

# Community Dispatch

An InfoFax of Community Development Halton

September 2008

Vol. 13, No. 6

## Canada Votes! – Community & Social Infrastructure

canada  
VOTES!

“Just one question...”

This publication is intended to help you engage with local candidates in the federal election on October 14, 2008. It's all about social issues that impact your community; questions that matter to you; and the role that the federal government can choose to take in addressing them.

Questions raise issues. Questions require candidates to develop a clear position on where they stand. In this document, we cover thirteen social issues affecting communities nationwide today, provide sample questions you can ask your candidates, and include links to more information. By getting involved, you help shape the kind of community in which you live – all it takes is just **one question**.

### Community & Social Infrastructure

Urban populations are growing rapidly both in size and diversity. Poverty is concentrating in particular communities. Poverty intensifies social exclusion, while growth in density and diversity change the framework for social interaction. The social infrastructure of a community is vital in ensuring social cohesion by addressing human needs, such as health

care, recreation, housing, cultural experience, learning, and spaces for gathering and friendship building. Inadequate or inappropriate social infrastructure can be detrimental to communities, perhaps even deadly. However, providing sustainable social infrastructure requires investment from municipal, provincial, and federal levels. The federal government can choose to revitalize public investment in social infrastructure by creating a new, national, collaborative plan that involves all three levels of government.

Attention to our outdated social infrastructure must be as important to the next government as our national highways, bridges, and buildings – what is traditionally referred to as infrastructure. The new reality of urban poverty has refocused our attention on the importance of place. We need to understand neighbourhoods better and the impact they have on the life chances of the children and families who live there. Most importantly, we need relevant, reliable, and timely data on social conditions and social change.

Affordable social data need to be made available to social and community planners through Statistics Canada and other federal departments. More and better social data are needed to meet local planning needs and priorities. A comprehensive plan for change among all three levels of government is important. Local governments provide over 60% of public services, but they receive only 8 cents on every tax dollar. This amount is not sufficient to properly create infrastructure that can deal with increasingly complex social problems. Transportation systems, for example, that make our communities livable can't just be funded locally. The federal government can choose to change the current

level and structure of community investment. We can choose a national leader who believes in grassroots community development, and who envisions how all levels of government could co-operate to equip neighbourhoods with the social infrastructure they need to build happy and healthy communities.

For More Information:

Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)  
[www.fcm.ca/english/view.asp?x=477](http://www.fcm.ca/english/view.asp?x=477)

Canadian Council on Social Development  
 Urban Poverty Project 2007  
[www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2007/upp/](http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2007/upp/)

Infrastructure Canada, Government of Canada  
[www.infrastructure.gc.ca](http://www.infrastructure.gc.ca)

Sources

Federation of Canadian Municipalities. 2007. *Quality of life reporting system reports*. <http://www.fcm.ca/english/View.asp?mp=477&x=767>. (1 Sept. 2008).

Infrastructure Canada. 2006 June. *From restless communities to resilient places: building a stronger future for all Canadians*. [www.infrastructure.gc.ca/eacc-ccevc/alt\\_formats/pdf/eacc\\_rep\\_ccevc\\_rap\\_e.pdf](http://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/eacc-ccevc/alt_formats/pdf/eacc_rep_ccevc_rap_e.pdf)  
[http://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/eacc-ccevc/rep-rap/index\\_f.shtml](http://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/eacc-ccevc/rep-rap/index_f.shtml)

## Community & Social Infrastructure: Key Points & Questions

Canada is urbanizing rapidly, with growing ethno-cultural diversity and widening income gaps between rich and poor.

The growth in density and diversity requires investment in new and expanded social infrastructure.

Municipalities need access to a wide variety of data to understand the changes they are experiencing and to put in place the policies and services needed to keep communities healthy and just.

**Will your party advocate for a national strategy on social and community infrastructure to address the new social realities of the 21st Century?**

**What is your party doing to ensure Statistics Canada has the appropriate resources and guidance to provide cities and communities with the data they need?**

*Canada Votes Papers 2008 is a pan-Canadian collaboration between SPARC BC, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, Community Development Halton, Human Development Council St. John, and Canadian Council on Social Development. Social planning organizations across the country are helping to strengthen communities and work on social justice issues. We also recognize the need to work together around key issues affecting our communities. We have come together to provide this publication on the federal election because we believe that democracy works best when citizens engage in dialogue on important issues.*

*Canada Votes papers outline key social issues and related questions that are important in this election. Asking questions is a way to make sure these issues are on the public agenda. By reading this publication and passing it on, by asking questions and talking about the issues, and especially by voting on October 14, 2008, you can help shape the kind of community in which you want to live.*

**Get Online!**

You can download Canada Votes and find more interesting information online at [www.cdhalton.ca](http://www.cdhalton.ca)



Community Development Halton  
 860 Harrington Court  
 Burlington, Ontario L7N 3N4  
 (905) 632-1975, (905) 878-0955; Fax: (905) 632-0778;  
 E-mail: [office@cdhalton.ca](mailto:office@cdhalton.ca)  
 Web site: [www.cdhalton.ca](http://www.cdhalton.ca)  
[www.volunteerhalton.ca](http://www.volunteerhalton.ca)

A United Way Agency

