

Community Dispatch

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INCLUSIVE CITIES CANADA

Burlington: Community Voices, Perspectives and Priorities

Part 2 – Civic Panel Recommendations

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION

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

COMMUNICATION, AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE

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

education issues and initiatives and provide support and funding to school boards specific to staff training in diversity competency.

- d. that the City of Burlington, in recognition that newcomers bring skills and knowledge that enrich our community, work to establish ongoing partnerships among local authorities, human service agencies and community groups to orient and assist newcomers to Burlington.

Potential considerations of these partnerships are:

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

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

- a. providing appropriate and comprehensive information and contacts in all Canadian diplomatic missions abroad and at all points of entry regarding settlement and employment in Canada including, where possible, information specific to individual communities.

- b. providing comprehensive information on its website and in printed matter to fully inform immigrants about significant challenges to employment for immigrants and the complexities of investment opportunities in Canada.
- c. pursuing a partnership with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to acquire and provide information and contacts regarding settlement services for individual municipalities.
- d. providing funding to human service agencies and other levels of government to provide social supports for newcomers.

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

- a. that the City of Burlington, local authorities and community organizations partner to develop and disseminate educational materials and programs to enable civic knowledge for action.
- b. that the Ministry of Education for Ontario in conjunction with Boards of Education and the partners of Inclusive Cities Canada:
 - i. evaluate the level of student awareness of the functions of all levels of government, and the processes by which young citizens can be engaged
 - ii. evaluate the civics curriculum and TAG (Teacher Advisory Group) programs as vehicles for enhancing student engagement in political, social and economic processes

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

- a. that the City of Burlington, Regional Municipality of Halton and human service agencies actively support the Halton 211 Steering Committee to implement a 211 system for Halton.
- b. that the City of Burlington, working with the Regional Municipality of Halton and human service agencies, explore the implementation of a 311 service.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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

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

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

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

and recommends:

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

adequate income and working conditions, enabling community members to support themselves and their families with a sense of security.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY PROBLEM-SOLVING

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

- a. that the Civic Panel meet with representatives of the print, television and radio media to develop strategies to ensure more and better media coverage of civic life in Burlington.
- b. that the City of Burlington explore the development of an innovative Internet-based Burlington news service that gives full coverage of civic life in Burlington.

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

Our full report is available online at www.cdhalton.ca and those of other partner cities at the website www.inclusivecities.ca.



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