistics Canada, Census data.

Legend: 1996, 1991
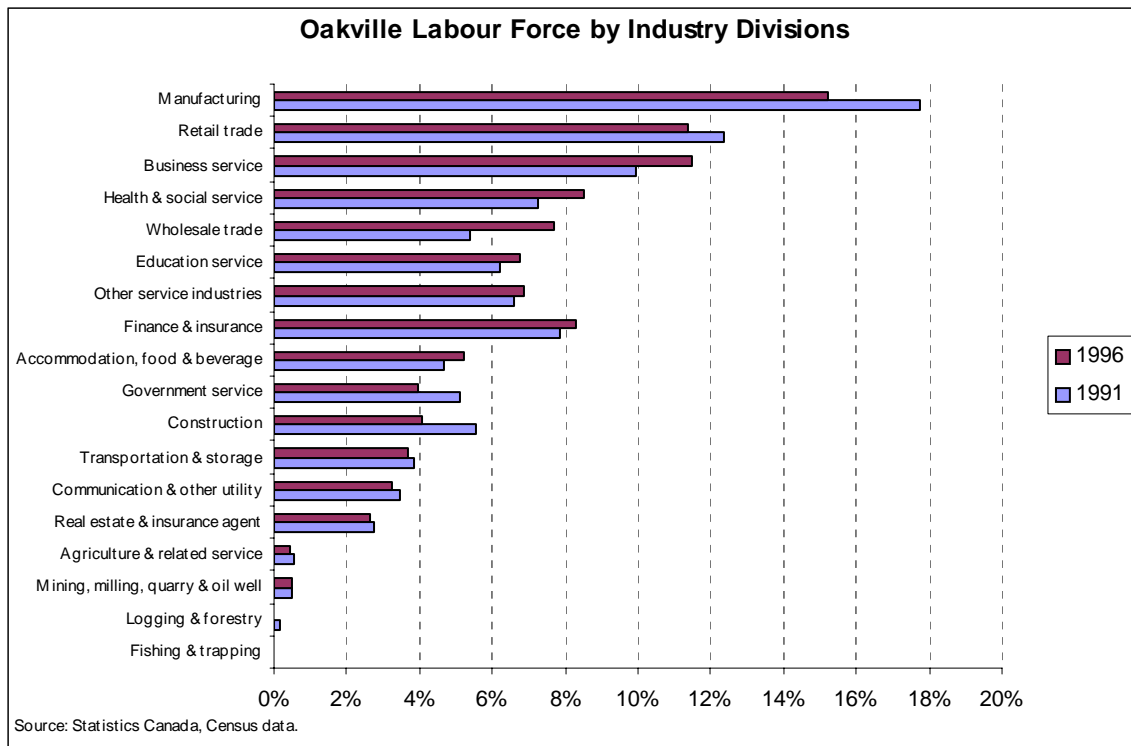
People's Occupations

Figure 27 shows that the top male occupation is in management, constituting 22.4% of employed males in Oakville, followed by sales and service at 21.7%. In comparison, Figure 28 shows that the top female occupation is business, finance and administration employing 31.4% of females in the labour force, followed by 27.4% in sales and service.

Figure 27 - Top 10 Male Occupations
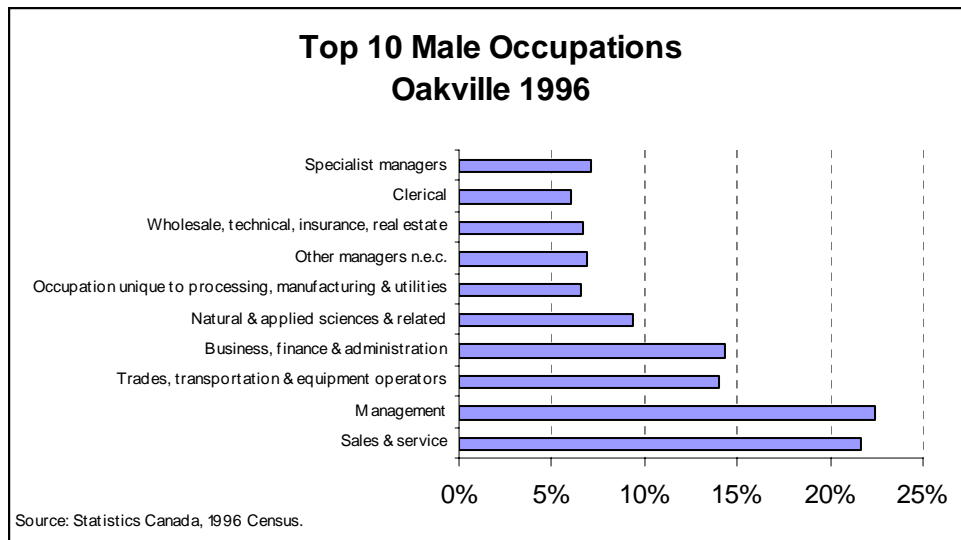
Figure 28 - Top 10 Female Occupations
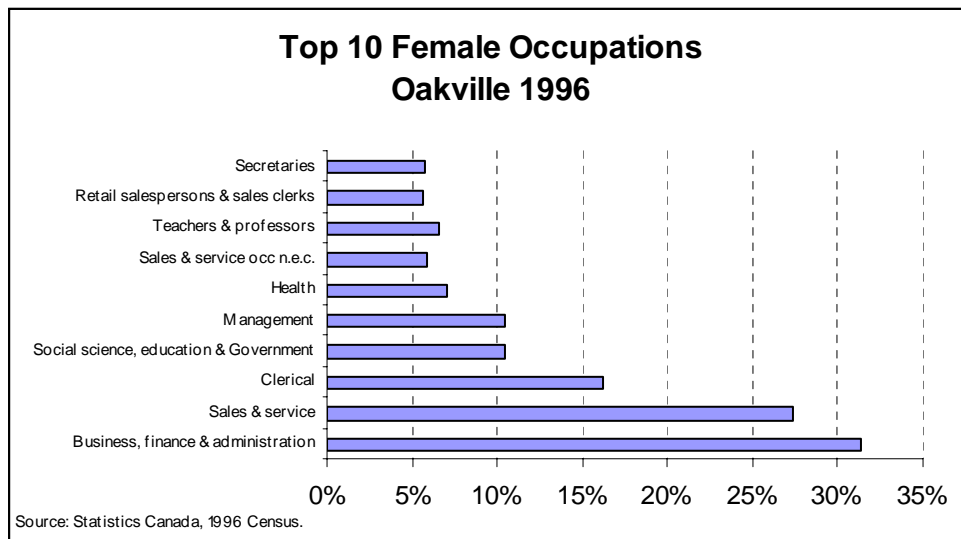
The census data contributing to an understanding of Oakville's economic environment highlights a number of significant points. First, the number of people unemployed implies a series of services to facilitate the bridge to new employment.

A high youth unemployment rate suggests the need to develop employment initiatives to assist youth in entering the labour market. Demand will continue for counselling, education and

training and volunteering opportunities for youth who face marginalization from the employment market. There is increased risk that youth, who are marginalized from the employment market, are more likely to join youth gangs, commit crimes, and engage in anti-social activities. A careful analysis of labour market requirements is essential to programming for youth employment needs.

Regarding economic environment issues in Oakville, the consensus of study participants is that Oakville is doing well, although it is considered more of a commuter community for Toronto. The emphasis on a commuter community suggests a concern for residential environments rather than business development. One funded agency respondent suggests: "Business is not really based here in Oakville. There is more need for taxes to be collected locally. It would be nice to have more local businesses."

People commuting to work outside Halton has a significant impact on people's time in the community and with their families, as well as their ability to participate in community activities. It also impacts on access to services and the need for childcare outside regular hours to accommodate commuters.

Oakville boasts many thriving small businesses and more needs to be done to encourage growth in this area. A key informant comments that "growth of small business is occurring from people's homes." Another says, "The local economy seems to be strong, but it is especially reliant on the automotive sector", while another states: "The business centre is vibrant. New industry in Oakville is average because there is not lots of land to develop on."

Respondents believe that changes in what governments do and who does what will affect local economic development. "Up until now, the town has had a good economic development plan. We need to cut out red tape. The provincial downloading will affect economic development." observes one funded agency member. Another suggests, "Downsizing is still going on. Jobs that are available are low paying."

There is a need for employment strategies to promote growth in high technology areas and entrepreneurship for people affected by the harsh recessionary effects on manufacturing and retail trades.

Physical Environment

Environmentally, Oakville is perceived by study participants as being relatively clean despite its proximity to major industries such as Ford, PetroCanada and St. Lawrence Cement. All respondents are concerned about air quality. They believe that the increasing population and the continued reliance on automobiles for transportation diminishes air quality. Figure 29 reflects most are not satisfied with it. One key informant states: "The worst is air pollution from cars and volumes of big industry. The escarpment keeps the pollution here."

Figure 29 - Air Quality Today
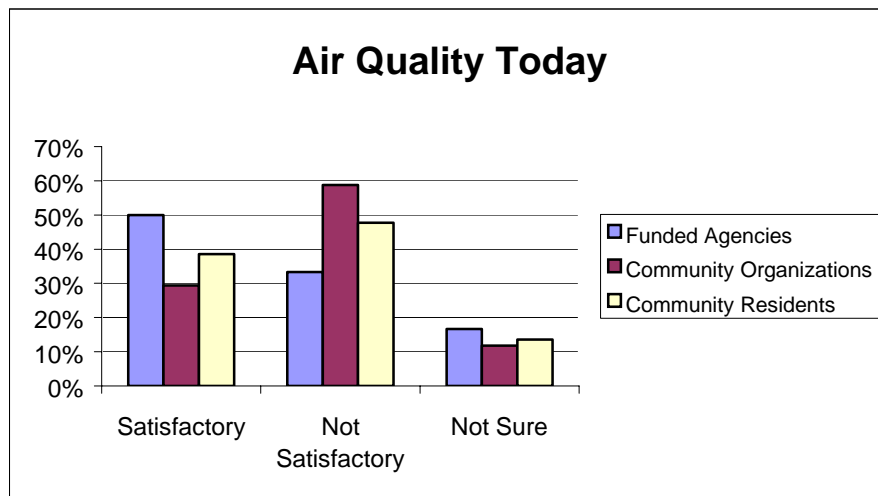
Respondents also indicate that pollution levels (Figure 30) and the quality of the lake water (Figure 31) need further attention in order for their quality of life to be satisfactory. "Many citizens are polluting. There is a diminishing social responsibility. They don't care. Citizens need to be responsible for their actions" is how one funded agency respondent sums up feelings about environmental cleanliness in Oakville. Another respondent states: "Environmental problems will probably increase with population, but hopefully the town will keep protection of lake and parks

as a priority to ensure public accessibility in the future. Such things as nature trails around creeks are important."

Figure 30 - Pollution Levels Today
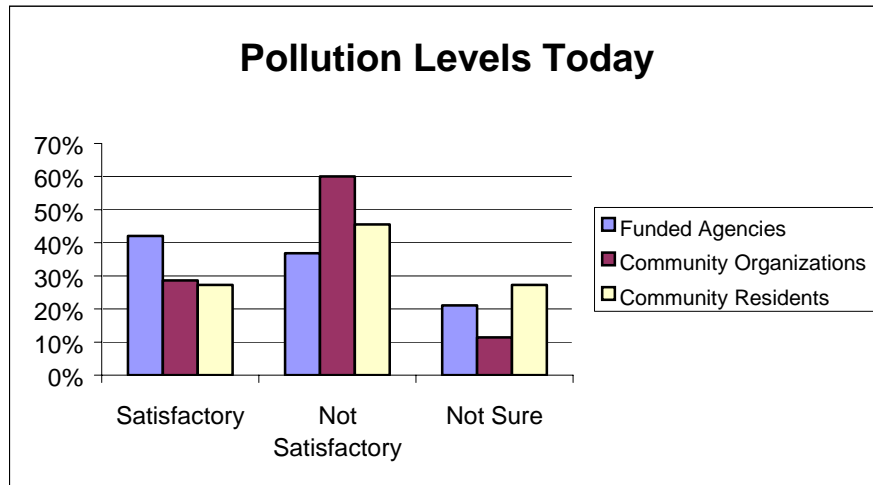
Figure 31 - Quality of Lake Water Today
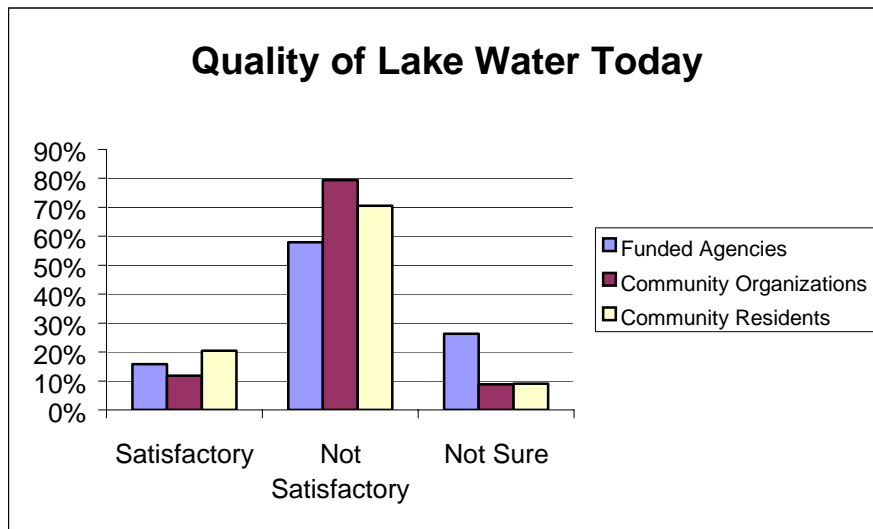
Attention needs to be maintained to the quality of Oakville's physical environment. Loss in open space, parks and changes in the quality of creeks and the lake need to be considered against growth and demand for the built environment.

Emergent Future Issues

Three of the groups surveyed (funded agencies, community organizations and community residents) completed a table identifying factors influencing the quality of community life in Oakville (See Appendices I-III). Respondents rank factors by the level of importance they believe the issues will have in the year 2005. Below are some of the highlights.

More than 80% of the respondents think the size of Oakville and pace of growth in Oakville will be important issues in 2005. Figure 32 and Figure 33 show that respondents are evenly split between these issues being very important and somewhat important.

Figure 32 - Size of Oakville 2005
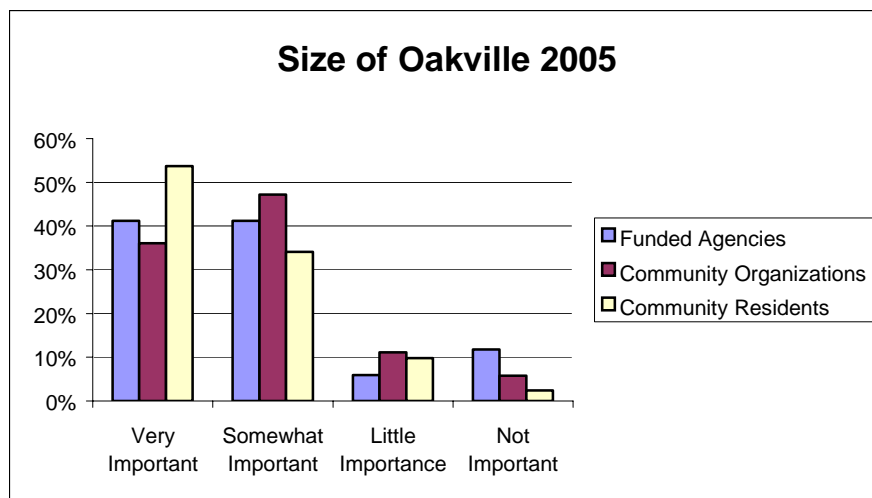
Figure 33 - Pace of Growth 2005
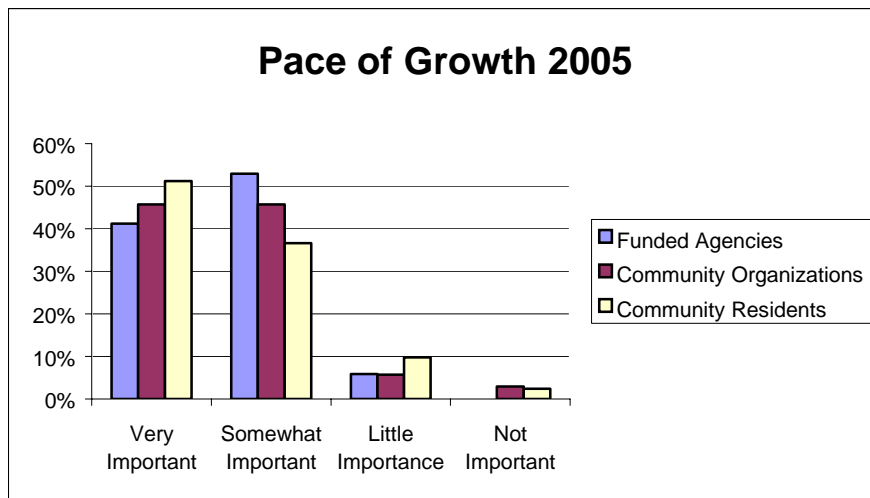
When asked about their perceptions of Oakville, one of the issues interrelated with population growth is increased ethnic diversity. In response to the question about the importance of multicultural services in 2005, funded agencies and community organizations rank it higher in importance than do community residents (Figure 34).

Figure 34 - Multicultural Services 2005
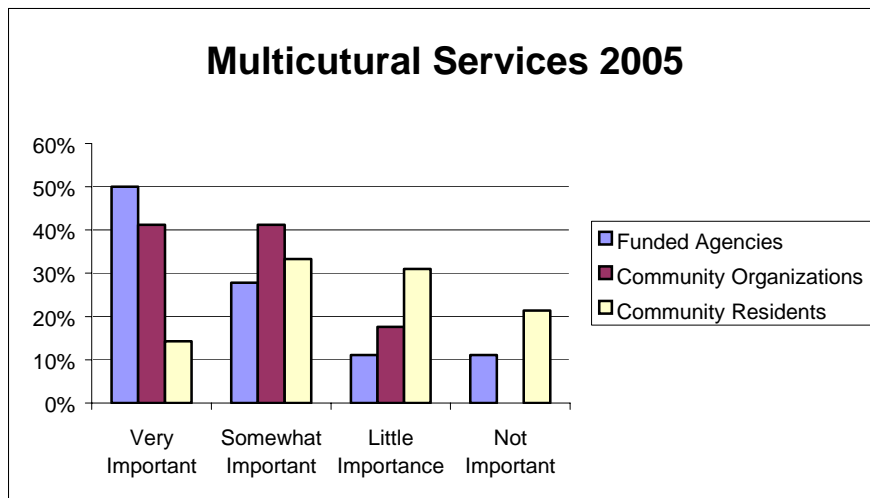
The need for settlement services will continue as the ethno-racial mix of Oakville changes. All service providers will need translation, cultural interpretation, cultural awareness and anti-racism policies.

Since funding to the not-for-profit sector has changed dramatically over the past few years, it is not a surprise that funded agency and community organization respondents thought this a very important issue for 2005, as indicated in Figure 35. While community residents think it is important, it does not have the same level of urgency for them. This may suggest that residents do not see the connection between funding and the availability of services.

Figure 35 - Funding to Social Agencies 2005
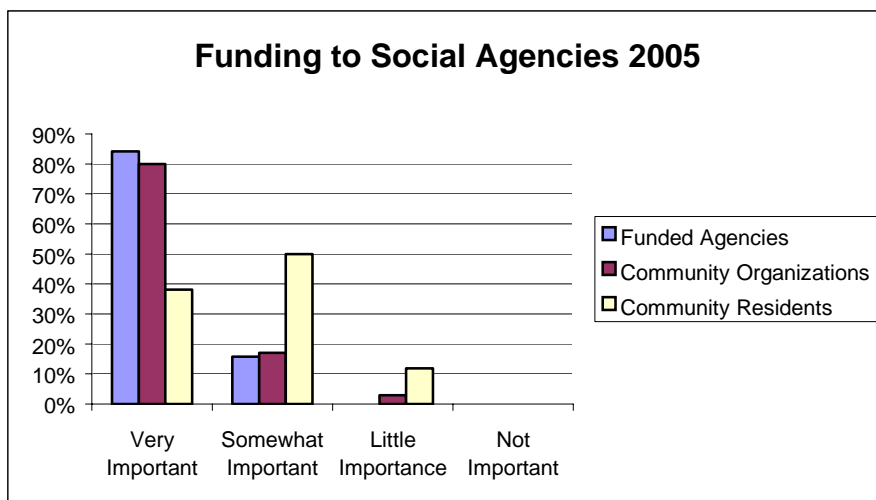
All respondents indicate that environmental issues will continue to be very important in 2005. Pollution levels, quality of lake water, of drinking water and of the air are ranked as very important by over 75% of the respondents. Examples of these concerns can be seen in Figure 36 and Figure 37.

Figure 36 - Pollution Levels 2005
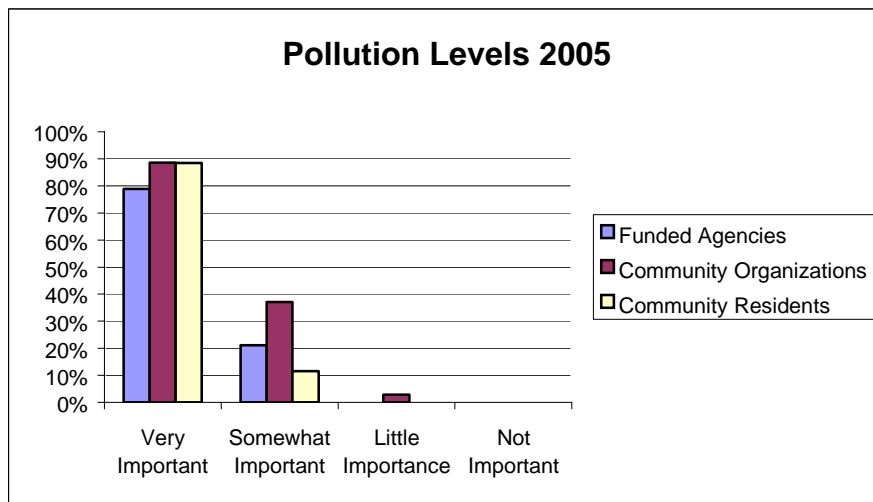
Figure 37 - Quality of Drinking Water 2005
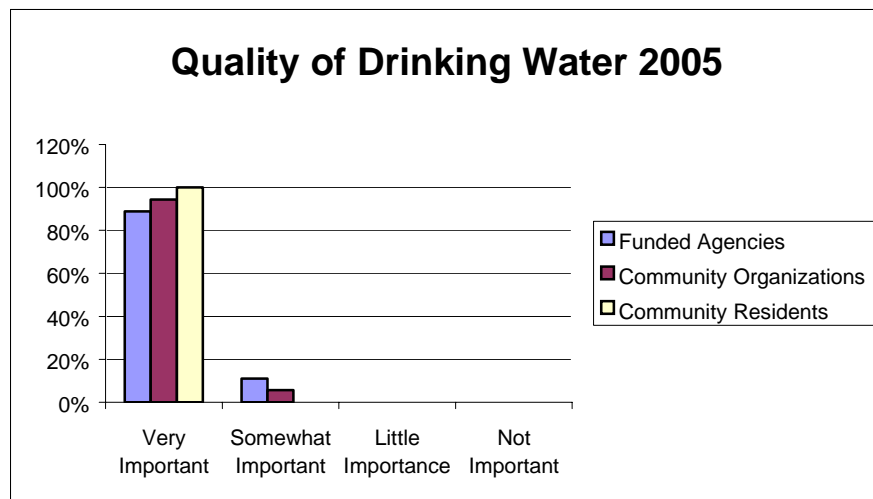
Safety is also identified as important in 2005. Respondents indicate that the crime rate in Oakville and personal safety will be very important issues (Figure 38 and Figure 39).

Figure 38 - Crime Rate 2005
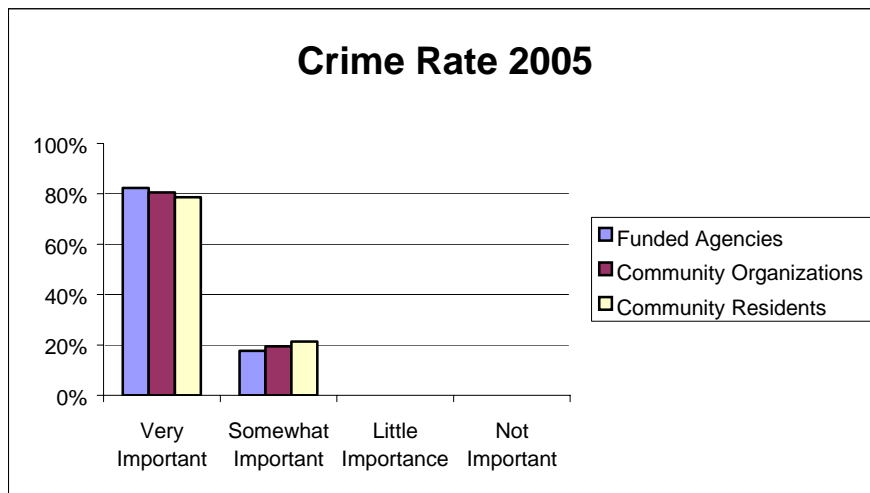
Regardless of police statistics that indicate Halton is a safe community, many people feel insecure, perhaps a reflection of insecure times.

Figure 39 - Personal Safety 2005
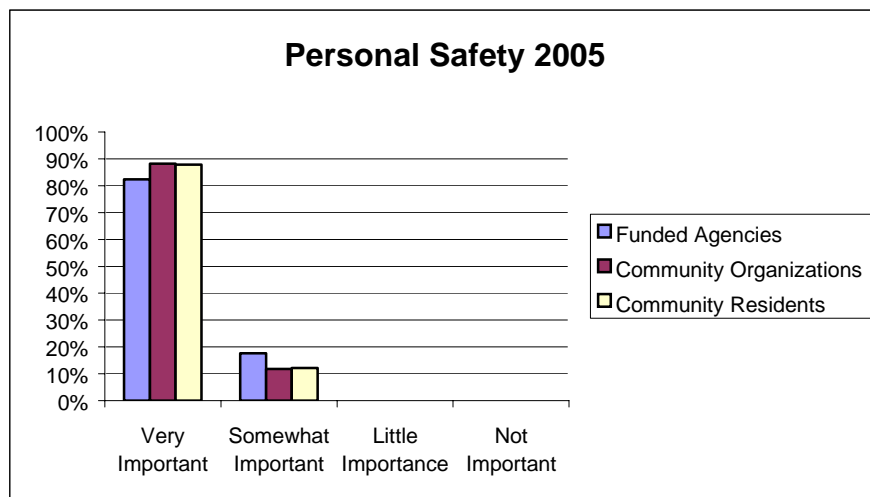
Summary

The quantitative census data and the qualitative information collected from Oakville study participants together paint is a picture of an affluent, well-educated community where there is general satisfaction with the quality of life. However, there are changes occurring, as captured by

study participants and substantiated by census information. These changes include tremendous population growth, greater ethnic diversity and growing poverty. Coupled with this is an identified distinction between the north and south parts of Oakville. These factors affect the future of the Oakville community. Its ability to cope with these changes, especially in terms of the provision of human services is a concern.

Respondents fear services that will not be able to keep up with these changes, and worry about those lower on the economic scale. Population aging, housing costs, public transit, and recreational opportunities are also highlighted as concerns. While there is general satisfaction with the performance of local government, concern about future economic development is identified. Respondents affirm the ongoing need to develop local business opportunities so that Oakville will not be dependent on one industry, nor on its status as a commuter community for Toronto. Environmental issues such as air and water quality are also very important and respondents are virtually unanimous in identifying these as continuing concerns.

3. OAKVILLE: A HEALTHY AND CARING COMMUNITY

Over the last decade, studies conducted by the Halton Social Planning Council, the United Way and local and regional governments systematically document the same human service problems through time. They are:

> shelter, employment, income security, food security, daycare, violence, recreation and culture, long term care, transportation, education and training, community awareness, co-ordination and planning, volunteerism.

All respondents concur that this list adequately outlines existing and ongoing problems in the Oakville community. One funded agency respondent's comment – "Yes, [they are] very important issues and they have stayed significant" – reflects the essence of the responses.

However, while in agreement with the list, respondents made important observations about this listing, reflecting the lens through which they view and participate in the community. A synopsis of these reflections is provided below:

> "... Yes, a pretty comprehensive list! Daycare is one of the biggest concerns with the growth of community, most organizations don't have capital to build and [therefore] provide more service. We need to be creative such as the idea that new schools would have daycare areas attached to them. This costs a lot and this idea has just gotten lost. Government needs to step in and fund these. ...Training and employment is not as important an issue now with lots of agencies doing this but they require government subsidies to sustain them. ...Will the private sector sustain this activity?"

> "Volunteerism seems out of place [on this list]. It is not a problem but is a solution!"

> "There is an increased need for volunteers for service provision."

> "Volunteerism isn't a problem but it can be a challenge at times."

>"Seniors, We are realizing the increasing need for volunteers to assist seniors with companionship, socialization and outings. Also, seniors need affordable housing. Long-term care continues to be an high need area."

>"Yes, I concur. All are significant but I give more priority to employment, transportation and emergency shelter/services."

>"Youth is an important separate issue"

>>–"residential care"; "emergency shelters"; "crisis response"; "Youth services mean more support for families."

>"... to violence add physical and mental."

>"I am concerned about poverty and children, seniors and poverty, hospital restructuring, mental illness and services for the developmentally delayed, adolescence and drugs, and ageism."

>"Emergency shelter an issue particularly critical now"

>"Affordable housing"

>"Resources must get to children and families, also to the elderly. We need to support the ones no longer [considered] significant."

Some of the respondents question whether recreation and culture should be on such a problem list. "Is recreation and culture a problem?" asks one community organization representative. A few respondents suggest that major improvements have occurred throughout the community due to the increase in facilities built for recreational and cultural activities. Nevertheless, they acknowledge that facilities may be falling or have fallen behind the demands generated by population growth.

In this section of the report, the responses of community organizations supplement the commentary of the other respondents. From their remarks, issues emerge such as traffic

congestion and its associated 'road rage' and environmental quality – that is air, water and food contamination.

Other Important Social and Economic Issues

Respondents were asked to comment on other important social and economic issues that best capture their understanding of the reality in which they live or work. Two critical service gaps emerge from their commentary. They are:

- *Services of all kinds to Oakville youth*
- *Services and issues associated with a multicultural community*

Youth

The respondents believe that the young people of Oakville have been left aside in the planning of social supports and activities which would incorporate them into the community as important young citizens with rights and responsibilities. The list of the gaps in supports to Oakville's youth is extensive and ranges from: i) empowering youth to participate in the identification and solution of their problems; ii) developing programs that respect and reflect the lifestyle and social integration needs of youth; for example, activities that remain open after midnight; iii) training and employment programs that face head-on the high unemployment rates of young people; iv) crisis services such as emergency shelter; v) substance-abuse programs and vi) community activities that incorporate and view youth as a community asset that is a much-needed resource in building a better community. Their comments describe this gap.

> "Youth services are critical especially services for adolescents ...kids are bombarded with conflicting messages ...we need to prevent [problems], affluence is not an indication of happy, well-adjusted young people and families. Problems do exist!"

> "Lack of services for teens; waiting lists for kids' service."

> "We don't really know kids..."

"Increasing issues with young people such as drug abuse ...There
are not the activities available for them unless they have a car.
They have no place to go."

Daycare

Again the issues of quality daycare and the need for universal public daycare are brought
forward as a continuing quandary yet to be resolved but very much on the agenda of respondents.
Daycare is integral to the development of a continuum of supports for our young and their
families.

Multicultural Services

Services and programs that respond appropriately to a multicultural population are raised as
emergent needs. Respondents note the changing demographics of Halton, and recognize that
many new residents reflect the diversity of groups represented in Canadian immigration patterns.
Many respondents talk of the need to plan appropriate services and to facilitate existing services
and programs so that they can adapt themselves to be relevant to different cultural and racial
groups. Funding is clearly an issue if Oakville, and Halton, are to avoid tensions and stresses
associated with diversity. Meeting the needs of a multicultural population is an issue of equity
for all residents of Oakville and the rest of Halton. One member of a community group sums up
this point of view: "We must provide equitable services to all citizens. Our support, financial,
and treatment services need to keep pace with the economic, social and health needs of a
changing and increasingly diverse population."

Respondents emphasize a number of areas of concern that they believe are in danger of being
pushed off the public agenda only to disappear in our indifference. They deserve special
consideration.

- *Critical problem area: Affordable Housing.* Repeatedly, key informants, respondents from
  funded agencies and from community organizations and community residents, voice a

preoccupation with the cost of housing in Oakville. Affordable housing is not available to many in our community. In response to the question "*What do you see as the most important health and social service issues face by Oakville?"* people comment affordable housing. One key informant expresses concern over the fact that a disproportionate amount of money from low-income families is channeled into rent. "Affordable housing is one of our most important social issues. For example, if individuals or families fall on to social assistance, they can't afford housing because everything goes to rent."

- *Critical problem area: Emergency Services.* The study respondents identify emergency services as an important area of concern. They perceive that people in Oakville and the rest of Halton do not have access to adequate emergency services such as crisis intervention or emergency shelters. Individuals in need of such services often must seek them outside Oakville and, for that matter, outside the region.

- *Critical problem area: Services to an Aging Population.* Respondents know that a myriad of health and social services have been put in place that support older people and that respond to the special circumstances of this stage of one's life cycle. However, respondents are concerned that the gains made in community supports, health, and social services for the older population are not expanding as the population ages. In addition, they are concerned that the underfunding of services and the devolution of service responsibilities to lower levels of government will seriously affect the quality of services and accessibility to such services. The following comments by respondents highlight the concern of the many.

> "There will be an increased number of seniors by the year 2001 to about 17 %. [This] corresponds to a need for increased services but with decreasing dollars. This is a challenge. We must also remember that increasing age also brings health problems and the need for additional resources."

> "At the other end of the age spectrum, we are not prepared for the growth in the seniors [population] and [thus] the growth in human service needs. The less well-off seniors will be in trouble."

> "As the aged population grows, it's imperative that we continue to provide sufficient facilities and care."

> "...lack of good nursing home and chronic care facilities. Our shortage of beds is a major problem."

> "Access to long-term care beds, there is a real shortage. Also, there is a lack of chronic care facilities. We have seen cutbacks to important social support services such as homemaking."

> "...seniors need long-term beds and respite services but basically we have good services [for seniors] but it will be cut back. CCAC (Community Care Access Centre) represents a health model - not preventative services. They will not be getting services to the home due to a continued cutback of home support services and a move to privatize them. Therefore, those that can't pay go to nursing homes which are even more expensive."

In terms of health and social services for seniors, respondents believe that present government policies and practices will not ensure their well-being in old age. Another critical issue raised is their perception of the deterioration of hospital and health services.

- *Critical problem area: Deterioration of Hospital and Health Services*. Study respondents frequently express concern over the deterioration of hospital-based services. Respondents believe that the demand for such services cannot be met in the present circumstances. One respondent from a funded agency speaks for the many: "There is a real deterioration in the quality of health services. I see decreased nursing care, early discharges, long waiting lists, trained personnel like doctors leaving." Another representative complements this reflection: "There is a real threat to our health system. Hospital care has deteriorated. Day surgery is understaffed and underfunded. We are replacing trained staff with those less capable."

Another dilemma is woven through the words of many of the study: poverty.

- *Critical problem area: Poverty*. Clearly poverty – the lack of financial resources to purchase basic necessities and to access opportunities – interacts with all the issues identified in the

study and exacerbates them. Poverty is a social situation that divides the Oakville community into two groups: those enjoying the benefits of society and those merely surviving. One funded agency representative suggests that the poor continue to be punished and that the community has yet to develop "adequate programs for low-income people. Our community hasn't really built a social services infrastructure that responds to [the needs of] marginalized people and groups." This thought is   reinforced in the comments of many respondents preoccupied with the growing gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' in society.

Governance

As study participants reflected on their perceptions of important social problems, other issues that disturbed them are issues of governance. Public policy decisions are being made that affect the nature of our caring system but without the participation of knowledgeable individuals and groups, without supporting data or without pilot projects to prevent adverse effects on people's lives. The increasing privatization of the not-for-profit sector is justified only on ideological grounds that the market is more efficacious. Massive changes are overburdening the existing system creating problems of service quality, accessibility, appropriateness, and volunteer and paid staff burnout.

Social Problems and Persistence Through Time

We asked those participating in the study the question "*Why do you think these problems have persisted over time?"* Their replies move us to discussions of root causes and processes that must be addressed as a precondition to the solution of the problems discussed. It is a look at the "underside" of a prosperous community located, by international standards, in a prosperous province and country. One agency informant answers with yet another question: "How do we provide for the vulnerable? Their needs are multifaceted ranging from income to housing. [Truly,] our community is only as healthy as its poorest people."

The persistence of these problems is due to a number of factors, as discussed below:

Changing Values of Collective Responsibility

A number of respondents believe that dominant values in society today deify the individual at the expense of the collective. One respondent from a service club captures this identified loss by the following statement: "We lack the French concern with the common good: 'la vie ensemble.' We are permitting society to create a layer of 'disposable' citizens." Another colleague from a community organization writes:

> "One factor is what I call the influence of the market place. Materialism is a dominant value in our society and our greed becomes evident. Individuals have become prepared to sacrifice the collective good for individual gain. This may seem overly harsh, but I think it is a part of a reality that needs to be faced."

This point of view is complemented and reinforced by responses that identify a sense of independence that focuses only on me and mine. One respondent explains it: "The emerging independence means I'm responsible for only my family, and myself; 'interdependence' fails."

Equity

The continued existence of the social problems discussed in this section is also traced to inequities in government policies such as changes in the federal government's transfer payments to the provinces[10] and to "general government cutbacks, inequities in the tax structure and the continuing inequality of income distribution. The problem is that equitable sharing does not exist." This exacerbates the circumstance of the vulnerable in society.

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[10] In 1996, the Federal Government repealed the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) and replaced it with the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST). For the 30 years between 1966 and 1996, the Canada Assistance Plan had governed provincial social assistance programs in Canada. In order to be eligible for federal cost-sharing, CAP required provinces to provide assistance to all persons in need, regardless of the cause of that need. By focussing attention on the fact of need, CAP reflected the view that poverty was less the result of individual failings and characteristics than of broader structural problems in the economy. Thus, CAP contributed to a social policy environment where access to needs-tested welfare for basic needs was understood as a right of citizenship. The CHST eliminates all standards for provincial welfare systems except the prohibition on residency requirements. CHST has eliminated any requirement that provinces provide assistance to all persons in need. This represents a major shift in Canada's philosophy of social assistance and, ultimately, our practice of it.

Structural Organization of Society

A few respondents suggest that the problems discussed above will be with us always as they – greed, for example – are inherent in the human condition. Rather than believing them innate to human beings, others identify the continuance of these social issues as relative to the organization of our economic and social systems**.** As one key informant states, "Society is structured to have these realities." Another suggests that "these issues are motherhood issues and will always be of concern, for life is not perfect. It is improbable that we will ever get rid of these entirely." One member of a community group suggests that "these issues will always persist to some degree or another. We should strive to reduce [their] impact."

Structural issues are created by the organization of our social and economic systems, and as such can be modified or changed. Some informants intimate that reducing the impact makes us confront the lack of leadership and political will in our community.

Leadership and Lack of Political Will

Innovative ideas, knowledge created through community-based research, vast experience in the field and potential new partnerships between sectors could be channeled into resolving these issues. However, this is not happening on any scale that will generate significant results. A leadership vacuum is identified over and over again by all participating in the study. No one escapes criticism, not politicians, bureaucrats, not-for-profit sector directors, or business leaders. All bear some responsibility for the circumstances of many people in the Oakville community and for the continued existence of the myriad of social problems that affect individual and community quality of life, respondents affirm.

Many respondents believe that Oakville's general affluence hides existing pockets of poverty, allowing decision-makers and the general public to minimize if not ignore the suffering of those not sharing in the opportunities existing in Oakville. They state:

> "There is a discrepancy in levels of income and life circumstances
> which are hidden in Oakville. This allows the community a certain

> amount of denial which breeds poor planning and a slow response to critical survival issues."

> "Two things push these problems aside – the lack of money and an attitude of the rich that deny any problems exist in Oakville**.**"

It is within this context that many remark on the lack of leadership of elected politicians. Their concern and disillusionment emanates from their commentary.

> "The government representatives as well as town representatives have not felt it a priority to improve."

> "There is no political will to address them. It is the 'not in my backyard' syndrome."

> "Political actions or lack of. It takes ages for some decisions to be made. I believe that improvement [would occur] if our governments worked more as a team instead of blaming the 'other' level of government for delaying decisions."

> "Politicians set policy [which allows] action. The mentality of politicians is to maintain the status quo. Social issues [problems] are seen as debit, not an investment in the long-term."

> "There is a lack of political will to permit participation. It is the individual acceptance of 'the old way is the only way.' There is a lack of forum in which to permit input. It is self interest versus the community interest."

When action to alleviate these social problems does occur, the funded agency respondents and representatives from community organizations concur that such actions are, at best, limited. They relate:

> "The rich get richer and the poor get poorer! There is no commitment to the needs of families and children by community or politicians - people get what they demand."

> "Our [programs represent] a Band-Aid approach. More resources
> should be allocated to get to the root of the issues."

Awareness and "Being Informed"

Respondents unanimously believe that large sectors of the public remain uninformed of the social issues facing their community. Many respondents assert that our inability to resolve social problems throughout our community is due to our lack of understanding or knowledge of their root causes. As one respondent declares: "We do not look at the foundation from which a problem springs. As a matter of fact, we often do not look at the real problem." Another states: "[The] corporate world needs to become more aware of what the lives of the have-nots are really like. When you are unfamiliar with the true issues in others' lives, it is human nature to cast judgement. Those working in the human services can see more readily what the issues are that families face. This creates more tolerance. How do we extend this to the corporate sector?"

This lack of understanding and knowledge is intricately linked to our lack of a long-term vision that establishes social policy, programs, and community-based action that prevents the onset of a crisis or problems. Many suggest that the development of a shared vision and long-term strategies for social development must be based on adequate research and program development. One respondent indicates the need for "more public awareness, officials to acknowledge there is a problem and to try and alleviate pressures."

Long-Term Vision and Prevention

Respondents believe that the community does not pay enough attention to prevention. It is not the principle underlying many of our activities. One respondent sums up this concern.

> "We are not appreciative of the need to identify young children
> and families that are at risk or are vulnerable and put supports in
> place to help them so that the long-term difficulties can't develop.
> …We need a working model [of how to] fix the problem rather
> than how to intervene when the crisis happens. Also, we do not put
> enough money into [human] services."

Another respondent suggests that meaningful solutions must be holistic and integrated. She suggests that while "funding dollars are needed, there is a lack of an integrated solution." A colleague asserts that long-term strategy building on prevention requires "community development, which is not a priority."

Research and Development

One key informant articulates the need for good data to understand community needs. Another key informant insists further that "information for decision-making cannot be based on propaganda, but [rather] on analysis." Funded agency and community group respondents share the perception that few resources are put into research and the development of alternative policies and programs. Experimentation and pilot project are considered a luxury. One respondent asserts: "Social planners haven't spent enough time and/or money looking at these human service issues. The concern seems to be the dollars required for research and development. These areas need to be looked at simultaneously with land use and physical planning issues." Another states: "More attention to the good research that is out there [is needed]. Identifying early problems for families and providing the right supports they need – be it daycare, education, training, mental health – to develop their own capacities to manage." "We need a very positive approach based on excellent planning."

Practice

Respondents from funded agencies and from community organizations do not hesitate to question their own practice and how this, in fact, contributes to divisiveness that does not permit the successful resolution of the myriad of social problems continuing in the community. They suggest a lack of leadership on the part of agencies is a critical part of the problem. In addition, they critique the 'territoriality' evident in the practice of many agencies and groups where interests are so vested in survival that change cannot occur. The following examples delineate this point of view:

> "Until [the agencies] stop their turf protection and work in
> partnership and develop alliances, it won't change. People cannot
> accept change."

> "Stakeholders need to be shaken up. It is an 'old boys network.' There is elitism. There is unwillingness to change, a lack of recognition of what needs to be done. They don't know how to build consensus because of diverse communities. There is a great distance from [their work] and the real world, they only want to protect their backyard."

> "Resources already exist in the community. There are good programs. We don't always need 'new' services, sometimes we just need more or better of what we've got. Don't need to re-invent wheel. Important to look at what already exists."

> "The basic thrust in these agencies is to maintain the status quo or try to 'control' the innovation."

While issues of territoriality have existed over time, often reflecting the historical development of the not-for-profit sector, the volatility of funding – sources, levels, knowledge and logic (core vs. projects) – clearly exacerbates these issues in the struggle for survival. This is an issues for agencies and, most importantly, for funders.

Community Residents: Thoughts on Continuing Social Problems

The questionnaire sent to residents throughout Oakville was intended to check the perceptions of our key informants, funded agency, and community organization respondents with those of Oakville residents. We explored with residents whether they concur with the human service problems identified in reports about Oakville. Figure 16 illustrates their responses. The residents consider no previously identified human service issue unimportant or no longer relevant. Eighty percent of the residents consider four concerns – employment, income needs or security, violence, and education – as relevant continuing problems. Issues such as shelter, food needs, daycare, long-term care, transportation, community awareness, and volunteerism are a continuing concern for between 60 and 70% of the residents. No issue falls off the list of human service problems. The perceptions of service providers are thus congruent with those of Oakville residents.

Figure 40 - Relevance as Continuing Problem
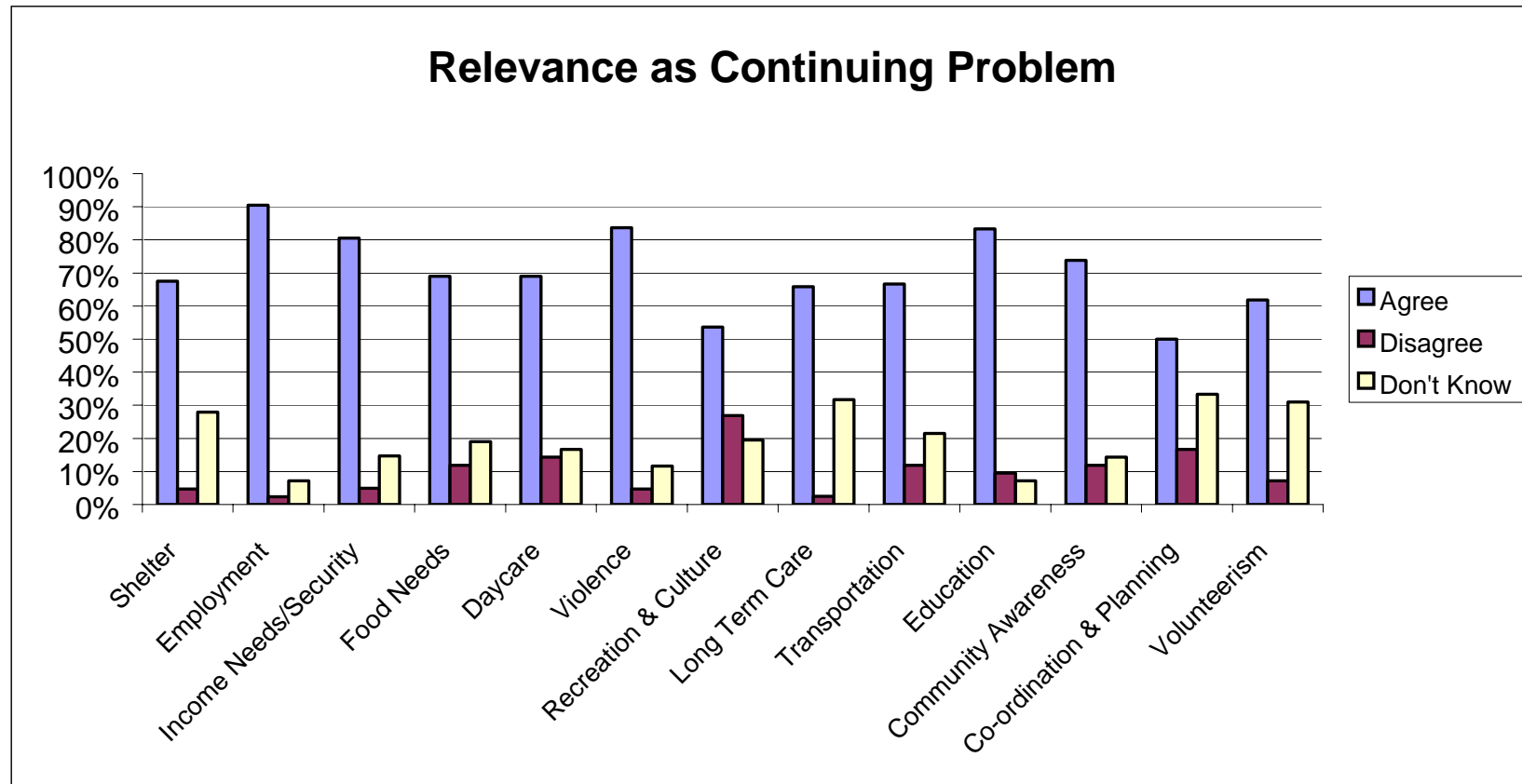
4. FUTURE ACTION TO ALLEVIATE SOCIAL PROBLEMS: NURTURING SOCIAL CREATIVITY

Most respondents readily admit that the search for solutions to alleviate the continuing social problems in a community is not easy. It requires the will of multiple sectors of the community in the form of partnerships, a disposition to unmask reality rather than obscure it, good and reliable information, debate on the full nature of problems, consensus-building, financial and human resources, the identification of community assets, and creative social experimentation.

This section, based on the comments and written responses of all respondents including residents of Oakville, points to concrete action strategies to be adopted by members of the community including community residents, the private sector, funders, agencies and groups and government. This section establishes the challenges that emerge from the voices of the respondents in this research. For analytical and discussion purposes, we have categorized their responses.

Paradigm Shift: New Ways of Looking at Each Other

The solutions to social problems affecting one group in our society ultimately affect us all. A number of respondents reflect on the loss of responsibility to the collective and express the notion that we must revisit our values associated with collective well-being.

A funded agency respondent, reflecting on how to resolve the social issues discussed in this section, declares: "Heaven only knows. We need a huge shift in how we look at life, at others. We must realize that we are our brother's keeper. There must be a move away from materialism." A colleague suggests that we also need a "paradigm shift" where local government sees itself as part of the community rather than threatening its existence with cutbacks. Another respondent feels that there are "pressures [to adopt] corporate thinking and the corporate model that do not fit the not-for-profit sector", suggesting that new ways of thinking about the not-for-profit sector need to be developed so that it can continue to be a vibrant part of civil society.

Participation

Respondents believe that the active participation of people, as individuals and through organizations, contributes to the clear identification of community issues and social problems and the mobilization of community assets to resolve them. The rigidities of government and the lack of flexibility of agencies often inhibit creative responses to social issues. As one key informant advises: "Encourage and let people develop goals and identify outcomes. Empower them to work towards them. Government should be less restrictive as it sometimes acts as a deterrent." Another key informant emphasizes the need for "a participatory consultative approach." Another sees no reason that community views could not be actively sought. "Hold focus groups where opinions are sought."

Others argue that often at the decision-making table important actors are not present, or if they are participating, their voice is neutralized by unreasonable constraints or boundaries placed around their deliberations. Necessary to alleviate problems is the active "... involvement of grassroots community services which attack basic and local problems," argues one representative of a community organization. A colleague states: "The citizens will be the innovators. They will see the way to accomplish something that the structured service group thought was not possible." Another envisions this: "Ideally, and in a democracy, citizens should have a large voice. I think people suffer from a surplus of powerlessness and feel change is impossible." Respondents indicate the need to mobilize all citizens in the community. "Their role is to volunteer in their community, to advocate and be politically active on issues, to speak out and advise government officials, planners, etc." is how one funded agency sums it up.

Others suggest that awareness of one's community and the challenges faced by diverse residents are predicated upon involvement in the community. This knowledge helps one act constructively. One response indicates citizens "need to be informed, knowledgeable [so as to make] good choices to elect the right people and to advocate. To contribute monetarily and provide their time or expertise by volunteering."

Developing Active Partnerships

Developing active partnerships is one way of working in a community. However, partnerships are meticulously constructed and, in fact, can be quite diverse. Partnerships are based on a network of relationships founded on trust, where people in the community and business cooperate and collaborate as they work towards common goals that create positive changes. Together, different sectors bring synergism to a problem-solving activity.

Partnerships are built around an issue identified as important by a number of actors in the community. One respondent from a community organization comments: "We need more community projects [where] we define a key problem and involve business, local government and the not-for-profit sector to dedicate themselves to alleviating it." A colleague states: "[There needs to be] support from all levels of government and the corporate community. Human services have largely been hampered by the struggle to survive." A funded agency respondent emphasizes "the willingness of agencies to partner and to do business in new ways" while another says, "We need improved co-ordination and greater involvement of key players to make sure the right people involved in process."

Adequate Funding

Funding is an issue of investment in a system of social supports that creates opportunity for many in a society. Unfortunately, a prevailing set of values suggests that social investment at this time is not possible, that human services are a superfluous set of activities serving only a few, that these services are costly and that those working in this field are somehow less competent than those in the private sector and that they should be made accountable, as if they were not, for what they do and how they spend. A response from a community organization indicates, "The attitude that only those who produce 'things' (for sale) are really working" supports those beliefs, while another colleague adds, "[There is a] belief that social issues are liabilities." The value set maintains that, unlike the physical development of our community, social development does not need an infrastructure. These values are repudiated by the key informants, the respondents of funded agencies and community organizations and Oakville residents themselves.

Four important points emerge in this study related to funding: i) funding should reflect a society's and community's vision of social supports; ii) funding must be commensurate with the job to be done; iii) funding should recognize the value of the not-for-profit sector; and iv) fundraising at the agency level takes energy away from the 'business of the agency.' The development of partnerships, especially with the private sector, is seen as a vital development to the stability of funding for services. Respondents indicate that the private sector needs to share social responsibilities.

One community organization respondent states: "The not-for-profit sector would benefit from secure funding - not limping from grant to grant." Another adds, "Much of their time is spent fundraising. [This is] very frustrating when they need to be working on their missions." "There needs to be adequate funding for social support agencies, or professional staff are [spending their time] fundraising rather than serving the agency and the community," is how one funded agency responds.

These issues have been identified before, and consensus on their importance is evident again in this study. However, as one funded agency representative laments, "Various services [problems] have been identified again and again, ... but funds are just not put into it. We need to put funds into them." Another respondent argues further, "We must reinvest in social services and community economic development. It is time that we create long-term solutions..."

Planning At All Levels

Respondents believe that research and development is an important way to confront the social issues facing the Oakville community. They support the need for applied research, for the compilation of information, and for a critical analysis of that data as important to informed decision-making. Planning and the implementation of demonstration projects point to successes that can be more fully implemented in the future. Not only is the identification of new ways of meeting social issues important but also the changing social environment argues, according to one community organization representative, for "co-ordinated responses at all levels of

government and among the community agencies." Planning activities should focus on 'root causes' and the development of preventive programs that will affect the lives of people over the long term. "[Funders] need to engage the not-for-profit sector in planning – real planning" states a respondent from a community group.

Education and Awareness

One important area identified is information. With information about the community, citizens, organizations, and politicians can promote the development of a healthy community. Providing information to the community about services and gathering information about needs within the community are key. Furthermore, information about what a healthy community constitutes and the role that every citizen has in its implementation is vital. One funded agency suggests, "We need to have the community see the whole community. There needs to be more awareness of services, rather than just talking about it. How can they make decisions when they don't know or see services being provided? We need to involve the decision-makers." Another states simply, "We need to identify need and respond to it." A community organization responds, "Someone has to identify a need and others need to agree that something should be done."

Advocacy and Lobbying

Associated with good information is the ability of all citizens in the community to be able to participate, to plan, and to advocate. One key informant suggests, "Let people develop and identify outcomes and goals. Empower them to work towards a healthy community." A community organization respondent states, "[The need to] become aware of the needs being met already and those which are not, consulting with the people to improve and establish programs to help and to encourage involvement by many people in the community." Another community organization response indicates the need to "involve people from all areas (social, economic, ethnic, etc.) in the planning and implementation process." People need to be challenged to know what is in it for them when they contribute to the community. It is through this shared knowledge of the community that planning, collaboration, and above all, a shared vision, can be developed and promoted.

Community participation is crucial for Oakville to grow as a healthy community. Respondents indicate that there is a need to create forums and avenues for citizens to express their concerns and their ideas. It is through the support of all facets of the community - government, business, not-for-profits, and residents - that a healthy community can be realized. As one community organization respondent envisions, "[Citizens need to] learn how to be advocates for when it's not just their family or concerns, but for others in need."

Volunteerism

The respondents are all aware that one of Oakville's community assets is the involvement of community members as volunteers in the myriad of activities that strengthen community, build social cohesion, and influence quality of life. However, volunteers and volunteerism as a community development practice must be nurtured and supported. Respondents highlight the need for citizens to be involved and participate as volunteers and as voters; to think innovatively; to work collectively, taking responsibility and leadership within the community. "Citizens need to think differently, to get out of the "box", be innovative," is how one key informant puts it. The comments of the study respondents points out the issues faced by volunteerism if it is to continue to be a force in the community.

> "Let volunteers know their value no matter how big or small their commitment. Allow volunteers to learn and take on more responsibilities."

> "You volunteer and you are asked to do your bit or contribution. If you do a great job then you are jumped on to do more and more."

> "We are living in a world where we are burning out volunteers."

> "People are very tired and have their own problems and are [simply] involved in getting by day-to-day, so it is hard for individuals to get involved [as volunteers]."

Leadership

Respondents indicate the need for strong and visionary leadership in the community in order to forge ahead toward a healthy community. Many see this as chiefly the responsibility of government. A funded agency respondent states, "Government has to be able to take leadership to make this happen and be receptive to change, to allow agencies to be creative." Government also plays a leadership role in encouraging the participation and involvement of the community. One respondent writes, "[Government plays a] facilitating role. 'Buying in' role – let the community know why healthy community is important. Prodding – encouragement – help people get involved." Another indicates: "Government is a key funder. There is an obligation to strongly lead through funding, resources, and policies. They should help identify needs and meet them. This is an issue of leadership", while another states "Better leadership is required at all levels of government - better co-operation, regard for work that has been completed and more heed given to recommendations from the numerous studies undertaken." As one respondent states, "Politicians don't come and see the services. If they are not aware and they are leaders, how are the rest of community meant to know?"

Oakville Residents: Strategies to Alleviate Problems

The survey sent to Oakville residents asked if they concur with the strategies, identified by key informants, funded agencies and community organizations, to alleviate continuing human service problems. Their responses are illustrated in Figure 17. Again, Oakville residents agree with the strategies identified by the other study respondents. Over 80% of the residents agree that strategies to alleviate problems should require: i) the participation of the community in decision-making processes; ii) adequate funding; iii) planning and co-ordination at all levels; iv) community education and awareness; and v) volunteerism. "Developing active partnerships" is the only strategy not receiving significant agreement as to its importance. Over 50% of the Oakville residents did not know if developing active partnerships is a good strategy to alleviate problems. This is a phenomenon that warrants further investigation, since partnerships were deemed important by many of the other respondents.

Strategies to Alleviate Problems
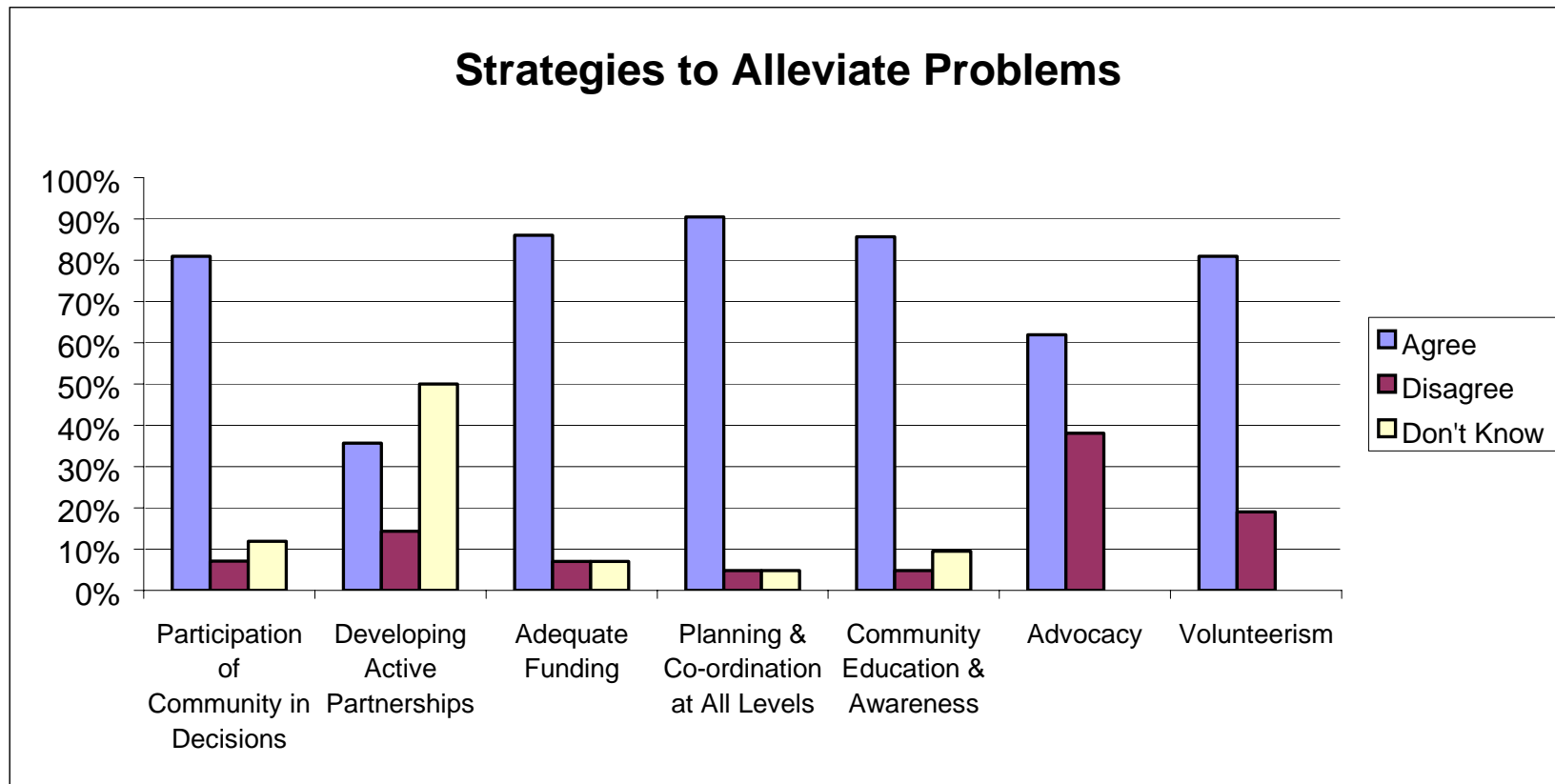
Figure 41 – Strategies to Alleviate Problems

5. OAKVILLE: FROM THE LOCAL TO THE GLOBAL

The last decade has made us aware of the impact of events far removed from local neighbourhoods. Decisions made in the global market place, whether in London, Frankfurt, Buenos Aires, Hong Kong or Singapore, affect social and economic development on our front door. Simultaneously, both the federal and provincial governments have implemented dramatic changes in the form of decentralization and devolution of responsibilities. This restructuring, and in effect, this reassessment of government responsibilities interacts to heighten the impact of globalization at the local level. Consequently, respondents were asked about the influence of globalization and decentralization/devolution on the role of Oakville not-for-profit organizations and the individuals and families they serve. Respondents do see a relationship between global trends, restructuring and local issues. The consensus is that the changes occurring at the global level will profoundly affect the organization of supports at the local level. Their responses and discussion are summarized in the following section.

Increased Pressure

Respondents believe that not-for-profit agencies will feel increased pressure to meet rising demands for social and health services. However, they also feel that the increasing demands will not be met with increasing financial resources for service expansion in a financial environment marked by fiscal restraint and fewer resources being made available. A response by one key informant that captures the sentiments of the many is: "[Fewer] dollars will be available and agencies will have to be creative to get their own financing." Respondents sense that our environment is characterized by "more competition for dollars from government and as a result some agencies will close while others will implement user fees." One respondent states simply: "Services are in jeopardy. The community must replace funding or services will be eroded." Under this increasing pressure, one key informant raises the question: "Will social agencies be able to deliver good services? How?"

This stress will increase the pressure associated with work in our caring agencies and groups. A number of respondents mention the "stress, confusion and fear" associated with the multiple

changes occurring in our socio-economic and political environment. One funded agency talks articulately about the history and uncertain future of human services:

> "... and how many services grew out of an identified need but in [the present] identified need or not, the service will not be in place. There will be a lot of confusion and fear. ... We ask what will happen in the future with issues of equity where those communities with resources will have services and those that don't will not have them. There will not be equal standards. What will the system look like?"

Quality of Service

Those working in United Way-funded agencies and community organizations are unanimous in their perception that if society values and desires that continuum of supports provided by agencies and community organizations, which sustain and assist many people in our community at different moments of their lives, then they cannot further reduce the resources flowing to this sector. These social and health supports are not just for the poor and most vulnerable but serve people from all socio-economic groups and from all ethnic backgrounds. The dilemmas described by those in the field clearly suggest that the quality of service provision will be negatively affected by the changes occurring in our political and economic systems. One community group captures this view:

> "We are a society that wants more service but does not want to pay. There is also the perception that bigger (amalgamation of services) is better. Social services need to become just as important as road repair and industrial growth."

Another funded agency respondent continues: "With downloading and less funds, yet more services needed with population growth ... agencies can't reduce services any more." He continues suggesting that the push for agencies and groups to engage in more fundraising has consequences: "Agencies are having to do more fundraising and this [translates] into decreases in service and program time."

Another respondent from a community organization summarizes the situation this way:

> "Following Thatcher and Reagan, Canadians have bought too much into the new financial directions of deficit and debt reduction. This must occur over years. Without greater support, voluntary agencies will be unable to support a necessary, basic infrastructure. The reaction of the public will become political."

In addition, another colleague from a funded agency puts forward a concern shared by many:

> "We are going to be asked to do more with less, even though it is already occurring and we are stretched. In theory, devolving sounds good, but in reality, government is just abandoning its responsibilities. The actual ability for the community to care for itself is not the same as it used to be..."

One respondent from a funded agency suggests emerging contradictions in agency practice that will affect the quality of service. "[The changing environment will] make people work more efficiently, but also it will reduce hours of service available. It will appear more streamlined but not enough time or staff will exist to service the clients."

Funded agencies suggest that the uncertainty and stress in our society produced by factors such as globalization, and the devolution of government responsibilities to lower levels, with fewer resources, sets in motion other patterns as exemplified in the following comments:

> "... since less money is available, there is a push to create multi-agencies that may be efficient but lose touch with the needs of the community."

> "... demand is increasing but smaller agencies suffer. Larger agencies have more dollars for the promotion of their organizations to the public. Competition for donors and support is escalating. Whom do we target in our fundraising?"

> "... introduce user fees to respond to the change?"

> "They won't get the quality of service. They may get no service. There will be longer waiting periods. People will fall between the cracks. The [job] satisfaction of service providers is down and they are burning out."

> "We will see community chaos with many competing priorities. ... not-for-profits will be minimized, more level accountability for not-for-profits. They want accountability to taxpayers. The way we do business will change. People will want to know changing needs and trends. [On the other hand,] more responsibility is being placed on community, but there are no funds to do anything with. What kind of financial responsibility is that?"

Also, the decrease in funding for research is highlighted by one community agency which believes that this will effectively prevent agencies from being proactive in meeting changing demands or facilitating the adoption of best practices. "...Scary thought!"

But out of these difficult times some believe that new challenges and opportunities have arisen. A minority suggests that the changing environment "will force greater accountability, for our sector hasn't taken good care of resources." Some feel that new relationships must be developed with the private sector and new partnerships with other agencies and groups in the not-for-profit sector. While this may be the form of the future, creative expression is needed to make this concrete. How different mandates, interests, and values will be accommodated is one part of the challenge emerging in these times.

Another opportunity mentioned by a few respondents is that the devolution of responsibilities to local levels of government may open the door to greater community involvement which, in turn, could make services and support more sensitive to community needs and community idiosyncrasies.

One respondent comments that the pressures associated with sustainability of an agency and the sector is only exacerbated by the rate of change inherent in globalization and federal and provincial restructuring. The representative states: "The rate of change will impact heavily on agencies, they will need to understand the changes and shifts [in order to] respond quickly."

Another believes that the trend is set and to increase sensitivity to rising demand for social goods will require "lobbying by large numbers of the population to push the government agenda to [include] more money for [human services and social supports]. Another believes that the pressure will continue to increase until we find a more stable period!"

Changing Ideology of Care

Some respondents point out that the provision of services is being defined be some as a matter for the community, that it is the responsibility of individual communities and individuals within those communities to care for those in need. This places new demands on the community, as evidenced in the words of one respondent: "Government is divesting itself of funding [services], and now there is more need for the community, [including] business and industry, to meet this need." This complements the concern of another key informant who believes that government is saying, "Communities, take care of yourselves." He believes that agencies need to step forward and assume the challenge of less funding by "...amalgamation which will be a reality. Groups need to cooperate and reduce inefficiency and merge with others." However, agency respondents are more skeptical of this point of view as evident in this comment of one representative of a funded agency: "Government devalues the services in the community because they are removed from the community." Another argues that "government doesn't realize their return from the voluntary sector."

The philosophy pushing responsibility for those in need onto local communities also emphasizes the responsibility of "families to look after their own ... that government funding won't be there."

Growing Gap between Haves and Have-Nots

The impact of the processes of globalization and devolution on the different population groups in Oakville is described by key informants as dramatic. Capturing the perceptions of many, one states: "The effects will be to widen the gap between haves and have-nots ... supported by the disappearing trend 'to take care of your neighbour'." He continues by adding, "Those already on social assistance will feel the crunch faster." Another observer of economic and social change in Halton states: "[We] will pay dearly for the bigger gap between haves and have-nots....

companies are stripping themselves of employees/managers ... it has the potential to greatly impact on social service agencies."

The key informants envision negative consequences of this growing disparity for many population groups. The following comment demonstrates this.

> "The old will be more isolated, marginalized, with a poorer quality of life ...their world will shrink, their capacity to contribute will narrow. Our youth are wondering... they don't study ... there is no room for them. Families that are single-parent [families] did not choose this but they must fight for survival. [In these cases], how do we define quality of life?"

These concerns are reiterated by respondents from funded agencies and those of community organizations. They believe that the times in which we are living bring the following:

> "[It will be] a lot harder for those already vulnerable, they will be in crisis as supports are withdrawn."

> "... potentially more poverty, less health care and more family stress leading to family breakdown"

> "Child poverty will increase"…"kids lacking supports will be further marginalized"

> "Fewer opportunities for clients to get their lives on track"

> "Seniors will exhaust savings paying for ... services"

> "Anger turning to violence ...We will see an increase in violence and crime."

Privatization and Commercialization of Human Services

An underlying concern of many respondents is the shift in the human service system from one based in the not-for-profit sector to one reliant on the private sector. They lament that private for-profit agencies are in competition with not-for-profit agencies. One agency representative caught amidst the privatization and commercialization of service states: "The effect is devastating. I estimate 1/3 of our clients will seek support in private agencies; another 1/3 will seek support from family and friends, and another 1/3 will be in trouble."

Two-Tiered System of Services

The prospect that access to social and health services will rest on an ability to pay basis raises the spectre of a two-tiered system of human services – one for those who can pay and another one – a public system for those without resources. In other words, the future holds a seemingly efficient, modern and supposedly competent system for those with financial resources and one based on charity and shortcomings for the 'have-nots'. One respondent summarizes the situation as follows:

> "Not-for-profit organizations are being squeezed at all levels. We are becoming 'Americanized' where significant changes will lead us into a two-tiered system. We will be [characterized] by being leaner, meaner, with less resources and less accessibility."

Greater Reliance on Volunteerism and Self- Help Movements

Respondents see two other trends as part of the future scenario resulting from the globalization of the economy and devolution of responsibilities on the other. Clearly the thrust back to the local calls upon the volunteer ethos that helped build many of our communities. But as one respondent from a service club warns: "Volunteerism isn't free. It needs support." The role of volunteerism as a community asset nurturing caring through citizen involvement is discussed more fully earlier in this document.

The other trend identified is a growing reliance on self-help movements. As limited human and financial resources bind the service of agencies and as the capacity to pay for a service increasingly defines access, it is felt that the need for self-help groups will grow.

6. CONCLUSIONS

> Caminante, no hay camino
> Se hace camino al andar.
>
>
> Traveller, there are no paths
> Paths are made by walking.
>
>
>   Antonio Machado

> "Healthy communities are those in which citizens are well-educated, enjoy good physical health, have the economic means to meet their basic needs, and experience an environment which is safe and of a high quality. Complementary to this and equally important to a healthy community is an environment wherein citizens, public agencies, and other organized sectors can have meaningful input into the affairs and decision-making that affect the community."
>
> (Research questionnaire, Oakville Community Audit)

This study has been conducted because the United Way of Oakville believes it must do what it can to help Oakville become a truly healthy community. The study's focus is primarily on the ways in which citizens, not-for-profit organizations, and government can work together to achieve this end.

Oakville: An Audit of a Community in Transition, documents, through the eyes of people who work and live there, its changing social landscape and the state of its social health. Together, their gestures and words weave a pattern of community attributes and challenges that belong uniquely to Oakville. In addition, an analysis of census variables describes statistically elements in this changing landscape. The qualitative and quantitative data used in this study complement each other and make the analysis of each more profound.

The research team conversed with workers in Oakville offices, walked the streets to workplaces, and read handwritten responses to inquiries about Oakville. Today they feel they have a special

knowledge of this place, its strengths, and its weaknesses. They also feel deeply the frustrations and fears expressed by those who live and work there.

The voices of the respondents cry out one word above all others: change. Services are changing, institutions are changing, governments' roles are changing, workplaces are restructuring, families are in flux, social tensions are omnipresent, and belief in social solidarity appears to be giving way to individual responsibility only for one's self and one's own. Everyone wants everyone else to be accountable, yet the word remains vague and ambiguous. These realities do not generate or support an environment based on trust and reciprocity.

Thus, the research unveils some of the imbalances in our world which are manifest in the lives of people as they live, work, and play in Oakville. There are no easy answers, and our path in this research is filled with ideas and questions that must be clarified in the search for good social investment strategies and good program options. Nevertheless, this sense of imbalance in so many aspects of life led the researchers to the conclusion that study respondents are searching for a new framework, shaped by principles of equity, in which to reconfigure the funding and development of policy and program options that support the components of a healthy community. The concerns respondents articulate speak to a need to address not only the micro, but the macro issues that envelop our work, our communities, our lives, creating both difficulties and stress, as well as opportunities.

In the voices of the people who live and work in Oakville, we discern the following:

- A perception that an *immense void exists in vision and leadership*, a void which by its presence creates problems, but which also means there is room to design creative and viable alternatives to resolve the present human service problems in our community.

- A perception that the activity of the United Way and other human service agencies should exist within *a framework* whose description fits that of *sustainable social development.[11]* In

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[11] The United Nations Development Program defines sustainable human development as "the enlargement of people's choices and capabilities through the formation of social capital so as to meet as equitably as possible the

other words, the activities of agencies must, be permitted and encouraged to be, and must be seen as, more than 'units of service'. Rather, they must be conceived of, directed toward, and recognized as contributing to something much bigger – an overall design for the construction of a healthy, more equitable community. Responses indicate that this framework, if it is to be viable, must incorporate objectives such as:

> i) the satisfaction of basic human needs
>
> ii) the encouragement of growing levels of self-reliance,[12]
>
> iii) the growing connection (coherent and consistent relations of balanced interdependence) between people and their environment, people and technology, global processes and local activity, the personal and the social, and between civil society and the state.

- A perception that people should be *active participants* in the development of their community. Clear concern emanates from respondents about the need to create those conditions wherein individual members are the primary protagonists in community development. Little room for the active participation of people occurs in gigantic systems, hierarchically organized, and within which decisions flow from the top down. If problems are to be truly and creatively resolved, frustrated respondents echoed time and again, all members of a community must be involved. These sentiments go well beyond the practices of liberal democracies which, despite best efforts, exclude many people, depriving them of channels of social participation and access to political power.

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needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future generations." They define social capital as the glue that creates social cohesion: "social capital goes beyond building individual human capacity. It recognizes that the enlargement of people's choices and capabilities makes sense only in the context of forms of voluntary collective action. ... People must be encouraged to invest in collaborative relations with each other that stem from their own initiatives rather than from distant official sources. Social capital provides the basis for restoring trust in social and political interactions. Restoring such trust will require that interactions and relations between individuals and social groups are considered as an important aspect of the social and ecological fabric. Indeed it is the complexity and diversity of such non-coercive social regulations that hold societies together and gives them a humane character." (Banuri, Hyden, Juma and River, 1994, pp. 6-7).

[12] Self-reliance is defined in the development literature in the following manner: "Understood as a process capable of promoting participation in decision-making, social creativity, political self-determination, a fair distribution of wealth, and tolerance for the diversity of identities, self-reliance becomes a turning point in the articulation of human beings with nature and technology, of the personal with the social, of the micro with the macro, of autonomy with planning, and of civil society with the state." (Max-Neef, Elizade, Hopenhayn, 1989, p.48).

- A perception that a shared, sustainable social development framework *emphasizes the importance of and deliberately seeks to empower social actors* (leaders), the role of social participation, and the role of local communities in the development of a truly civil society. Such a framework supports a participatory and democratic culture. The challenge is to move people from being the traditional **objects** of development towards taking a leading role in shaping development, for true development must emanate directly from the actions, expectations, and creative and critical awareness of the protagonists themselves.

- A perception that the presence of *visionary leadership that supports social solidarity and community capacity building* is an important issue in the development of a healthy community. Without leadership and vision, people find it difficult to respond to needs in the community beyond their own or those of their immediate families.

- A perception of the need for *critical reflection on the problems facing the community* and, more important, on the urgent need to develop new forms of social, economic, and political praxis. One immediate challenge is the generation of a fruitful and expansive dialogue in pursuit of constructive interpretation of the issues and work on the proposed solutions identified by Oakville agencies, organizations, and residents.

- A perception that we must find *new ways to pursue and share knowledge*, in order to create critical awareness throughout the community. New methods of ensuring and encouraging involvement in participatory research and equally, developing greater variety in the ways that knowledge is shared and communicated, are needed. It is not enough for information to be simply available to people; if it is to be used, digested, thought about, acted upon, that information or other forms of knowledge must be relevant to the interests of the members of the community.

- A perception that public discourse is full of *euphemisms* and worse, *doublespeak*, where words no longer fit with the facts, or become so bloated or vague or ambiguous that they are deprived of meaning. In such a situation, people cease to understand or come to understand

all too well and cease to believe and, as a consequence, become cynical and withdraw, or become impotent, perplexed individuals.

- A perception that we live and work in a way that overlooks the *growing complexity of and interdependence of issues in the society* in which we are immersed. This oversight leads to false debates and the false identification of problems. Solutions are too often designed without understanding or addressing the root causes of the problems they seek to alleviate, or their relationship to one another. The perception exists too that government, funders and agencies arrogantly develop programs for people before we know what people need and want – and what will work for them!

- A perception that the complexity of reality challenges us to adopt *new understandings based on transdisciplinary approaches.*[13] Support for this reorientation comes from the fact that analyzing a specific problem virtually always requires looking at a web of complex issues that cannot be separated easily and cannot often be resolved through the application of conventional policies or praxis founded in traditional disciplines and/or sectors.

- A perception that *human need is **not** constantly changing*. What changes is the particular form or shape those needs may assume in a given community, culture, environment or historical period, as well as the way those needs are satisfied – which again will vary according to community, culture, environment, and historical period. This belief, expressed over and over again by respondents, is of enormous importance for the human services. It clearly implies that our concerns should be focussed not on naming the needs but on finding the current and appropriate way to meet them.

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[13] Transdisciplinary is an approach that, in an attempt to gain greater understanding, reaches beyond the fields outlined by strict disciplines. While the language of one discipline may suffice to describe something (an isolated factor), and interdisciplinary effort may be necessary to explain something (a relation between factors). By the same token, to understand something (a system as interpreted from another system of higher complexity) requires a personal involvement that surpasses disciplinary frontiers, thus making it a transdisciplinary experience. (Max-Neef, Elizalde, Hopenhayn, 1989).

- A perception of *the interrelatedness of social problems* such that we can only conclude that all human needs are interrelated and interactive.

- A perception that *needs are satisfied within three contexts:*
    i) with regard to oneself
    ii) with regard to the social group
    iii) with regard to the environment.

- A perception that we *must reinterpret and greatly expand the concept of poverty.* The traditional concept of poverty is limited and restricted, referring exclusively to the situation of people whose income falls below a certain threshold. The voices of Oakville workers and residents remind us that people in this situation do, despite a certain unwillingness to accept the fact, live in Oakville. Beyond this, their descriptions of difficulties and, especially, their fears about the future give shape to very different forms of poverty - of lack. When real, basic, human needs are not adequately satisfied, there is poverty. Poverty of subsistence exists when people have insufficient income, food, and shelter. Poverty of protection occurs when violence is a threat or the health system deteriorates to a point where it can hurt as often as it helps. Poverty of understanding due to poor quality of education or lack of information; poverty of participation founded in the marginalization of and discrimination against women, children, and minorities. There are in fact many poverties. Each form of poverty generates pathologies – literally "disease" of one kind or another, often of more than one kind.

An example of a persistent problem that currently influences the poverty and well-being of our young people is unemployment. While not a new problem in the industrialized world, all signs currently seem to indicate that unemployment now is different, that it has become virtually a structural component of our current economic system.

People who suffer extended unemployment typically go through an emotional roller coaster experience that includes at least four phases: i) shock; ii) optimism; iii) pessimism; iv) fatalism.

The last phase represents the transition from frustration to stagnation and from there to a final state of apathy, wherein the individual reaches his/her lowest level of self-esteem. In addition, extended unemployment totally upsets an individual's basic needs system. Struggling to achieve subsistence, an individual may well feel increasingly unprotected. Crises in family life are common, with guilt and resentment taking an increasingly destructive toll on affections, support, and participation in relationships. That very lack of participation increases feelings of isolation and marginalization, and declining self-esteem may well generate marital and family breakdown, solace sought in substance abuse, violence, and a host of other pathologies.

And these pathologies not only affect individuals. Given the present circumstances of generalized economic uncertainty, not to say crisis, we can no longer think of pathologies as merely affecting individuals. We must necessarily recognize the existence of collective pathologies of frustration for which traditional treatments are inadequate or ineffective. Although unemployment is caused by economic processes, once it has reached critical proportions, in both quantity and duration, there is no economic treatment capable of solving the problem on its own. It has become an issue of transdisciplinary proportions.

- A perception that we are *obsessed with form*, allowing us to conceal our unconscious fear about the uncertainties underlying the problems. Law is confused with justice, and regulations with efficiency. Generosity is confused with charity and participation with favoritism. Echoes of this are heard often in the voices of respondents.

- A perception that we live in a period of transition which means that paradigm shifts are *not only necessary but also indispensable*.

- A perception that we *must learn to respect diversity in our community* whether it be differences between people or differences in ideas. The coexistence and celebration of many differences enrich us.

- A perception that a *critical and vigorous review of the concepts of efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability* – terms cloaked in self-righteousness and masked by ambiguity – is necessary.

- A perception that *the connection between stable funding of the infrastructure of human services and their ability to serve the community fully and appropriately is still poorly understood by those who do not have to try and provide those services*. A kind of magical thinking persists, imagining that everything can be done with nothing. This thinking is tied to vague, ambiguous, and often misleading, feel-good statements about the importance of community and voluntary action.

- A perception the neither *conventional nor non-conventional resources have been mobilized to support sustainable social development*. In terms of traditional resourcing, the capacities of human service agencies are directly related to the presence of stable, ongoing, core funding. Programs require appropriate levels of funds if implementation is to proceed successfully. There is a perception that in the conventional funding system monetary and financial reforms are needed to allow public and private resources to relate better to local needs and to the disadvantaged. *The role of government as an allocator of resources to favour equitable and sustainable development is reaffirmed.*

On the other hand, there is a growing sense that non-conventional resources must be mobilized in order to build community capacity to support social development. They include i) social awareness; ii) organizational know-how and managerial ability; iii) popular creativity; iv) solidarity and the ability and willingness to provide mutual aid; v) expertise and training provided by supportive agencies; and vi) dedication and commitment from internal and external agents.

Unlike financial resources, non-conventional resources are lost only to the extent that they are not used. Non-conventional resources are plentiful. They also have a tremendous capacity to preserve and transform social energy into deep and lasting change.

- A perception that *true voluntary action (as opposed to merely unpaid work) as a form of community development* fosters creativity, mobilizes social capital and energy, preserves communal identity, deploys solidarity and utilizes organizational experience and popular knowledge for the satisfaction of individual and collective needs.

The clarification of these perceptions with all sectors of the Oakville community is one of the challenges of building a healthy Oakville. As daunting as it may seem, much action is already underway in the community toward this end, and there is much that should be supported. Respondents recommend that the United Way of Oakville adopt the following recommendations and that the family of United Way-funded agencies be encouraged to support these directions through program development:

Recommendations

1.   That the United Way of Oakville's allocations supports the consensus on social issues evidenced in this study by reaffirming the importance of responding to persistent and ongoing social problems. These persistent issues include:

   shelter, employment, income security, food security, daycare, violence, recreation and culture, long-term care, transportation, education and training, community awareness, coordination and planning, volunteerism

2.   That the United Way directs funds to service gaps and critical service problems identified by respondents, particularly issues related to youth and emergency services.

3.   That the United Way ensures that allocations reflect awareness of Oakville's growing cultural and ethnic diversity, and the emerging need for appropriate and specialized services. Of particular importance is the integration of different groups into the community.

4.   That the United Way recognize the crisis in affordable housing in Oakville, as identified
      by respondents and census data, and support through information, education and
      advocacy changes to public policy that will make housing accessible.

5.   That the United Way's allocations recognize that Oakville's population is aging and that
      their needs will be increasing and expanding as resources to support services to them are
      dwindling and disintegrating.

6.   That the United Way takes into active consideration as a subtext in its deliberations and
      allocation process, the presence of poverty of subsistence in Oakville, and of other forms
      of poverty as discussed in this study.

7.   That the United Way acknowledge the legitimacy and value of prevention activities, and
      that allocations toward such activities are supported, alongside allocations to meeting
      current needs.

8.   That the United Way recognizes and actively supports through allocations the
      infrastructural needs of volunteerism in Oakville.

9.   That the United Way acknowledge as legitimate and necessary research, planning, and
      development activities of the not-for-profit sector, encouraging agencies to seek out and
      develop good data, to analyze it well and thoroughly, and to use it in decision-making
      processes and program development.

10.   That the United Way accept the plea of respondents for assistance in creating and
      deepening the understanding of residents and other sectors of the Oakville community, of
      the nature, realities, and exigencies of the not-for-profit sector.

11.   That the United Way encourages, through allocations, the importance of advocacy as a
      legitimate and necessary activity of the not-for-profit sector regarding the issues it seeks
      to resolve and the needs it seeks to meet.

12.   That the United Way of Oakville allocates resources, human and financial, to assisting the community to fill the leadership voids, whether that is the leadership of individuals or agencies.

13.   That the United Way act as a nurturer of new partnerships in the community, actively seeking to connect not-for-profit agencies with members of the business community. Such activities will enhance, not undermine, the support of the business community for the United Way.

14.   That the United Way undertake to support, expand, and create anew, mechanisms, venues, and media that truly permit, invite, encourage, and support true participation in decision-making by all members of the community.

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Appendix I

Interview Schedule:

United Way Funded Agencies

Appendix II

Questionnaire:

Community-Based Agencies and Groups

Appendix III

Questionnaire:

Oakville Residents

Appendix IV

Social Area Maps