

**A REVIEW OF  
SOCIAL PLANNING ACTIVITIES  
IN THE CITY OF TORONTO**

**PREPARED FOR:** Social Development and Administration Division  
Community and Neighbourhood Services Department  
City of Toronto

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**DATE:** June 30, 2004

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, commissioned by the Social Development and Administration Division of the City of Toronto, reviews the state of social planning activities in Toronto and makes recommendations regarding its future directions.

Social planning aims to improve the living circumstances of individuals and communities through research, engagement and action. Social planning can best be described as the foundation for community sector work. Communities themselves, and community agencies and organizations, engage in social planning to:

- Decide what must be done;
- Decide how it must be done;
- Engage and mobilize others

Over the last two decades, social planning has become less research-driven and more community-focused. Social planning has increasingly begun to involve communities defining their goals and dreams, ensuring that communities have the tools and abilities to engage in such work, and that the product of social planning results in some impact. As a consequence, more effort has been placed on generating discussion, debate and dissemination of information, including support for advocacy work.

In recent years, the number of organizations and groups which directly engage in social planning activities has expanded significantly, particularly with the growth of single-issue advocacy groups and networks, which regularly combine social research, community education and mobilization, and policy and media advocacy.

Over the past two decades, as the role of governments has changed significantly and as the economy has experienced major transformations, community agencies providing a range of human services have assumed wider responsibilities while addressing greater needs with fewer resources.

Social planning activities have experienced a similar strain while operating with less support; this includes the ability of communities themselves to mobilize and take action in response to their own self-identified issues and concerns.

The deficit-cutting strategies of the federal and provincial governments have in large measure involved pushing the responsibility for addressing social needs from senior levels of government onto municipalities, the community sector and vulnerable individuals and families.

The cutbacks in funding directly affected the financial picture for the community sector, and also indirectly affected them, for they were faced with increased demands on their services and less capacity to respond as their constituencies were hard hit by reductions in government services and reductions in income support.

Toronto also has changed dramatically in the last two decades, notably in terms of demographic changes (major populations of visible minorities and newcomers) and socio-economic polarization.

Funding constraints with respect to the community sector has meant that newer community agencies, such as those serving newcomer groups, ethno-specific populations, and under-serviced areas (such as the former suburbs of Toronto, which have been historically under-serviced), cannot access the funding necessary to address these growing needs.

These conditions – of demographic change and funding constraints – also created the circumstances where agencies serving ethno-racial and newcomer populations found themselves competing, often unsuccessfully, for funding with existing agencies. This has occurred at the same time as these ethno-racial and newcomer communities are experiencing disproportionate unemployment and poverty rates, not to mention other impacts relating to settlement, cultural adjustment, family strain, language barriers, and discrimination.

There is no getting around the fact that the sum of funding going to social planning activities in this City is inadequate. That assessment is based on several calculations: (1) past levels of funding; (2) the significant and growing role being assigned to the community sector by governments; (3) the tumultuous changes which have occurred with respect to the economy, the functions of governments, and the activities of the community sector, which require major adaptations in approaches and practices.

Indeed, the current constrained circumstances not only impoverish the capacity of the community sector as a whole, it has added to the tension between existing and emerging groups. If funders had wished to neutralize and indeed diminish the community sector, they could have found no better way than to foster internal rivalries and bitterness through heightened competition for diminished resources in a time of increasing community needs.

This report also makes clear that there is a need to ensure equity of funding within the social planning sector. Given the very wide expanse of perspectives and constituencies, these funding decisions should also ensure:

- (1) That equity in social planning is a primary goal, notably on the part of marginalized populations such as ethno-racial, immigrant and refugee communities, Aboriginal communities, poor and working people, women, the disabled;
- (2) That priority be given to the intersection of equity concerns, to address the cumulative impact of polarizing tendencies occurring in Toronto;
- (3) That special attention be given to locally focused activities, to enhance the ability of different communities to address their issues and concerns.

These principles should apply regardless of the overall trend in social planning sector funding, whether it is increasing or decreasing. If the recognition of the implications of a more diverse city is to amount to more than a policy pronouncement, if the pursuit of equity is to include empowering all participants in that process, then funding decisions need to back up these principles.

The funding recommendations propose a shift from a centralized structure of social planning in this City, with its asymmetrical division of funding, to a more decentralized approach to social planning, and a more equitable division of resources.

Nevertheless, there remains a need for these disparate activities to find ways to coordinate their activities, in terms of collaboration around specific projects, developing sector-wide strategies in dealing with funders, as well as building the common infrastructure necessary to support social planning across this City.

This report therefore recommends a network of organizations to reflect the diversity of interests, identities and communities in social planning activities for Toronto.

This report also recommends a network of funders of social planning activities, to facilitate deliberations about priorities in the social planning field between the social planning sector and funders and amongst funders themselves.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This report was prepared by Tom Zizys, Mitchell Kosny and Jennifer Bonnell on behalf of the Social Development and Administration Division, Community and Neighbourhood Services Department, City of Toronto.

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Four social planning organizations were intimately involved in the process contributing to this document. These were:

The Aboriginal Peoples Council of Toronto  
The Alternative Planning Group  
The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto  
The Toronto Neighbourhood Centres

As well, a number of individuals, partly drawn from some of these groups, as well as others who have been intimately involved in social planning activities in Toronto for many years, were of particular help in clarifying and shaping the approach taken in this study. While the views in this report are those of the authors, these individuals assisted us in coming to understand the richness and complexity of social planning in Toronto. Therefore, many, many thanks go to:

John Campey, Executive Director, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (CSPC-T)

Peter Clutterbuck, Social Planning Network of Ontario (SPNO)

Debbie Douglas, Executive Director, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)

Rob Howarth, Coordinator, Toronto Neighbourhood Centres (TNC)

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Dr. Anver Saloojee, Professor, Department of Politics and School of Public Administration, Ryerson University

Uzma Shakir, Executive Director, Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA)

Chung Tang, Executive Director, Chinese Canadian National Council—Toronto Chapter

Finally, much appreciation is also extended to the more than 55 key informants and stakeholder interviewees who agreed to share their views with the consulting team (their names are listed in Appendix A of this report).

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report reviews the state of social planning activities in Toronto and makes recommendations regarding its future directions.

This study had been commissioned by the Council of the City of Toronto at its regular meeting held on July 22, 23 and 24, 2003, on the basis of recommendations arising from its Community Services Committee to authorize a “Review of Community Planning.” The committee report had noted that “community-based or social planning encompasses a range of activities including social policy analysis, research, advocacy, service co-ordination, and capacity building.”

The subsequent Request for Proposal document characterized this study as a “review of community-based planning activities.” Throughout this report, however, we have settled on the term “social planning” and “social planning activities” to define the focus of our work.

It is both appropriate and necessary that this report places a lot of emphasis on defining what social planning is and what its history has been, in broad terms as well as with respect to the specific circumstances to be found in Toronto.

This report is therefore organized as follows:

Section 2 undertakes an extensive discussion of what is social planning, in particular positioning social planning in the context of civil society, social capital, social infrastructure, civic engagement and social inclusion. It also discusses social planning in practice and provides some relevant Toronto examples. It describes the functions of social planning and who it is that engages in social planning.

Section 3 provides the background history to social planning in general, and the specific challenges that have beset social planning in the last two decades, as the role of governments have changed and as our society has experienced significant economic transformations and demographic shifts.

Section 4 reviews the particular circumstances of social planning in Toronto, both in terms of how the broad societal changes have manifested themselves, as well as recounting the dynamics affecting social planning organizations in this city.

Section 5 describes how this study was undertaken, providing greater detail regarding how this study came about and the actual work plan of the consultants.

Section 6 provides a summary of the reports produced by three social planning organizations commissioned to provide input to this process, as well as of over 50 interviews conducted by the consultants.

Section 7 reviews the prominent issues that arose out of discussions facilitated by the consultants involving many of the central participants in the social planning scene in Toronto. These topics ranged from defining the focus of social planning to promoting the principles of diversity and equity, and included practical considerations relating to resources and how social planning activities need to be structured.

Section 8 presents the recommendations of the consultants arising out of this process. It should be stressed that these recommendations are proposed as a package – implementing just one or several of these six recommendations would not advance social planning activities in a way they can and should be advanced in the future.

The report includes a number of appendices. These include the usual appendices citing individuals who contributed in various ways to this study through deliberations and roundtable discussions (see Appendices B to D).

However, Appendix A is distinct, in that it provides four social planning organizations the opportunity to offer their separate comments on this report. These four organizations (the Aboriginal Peoples Council of Toronto, the Alternative Planning Group, the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, and the Toronto Neighbourhood Centres) had been involved in the consultation process, and further were able to provide comments on an earlier draft of this report. Each organization was then asked to prepare a one page overall comment in response to the final version of this report. Their comments have been included without any content editing on the part of the consultants or City staff, to ensure that their perspectives are made available to readers of this report in a completely unfiltered way.

## 2. WHAT IS SOCIAL PLANNING?

Trying to describe social planning can be both easy and difficult. At one level, one can suggest some easy definitions and outline the functions usually associated with social planning.

At another level, social planning has evolved over the last few decades, so that changes in government policy, in the activities of the community sector, and in the evolving demands and expectations placed on social planning, have resulted in changes to how social planning is defined. As a result, what social planning is, or needs to be, is a continuing work in progress.

### **The community sector: some clarifying definitions**

Before one can talk about social planning, one needs to place it in the context of the community sector and in relation to a number of other related concepts. While the following section seems laden with definitions, the purpose is to show the relationship social planning has to the community sector in general and to broader notions related to civil society. As well, these terms will be used throughout the report, so it is useful to have a common understanding of their meaning from the outset.

The **community sector**, also known as the **non-profit** or **not-for-profit sector**, the **voluntary sector** or the **non-governmental sector**, encompasses a wide range of activities, not easily susceptible to one all-encompassing definition. The community sector is probably best explained by several traits:

- Community sector activities involve people **working in common** on mutual goals or initiatives;
- These activities are largely **self-organizing** – the product of like-minded individuals coming together;
- The focus of the work addresses some aspect of **quality of life**.

That focus can involve any number of areas and, without limiting the definition, includes social, cultural, artistic, recreational, spiritual, environmental, neighbourhood and professional interests. It encompasses service organizations, advocacy groups, social justice networks and associations of individuals with common interests.

While a large number of people serve as **volunteers** in this sector (which also reflects the origin of much of this work as charitable or voluntary initiatives), the fact is that this sector has developed significantly as an employer and as a component of gross domestic expenditures.

Of particular relevance here is the term **community agencies**, which refers to that smaller part of the community sector made up of organizations providing a vast array of human services, often supported by funding from the various levels of governments, and less so through volunteer efforts and financial support from the philanthropic sector.

The community sector is part of a larger component of society known as the **civil sector**, including not only organizations and associations but also other ways in which individuals group themselves, such as families, circles of friends, active networks of neighbours, labour unions, congregations and faith groups, clubs and so on. Civil society is usually seen in contrast to the public sector (governments and related bodies) and to the business sector (profit-making enterprises and activities) and for that reason is also sometimes called the **third sector**.

*...social capital provides the trust and expectations of reciprocity required for a well-functioning market economy, and ... anchors the legitimacy of political institutions and respect for the rule of law.*

The emerging focus on civil society in the last decade or so reflects an increasing recognition of the relevance and importance of civil society to the proper functioning of societies, not only as social organisms, but also as economies and as political entities. Of particular importance in this regard is the concept of **social capital**, the value embedded in all the social networks represented through civil society, as well as the norms, practices and learnings which civil society generates. This not merely represents the “glue” that allows people to come together and cooperate around issues or activities important to them, although this is a characteristic important for its own sake. It is social capital which provides the trust and expectations of reciprocity required for a well-functioning market economy, and it is also social capital which anchors the legitimacy of political institutions and respect for the rule of law.<sup>1</sup>

A related term, **social infrastructure**, refers to those institutions which are the building blocks of civil society, the places where the community sector functions (community centres, meeting places, support for organizations to form and grow) and where social capital gets created.

In the context of the terms already discussed, **social development** seeks to strengthen social infrastructure and social capital, in the case of the former, relating more to institutional capacities (organizational capabilities, best practices and so on), while in the case of the latter relating to practices and processes within and between communities and individuals (through networking, mobilizing, convening and educating).

<sup>1</sup> It is no mere coincidence that the concepts of civil society and social capital garnered attention beginning in the early 1990s, just as newly formed democratic, market economies were taking shape in the countries of the former Soviet bloc. It became apparent that supporting the transition from totalitarian, command-driven economies required more than just changing legislation and providing free elections – what was needed to actually make democracy and free markets work were the habits, the frames of mind, the values and the voluntary commitment found in civil society that are taken for granted in Western countries. That lesson is now being learned anew in our own circumstances.

**Community development** can be seen as a subset of social development, supporting the ability of members of a community to address issues of importance to them, through voluntary, self-organized, participative action. This includes providing opportunities for members of a community to come together to discuss and act on matters of concern, ensuring that these processes are inclusive and participatory, and helping to support leadership within the community, allowing for bottom-up approaches.

**Community capacity building** is a comparable term, although the latter may sometimes focus more on developing the particular skills needed to support community development initiatives.

**Civic engagement** relates to the specific activity of involving individuals in a meaningful way around decision-making relating to issues of importance to their lives, and so is particularly linked to both the political process and community development.

**Social inclusion** is a term used to assess the degree to which each member of a society feels that she or he is accepted and can function without barriers in that society. It relates to the basic notions of belonging and recognition. It is represented by the realization of full and equal participation in the political, economic, social and cultural dimensions of life in that society. **Social exclusion** reflects a circumstance where the broader

## **Social planning in action**

### **Example #1:**

### **People and Organizations in North Toronto (POINT)**

*Effective Community-based Social Planning and Service Coordination*

<http://www.pointinc.org/>

POINT is an excellent example of a local social planning agency which involves communities and produces results. With a track record dating back to 1968, POINT has played an instrumental role in advocating for community facilities, services and supports in North Toronto.

A United Way member agency since 1976, POINT provides a range of services including community information and referrals, a North Toronto Human Services Database, social planning and development of social and health services, and local research on service gaps and programming needs.

Key achievements include advocacy and leadership in the development of the North Toronto Memorial Community Centre and the Anne Johnston Health Station in the late 1980s/early 1990s, and development and support for Ewart Angus Homes, a residence for people with Alzheimer's, in the late 1990s. In each of these processes, POINT convened community stakeholders and solicited meaningful community input, while at the same time lobbying effectively with municipal and other levels of government.

POINT continues to provide counselling, information and referral services to North Toronto residents, and to act as a catalyst in responding to local community issues—conducting local research, convening stakeholders, seeding networks, and lobbying government.

mechanisms of society do not appear to work on behalf of all its members, either in terms of recognition through the political process, access to equal opportunity in the economic realm (in terms of jobs, pay and/or opportunities for advancement), fairness in dealings with public services (health, education, policing, access to housing), and the broader sense of feeling welcome in numerous formal and informal ways (from admission to professions, to membership in country clubs, to settlement in neighbourhoods of one's choosing). Social exclusion erodes the sense of legitimacy which political, economic and social institutions require in order to carry out their functions.

**Equity** speaks to the results of various societal processes, whether these are political, economic or social. While traditional liberal notions promote equality of opportunity (that is, having equal chances at the start), equity seeks fairness in the results, having regard to the barriers, both explicit and less obvious, which can have an effect. Equity seeks to overcome all potential forms of discrimination, whether based on age, disability, gender, socio-economic background, race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation.

### **The relevance of the community sector and the broader civil society**

Why this extended description of the community sector and civil society?

For one, the community sector has grown substantially in the last few decades, evolving from largely volunteer bodies with limited paid staff to established, mature organizations, playing increasingly important functions as service deliverers, as participants in government policy making processes, and as vehicles for allowing and encouraging citizens to become involved and engaged with each other as members of a community.

Another reason worth highlighting is the increasing interrelationship between the governmental, business and community sectors. This is not simply limited to instrumental roles – that is, where governments contract community agencies to deliver public services. Rather it is in relation to the concept expressed earlier: the community sector, or more accurately, civil society, is more and more recognized as a critical foundation to the proper functioning of governments and businesses.

It is indeed striking the degree to which both governments and the business sector are regularly emphasizing concepts rooted in a civil society perception of the world. Governments encourage participative, consultative processes and promote civic engagement in order to promote legitimacy of the political process and acceptance of decisions flowing from the exercise of political authority. Businesses increasingly refer to the quality of life of communities as a primary factor in business location decisions, in the development of productive industry clusters, and in support of

*Healthy, vibrant communities are not only essential to positive social life, they are a foundation for the creativity and innovation necessary for economic competitiveness and growth in the new economy.*

the education and training necessary to create a skilled labour force. Healthy, vibrant communities are not only essential to positive social life, they are a foundation for the creativity and innovation necessary for economic competitiveness and growth in the new economy.

Significantly, governments and the business sector are championing the **values** which underpin civil society – notions of involvement, commitment, pursuing goals beyond mere

self-interest, betterment of society, trust, volunteerism. The rhetoric of the electoral stump and of the business luncheon speech resounds with the imagery of civic society principles.

As will be discussed later in this report, the level of funds available to support these activities doesn't begin to match the support voiced for these principles.

## Social planning in action

### Example #2:

#### East Scarborough Storefront

##### *Innovative Local Service Planning*

<http://www.thestorefront.org/>

Located at Morningside and Kingston Roads in east Scarborough, a high needs area with a significant new immigrant population, the East Scarborough Storefront is a unique community space which provides easy access to social services and programs, and a comfortable place to for community groups to gather.

Initiated in 1999 by the Caring Alliance, a coalition of faith communities in the area, the Storefront brought together more than 40 Scarborough social service agencies, organizations and community groups with the goal of improving service coordination and accessibility. With seed money from the Retired Teachers fund, the project attracted core funding support from HRDC. The Storefront opened its doors in February 2001.

The Storefront concept allows local agencies to maintain their unique focus and independence while allowing for better coordination between them. Clients, meanwhile, have a “one-stop-shop” location for services and a community space where they feel comfortable, a clear reflection of positive community-based service planning.

An accountable, transparent and demographic governance structure is an important feature of the Storefront. Regular accountability meetings draw participation from 40 to 70 people, providing an opportunity for community stakeholders to share ownership and control with service provider partners of the consortium.

## Social planning in practice

In this context, **social planning** can best be described as the foundation for community sector work. Communities themselves, and community agencies and organizations, engage in social planning to:

- Decide what must be done (for example, define priorities);
- Decide how it must be done (for example, identify best practices);
- Engage and mobilize others (to give its actions direction and strength).



In short, **social planning represents the R&D (research and development) activities of the community sector**. But it is a form of R&D not limited to research of an abstract nature. It is research that includes knowledge generation by way of data gathering and analysis, but it is also research which is action-oriented, research which community members themselves generate, through dialogue and deliberation. That kind of research contributes to social capital, and lays the foundation for communities to then take action in response to circumstances that have been documented and which require redress.

As has been noted earlier, social planning is a concept which has evolved over time. It is fair to say that in its earlier form, social planning was based on a more traditional view of research, the generation of evidence-based knowledge, produced for the purpose of then taking some action. That research could involve, for example, a needs assessment to justify the development of a program, or an evaluation to determine the effectiveness of an existing program. But it would probably be fair to say that social planning reflected a rational approach to decision-making: gather the facts, conduct an analysis, and then proceed to conclusions, recommendations and action.

*Over the last two decades, social planning has become less research-driven and more community-focused, approaching in practice the term social development...*

Over the last two decades, social planning has become less research-driven and more community-focused, approaching in practice the term social development, described earlier. Social planning has increasingly begun to involve communities defining their goals and dreams, ensuring that communities have the tools and abilities to engage in such work, and that the product of social planning results in some impact. As a consequence, more effort has been placed on generating discussion, debate and dissemination of information, including support for advocacy work.

### **Social planning in action -- Example #3: Community Voices of Support (CVOS)**

*Effective Advocacy and Community Outreach*

[www.torontocan.ca](http://www.torontocan.ca)

Community Voices of Support (CVOS) was established in 1995 in response to deep cuts to social services by the new Conservative Government. In the months following the funding cuts, agencies struggled to respond to rising service demands with significantly less resources. Fearful of more cuts, particularly a “second wave” of cuts as municipalities responded to provincial cuts to *their* funding, community agencies came together as a result of the leadership, direction and significant staff resources provided through the Metro Social Planning Council (later to become CSPC-T).

The focus was on protecting city grants. Even though they amounted to only 4% of agency budgets compared to the 50% received from the province, it was felt that intervention at the municipal level so outweighed the possibility of success at the provincial level that the emphasis should lay on the former.

The coalition of agencies grew to include labour, environmental groups and others, with continued support from the MSPC. The involvement of diverse stakeholders, combined with very focused and strategic lobbying efforts, resulted in a successful campaign to prevent cuts to the City’s community grants program.

## A working definition of social planning

A starting definition of social planning:

**Social planning aims to improve the living circumstances of individuals and communities through research, engagement and action.**

What does that mean?

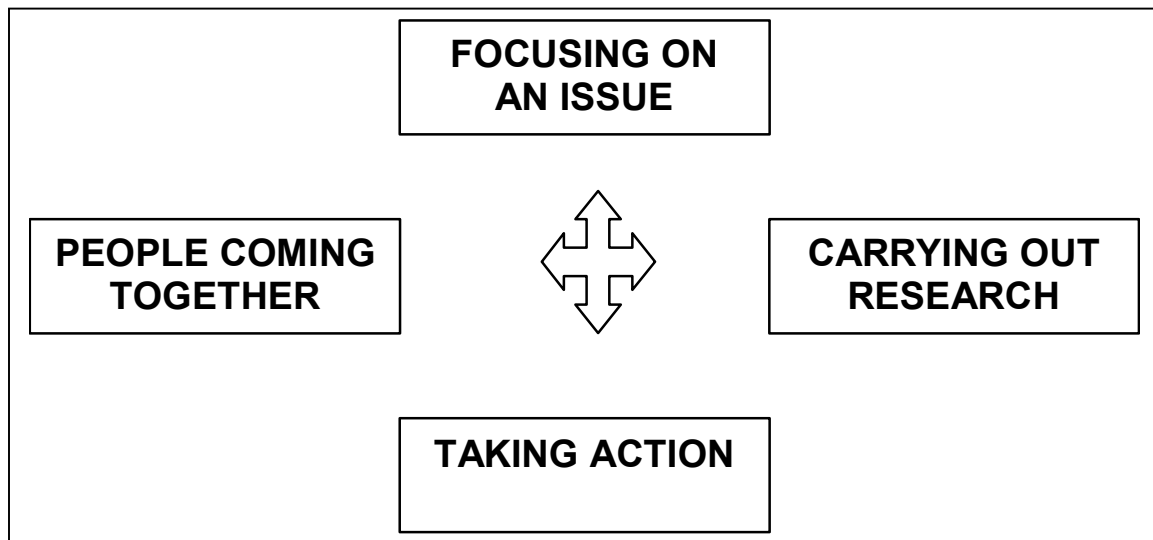
**Research involves generating knowledge**, through data collection, surveys, consultations, observations. The sort of research anticipated by social planning involves not only the accumulation of numbers or statistics, but also channeling the viewpoints of individuals and communities, giving concrete voice to how individuals experience poverty or social exclusion on the one hand, or a sense of empowerment and control of their lives on the other.

**Engagement means bringing together people** to reflect, to participate in dialogue and debate about the issues important to them and to their communities, to become involved with others in some common activity, for example through hosting a community forum or convening a roundtable of stakeholders.

The focus on **action suggests that something be done as a result of research and/or engagement** – these activities are not undertaken in the abstract, they are done to improve the living circumstances of individuals and the quality of life of communities, and include mobilizing communities to address an issue, undertaking advocacy, promoting government policy changes, and so on.

It should not necessarily be assumed that there is an obvious linear relationship here, that somehow research provides the rationale or reason for bringing people together so that they can act on a social issue or advocate with regards to some government policy.

Rather, each of these components is separate, important, and can each form the starting point for social planning activity.

**Chart 1: Social planning activity can start anywhere in this cycle**

What distinguishes social planning is that it is not limited to one activity, but rather relies on this combination of research, engagement and action.

While social planning has evolved, approaching in many respects the concept of social development, we will continue to use the term social planning throughout this report to include that combination of research, engagement and action which make up the working definition of social planning that we have proposed.

## **The functions of social planning**

To illustrate what social planning is, it is useful to consider in more detail the functions of social planning work. The following three functions form interrelated components of social planning:

### **Research and Analysis**

Includes any activity which seeks to bring to the attention of others the social conditions of a particular group, neighbourhood, or city as a whole. This may include traditional forms of research, such as assessing or surveying a group of individuals, compiling or analyzing data, evaluating the effectiveness of a program, engaging in broader analyses of social policies and their implications, and developing alternative social policies. But such research can also include community members mobilizing with respect to a particular issue, documenting their concerns and planning a course of action. This type of research, through its participative approach, both generates knowledge but also invigorates a constituency which takes action as a result of the process.

## Advocacy and Public Education

Includes the dissemination of the findings of social planning research to government, the public generally, or a community—this can be called a “social reporting” function.

*Advocacy* activities seek to mobilize individuals and communities to foster civic

engagement, build social capital and bring about social change.

*Public education* activities seek to publicize the results of social planning research to a wider community or the public at large, and to facilitate the ability of a community or the public to engage in a dialogue about social issues.

### **Social planning in action -- Example #4: Regent Park Redevelopment**

*Meaningful Community Involvement in a  
Planning Process*

[www.regentparkplan.ca](http://www.regentparkplan.ca)

Built in the early 1950s, Regent Park is one of the oldest publicly funded housing communities in Canada. Located in the east end of Toronto at Parliament and Gerrard Streets, Regent Park is home to 7,500 people. Its buildings, however, are deteriorating; its public spaces are poorly planned, and there are few community facilities available for residents. Furthermore, almost 100% of the residents of Regent Park live in poverty: 24% arrived in Canada in the last 5 years; 64% do not speak English at home.

Over the past 10 years, the community has been consulted regularly about the problems in Regent Park; they have little to show for it, and little patience for further consultations. In December 2002, Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) made a commitment to revitalize Regent Park, and involve residents in more meaningful way in the planning and design process.

TCHC held discussions with residents in seven major languages, and hired and trained local residents to animate community discussions. Each ethnic community at Regent Park was encouraged to develop their own culturally appropriate redevelopment model. As a result, over 2,000 residents, community agencies and financial, design and planning experts contributed their ideas. Community feedback significantly affected the Regent Park Plan; it created a foundation for support from the TCHC Board and City Council, and laid the groundwork for future discussions on topics important to the community.

### **Community Development and Capacity Building**

Describes a range of activities which seek to build the strength of the community sector.

*Community development* activities may include convening groups to strategize responses to social issues, mobilizing resources to address social issues, or networking with other organizations or sectors to advance the goals of social planning. *Community capacity-building* activities use the results of social planning research to identify and disseminate best practices, develop appropriate and effective programs, and deliver training to agency staff, the public or a members of a particular community. The impetus for this work can come from within communities themselves or as a result of community agencies identifying a need or an opportunity. This community development and

capacity building work can be limited in its scope (mobilizing community resources for a particular project) or transformative, that is, seeking broader political, social or economic change.

Together, these functions support a fourth function of social planning, which is:

### **Service Planning and Coordination**

Includes the identification of community needs and gaps in services, and the development of appropriate programming to respond to these needs.

### **Who engages in social planning?**

Given the range of what social planning aims to do and given the functions it undertakes, one can well imagine that the range of players engaged in social planning is quite wide. It is useful, however, to segment that broad universe of social planning actors into a number of more discrete categories.

For starters, many individuals and organizations contribute content to what we call social planning. This is particularly so in the case of the research component of social planning work. Thus, academic research studies, in-depth media analysis and government policy studies are often very important sources for social planning activities, and are used to promote a social planning agenda. **It would be stretching the definition to call this social planning work, because it is neither rooted in the community nor based on community involvement or engagement.** At the same time, one cannot ignore this product, because it can have such an important influence on setting the terms of the public policy agenda, and therefore the terms of social planning work.

There is a further level of social planning work which emerges from the community sector, often through the day-to-day activities of community sector organizations. Studies in support of community projects (whether needs assessments or evaluations), community development work (facilitating members of a community to address a common issue) or advocating in relation to a government policy (appearing before a city council or legislative committee) are all social planning activities undertaken by community agencies as part of their everyday functions. Even though these agencies would not call themselves social planning organizations, they do consciously engage in social planning activities.

Finally, there is a group of organizations whose mandate is more explicitly focused on involvement in social planning specifically, either through social policy research, or community capacity building, or advocacy work, and often all of these functions. Historically the

*In recent years, the number of organizations and groups which directly engage in social planning work has expanded, particularly with the growth of single-issue advocacy groups and networks.*

combination of these functions in any given community was concentrated in **social planning councils**, bodies specifically established (almost always through the joint funding by the municipal government and the local United Way) for this purpose.

In keeping with the evolving definition of social planning discussed earlier, it is interesting to note that a number of such social planning bodies have adopted terms such as “social development” or some reference to “community” in their name to signal less emphasis on basic research and more on the community engagement part of their activities.<sup>2</sup>

In recent years, the number of organizations and groups which directly engage in social planning work has expanded, particularly with the growth of single-issue advocacy groups and networks, which regularly combine social research, community education and mobilization, and policy and media advocacy.

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<sup>2</sup> While most social planning organizations still limit themselves to the term “social planning” in their name, there are some which have adopted a different description, for example: The Community Development Council of Quinte (Belleville), The Elgin Area Social Research & Awareness Council (Aylmer), Community Development Halton, Perth County Community Planning Committee, Social Development Council of Ajax/Pickering, South Essex Community Council; in Toronto, the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto and, province-wide, the Ontario Social Development Council. It is also the case that a number of these organizations provide some direct services as well, in addition to their social planning role.

### 3. THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL PLANNING

To understand more clearly what social planning is and where it is going, it is useful to review how social planning began and how it has evolved. In particular, the past decade has placed considerable pressures on the practice of social planning, and the essence of this report lies in how to respond to these circumstances.

#### The early history

Social planning, particularly in its earliest form reflecting an emphasis on research, represents the adoption of scientific, quantitative methods to the social field. Historically, various “rational” planning approaches and movements began to emerge in the late nineteenth century. The real demand for knowledge-based interventions to replace charitable good works in the social field arose in the 1930s, as governments redefined their roles in the economic and social spheres in response to the Great Depression.

In this light, it should come as no surprise that Toronto’s first social planning body was created in 1937, as the Welfare Council of Toronto and District (WCT). It was actively involved, together with other community, religious and labour groups, in advocating in support for unemployment insurance, affordable housing, health insurance, public pensions, minimum wage levels, family support services and other social programs.<sup>3</sup>

As government programs were developed and expanded during the period of economic growth and promotion of social policy following the end of the Second World War and the decade of the 1950s, bodies such as the Toronto Welfare Council took up the task of rational planning and coordination of social and charitable services, through needs assessments, service planning and program evaluations.

With the establishment of the two-tier metropolitan government in Toronto in 1953, WCT was similarly reconstituted, taking on the name of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, and explicitly assuming the mandate of developing an orderly plan for community services in the new Metropolitan Toronto.

While the sixties and seventies continued to experience employment growth and increased government spending, it was also a time of social upheaval, with the counterculture revolution, the anti-Vietnam war and disarmament movements, and the assertion of rights-based politics, arising primarily from the civil rights and feminist campaigns. The practice of social planning was not untouched by these changes – the

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<sup>3</sup> Much of the background for this section is taken from an excellent paper produced by Susan McGrath and Peter Clutterbuck, “Third Sector Transformation in an Emerging City State: A Case Study of the Toronto Social Planning Council,” for the International Society for Third-Sector Research (ISTR) Third International Conference, July 1998, Geneva, Switzerland. The paper is available at: <http://www.jhu.edu/~istr/conferences/geneva/confpapers/mcgrath.&.clutterbuck.html>

growing emphasis on participatory processes and on authenticity through grass roots engagement influenced social planning approaches. Complementing data based research were new attempts to communicate the experience of individuals and communities affected by poverty and stigmatized by reliance on social assistance and social services. That being said, social planning still largely focused on “universal” notions of planning – that is, a homogenized view of communities, one less sensitive to the evolving ethno-racial reality of Canada.

These trends helped broaden the scope of traditional social planning work beyond a narrowly defined focus on social services planning. In addition, social planning sought more engagement with communities and the individuals affected by or reliant on social services, more exploration of the root causes of the social challenges which social programs aimed to address, and more involvement with communities to help them shape their own responses to their concerns.

No one would suggest that a broad reorientation occurred overnight or that it is now complete – rather, the relevant point is that social planning, as a concept and in its practice, continued to evolve in the light of the changing political, economic and social climate.

### **The recent challenges**

Whatever changes experienced by social planning and the community sector as a whole through the seventies and early eighties remained within the context of a widespread social consensus regarding what was known as the welfare state, notably with respect to support for publicly-funded social programs and an activist role in social and economic affairs on the part of governments. The late eighties and the decade of the nineties witnessed a significant erosion of that consensus, with severe consequences for social planning.

This change occurred in conjunction with and as a result of a major economic transformation, involving widespread corporate restructuring and downsizing, absorption of the shock of globalization and increased competitiveness, and the impact of the information and communications revolution.

These twin changes in the political and economic realms have had tremendous ramifications on society, both explicit and subtle, impacting everything from employment patterns to household composition, from decisions regarding education and career, to the timing of marriage and childrearing. At the same time Canadian society has experienced significant demographic shifts: the aging of the baby-boom generation, the coming into

*...the growing emphasis on participatory processes ...influenced social planning approaches. Complementing data based research were new attempts to communicate the experience of individuals and communities affected by poverty and stigmatized by reliance on social assistance and social services.*



the teen-aged years of the baby “boomlet” (the children of baby-boomers) and, very importantly for Toronto, the changeover of the city into a multicultural, multiracial urban centre.

The various changes experienced throughout these last fifteen years deserve separate enumeration, yet their impact has had a cumulative effect. To list the major impacts:<sup>4</sup>

### **Government downsizing and downloading**

It is not the intention of this report to explore why or how deficit-cutting became the operating principle of the federal government starting in the mid-eighties and of the Ontario government starting in the mid-nineties, but rather to list the consequences of this philosophy.

Governments began both cutting back programs (either through eliminating programs, or reducing benefits, or restricting eligibility), or downloading responsibility for programs to lower-tier governments, who had to find the funds or cut back these programs, with significant negative impacts for individuals and groups relying on government programs, services, income support and funding.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the deficit-cutting strategies of the federal and provincial governments have in large measure involved pushing the responsibility for addressing social needs from senior levels of government onto municipalities, the community sector and vulnerable individuals and families.

### **Economic transformations**

The economic changes taking place as a result of corporate restructuring, enhanced competitiveness, globalization, and the technological revolution meant certain categories of the population were particularly hard hit by these actions (lower-skilled workers, the working poor, visible minorities and newcomers).

This period was marked by large numbers of jobs being lost in the traditional manufacturing sector, partly off-set by the growth in employment opportunities among lower-paying service sector positions. As well, there was a growth in more contingent work – either contract and/or part-time employment, or self-employment. Finally, the requirements for accessing employment were increased, sometimes to

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<sup>4</sup> An excellent short summary of these changes can be found in the following article: Ted Richmond and John Shields, “Third Sector Restructuring and the New Contracting Regime: The Case Of Immigrant Serving Agencies in Ontario,” *Policy Matters*, No. 3, February 2004, CERIS (Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement – Toronto), available at: <http://ceris.metropolis.net/PolicyMatter/PolicyMatters3.pdf> Although the article focuses on the impact on immigrant serving organizations, its description of government funding trends applies to the entire community agency sector.

reflect the higher level of skills needed for a particular job, in other cases simply to make screening of candidate employees easier.

### **Cutbacks in funding to the community sector**

The cutbacks in funding **directly** affected the financial picture for the community sector, and also **indirectly** affected them, for they were faced with increased demands on their services and less capacity to respond as their constituencies were hard hit by reductions in government services and reductions in income support.

In particular, the community sector experienced reduced funding for their core operations, with more funding being **contract funding** or **project-based**, that is, linked specifically to the provision of a contracted service. Project-based funding is funding based on piecework – funding limited to the provision of a particular service.

It is worth highlighting this reorientation in funding, because community agencies for some time have been decrying the consequences of reduced core funding. Project funding which only supports the actual service ignores everything else which makes the provision of that service possible. **The analogy would be if firefighter services were funded only for those times when they are fighting fires, and for nothing else – no funding for the training involved, the supervision required, the costs of maintaining a firefighting unit even when not fighting fires.**

### **Cutbacks in funding to social planning activities**

The cutbacks in funding for the community sector also reduced funding for social planning. At a time when the community sector was being asked to work more efficiently and more effectively, its capacity to devise appropriate solutions was cut. Indeed, what was further eroded was the extent to which social planning examined the root causes of social problems and proposed solutions, and supported the ability of communities to mobilize to face these challenges. **To extend the firefighter analogy further, at the same time as service funding was reduced, funding was cut for fire prevention programs, for fire safety programs, for keeping up with best practices developed by fire departments in other cities and for programs to mobilize volunteer firefighting brigades.**

### **Greater demands for contribution from the social planning sector**

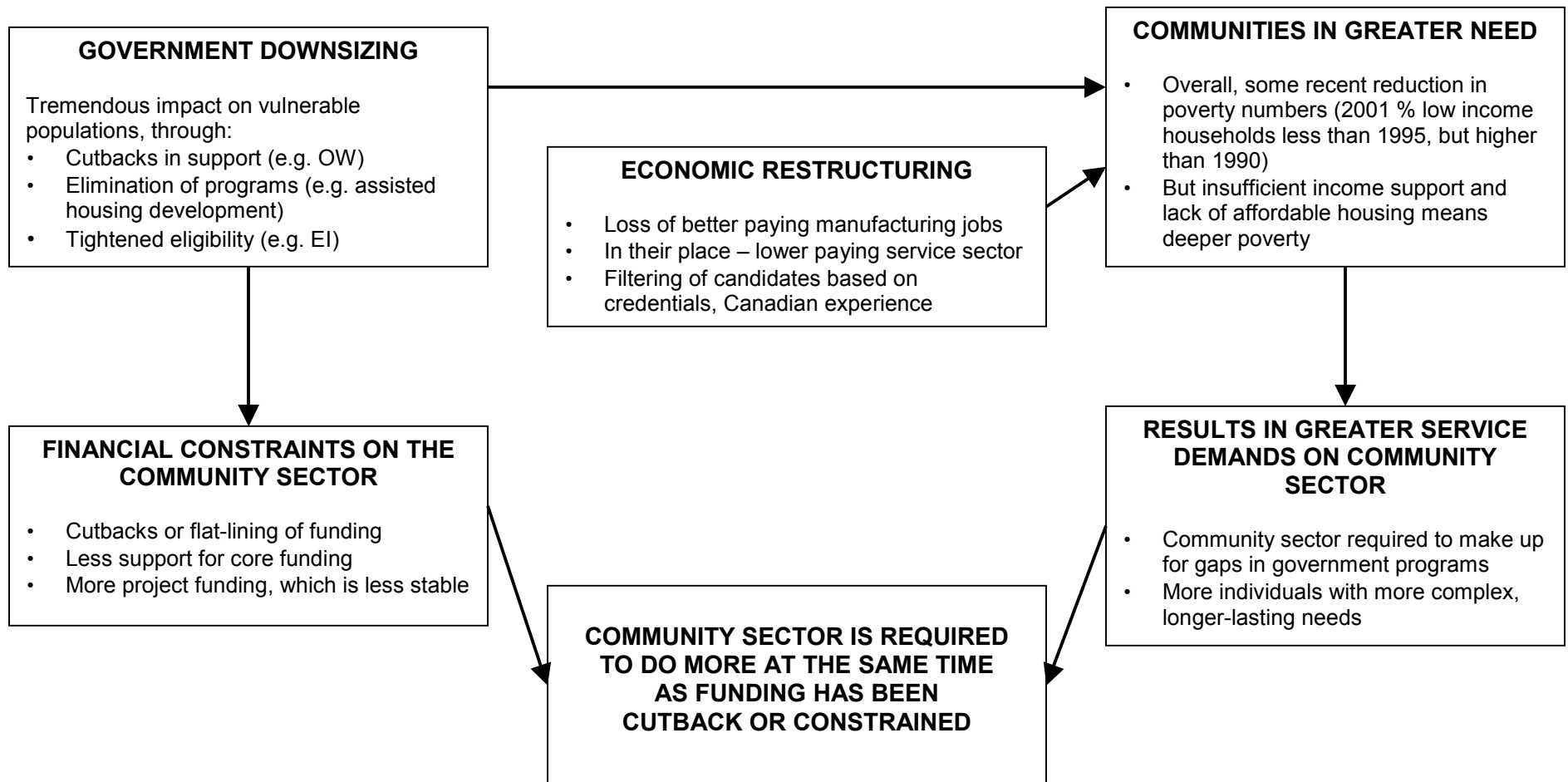
In the face of all these changes, the community sector has found itself needing to do far more in the field of policy development, service design and advocacy, for several reasons:

- The great transformation in the role of governments and the redefinition of the welfare state has meant the community sector has needed to marshal its arguments to influence the redefining process;

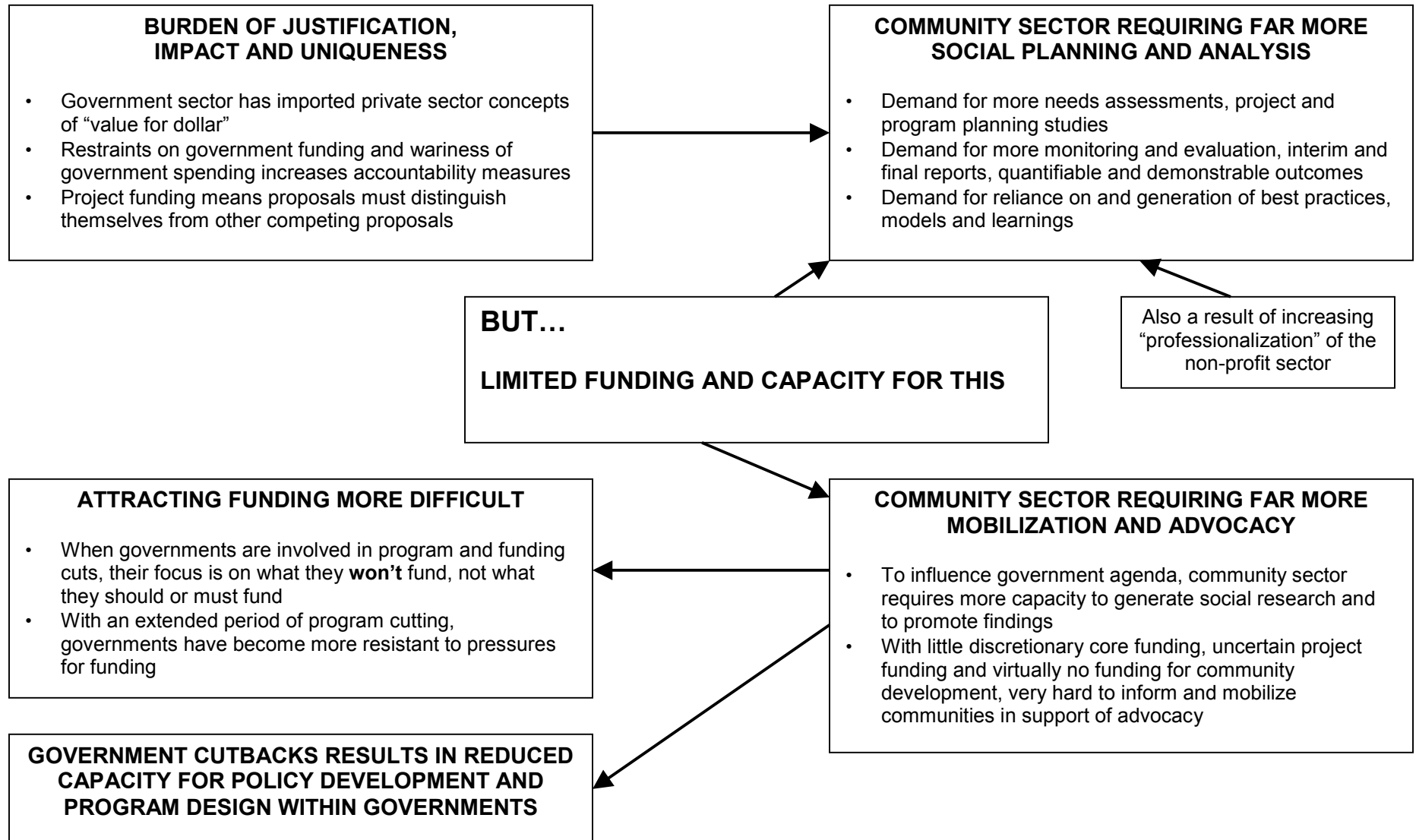
- New government policies have resulted in new programs, requiring research in best practices and learnings;
- Greater expectations of accountability for public dollars has placed a greater demand for justifying starting and continuing programs, through needs assessments, monitoring, reporting and evaluations;
- Governments seek more consultations, to develop consensus for their actions, and so the community sector is invited to participate in far more processes, drawing on time and resources;
- Cutbacks in government policy units has created even greater need for robust and credible contributions to the policy development process

The cumulative impact of all these trends listed above affecting the community sector is demonstrated on the following two pages.

**CHART 2: TRENDS AFFECTING THE COMMUNITY SECTOR AND SOCIAL PLANNING ACTIVITIES (Part One)**



**CHART 2: TRENDS AFFECTING THE COMMUNITY SECTOR AND SOCIAL PLANNING ACTIVITIES (Part Two)**



In addition, several further trends bear mentioning:

### **Governments returning to participative, consultative processes**

Over the last few years, governments at all levels have promoted a return to participative and consultative processes. Unlike the 1960s and 1970s, when major social changes resulted in pro-active, bottom-up efforts to change the character and practices of politics, leading to greater demands for citizen involvement in decision-making, to a large degree this more recent trend is government-led. In truth, it is a response to the growing alienation which many voters feel toward the political process, an attempt to restore the legitimacy which governments require to carry out their functions. This is not to say that these initiatives are not sincere, but rather that they are in response to the continuing drop in voter turn-out and the very palpable citizen apathy and indeed cynicism which exists regarding the political process. These greater opportunities for public input also place more burdens on the community sector, however, as the community sector is involved in helping facilitate or sometimes mobilize communities to add their voices to these processes.

### **The changing demographics in Toronto**

Meanwhile, Toronto's population mix has been changing dramatically, primarily as a result of continuing immigration. In the most recent census (2001), 49.4% of the City of Toronto's population was born outside of Canada, and 42.8% of the population is characterized as a visible minority. What is troubling in this circumstance are the higher poverty rates, higher unemployment rates, and lags in income compared to Canadian-born residents which newcomers are facing. The community sector has had to deal with these changes, not simply in terms of settlement services, but more importantly, addressing the fact of the growing racialization of poverty in this city, both in terms of reversing this troubling trend while also trying to contain the obviously negative impacts of its consequences.

### **Growing polarization**

The latter point regarding the racialization of poverty is part of another disturbing trend: the growing polarization of Canadian society, witnessed at a national level and at the level of a city such as Toronto. Not only does poverty hit certain groups harder, but in recent years the gap between these low-income groups and high-income groups is widening.

Low-income rates are higher among certain groups in cities across Canada: recent immigrants (those who arrived to Canada in the last ten years), Aboriginal people, and members of lone-parent families (by far the majority of whom are led by sole support mothers).

**Chart 3: Low income rates among selected groups in Canadian cities<sup>5</sup>**

<b>Selected groups</b>	<b>Low income rate</b>
All persons	16.7
<b>Lone-parent family persons</b>	<b>44.4</b>
Non-lone parent family persons	14.5
<b>Aboriginal people</b>	<b>39.4</b>
<b>Recent immigrants</b>	<b>32.2</b>
Other immigrants	16.6
Others	14.1

This polarization is also evident geographically: the income gap between richer and poorer neighbourhoods rose between 1980 and 2000 in Canada.<sup>6</sup> In Toronto, that gap has widened as well, and the city has many more concentrated areas of poverty than it did 20 years ago.<sup>7</sup>

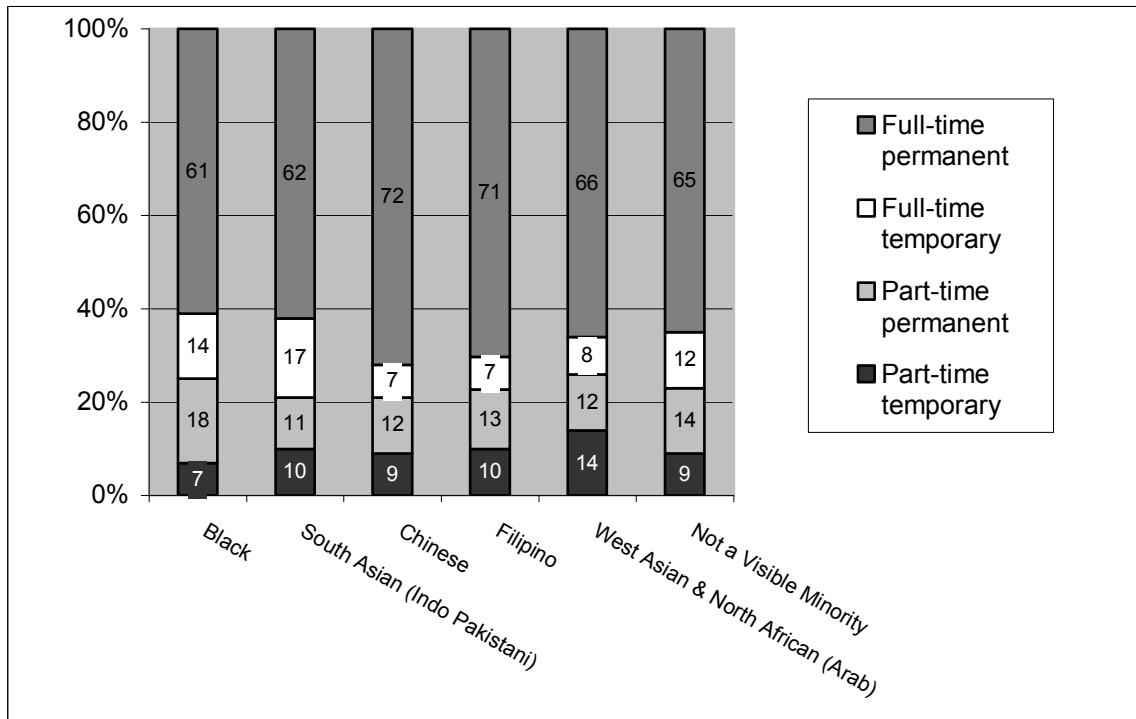
The transformations apparent in the economy have resulted in smaller proportions of workers employed in full-time permanent jobs, and greater proportions of workers in full-time temporary, part-time permanent and part-time temporary jobs. This latter type of work, labeled “precarious employment,” is typically characterized by lower degrees of certainty about continuing employment, less control over working conditions (notably by the absence of labour unions) and lower wages.<sup>8</sup> Women are more likely than men to experience precarious forms of employment, and precarious employment is experienced differently by the various ethno-racial populations.

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada, *Low-income in Census Metropolitan Areas, 1980-2000*, Catalogue 89-613-MIE, No. 001, 2004, p.82. Available at: <http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/89-613-MIE/2004001/89-613-MIE2004001.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>7</sup> United Way of Greater Toronto, *Poverty by Postal Code*, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Cynthia Cranford, Leah Vosko and Nancy Zukewich, *Precarious Employment in the Canadian Labour Market: A Statistical Portrait*, Just Labour, vol. 3 (Fall, 2003), available at: [http://www.justlabour.yorku.ca/cranfordetal\\_justlabour.PDF](http://www.justlabour.yorku.ca/cranfordetal_justlabour.PDF)

**Chart 4: Forms of Wage Work by Visible Minority Group, Canada, 2000<sup>9</sup>**

Significantly, the polarization effect is not limited to lower-skilled workers. Among newcomers, despite the increasing levels of employment skills and education attainment governing immigration to Canada, numerous barriers inhibit their advancement. Even after 10 years, **new immigrants with a university degree earn 71% what Canadian-born university grads earn, and 60% of newcomers to Canada do not work in the same occupational field as they did before coming to Canada.**

### The cumulative effect of this polarization

That polarization can and often is cumulative: combining the effects of location, race, immigrant status and single parenthood (many of the statistics combine the genders, but the fact is that women make up far more of this category), and one faces some neighbourhoods in Toronto where more than three-quarters of the sole support mothers and single women, largely women of colour and/or recent immigrants, are poor.<sup>10</sup>

Taking all these earlier trends and seeing their impact together:

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16. Data drawn from Statistics Canada, *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics 2000*.

<sup>10</sup> Punam Khosla, *If Low Income Women of Colour Counted in Toronto*, The Breaking Isolation, Getting Involved Project, 2003.



- The changing economy and structure of work has meant higher-paying manufacturing jobs have been replaced by lower-paying service sector employment, which also involves more contingent labour (temporary, part-time, contract work); this change is most clearly felt among lower-skilled employees;
- The economic impacts have most strongly been felt by marginalized communities, most often characterized by race, gender, newcomer status and socio-economic standing;
- Cutbacks in government income support and other social programs have hurt already vulnerable groups the hardest;
- Reduced funding for the community sector results in fewer programs which can provide some relief to these populations;
- Funding constraints with respect to the community sector means that newer community agencies, such as those serving newcomer groups, ethno-specific populations, and under-serviced areas (such as the former suburbs of Toronto, which have been historically under-serviced), cannot access the funding necessary to address these growing needs;
- Lack of social planning capacity means these emerging trends are recognized far too late in the day, if at all, and the ability of the community sector to develop programs and/or to mobilize communities to address these challenges is greatly reduced.

In these circumstances, it should come as no surprise that a sense of social inclusion might not be felt strongly in all quarters of society. Nor should it surprise anyone that the conclusion that the larger social processes and institutions actually work, in terms of getting an education, a decent job, a fair break in life, may not be a view that is readily agreed to in all parts of the city.

**To complete the firefighting analogy, it would be as if firefighting services were no longer available in certain parts of the city or for certain population groups and, what's worse, that there was an obvious pattern determining which groups were lacking those services, a pattern which reflected under-servicing of marginalized populations, defined by race, gender, newcomer status, geography and socio-economic standing.**

## 4. RECENT HISTORY OF SOCIAL PLANNING: THE TORONTO CONTEXT

The prior discussion spoke to a number of issues that have affected the community sector and social planning bodies throughout Ontario as well as most of Canada. The broad trends of major economic transformations, the changing role of governments, downloading and downsizing, and the funding squeeze in which the community sector found itself are a familiar story across the country.

Toronto, and the organizations most intimately involved in social planning work in this City, certainly were greatly affected by these trends, in part because the recession in the early 1990s hit Toronto particularly hard, but most especially as a result of a number of policies, notably the drastic funding cuts to income supports, services and programs, initiated by the provincial Conservative government following their election in 1995. This section speaks to the more recent history relating to the social planning environment in this City.

Another issue, that of the growing ethnic diversity of the City, also deserves greater elaboration, because of the way this demographic trend has changed the City and the impact it has had and will continue to have on the social planning environment.

*It is probably safe to say that Toronto has the highest proportion of foreign-born residents than any other major urban centre in the world.*

### Demographic changes

Among the broad impacts mentioned earlier which have affected the community sector and social planning in general, the issue of the changing demographics in Toronto is an especially salient one, not only in terms of the significant proportional population changes, but also in terms of the social and economic divisions which have arisen over the last two decades. These issues include:

- Population numbers and a changing racial mix;
- Less employment and increased poverty among new immigrants;
- Funding constraints for new community agencies serving ethno-racial and immigrant populations.

### Population numbers and changing racial mix

As noted earlier, almost exactly half of Toronto's population was born outside of Canada. It is probably safe to say that Toronto has the highest proportion of foreign-born residents than any other major urban centre in the world.

**Chart 5: City Comparison of Percentage of Foreign-born Residents<sup>11</sup>**

Urban centre	Percentage of Foreign-born
City of Toronto	49.4
Toronto CMA	43.7
Miami	40.2
Vancouver	37.5
Sydney	30.9
Los Angeles	30.9
New York	24.4
Montreal	18.4

Not only has immigration been a regular part of Toronto's population dynamic over the last half-century, in a number of respects it is the critical dynamic affecting the demographic character of Toronto:

- Immigration is becoming the major source for skilled labour, labour force growth and population growth in Toronto;
- The shift in the source countries of immigration is making Toronto a multicultural and multi-racial city.

*While immigrants make up 49% of Toronto's population, they make up 57% of those living in the poverty.*

Again, as noted earlier, 42.8% of the City is now classified as visible minorities. Prior to 1961, 92% of Toronto's immigrants came from Europe; since 1991, 63% have come from Asia.

### **Less employment, increased poverty among new immigrants**

The immigrant experience, however, is demonstrating some extremely troubling trends, as follows:

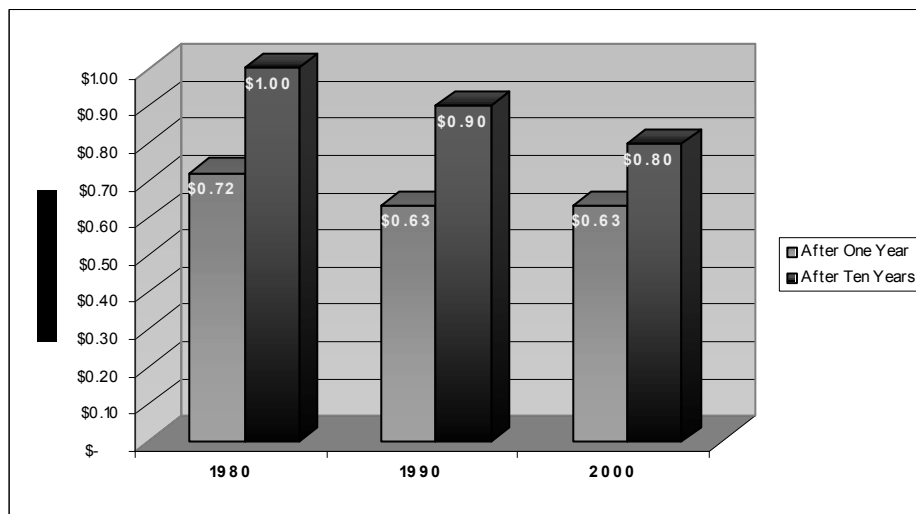
- Immigrants, especially recent ones, experience **higher unemployment**;
- Even employed recent immigrants **now earn much less** than Canadian-born;
- After 10 years, new immigrants with a university degree earn **71%** what Canadian-born university grads earn;
- 60% of newcomers to Canada do **not work in the same occupational field** as they did before coming to Canada;

<sup>11</sup> Data for the chart came from Statistics Canada 2001 Census and *Labour Market Trends in Ontario*, Labour Market Information and Research, Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, May 2003.

- From 1980 to mid-90s, low income rate for recent immigrants **greatly increased**; Low income rate remains about **2.5 to 1** for recent immigrants compared to rest of population;
- While immigrants make up 49% of Toronto's population, they make up **57%** of those living in the poverty;
- In Canada, the child poverty rate for newcomers **twice** that of others.

This deteriorating trend is most starkly demonstrated when comparing the earnings of newcomers over time. In 1980, after one year, a working male newcomer could expect to earn 72% of what a working Canadian-born male was earning, but after ten years the earnings were exactly the same. In 2000, after one year the gap has grown to 63%, but after ten years a gap has emerged which now stands at 80%.

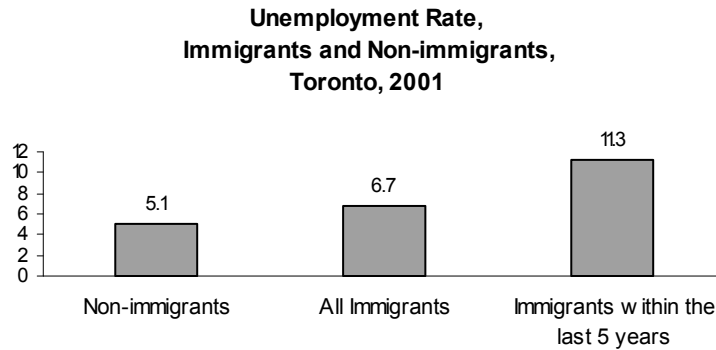
**Chart 6: Earnings of New Immigrant Males Compared to Canadian-born Males in Ontario<sup>12</sup>**



Similarly, unemployment rates, particularly for newcomers, compare unfavourably to those of Canadian-born residents.

<sup>12</sup> *Labour Market Trends in Ontario*, Labour Market Information and Research, Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, May, 2003.

**Chart 7: Unemployment Rate for Immigrants and Non-immigrants, City of Toronto, 2001<sup>13</sup>**



### The cumulative impact of polarization

As noted earlier, the cumulative impact of polarization of income is especially pronounced among particular segments of the Canadian population. In Toronto, this is especially evident among women of colour. For example, the **incidence of poverty in Toronto among lone mothers in 1996 was over 70%** for women of Latin American, Arab and West Asian, and African, Black and Caribbean origins.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, while women generally fare worse compared to men in terms of income and rates of poverty, the discrepancy among women between different racial groups is also very significant, as the following chart graphically illustrates.

**Chart 8: Homeownership Rates of Female Lone Parents with One or More Children under 19, Toronto, 1996<sup>15</sup>**

Ethno-racial Group	% Female Lone Parents Who are Home Owners
African, Black & Caribbean	4.5
Latin American origins	12.1
Arab and West Asian	13.6
South Asian	24.7
European	31.5

<sup>13</sup> *Labour Market Trends in Ontario*, Labour Market Information and Research, Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, May, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Punam Khosla, *op. cit.*, p. 20. Source: Statistics Canada 1996 Census; tabulation by Michael Ornstein, Institute for Social Research, York University. These figures have not been updated using 2001 Census data, which itself speaks to how this polarization has not been a priority in data analysis work.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23. Source: Statistics Canada 1996 Census; tabulation by Michael Ornstein, Institute for Social Research, York University.

### **Ethno-racial and immigrant-serving community agencies**

These various demographic trends, combined with what has happened to the community sector in general, have created particularly difficult circumstances for agencies serving ethno-racial and immigrant communities.

For one, the absolute number of immigrant and ethno-racial individuals has increased substantially. One can well imagine the orientation, settlement and service needs of people new to this country. **In 2001, one out of every five residents (21%) of Toronto had arrived to Canada between 1991 and 2001.**

For another, the demonstrable needs of these communities are also very evident, expressed, for example, in the numbers relating to unemployment and poverty. Yet funding for settlement programs directly serving newcomer population have been largely either cut or flat-lined in recent years, with no recognition that Toronto is the major reception area for newcomers to Canada.

*...settlement programs directly serving newcomer population have been largely either cut or flat-lined in recent years, with no recognition that Toronto is the major reception area for newcomers to Canada.*

All this must also be seen in the light of the funding constraints operating for the entire community agency sector. With the changing demographics of the City, new agencies are emerging among these populations and in those geographic areas where these populations are settling, as people seek to organize and mobilize themselves to serve their self-recognized needs, often because of the lack of such community services in their area or because mainstream agencies are not equipped to support these new populations (be it for reasons of language, cultural appropriateness or their inability to connect with these communities). **Yet in this period of fiscal restraint and cutbacks, these organizations and agencies are having difficulty attracting the funding and other resources they require to develop and grow because the funding pie is either shrinking or holding steady.** Established agencies, meanwhile, can claim they are protecting existing programs and services for their clients, that they have a track record and the organizational capacity to meet funders' requirements.

Thus, these conditions – of demographic change and funding constraints – create the circumstances where agencies serving ethno-racial and newcomer populations find themselves competing, often unsuccessfully, for funding with existing agencies. This is occurring at the same time as these ethno-racial and newcomer communities are experiencing disproportionate unemployment and poverty rates, not to mention other impacts relating to settlement, cultural adjustment, family strain, language barriers, and discrimination.

In this light, the racialization of poverty and the under-funding of the agencies serving these populations set the stage for an

*...these conditions – of demographic change and funding constraints – create the circumstances where agencies serving ethno-racial and newcomer populations find themselves competing, often unsuccessfully, for funding with existing agencies.*

explosive tension within the community sector, and between the community sector and funders.

## **Amalgamation and Funding**

In addition to the impact on the community sector and social planning organizations of the cuts in government funding and the attendant consequences described in The Recent Challenges section above, the social planning sector was greatly affected by the decision of the provincial government to force the amalgamation of the local governments making up Metropolitan Toronto. That local government restructuring and the tightened funding environment led to an amalgamation of the local and metropolitan level social planning councils into one body. On January 1, 1998, the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (CSPC-T) was legally formed, combining the following organizations:

- The City of York Community and Agency Social Planning Council;
- The East York Community Development Council;
- The Etobicoke Social Development Council;
- Human Services Scarborough (actually joined in April, 1998);
- The North York Inter-Agency and Community Council; and
- The Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto.

Bringing together these separate and distinct organizations into one body involved a substantial managerial effort, creating a new legal entity with a new board, integrating staffs, merging various administrative systems, consolidating space, upgrading technological systems, and so on, and after considerable work, a new organization took shape.<sup>16</sup>

The new organization was able to continue projects and studies which had a local focus, as well as undertake initiatives which examined citywide challenges or emerging concerns. However, the consolidation of space meant a reduced physical presence of the CSPC-T outside the old City of Toronto, and with a continued drop in funding, that local presence became more and more limited. Combining what had been locally based and locally focused organizations into a single metropolitan-wide organization makes it more difficult for local perspectives and issues to receive attention and study; the reduction in funding guarantees such a result.

The five local pre-amalgamation planning councils (that is, all but the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto) suffered major losses of funding from the province in late 1995, resulting in those organizations being reduced to just several staff people.

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<sup>16</sup> Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, Post-Amalgamation Report, August 2000.

Therefore, at the time when these organizations were merged, their base funding had already dropped and so the budgets for these organizations immediately preceding amalgamation reflected a reduced funding base. In fairness, amalgamation did produce some administrative savings (less overhead, consolidated management and support staff), albeit at the cost of local community presence.

After amalgamation, the financial picture only got worse for the new organization. The following table summarizes the core funding support for the CSPC-T by its primary funders, the City of Toronto and the United Way of Greater Toronto.

**Chart 9: Funding Summary, CSPC-T, 1998-2004**

<b>Year</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>UWGT</b>	<b>Total</b>
1998	\$ 480,294	\$ 628,002	\$ 1,108,296
1999	\$ 480,294	\$ 628,002	\$ 1,108,296
2000	\$ 480,294	\$ 628,002	\$ 1,108,296
2001	\$ 449,893	\$ 628,002	\$ 1,077,895
2002	\$ 399,893	\$ 587,703	\$ 987,596
2003	\$ 333,393	\$ 403,200	\$ 736,593
2004	\$ 333,393 (proposed)	\$ 341,703 (confirmed)	\$ 675,096

However, there is another element which partly explains this drop in funding, to be discussed in the next section.

### **CSPC-T in crisis**

There is no doubt that amalgamation and the resulting organizational consolidation created not only administrative and managerial headaches, it also generated serious fissures and disagreements among the organization's staff and stakeholders. At the same time, the demographic change occurring in Toronto brought to the fore the expectations of these newly emerging constituencies to have their issues recognized and their voices heard.

These two factors manifested themselves in a number of tensions which culminated in a dispute in the terms of employment between the CSPC-T Board and the then two Co-Directors of the organization which erupted publicly at the Annual General Meeting in May 1999. The ensuing turmoil shook the organization and damaged both its reputation and its effectiveness.



This crisis resulted in a further organizational review. It is worth quoting from the report in some detail, if for no other reason than to appreciate just how serious the circumstances were during this period:<sup>17</sup>

It would be expected that an organization born of amalgamation would face some growing pains. The Council's past few years have, however, been nothing short of tumultuous. They have been marked by infighting, indecision, confusion, questionable management, and unstable governance.

The Council has been in crisis. There has been little cohesion about the Council's mandate, niche and core programs. Governance and management have been unstable. Relationships with partner agencies and member agencies have been frayed. Internal relationships have been dysfunctional. Planning and management systems are fragmented. Financial challenges due to funding cutbacks are immense and immediate. And, perhaps most ominous, the support and confidence from major funders is shaken.

Despite this gloomy scenario, we emerge from this review with optimism about the Council's future. Our optimism is grounded by the near-unanimous commitment to the vital role that the Council must play and a spirited vision of what the Council could be. There is a rich reservoir – from most stakeholders – of respect for the Council's history and goodwill (mixed with caution) for the Council's future.

The report is entitled to cast an optimistic view of the future, but it is worth noting several significant consequences of that crisis period:

- CSPC-T did suffer in terms of its standing with a number of ethno-specific and newcomer organizations, of which the May 1999 AGM eruption was one symptom. The concern was rooted not simply in the issue of the leadership of the CSPC-T and issues of diversity, although this was certainly a key dispute; it was also manifested in perceptions that the CSPC-T sometimes acted paternalistically toward these emerging constituencies, that consultations with such groups were often perfunctory or limited to minor issues, that the perceived relevance and expertise of these groups was only in relation to ethno-cultural matters, and that the input of these groups were sometimes appropriated without credit by the CSPC-T;<sup>18</sup>
- During this time there also emerged the Alternative Planning Group, a consortium of several social planning organizations serving ethno-racial communities, which sought to exercise their own presence in the social planning field in Toronto; its primary focus was both to assert a strong social development approach in social

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<sup>17</sup> Glen Brown, Joan Anderson & Wendy Pinder, Consultants, Organizational Review: Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, December 5, 2001. The quote following is from pages 2-3.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

- planning, as well as to advocate for a full acknowledgement of Toronto's changed demographics, noting that the diversity of Toronto was now the defining characteristic of this city;
- As well, the broader social planning stakeholder community was unnerved and uncertain about the future capacity of the CSPC-T to play its traditional role;
  - Concerns regarding the social planning leadership capability of the CSPC-T were further exacerbated by a string of executive director appointments each of which lasted only a short time;
  - These concerns and uncertainties contributed to decisions by the main funders, that is, the City and the UWGT, to cut back further their financial support;
  - Finally, the cutbacks in funding hampered the ability of the CSPC-T to re-establish itself, as its strained finances only continued the crisis atmosphere surrounding the CSPC-T and made its recovery and its transformation in response to the crisis that much more difficult.

In short, the crisis at the CSPC-T was partly the result of external circumstances (funding cutbacks and the aftereffects of amalgamation), and partly of CSPC-T's own doing (its inability to respond adequately to the challenge posed by the changing diversity of Toronto). That crisis was exacerbated by the reaction of the broader community to the turmoil within CSPC-T, in particular made worse by the decision of funders to cutback even further their financial support for the organization. At the same time, a new organization, a collaborative effort of several existing organizations, emerged to give voice to the growing sense of racialized inequity.

### **CSPC-T stabilizing**

Despite these recent traumas, CSPC-T continued to play a role in contributing to the social planning agenda in this City over the last few years – indeed, it would be unfair to claim that governance, funding and managerial upheavals had completely prevented quality work from being produced. Even as its funding has been cutback, CSPC-T has been able to deliver social planning product, notably:

- The previously highlighted Community Voices of Support effort (see page 8), whereby the CSPC-T successfully mobilized a diverse range of stakeholders to prevent cuts to the City's community grants program;
- The CSPC-T received additional funding from the City in 2000 to undertake community consultations on a Social Development Strategy, producing *Preserving Our Civic Legacy*, a key input which underpin the eventual *Social Development Strategy for the City of Toronto* (2001);
- CSPC-T has been instrumental in supporting various research, advocacy and community mobilization initiatives, for example, *Workfare Watch* (documenting the impact of the provincial cutbacks and restrictions relating to social assistance);

- Even with a reduced presence, CSPC-T has been able to engage in community level work, most prominently in the former City of York, where CSPC-T has been able to maintain a consistent community presence;
- CSPC-T has convened two Opening Doors seminars, providing forums where community sector members could engage politicians regarding the implications of new administrations at the provincial and municipal levels.

## Broad scope of social planning activities

Irrespective of the particular trajectory of events at the CSPC-T, a further trend was making its impact felt on the social planning scene in Toronto, and that was the significant expansion of players involved in social planning activities. As the community sector grew, as its significance as a service provider and policy advocate expanded, and as a growing maturity and increased expectations for professional work took hold of the sector, far more organizations took it upon themselves to engage in social planning work, particularly in relation to the research component of the range of social planning functions.

As a result, a substantial amount of studies and reports, as well as a significant amount of advocacy and mobilizing effort, is taking place, through the work of single-purpose advocacy groups, service providers as well as social justice networks. To highlight a typical range of such work:

- Campaign 2000 and its national “end child poverty in Canada” focus, conducts research and public education relating to this topic, at a national, provincial and local scale, including the production of its annual Report Card on Child Poverty in Canada;
- The Daily Bread Food Bank and its various research reports, including its numerous analyses of trends relating to food bank usage;
- Policy and research publications by various think tank institutes (for example, the Caledon Institute, the Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement – Toronto [CERIS], or the Vanier Institute of the Family) and philanthropic foundations (the Atkinson Charitable Foundation, the Laidlaw Foundation, the Maytree Foundation);
- Research work produced by the City of Toronto itself (for example, Cracks in the Foundation: Community Agency Survey 2003: a study of Toronto’s community-based human service sector);
- Research work produced by the United Way of Greater Toronto (most recently, Poverty by Postal Code, which demonstrates how the income gap and

*...the field of social planning has become crowded in Toronto, during the time when a central focal point for social planning, the CSPC-T, has suffered both funding cutbacks and a loss of standing among some parts of the social planning community.*

neighbourhood poverty has intensified in Toronto, most alarmingly among inner suburban neighbourhoods).

In short, the field of social planning has become crowded in Toronto, during the time when a central focal point for social planning, the CSPC-T, has suffered both funding cutbacks and a loss of standing among some parts of the social planning community.

Other organizations relevant to the core functions of social planning in the City include:

**The Aboriginal Peoples Council of Toronto:** The APCT is the newly created representative body for aboriginal peoples in the Greater Toronto area. Elections were held in the fall of 2003 to constitute this political voice for the urban aboriginal population in the Toronto area.

Being a new group, APCT is only beginning to develop its workplan. Its primary focus will be to develop a community plan for the aboriginal population, with particular emphasis on economic development (including the establishment of an arms-length economic development corporation), support for arts and culture, and support for community service delivery. Education and homelessness are key issue priorities.

While the predominant orientation on the part of aboriginal peoples has been toward the federal government, moves by the federal government to download various programs targeting aboriginal people, as well as the growing proportion of aboriginal people who live in cities (nation-wide, over 50%), means that aboriginal institutions and organizations need to focus far more on local services and local planning.

In that light, the APCT seeks to bring the aboriginal voice to local government decision-making processes, as well as engage with the community sector in social planning and service planning activities.

**The Alternative Planning Group:** As noted earlier, this group emerged more or less at the same time as there arose strong dissatisfaction with the manner in which the CSPC-T responded to calls for greater attention to issues of diversity in Toronto.<sup>19</sup> Currently, the APG is made up of:

- the African Canadian Social Development Council (ACSDC);
- the Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter (CCNCTO);
- the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA); and
- the Hispanic Development Council (HDC).

Separately and together, members of this consortium have produced important research on alternative social planning, social inclusion and community development for a city

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<sup>19</sup> The impetus for the formation of APG emerged from discussions among its constituent organizations and the City, and received support from the CSPC-T as well.

whose demographics have changed dramatically in recent decades. The nature of their partnership is in itself unique, in that the work of the consortium is informed by the ongoing social planning activities of each individual agency; the APG's activities, in turn, work to strengthen the capacity of its members, and the social capital of their respective communities.

The APG has been working together since 1998. APG represents a coming together of distinct organizations representing distinct populations, finding common ground through dialogue and flexibility. Each of the constituent organizations contributes time and resources to allow APG to function. Some highlights from the social planning work arising from their collaboration include:

- The development of a joint position paper on the inclusion of anti-racism and anti-discrimination activities as a charitable act under the Canadian Customs and Revenue Agency (2002).
- Leading a consortium of settlement service agencies through the development of a collaborative research report, "Re-visioning the Newcomer Settlement Support System," which proposed a new service delivery model for settlement services in Canada (2000).
- Conducting a Joint Community Roundtable on July 14, 2000 entitled "Beyond Dialogue: Strategies for Economic Participation," which brought together for the first time South Asian, Chinese and Hispanic community members to discuss common issues on barriers to economic participation, and strategies to address the issues.
- Working in partnership with OCASI and CVOS to organize successful community campaigns against proposed cuts to the City's Community Grants budget. Specific contributions here included the development of a community development project called WATCH ("We are the City's hope"), which saw participants from diverse communities attend classes to learn about city structures and the process of budget making.

In addition, APG members have worked together to deliver joint presentations, workshops and conferences on issues related to settlement, immigrant employment, and social development; and to launch joint advocacy campaigns on issues of anti-racism and equity. Mutual support and capacity-building is an important function of the consortium: APG members support each other by attending each other's events, and through supportive advocacy initiatives (for example, the CCNCTO and HDC have supported the CASSA initiative to establish an Association of International Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario). The APG is currently collaborating on a study of social inclusion from the perspective of diverse communities.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> These collaborations have included working together with the CSPC-T, for example, on "Re-visioning the Newcomer Settlement Support System" and on the current work on social inclusion for Health Canada.

The social planning work of APG has been financially supported by the City of Toronto since 1999 through grants of \$30,000 each to the three founding member organizations (CCNCTO, CASSA and HDC). ACSDC received funding from the City in 2004, but not directly for social planning work. It should also be mentioned that two partner organizations of APG have also received funding from the City: the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants has received \$22,000 since 2002, while the Portuguese Interagency Network has been receiving \$9,000 for planning and coordination.

**The Toronto Neighbourhood Centres:** The TNC was established in 1999 as an amalgamation of two previous networks of neighbourhood-based multi-service agencies: the six member agencies of the former Toronto Association of Neighbourhood Services (TANS), which began its work in 1918, and; twenty Toronto, York, North York, Scarborough, Etobicoke and East York agency members of the forty-member Coalition of Neighbourhood Centres (CNC), an Ontario-wide association of neighbourhood centres established in 1995.

Currently the TNC's thirty members are working together to address the issues of inadequate core funding and community infrastructure in Toronto, the implications of the racialization of poverty for community agencies, and are undertaking organizational capacity building using peer supports across the membership.

While TNC promotes itself as a network of community agencies, a good part of its work involves traditional social planning, in terms of social research, networking, convening and advocacy. The work of the TNC is sustained by both membership fees as well as project funding for various research reports. It does not receive any core funding support from either the City of Toronto or the United Way of Greater Toronto.

## 5. THIS REVIEW: BACKGROUND AND APPROACH

### Background

At its regular meeting held on July 22, 23 and 24, 2003, the Council of the City of Toronto confirmed the recommendation arising from its Community Services Committee to authorize a “Review of Community Planning.” The report noted that community-based or social planning encompassed a range of activities including social policy analysis, research, advocacy, service co-ordination, and capacity building.

The City identified the following objectives for this review:

- To analyze the current scope and capacity of community-based planning in the City of Toronto;
- To identify the social planning models/frameworks now being utilized by community-based organizations and groups and situate them within a national context and within the context of the City of Toronto Social Development Strategy;
- To advise on the appropriate role of community-based planning activities within Toronto’s social infrastructure;
- To identify mechanisms to build the capacity of the community-based sector to engage in effective social planning;
- To identify planning models/frameworks that are inclusive of the diversity of Toronto’s communities; and
- To advise on appropriate relationships between the planning sector and the City of Toronto and other funders.

In October 2003, following a Request for Proposals process, the City of Toronto’s Social Development and Administration Division, Community and Neighbourhood Services Department contracted a consulting team, comprised of Tom Zizys, Mitchell Kosny and Jennifer Bonnell, to carry out this review of the social planning environment in Toronto.

In addition, as part of the review, the City also contracted with three community-based social planning organizations to carry out research and consultation within their sectors. The City identified that these consultations should include the following activities:

- to review the planning capacity of the sector which these organizations serve;
- to review the community-based planning needs of that sector;
- to identify the role and relationship of that organization to other planning groups and institutions; and
- to recommend ways to improve the co-ordination and effectiveness of the sector.

The three organizations commissioned to conduct their sector-focused reviews were:

- The Alternative Planning Group, consisting of the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA), the Hispanic Development Council (HDC), the Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter (CCNCTO), and the African Canadian Social Development Council (AFSDC), in collaboration with the Portuguese Interagency Network (PIN) and the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI);
- The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (CSPC-T); and
- The Toronto Neighbourhood Centres (TNC), the association representing 30 multi-service neighbourhood-based community agencies in Toronto.

## Approach

The consultants engaged in the following activities:

- Carried out a literature review relating to social planning;
- Conducted an Internet review of social planning sites, primarily in Canada;
- Undertook key informant interviews (14 individuals in total) to obtain a general overview of the social planning sector in Toronto);<sup>21</sup>
- Undertook a further set of stakeholder interviews (43 individuals in total) with representatives from community-based organizations, labour, government, funding bodies, the Board of Trade, and others;
- Met regularly with a City staff steering committee to review progress;
- Met regularly with a City staff support group to plan the work;
- Prepared this report.

Two further activities of the consultants bears particular emphasis: once the individual reports of the three sector-specific studies were completed, the consultants facilitated a roundtable discussion between these groups as well as others intimately involved in social planning in Toronto over the years.<sup>22</sup> The dialogue begun through this process continued over the next two months through a number of meetings with staff and Board members of APG and CSPC-T. These discussions greatly contributed to the findings and analysis of this report.

In addition, the consultants held a separate session with the Aboriginal Peoples Council of Toronto,<sup>23</sup> to discuss their perspectives on social planning in Toronto and the relationship of this activity to issues of concern to Aboriginal Peoples.

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<sup>21</sup> A list of key informants and of stakeholders (see the following bullet point) can be found in Appendix B of this report.

<sup>22</sup> A list of attendees to the March 12 roundtable discussion is provided in Appendix C of this report.

<sup>23</sup> The individuals and their organizational affiliations are listed in Appendix D of this report.



## 6. SUMMARIES OF REPORTS AND INTERVIEWS

The following are summaries of the three individual papers as well as of the interviews. The paper summaries are presented separately, while the interview summaries are presented in terms of topic areas.

### Summaries of the three reports

1. *Alternative Social Planning: A Paradigm Shift. Developing an Inclusive, Healthy Toronto.* By Alina Chatterjee, Chung Tang, Cidalia Pereira, Debbie Douglas, Duberlis Ramos, Raymond Micah, and Uzma Shakir, for the Alternative Planning Group, February 2004.

The consultation report prepared by the Alternative Planning Group (APG) posits an alternative conception of social planning for the City of Toronto that seeks “to create common values, principles and an inclusive process for the development of social planning that is equitable, accountable, transparent and responsive.” It takes as its premise the view that ethno-racial communities are not special interest groups, but represent the public interest as a whole.

The APG paper identifies the following problems in the current practice of social planning:

- **The existing framework for social planning does not effectively integrate ethno-racial diversity or shared decision-making;**
- **The practice of social planning is *centralized, “top-down,” and paternalistic*:** it is conducted *for* communities by planning professionals within centralized agencies, rather than *by* communities themselves;
- **Current planning has been unable to respond to the complexities of evolving communities.** “Top down” planning has tended to structure responses into sectoral “silos,” limiting opportunities for creative responses that cut across sectors. This kind of planning also misses an opportunity to support the emergence of community-based planning expertise.
- The concept of “social inclusion” is discussed. Strategies whereby individuals excluded from political, economic or social processes are brought into these processes do not amount to all that much if these processes nevertheless rest on inequities. **The issue is not how to include previously excluded individuals and groups, but rather addressing why the exclusion occurs and how to eliminate those conditions.**

- Given these factors, **current planning is unsustainable**. Without a strong forecasting function, it misses an opportunity to develop creative responses to Toronto's continually changing demographics. Reactive rather than proactive, it establishes priorities and allocates resources within short-term time frames. It lacks the flexibility to respond to an ever-changing urban environment.

The paper outlines the following elements of an alternative approach to social planning:

- **Alternative social planning sees diversity not as a problem to be overcome, but a rich opportunity to be seized;**
- **The goal of alternative social planning is to create a “common good”** that is shared across diverse communities, rather than the “greatest good” for some communities. In a pluralistic society, social planning seeks to build equitable social capital among diverse communities as a means of creating social cohesion.
- **Alternative social planning is *decentralized*:** it is conducted *by* communities, rather than *for* communities. It involves communities in identifying goals and obstacles, and devising and implementing practical solutions.
- **Communities are “self-defining and come together organically on points of commonality.”** Individuals, then, can be part of multiple communities.
- **A restructuring of power relationships and resource distribution** in society is a necessary prerequisite of alternative social planning. Communities must be equitably resourced to conduct effective and meaningful social planning;
- **Alternative social planning enables ongoing public engagement** rather than one-time public input or consultation. It involves communities in decision-making processes from the beginning;
- **Alternative social planning looks forward and back:** it learns from the mistakes of past planning exercises, and incorporates critical forecasting to plan responses to future conditions.

In order to democratize the practice of social planning in Toronto, the APG urges the City to reconceptualize social planning based on the principles of shared common good. A re-conceptualized social planning, they argue, should “facilitate meaningful participation by multiple communities” in developing responses to current and future planning needs. The APG identifies two major steps in operationalizing alternative social planning:

- First, the City should **recognize and legitimize communities as social developers and planners within** their own communities. Communities need to be adequately resourced to fully develop their potential and capacity to plan effectively.
- Second, alternative social planning could be operationalized through a “**constellation**” of **planning bodies or a network of planning groups** that plan independently for their communities and come together to collectively to achieve broader social planning goals. This “constellation” or “network” would advise the City of priority needs to inform the City’s allocation of resources.

2. *Community-based Planning in Toronto: A Report to the City of Toronto Community and Neighbourhood Services Department*, by the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, February 2004.

The CSPC-T consultation report uses the phrase “community-based planning” to describe the CSPC-T’s social planning practice. The report identifies two interrelated functions of community-based planning:

- (1) service planning, including needs assessments, networking and other activities which generally occur at the local level and are confined to one sector or group; and
- (2) an advocacy-oriented agenda, which employs research, policy analysis, and public education to influence policy development at all three levels of government.

The report stresses the importance of the CSPC-T’s role as an independent community planning body with the ability to conduct research on citywide issues.

The CSPC-T report highlights examples of successful community-based planning conducted by the CSPC-T in partnership with other groups. In each of the examples, the CSPC-T took on a facilitating role, acting as project incubator (providing advice and office space to emerging groups), convenor (pulling groups together around different issues), advocate (for example, campaigning to protect City grants), and researcher (consulting communities, publishing and disseminating information). The report highlights the CSPC-T’s recent collaboration with the Alternative Planning Group in the development of the

Integrated Settlement Planning Project as an example of effective partnership on social planning issues.

The existence of an independent planning body, the author stresses, is vital to the health of social planning in the City. The CSPC-T's ability to take on politically controversial projects (such as Workfare Watch, or Surviving the Streets), its ability to take on an advocacy role that City departments and many agencies cannot, and its position as neither a funder nor a competitor for funds in incubating new groups, are important functions of effective social planning.

The report identifies the need for more local planning capacity, particularly in light of the reduced planning capacity of organizations such as the Toronto District School Board, which once had over 25 School-Community Advisors across the City. The CSPC-T itself has only three community planners across the City, only two of whom are based in the community. Given this lack of local planning capacity, the CSPC-T sees "a legitimate role in community-based planning for a wide range of groups." Ethno-specific organizations, the report concludes, have an important role to play in delivering services and enhancing planning capacity for an increasingly multicultural society. Despite evident space for new players, however, the report emphasizes a "crucial role for an organization with a broader mandate, for issues which cut across ethnicity, and to help emerging agencies." Each of these roles is important to a healthy social planning environment, the report concludes, and more resources are needed to support social planning activities across the city.

The report concludes with three recommendations:

- (1) Ensure capacity for independent community-based planning across the city, especially in the former suburbs;
- (2) Ensure ethno-specific planning groups have the resources to carry out their mandates without removing resources from independent organizations with a broader mandate that crosses ethnic lines; and
- (3) Recognize that the functions of community-based planning (social policy analysis, research, advocacy, service coordination and capacity building) are inextricably related, and that independent planning organizations need to undertake all of these functions in order to do one properly.

3. *Toronto Neighbourhood Centres' Observations on the State of Community Planning in Toronto*. Prepared by Rob Howarth for the Toronto Neighbourhood Centres, February 2004.

The TNC consultation report draws a parallel between the lack of supports and resources for communities in Toronto, and a corresponding lack of support and resources for community agencies. Key issues communities face include the racialization of poverty, a growing divide between rich and poor, and increasing isolation and disadvantage for vulnerable populations across the city. Agencies face insufficient resources, a growing dichotomy in resources and supports between established and emerging organizations, and a lack of organizational infrastructure, particularly in the former suburbs. The result is that many neighbourhoods and ethno-specific communities are under-resourced in terms of service delivery and community-building supports. Residents' capacity to participate in social planning activities, the report argues, is directly related to the presence of community infrastructure.

The report describes "community planning" as a necessary process in achieving social development. The *process* of community planning (an action-oriented process involving research, community education and mobilization) should inform the *goals* of social development: to increase civic engagement, to increase the quality and scope of social services, and to enhance coordination and access to services. Community planning functions are necessary at both the local and broader sector levels. TNC agencies identified three main functions of effective community planning:

- (1) **Stable and well-resourced non-profit organizations** which integrate community development practice with service delivery;
- (2) **Permanent, community-level forums** resourced to support ongoing community planning activities (both within geographic neighbourhoods and across communities of interest/affinity), and accountable to government and agencies.
- (3) **Permanent, sector-level networks** of non-profit community agencies (Toronto or GTA wide) with the capacity for information sharing, collaboration and collective action, and with the resources to act as a clearinghouse for local social planning initiatives.

In order to strengthen or establish these three essential components, the TNC makes the following recommendations:

- (1) **Support local hubs to build communities and expand non-profit infrastructure.**

- Include community development and civic engagement as critical core functions of community planning in need of additional resources;
  - Reinvest funds in core agency functions (community development is one of these);
  - Mobilize support and resources for non-profit infrastructure development.
- (2) Establish local planning forums**
- One organization or City department could take the lead in reviewing local service planning models in use across the city, compiling best practices, and building upon previous initiatives;
  - Establish “social infrastructure planning tables” (staffed and resourced) in pilot communities.
- (3) Establish sector-level networking**
- Develop and fund a project to establish effective communications tools and sector-level policy platforms (CSPC-T and APG could explore joint management of this initiative);
  - Increase the level of collaboration and effectiveness of community development practice in Toronto (for example, the CSPC-T and the APG could jointly convene meetings of community development workers from across Toronto);
  - Mobilize current capacity for Ontario-wide non-profit sector organizing (for example, the CSPC-T and the APG could convene meetings of provincial organizations who support non-profit agencies in Toronto).

## **Interview summaries**

As noted earlier, the consultants interviewed forty-eight informants over the course of the project. At the beginning of the project, thirteen key informant interviews provided context on the recent history of social planning in Toronto and helped to frame key issues. Interviews with thirty-five stakeholder representatives from community-based agencies, funding bodies, government, labour and business over the subsequent course of the project provided more detailed exploration of these issues.

Interviewees identified the important functions of social planning, outlined observations on the state of social planning in Toronto, and made recommendations to improve the practice of social planning in the city.

## **Defining social planning**

Not all interviewees were comfortable with the term “social planning.” Some found it too narrow a term, creating a false division between economic and social planning. Others felt it divorced the activities of community mobilization and development from research

and planning. These interviewees sought a broader and more encompassing term, such as “social development” or “community-based planning.”

Interviewees identified a range of **functions** necessary to support effective social planning. Their responses can be grouped into four interrelated “core capacities:”

- (1) Research, including gathering community intelligence, identifying emerging issues, forecasting future trends, and setting research priorities;
- (2) Dissemination, including public education and advocacy;
- (3) Convening, including identifying stakeholders, drawing them in to an inclusive process, and creating opportunities for collaboration;
- (4) Capacity building, or working with communities to help them to identify strengths and needs, set priorities, and work towards realizing their goals.

Effective social planning, stakeholders felt, must be action-oriented. Research should have a social reporting function, and it should be an effective tool in advocating for policy change. It should be participatory, applied, and accessible. Finally, research should be credible. Good social planning creates a base of current information on communities.

### **Comments on the state of social planning in Toronto**

Interviewees were unanimous in their opinion that **current social planning activities in Toronto are fragmented, piecemeal, and uncoordinated**. There is a lack of communication and coordination within and between sectors; good work is being done in pockets, interviewees felt, but there is limited coordination to build upon it. In the absence of good planning, the delivery of services across the City has evolved in an ad hoc way: some areas of the city have a good complement of services, while others have no community health centre or United Way-funded agency. As poverty deepens in geographic pockets across the city, these inequities have continued to expand.

Interviewees pointed to the **reduction of community development supports** as a key factor affecting the quality of social planning in Toronto. The loss of dedicated community development staff,<sup>24</sup> together with reduced funding to agencies for community development activities and through cuts to core funding, has contributed to a loss of capacity in communities across the city. Remaining community development workers have been silo-ed, interviewees said, within specific sectors (health, housing and so on), and the capacity for broader community development work that crosses sectors is negligible.

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<sup>24</sup> For example, the TDSB alone cut 25 School-Community Advisors in the last 2 years.

This lack of capacity, interviewees noted, is **especially evident in the former municipalities** of Scarborough, Etobicoke and North York. These areas still feel the vacuum left behind by the former local planning councils.<sup>25</sup>

**Funders contribute to this fragmentation**, interviewees agreed, by not looking at the City broadly to identify pockets of need. One-time projects that are conducted without the resources to expand or continue actually undermine the idea of social planning, one interviewee commented. Too often, funders are missing opportunities to participate in and enhance community strategic planning activities.

In an atmosphere of cutbacks and short-term project-oriented funding regimes, agencies described themselves as learning “a lot of bad habits.” We are operating “in triage mode,” they said, prioritizing the most pressing issues and concentrating their energies on short-term projects. Staff has been trained to be program-focused, and the result has been **a loss of capacity to think with a long-term social planning perspective**.

**Social planning activities have failed to be as inclusive as they could be.** The Aboriginal sector, for example, has been estranged from the social planning process. Youth are another group that have not been consistently engaged in the process. An effort needs to be made, many interviewees felt, to create space for marginalized groups to play an active role in decision-making processes that affect their communities.

Finally, interviewees found shortcomings among **the previous leaders** of social planning. The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto **had lost both its credibility and its capacity to produce good social planning products**. As an amalgamated body, the CSPC-T no longer has an active presence at the community level; its capacity as a trainer and a source of social research have been dramatically reduced. The City of Toronto, in the view of some interviewees, has also regressed from its position as a strong leader on social development issues with an active community development function. That being said, it was recognized that the City produces excellent social planning research and its staff are often available to assist the community sector through the provision of data and data mapping services. While the United Way of Greater Toronto has picked up some of the slack here, there remains an express need for leadership and coordination of social planning activities in Toronto.

There were further concerns about social planning resting too much in the hands of funders, whether it is the City or the United Way. The whole purpose of social planning is to give voice to the perspectives and aspirations of the community. Therefore, even where the City or the United Way produce excellent studies and reports<sup>26</sup> there was a

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<sup>25</sup> Together with the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, five local planning councils served populations in the former municipalities: Human Services Scarborough, Etobicoke Social Development Council, North York Inter-Agency and Community Council, East York Community Development Council, and the City of York Community and Agency Social Planning Council.

<sup>26</sup> The City of Toronto and the United Way of Greater Toronto were regularly praised regarding the quality of their social planning studies. To give just limited examples: the City’s *Report Card on Housing and*



worry that at the same time there was a “hollowing out” of the capacity of the community sector to engage in such work. In addition, skepticism was expressed regarding how vigorously such reports by these bodies could be followed up with through advocacy and community mobilization, the natural related functions of social planning.

## Recommendations

There was considerable agreement among interviewees on the need for additional resources to support the following infrastructure:

- An **independent central planning body** with a city-wide mandate to identify emerging issues, set research priorities, coordinate planning activities across sectors, convene groups, and engage communities across diverse sectors;
- A **network of neighbourhood-based social planning organizations** with representation and regular dialogue with the central planning body;
- A **funders’ table** where city-wide funding agencies could meet to share information, identify needs, and collaborate on solutions;
- A **supportive environment for partnerships**, including partnerships between academic institutions and community-based organizations;
- **Expanded and enhanced community development and mobilization supports**, including the regular convening of community development workers from across the City, and so on.

Process recommendations included the following:

- **Develop a social planning agenda:** identify and agree on key issues and prioritize resources;
- **Tap into the existing expertise** of agency staff, and the planning strengths of communities: build from and resource existing networks;
- **Be open-minded about who to invite into the “collaboration-tent:”** creative solutions can come from unlikely sources (for example, arts and environmental organizations);
- **Involve labour.** Local labour councils have strong community outreach and social planning function;

- **Ensure consistent representation from marginalized groups**, such as the Aboriginal sector and Youth, in decision-making processes;
- **Resource planning, coordination and advocacy activities;**
- **Resource mobile community development supports.** Strategic allocations of community development staff time, for example, to help agencies develop a plan or build capacity, rather than attend monthly meetings of one or two groups;
- **Improve coordination** between large social planning bodies (CSPC-T, UWGT, and government departments);
- **Provide a “one-stop-shop” for communities to receive assistance.** A strengthened Social Planning Council could fill this role, as an ombudsman or mentor for smaller agencies seeking information on funding, partnerships, finding space, and so on.
- **Support small-scale interventions** (e.g., resourcing a small food bank or a community gardening programs for at-risk youth) as inexpensive and often effective solutions;
- **Develop a databank of people who can share information** in different areas (a “training bank” or “speaker’s bureau” model);
- **Share success stories;**
- **Bolster community-academic partnerships.**

Regarding this last point of fostering more community sector and academic partnerships to advance social planning work, some additional observations were made, highlighting the challenges of fostering such linkages:

- Problem of **differing time frames** – academia has the luxury of long time frames, while agencies need results quickly;
- **For many agencies, the research work is on top of their main job**, while for academia research is part of their part job;
- Huge **disparity in resources** (academia brings to the table their time and often funding, while agencies offer their front-line experience and their access to the community);
- **Funding structures** for the most part do not sufficiently acknowledge either the value of the community sector contribution nor the pressures placed on them because of their service demands and their restricted core funding;
- **Accountability and transparency** are vital to success;
- Pre-existing relationships contribute to success.

## 7. FURTHER ANALYSIS

Earlier in this report, the universe of participants and stakeholders involved in social planning was described. At one level, there is a vast array of researchers, writers and academics, working in government, academia, the media and think tanks, who produce content or otherwise contribute product, through reports and analyses primarily, which greatly contributes to the social planning discussions and agenda-setting. To distinguish this group, one can call them **social planning analysts**.

A further level of players involves those many participants in community sector activities, engaged in one or several of the social planning functions, but not considering their role as central to social planning. They contribute to it, they use it, but their primary function is not social planning per se. In large measure, many of the key informants and stakeholders we interviewed represent this broader constituency: they have a great interest in that social planning *works* in some fashion, because they interact with the social planning activities in numerous ways. For convenience sake, this group can be labeled **social planning stakeholders**.

Finally, there exists an inside group, who could be either or both social planning analysts or social planning stakeholders, whose primary role or attachment is to social planning activities. They have strong views on what principles should underlie social planning activities and they have the largest vested interest in the issues of functions and funding, because their core activity consists of social planning work. This group could be called **core social planners**. Such a group would include the CSPC-T and APG, as well as certain academics who have long been directly associated with defining and putting into practice social planning.

To put matters in their most simple terms (and at the risk of over-simplifying the situation), **the social planning stakeholders seek largely mechanical improvements to how social planning functions in Toronto**, improvements which would greatly enhance social planning processes and products, making them more effective, more efficient and more relevant, not only to the everyday lives of residents, but also to the decision-making processes of the community, be these political or community-based processes.

**The group of core social planners**, however, that cluster of individuals and organizations who are essential to putting into practice social planning in this City, **seeks to address issues relating to the social planning past in this City, as well as where it is heading, and how it will get there**. This section of this report attempts to describe the issues relevant to that discussion, and to identify the key items which require deliberation and resolution.

The roundtable and subsequent deliberations undertaken by the consultations helped clarify where there was broad agreement and where the group of core social planners

needed more time and engagement to sort through these issues. The following topics will be discussed:

- The concept of social planning
- Diversity: Comment #1
- Need for a hub, constellation or network
- Resources
- Diversity: Comment #2
- Role of APC, APG, CSPC-T and TNC

### **The concept of social planning**

Despite the struggles relating to funding support for the community sector as a whole and social planning functions in particular, there exists a core enthusiasm regarding the future potential for social planning. This enthusiasm is not some sense of promising and perhaps misguided optimism. Rather, it is based on the growing and solid evidence of the need to strengthen the community sector and ensure the participation of communities and the community sector in the decision-making processes which guide the political, economic and social life of this City.

Thus, going back to an earlier discussion, the extent to which governments speak of citizen engagement or that the business sector speaks to quality of life issues contributes to the validation of civic society and the community sector. It is in this light that the social planning functions acquire even more relevance, and it is for this reason that its role and definition is being so strongly promoted. Indeed, the messages of civic engagement and quality of life are precisely some of the strong themes which social planning seeks to promote.

In this context, then, there is strong consensus among the core social planners that social planning must reflect the following:

- The “rationalist” top-down model of social planning is dead;
- Social planning no longer focuses on redesigning social services, but rather addresses itself to the broad challenge of city well-being;
- A stronger emphasis on social development goals and approaches, supporting more bottom-up activities and working with or supporting communities, however defined, to conduct their own social planning;
- Social planning needs to incorporate a far broader perspective, including economic, environmental and cultural goals;
- Minorities are not the minority anymore – the new mainstream is diverse communities;

*Despite the struggles relating to funding support for the community sector as a whole and social planning functions in particular, there exists a core enthusiasm regarding the future potential for social planning.*

- Social planning ultimately must focus on helping marginalized individuals and communities achieve their political, economic and social goals as they define them – creating access to lousy services or low-end jobs is not enough;
- Social planning needs to define and contribute to creating a continuum along which communities and individuals can move in choosing and pursuing their goals, with appropriate supports provided.

## Diversity: Comment #1

As noted earlier, addressing the implications of a more diverse Toronto has become a challenge in the context of a constrained funding environment, in two respects: (1) how to resource support for equity in a racially and culturally diverse city; and (2) how to support emerging organizations serving newcomer and ethno-racial organizations which are unable to obtain the resources and capacities to allow them to address the worsening circumstances of their constituencies. The specific issue of resources is addressed further on, but on the issue of diversity itself, the following concepts attract general consensus:

*The process of social planning must have the pursuit of equity at its centre...*

### Equity

- The process of social planning must have the pursuit of equity at its centre – the people affected by social planning must not only be its objects of social planning, they must also be its subjects, participating in its direction, design and implementation;
- Without this approach, communities will continue to be marginalized, including marginalization by the social planning process itself;

### Social inclusion

- Social inclusion is about creating a society that values the contribution of all its members;
- Social inclusion begins with the reality of exclusion and is about creating a society that values, respects, nurtures and develops the capacity of all;
- Social inclusion is about process as well as outcome – individuals and communities need to feel that they helped shape and had adequate participation in the process, as well as feeling that the results reflected their aspirations and addressed their needs.

On these principles, there is agreement. The challenges, as discussed below, arise with respect to who speaks for which communities, including the coalition of communities, as well as with respect to the resources needed to carry out their functions.

## **Need for a hub, constellation or network**

There is recognition that there exists a constellation of organizations doing social planning in Toronto. There is a broad consensus that the practice of social planning must be based on the principle of multiple hubs or voices or players that are active in the field. There is a desire to give this concrete expression, in the following way:

- Recognizing multiple hubs at different levels, cutting across local geographic communities, ethno-specific communities and communities of interest. All have legitimate right to resources – the issue is how best to provide supports across sectors/communities, and to ensure proper communication within and between hubs;
- This involves identifying the capacity and funding required to create effective, community-based hubs for social planning.

Essentially what is being proposed here is that for one, social planning takes place at different levels of aggregation and that it cannot be done solely at a city-wide level. Indeed, a vision of social planning which promotes citizen engagement, local involvement and bottom-up approaches cannot do so without a decentralized approach to social planning.

The issue then becomes: what would this look like? What kind of resources would it need? What is the relationship of such decentralized activities to any centralized core, however that core is defined?

In essence, then, deliberation regarding these preliminary issues, defining social planning, of valuing diversity and of the need for a social planning “hub,” resulted in fairly broad consensus among the core social planners group. The unresolved issues requiring further discussion relate to resources and the roles of the various players.

## **Resources**

**Need for increased funding.** There is no getting around the fact that the sum of funding going to social planning activities in this City is inadequate. That assessment is based on several calculations:

- (1) the historical patterns of funding;
- (2) the significant and growing role being assigned to the community sector by governments;
- (3) the tumultuous changes which have occurred with respect to the economy, the functions of governments, and the activities of the community sector, which require major adaptations in approaches and practices.

Early in this report, social planning was characterized as the R&D activities of the community sector. It is the work which enhances the ability of the community sector to deliver on its promise, that of providing relevant and effective human services, that of supporting the ability of communities to mobilize their internal resources, and that of contributing to the functioning of broader societal processes (for example, through civic engagement and the enrichment of social capital). It is rare to find business analysts who bemoan the R&D functions of a corporation – when was the last time someone said a business spent too much money on R&D? Social planning similarly needs to be properly resourced if the community sector is to perform its functions.

At the very least, the range of the global contribution to core social planning activities in the city made by the City of Toronto and the United Way of Greater Toronto should be far close to the more recent high of \$1,108,000 – the 1998 figure for the CSPC-T, as opposed to the current historical low of \$796,000 (the combined funding received by CSPC-T, APG and its partners). This represents a gap of \$312,000, some 40% more than current allocations.

**Need for this to be “core” funding.** The proposition is often advanced that the community sector must become somehow more self-sustaining and, in particular, that its funding should be linked to specific provision of services, that is, contract funding. The bane of contract or project funding is a longstanding grievance of the community sector – it hollows out the capacity of the community sector and undermines the management and planning functions which make the community sector function in the first place.

This argument is similarly advanced with respect to social planning organizations – that given their research and development expertise, social planning bodies should be able to support themselves by acquiring research contracts available through various competitive processes. The actual fact is that **as core funding is reduced, the capacity to compete for contract work is similarly affected, as a shrinking number of key staff must spend an increasing amount of their time searching for and bidding for work.** Indeed, in the case of the CSPC-T, this is precisely what happened in the late 1990s – as their core funding was cut, the amount of funding they were able to attract competitively also dropped.

**In the case of newly emerging organizations, such as APC or APG, or very small operations, such as TNC, the limited funding they have virtually guarantees that they can never develop the critical mass of experience and size to operate as robust voices for the perspectives they promote.**

Moreover, contract funding is tied to a specific project whose objectives are defined by the funder. Core funding supports the basic goals of an organization, allowing the decisions of what social planning gets done to be made within that organization, in conjunction with the constituency or community it serves. In short, an exclusive reliance on contract funding would run completely contrary to the whole purpose of social

planning – that its work and focus be rooted and derive from its community orientation, not what funders dictate.

**What’s considered part of the “global pot” for social planning funding?** The social planning “pot” of funding is to be found in several locations, not only what is termed direct funding for social planning.

For one, some functions for social planning are carried out within the operations of the City of Toronto and the United Way of Greater Toronto. For example, the City of Toronto has a staff of community development officers, while the UWGT has internal social research capacity. Certainly in various ways these functions contribute both directly and indirectly to meeting City and UWGT objectives. However, when making allocation decisions, consideration should be given to whether having more of these functions lodged in the community sector (with the attendant resources) would not also serve a further goal, that is, contributing to the strength of the community sector as well.

For another, the City, the UWGT and other bodies regularly commission research work through various competitive as well as non-competitive processes. More attention needs to be given to how a greater portion of this work could be directed to the social planning sector to serve the complementary goal of supporting the capacity of that sector.

Finally, in addition to there being a large number of players in the social planning sector, there are also a larger number of funders – the City and the UWGT stand out, but social planning activities are also funded by the two senior levels of governments, through philanthropic foundations, through other community charities (such as the Catholic ShareLife or the United Jewish Appeal), and through various agencies and other funding sources which support academic research. At the very least, some effort must be given to bringing this range of funders together, both to consider strategically the support provided to this sector, as well as to explore opportunities for collaboration and synergy among many different funding activities.

**Distribution of existing funding.** This report proposes then that core funding for social planning activities be increased, that decisions relating to other spending which could contribute to strengthening this sector be reconsidered in the light of how such monies could contribute to strengthening the capacity of the sector, and that the funders be brought together to make determinations about this sector in a more strategic fashion.

To a degree, it can be said that the constrained funding environment has greatly contributed to a circumstance where the core social planning organizations are unable to collaborate in a strategic way on a broad social planning agenda because the issue of each individual organization’s funding (and indeed survival) gets in the way. It is not easy for these organizations to unite in solidarity about future priorities as their own individual funding needs (indeed, their own organizational survival) takes precedence over collaborative approaches.



It is also obvious that there has been a great disparity of resources between the CSPC-T and other organizations seeking to engage in social planning. This is a simple, factual reality: organizations which have emerged to serve ethno-racial communities, as well as to present alternative perspectives regarding the practice of social planning, have done so on shoe-string budgets.

Obviously allocating what has been a shrinking pie amongst organizations dangling on the brink of financial survival places these organizations and the entire social planning sector into an impossible circumstance. The truth is, as one participant in these deliberations commented, that arguing about the distribution of such meager resources is like “rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.” The amount of resources currently available to fund core social planning activities cannot support the minimum of social planning work which needs to take place in this City, and deliberating about its distribution is very much an issue secondary to that of expanding the funding envelope. It is certainly the view of this study that, in expanding the funding envelope, priority must be given to new and emerging voices in the social planning field, for reasons to be discussed in the following section.

If the funding envelope is not to be increased (in which case the consultations and processes which have underpin this study have been for naught, because a major finding of this report is the need to increase funding in this sector), then the same logic regarding a growing pie applies to a stagnant pie. Funding allocations must give more recognition to the multiplicity of voices in the social planning sector. If the recognition of the implications of a more diverse city is to amount to more than a policy pronouncement, if the pursuit of equity is to include empowering all participants in that process, then funding decisions need to back up these principles.

*If the recognition of the implications of a more diverse city is to amount to more than a policy pronouncement, if the pursuit of equity is to include empowering all participants in that process, then funding decisions need to back up these principles.*

## **Diversity: Comment #2**

In light of this discussion regarding resources, it is relevant to return to the discussion on the issue of diversity.

The point has been repeated made in this report that there has emerged a range of interests and communities which seek to play a more significant role in the social planning field, both in terms of which communities receive social planning attention, as well as in terms of how that social planning is conducted.

The consequences of the growing diversity of Toronto's population and how this reality is reflected in decision-making processes remains contentious, not because the fact of diversity is disputed, but rather in terms of how that diversity finds its voice and how it gets expressed.

There had existed in Toronto for the longest time a circumstance where one organization was the primary convenor and focal point for social planning work. In the last decade or so, a number of organizations have sought to articulate a range of voices which they assert are not heard or are not sufficiently acknowledged.

These include the voices of racial and ethno-cultural groups, new immigrants, women, Aboriginal peoples, and economically marginalized populations, as well as voices proposing alternative approaches to social planning.

This is not to say that mainstream organizations completely ignore these issues or that these emerging organizations somehow exclusively speak for or can act on behalf of these perspectives. It is also not to say that mainstream organizations somehow represent some broad citywide perspective, or that these emerging views are limited to a parochial expression of self-interest.

Rather, what is evident is that there exists in Toronto a multiplicity of voices, of constituencies, of approaches to social planning. That multiplicity of voices requires support and it is not support which can be accommodated through one organization. Indeed, these communities and viewpoints seek the wherewithal to foster and articulate their own voices, not have these mediated or represented by others. A proper recognition of this multiplicity of voices means resourcing a range of viewpoints and approaches, through several organizations, to ensure that a broader array of players as well as of communities can adequately engage in social planning in the way that they seek to be involved.

*A proper recognition of this multiplicity of voices means resourcing a range of viewpoints and approaches, through several organizations, to ensure that a broader array of players as well as of communities can adequately engage in social planning in the way that they seek to be involved.*

## **Role of APC, APG, CSPC-T and TNC**

The issue that remains to be examined is the respective roles of the core social planning organizations.

The first organization to consider is the CSPC-T. While this review was not an examination of the CSPC-T, the emerging argument of this report points to the need for a hub of organizations which can serve as an organizing network for social planning direction in this City. The question arises, then: is not the CSPC-T the organization vested with convening and facilitating the discussion around social planning in this City?

At one time, that was the function of a central social planning body. As has been discussed, **that is no longer a function which one social planning body can play in Toronto**. This point deserves further elaboration and reinforcement.

As noted earlier in this report, the range of organizations, networks and constituencies engaged in social planning in the City has broadened considerably in the last decade or two. CSPC-T has become one player among many – an important player, to be sure, but not so predominant as to assume it can perform a leadership or even convening function entirely on its own.

For another, the range of separate interests represented in a cosmopolitan city such as Toronto is vast. Indeed, some would argue that trying to structure a process which seeks to accommodate those interests in some representative way around social planning or any other community initiative is impossible. In a practical sense, that is true. Every distinct perspective may not find a separate place at the social planning table – there will be need to cluster perspectives, constituencies and interests into manageable groupings. But surely a network of diverse organizations would nevertheless be more capable of representing the diversity of interests, identities and communities in Toronto than can one single organization.

*...a network of diverse organizations would nevertheless be more capable of representing the diversity of interests, identities and communities in Toronto than can one single organization.*

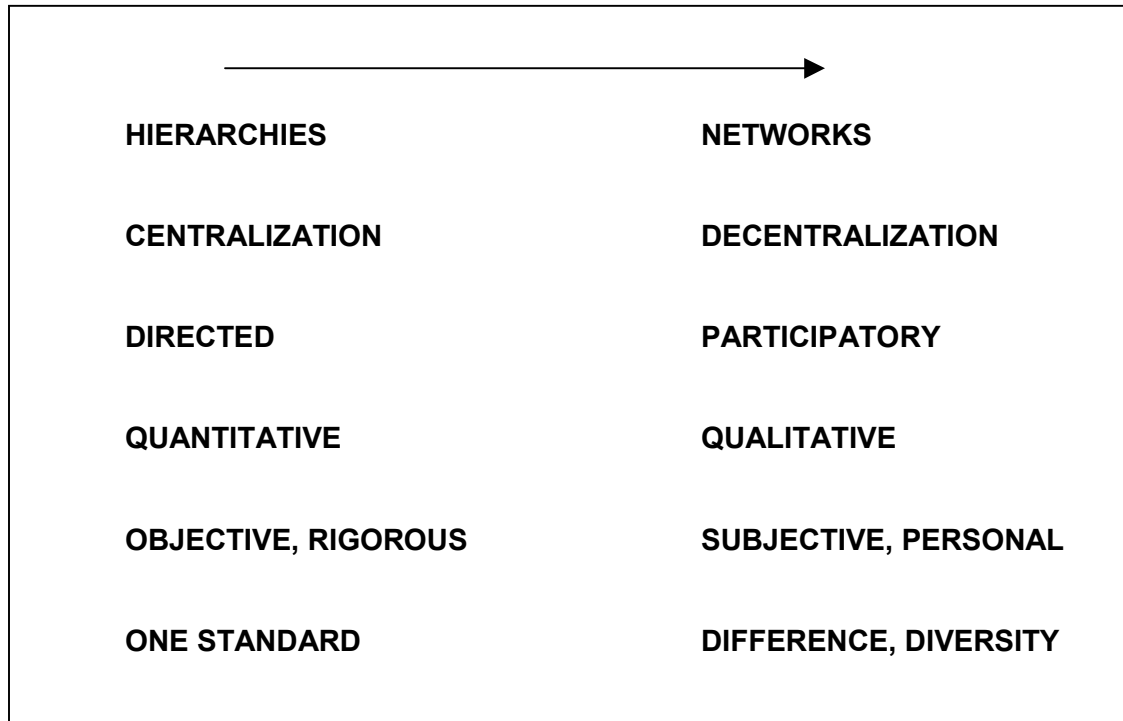
This multiplicity of interests, identities and communities is not only vast and complex. It should also be emphasized that individuals are not reducible to or defined in terms of one interest, one identity or one community. Structuring a more complex mechanism for gathering these perspectives does not guarantee that every conceivable voice gets a place at the table, but it does increase the range of interests represented at that table.

It cannot be denied that the recent history of the CSPC-T did make it more difficult for it to serve as the focal point for social planning deliberations in this City. The challenges it faced following amalgamation, its difficulties in addressing the emerging diversity of the city, its internal upheavals and the loss of capacity resulting from funding cutbacks did rattle the profile and credibility of the CSPC-T among its stakeholders and funders alike. In some instances, it was the victim of circumstances – its detractors will also say that it was the author of some of its own misfortunes. The point is, though, that whatever was the source of its crises, those events have affected the course of how social planning has developed in Toronto, including, for example, the emergence of alternative groups such as APG. This is the reality of Toronto.

But at the same time, it could also be proposed that the emergence of a network is part of a wider trend. There have been a number of ways in which social planning has evolved in the last decade or more, and a network accords with these broader social changes.

The chart below describes these trends in terms of a number of juxtapositions, several of which have already clearly taken hold, others of which may still be emerging.

**Chart 10: Some Broader Social Trends**



**It is the view of this report that a network can far better give voice to strategic deliberations around social planning issues in this City than can one organization.**

What, then, is the role of CSPC-T in the context of such a network? Frankly, it remains a role for the CSPC-T to sort out. Indeed, the focus of what the CSPC-T does would need to be an issue for the CSPC-T to address whether a network came into being or not. Developing greater focus on fewer issues is something the CSPC-T has been doing over the last few years, although the broader constituency of social planning stakeholders is at times hard-pressed to name what the current focus of the CSPC-T is.

A recurring theme of this report has been that social planning activities and the range of social planning actors have expanded significantly over the last decade or two. In these circumstances, a social planning organization, even one purporting to assume a citywide focus, cannot cover the entire range of potential social planning issues. Nor should it, given the existence of so many other organizations.

CSPC-T needs to identify what its niche is. It has played a useful role in nurturing new organizations, emerging to address new issues or new population groups; it has taken a strong lead on a number of research issues and community mobilization efforts; it has

also supported broad advocacy networks as well as neighbourhood-based community development initiatives. In short, it has demonstrated a range of capabilities – it now needs to concentrate on several distinct, signature activities which personify its mission.<sup>27</sup>

The same comment applies to the other core social planning organizations. The relevance of each of these organizations will depend on its ability to define its role and carry out its functions in a way that attracts and maintains support from its stakeholders and funders.

In the case of Alternative Planning Group, it has expounded a view of an alternative approach to traditional social planning – it now needs to make that vision concrete, in terms of actual social development practice. Its unique approach, resulting as it has in a common view among its constituent organizations toward social planning at a conceptual level, needs to find expression in locally based applications.

Obviously the Aboriginal Peoples Council is defining its own course as a nascent organization, but clearly its primary tasks will be to define its functions in relation to the City's aboriginal community and its various aboriginal organizations, as well as to situate the aboriginal community in relation to the federal, provincial and City governments. In addition, the network of aboriginal organizations needs to define its relationship to the mainstream community sector and mainstream community agencies.

Finally, the Toronto Neighbourhood Centres brings an important perspective to the social planning discussion, namely the experience of the major neighbourhood centres. Whether TNC truly seeks a wider role is the question, although its potential contribution to community development, community mobilization and social research is recognized by all stakeholders.

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<sup>27</sup> In this regard, CSPC-T's 2003 Strategic Plan conveys a broad and overly-ambitious role. The document identifies CSPC-T's "niche" as:

- A convenor, clearinghouse and conductor of social planning research;
- An organization supporting, coordinating, and initiating community mobilization in the City of Toronto and its constituent geographic communities;
- A body supporting communities, informing the public, and advocating with policy makers for improving social and economic conditions;
- A source for action-oriented research in support of community initiatives and mobilization.

The actual research agenda is more focused and nuanced, identifying different roles in three distinct research areas:

- A leading role in research on the social service sector;
- A convening role in research on the changing nature of work and income in Toronto;
- A partnering role in research on the inclusion of newcomers and racialized communities in Toronto.

## 8. Recommendations

**Recap.** In advance of the recommendations, it is useful to recap the overall findings and analysis of this report:

- Social planning encompasses the social research, community development, and community mobilization and advocacy functions of community sector work;
- Over the past two decades, as the role of governments has changed significantly and as the economy has experienced major transformations, community agencies providing a range of human services have assumed wider responsibilities while addressing greater needs with fewer resources;
- Social planning activities have experienced a similar strain while operating with less support; this includes the ability of communities themselves to mobilize and take action in response to their own self-identified issues and concerns;
- During this period, the range of players engaged in some form of social planning has greatly expanded, paralleling the growth of the community sector as well as reflecting the rise of far more single focus advocacy and policy groups;
- Toronto itself has changed dramatically in the last two decades, notably in terms of demographic changes (major populations of visible minorities and newcomers) and socio-economic polarization;
- The cast of interests operating in the social planning field has also expanded, to a point beyond the ability of one organization to reflect this wider range of perspectives;
- It has also been the case that at the time all these impacts were taking place, the one organization in Toronto which had historically performed a central social planning function saw its capacity and standing diminished as a result of a combination of factors, both internal and external.

In short, the cumulative impact of these events and trends, the range of challenges these circumstances pose, the expanse of interests, perspectives and voices seeking recognition, all require a broader approach to managing social planning in Toronto. This moment, however, is not one of crisis, but of opportunity – it offers the prospect of developing a strategic approach to social planning, one that incorporates the diversity of Toronto and the potential of its varied communities.

The purpose of this report has been to assess the implications of all these events for the social planning environment and to make recommendations regarding future social planning activities.

The recommendations of this report come in three forms:

- (1) Funding recommendations;
- (2) Process recommendations; and
- (3) Content recommendations.

## **Funding recommendations**

The overall thrust of this report is clear: social planning activities in Toronto are under-funded. The current constrained circumstances not only impoverish the capacity of the community sector as a whole, it is adding to the tension between existing and emerging groups. If funders had wished to neutralize and indeed diminish the community sector, they could have found no better way than to foster internal rivalries and bitterness through heightened competition for diminished resources in a time of increasing community needs.

### **Recommendation #1: That core funding for the social planning sector be returned to recent historical levels.**

This report also makes clear that there is a need to ensure equity of funding within the social planning sector. That equity of funding will largely be reflected in how different organizations are funded. However, given the very wide expanse of perspectives and constituencies, these funding decisions should also ensure:

- (1) That equity in social planning is a primary goal, notably on the part of marginalized populations such as ethno-racial, immigrant and refugee communities, Aboriginal communities, poor and working people, women, the disabled;
- (2) That priority be given to the intersection of equity concerns, to address the cumulative impact of polarizing tendencies occurring in Toronto;
- (3) That special attention be given to locally focused activities, to enhance the ability of different communities to address their issues and concerns.

These principles should apply regardless of the overall trend in social planning sector funding, whether it is increasing or decreasing.

### **Recommendation #2: That funding allocations for social planning activities better reflect the needs of new and emerging organizations which have arisen to address neglected interests, identities and communities.**

It is not only a matter of more dollars – monies currently being spent on what are in essence social planning activities could contribute to a strengthening of the sector if those monies were considered part of the funding envelope for the sector.

As noted earlier, there are legitimate reasons for organizations such as the City of Toronto, the United Way of Greater Toronto or others to have some of these functions either in-house or available by way of contract. However, when decisions are made to

either hire such in-house capacity or contract external support, it is not obvious that the issue of the capacity of the social planning sector is at all a consideration.<sup>28</sup>

Clearly organizations seeking to contract some form of social planning work (in most cases this involves some form of social research) seek to have the flexibility to hire when and how they please. However, in the case of public bodies (such as governments) or organizations with a social goal (such as community charities or philanthropic foundations), the prospect of structuring some of their contracted work to serve a further purpose, that is, strengthening the social planning sector in Toronto) surely is a concept which can attract at least support in principle.<sup>29</sup>

If that concept can be supported in principle, then some effort should be made to allow for such contracted social research work to support that goal. It should be obvious that simply offering an open Request for Proposals process provides only limited support to the sector. Where such RFPs are publicized at the last moment, with tight deadlines for submission of proposals and production of the work, social planning organizations can hardly plan for the part-time staff that could be recruited to participate in such work.

If contracting organizations were truly serious about building the capacity of the sector, they would outline their contracted social planning requirements with far more lead time, and even engage the sector as a whole in discussions about how this work could be undertaken in a way which serves both the need to produce a product and the desire to contribute to the on-going capacity of the sector. Indeed, the perfect forum for these sorts of issues to be sorted out would be joint sessions between the social planning sector and funders of social planning activities (a mechanism for doing just that is found in a later recommendation).

For example, the recently formed Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force has commissioned a series of research projects representing a cumulative \$150,000 of social research work. If part of the essence of strong neighbourhoods is the existence of a strong social infrastructure, including social planning capacity, then it would have been an enticing option to coordinate the production of this research with the social planning sector itself. The argument could no doubt be made that there was not sufficient time to do so, or even that the capacity of the sector to take on such work on short notice is very limited. If this is true, it is in part because we have not structured the way contracted social research gets carried out with the strengthening of the social planning sector as one of the objectives.

**Recommendation #3: Funding organizations and other bodies seeking social planning product should review their contracting and hiring decisions which involve a strong social planning function, to assess in what way spending in these areas**

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<sup>28</sup> An example of such an approach was the decision by the Toronto Community Foundation to sub-contract the researching and tracking of its *Vital Signs* indicators to the CSPC-T.

<sup>29</sup> Such a policy could be compared to the City of Toronto's Environmentally Responsible Procurement Policy, which seeks to increase the purchase of environmentally sound products.



**could be directed to have the same services undertaken through the social planning sector, thus contributing to the capacity and financial health of this sector.**

### **Process recommendations**

The funding recommendations propose a shift from a centralized structure of social planning in this City, with its asymmetrical division of funding, to a more decentralized approach to social planning, and a more equitable division of resources.

A decentralized structure will, in the view of this report, make it more likely that the range of different social planning interests in Toronto can find expression. This would be particularly the case with respect to distinct populations and communities. This range of social planning approaches may also be able to offer a spectrum of models and perspectives which local community initiatives could draw upon, enriching the practice of social development at the neighbourhood level.

Nevertheless, there remains a need for these disparate activities to find ways to coordinate their activities, in terms of collaboration around specific projects, developing sector-wide strategies in dealing with funders, as well as building the common infrastructure necessary to support social planning across this City.

Indeed, how can Toronto achieve a vision and practice of social planning which can truly represent the strengths of its many communities, one which can harness the diverse assets, experiences and viewpoints of its multi-varied constituencies, one whereby the community sector as a whole can speak as an equal partner to governments and the business sector in helping shape the kind of city where all residents feel at home?

This can only happen if the diversity of Toronto is reflected in a common process.

### **A social development network**

The first issue, then, is how to manage the social planning sector as a whole. As has been noted repeatedly throughout this report, the range of players in the social planning sector has increased substantially in the last few years. As well, the growing recognition of the diversity of the City of Toronto, in its many respects (in terms of race, culture, social economic standing, sexual orientation, to name several), as well as the emergence of strong single issue or single perspective organizations (with respect to gender, social justice, anti-poverty, environmental issues, for example) all speaks to a need to broaden the range of players at the convening table for social planning.

If one were to try to incorporate all the different perspectives and groups that form the City of Toronto, the resulting body would be impossibly large. At the same time, trying to have these different views represented within one organization seems equally

unrealistic – one organization, any organization, tends toward a coalescing of views and tends to homogenize differences, if only for the sake of having a focused direction.

The idea of a network is proposed as a vehicle which seeks to find a balance between these two extremes, and which could over time evolve to accommodate the various pressures for representation and voice at such a table.

**Such a network could only operate if the member organizations are sufficiently resourced to be able to participate effectively.** Recommendations #1 and #2 relating to funding must provide recognition of this reality, otherwise a network becomes just another under-resourced task foisted onto already strained organizations.

**Recommendation #4: That a Toronto Social Development Network (TSDN) be established, to act as a convening body for social planning and social development deliberations, with sufficient resources for member organizations to participate effectively.**

At a minimum, Toronto requires a mechanism or forum where the various social planning and social development organizations can come together to:

- Discuss the broad social planning and social development agenda;
- Coordinate activities;
- Ensure proper sharing of information; and
- Act as a vehicle for communicating with funders regarding social planning and social development priorities.

This group should be sufficiently broad to include a wide range of perspectives and interests, yet still be of sufficiently manageable size for the purposes of useful discussions. This report believes that such a mechanism is necessary to incorporate the diverse range of interests, identities and communities that are engaged in some aspect of social planning work. It is a step toward ensuring a greater voice for the diversity of views and interests in Toronto.

**Membership.** Such a group should consist of, at the very least:

- Aboriginal Peoples' Council;
- Alternative Planning Group;
- Community Information Toronto;
- Community Social Planning Council of Toronto;
- Toronto Neighbourhood Centres.

In addition, this group should likely have a representative from an organization or network representing the following:

- Academia in Toronto;
- The business community;
- The gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities;
- Immigrant populations;
- Labour;
- Poverty activist or social justice organizations;
- Seniors;
- Women;
- Youth.

**Resources.** As noted earlier, member organizations would need to be adequately funded under their social planning allocation to participate effectively. However, as a convenor body, the network itself would not require that much in the way of resources. The network would have need of support for staff and expenses, a minimum of a 0.25 FTE managerial level function, together with a minimum 0.25 FTE administrative support function. It should not require much more than this – the purpose is not to create a new organization. The secretariat role (and attendant resources) required to schedule and minute meetings could be lodged within one of the participating organizations, perhaps on a rotating (annual, biannual?) basis. Similarly, the chair function could also rotate among the membership of the body.

**Functions.** There are a number of functions which such a body could assume, such as:

A broad agenda setting function: Currently, there is no forum in Toronto where the broader social planning and social development issues receive regular discussion or prioritizing; such a venue, involving the range of organizations and networks proposed, would not only allow for exchange of ideas but also contribute to deliberations about strategies, advocacy priorities and work partnerships;

Prioritizing sector-wide initiatives: Further on in these recommendations, a number of potential sector-wide ideas are proposed – this body could make recommendations relating to the priority sequence of such initiatives, as well as propose mechanisms for how these initiatives could be implemented and managed (for example, an electronic social development clearinghouse for data, research and networking in Toronto);

Speaking to funders: No one organization can speak to funders in Toronto regarding the social planning and social development agenda, including the issue of funding – this body would have the range of interests represented which could allow it to speak for the sector as a whole.

Representing the sector: If such a body attracted sufficient support, it would be a natural entity which could be expected to participate in processes where the


community sector voice was required – this would include being members of the steering committees for such processes as the Toronto City Summit Alliance or the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force.

Giving shape to a multiplicity of hubs: A further view which emerged from the work of this report was that of multiple hubs. Thus, while the proposed Toronto Social Development Network would represent a hub at a citywide level, the notion of multiple hubs needs also to find concrete expression. This multiplicity of hubs would presumably find expression at a geographic level and perhaps also as separate tables around different issues. Presumably some of this view is the subject of the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force, however this is also an issue which should be the focus of the TSDN as well.

**Operations.** How should such a body function? What would be its responsibilities? How would decisions be made?

The profile such a network would have depends on what profile its member organizations determine to let it have. The chart on the following page offers a spectrum of options which represent how such a network would represent itself:

**Chart 11: Spectrum of options for Toronto Social Development Network**

	<b>Loose association</b> 	<b>Strong coalition</b>
<b>Main purpose</b>	Information sharing	Frame a common social planning agenda
<b>Profile of the network</b>	Loose collection of organizations	With the support of members, network can speak as one voice on social planning issues
<b>Relations with funders</b>	Organizations continue to interact separately with funders	Network pursues a common agenda with funders
<b>Support to social planning infrastructure</b>	Intermittent activities that support the social planning infrastructure	A primary focus of the network is to strengthen the infrastructure supporting social planning

In large part, answers to these questions will need to be the responsibility of this body itself, emerging from its own deliberations. These answers will depend on how willing the member organizations are to develop a common strategy for social planning. Such a strategy should not preclude individual organizations from determining their own priorities, but rather should provide a framework which incorporates and coordinates the priorities important to each organization.

**What is the advantage of such a network to individual organizations?** Some advantages of such a network:

- The prospect for a united voice on selected social planning issues;
- Strength in numbers;
- An opportunity to focus on the infrastructure required to support social planning across the city;

- Given Recommendation #2 below (a gathering of social planning funders), a mechanism whereby the social planning collectivity can engage in regular dialogue on broad strategic issues with all relevant funders (as opposed to each organization negotiating solely in relation to individual funding requests).

### **A gathering of funders of social planning activities**

Just as the range of players in the social planning and social development field needs to find a forum for deliberation, so too do the various funding bodies, who not only make decisions regarding allocations of resources, but also who, through these decisions, give shape to what social planning and social development takes place. A forum of funders could permit these individual decisions to be made in the context of sharing of information and priorities between funders, as well as between funders and the social planning sector, represented through the body of the Toronto Social Development Network.

**Recommendation #5: That a Toronto Social Development Funders' Table be convened, to act as a group which can consult and coordinate with the Toronto Social Development Network, to ensure that funding decisions regarding social planning and social development can be made in a strategic way.**

**Operations.** Such a group need not meet often, perhaps several times a year, however the opportunity to discuss with the sector as a whole and among funders as a group the priorities in this field could create important synergies and partnerships, as well as allow for a coordinated and strategic approach to funding in this sector.

**Membership.** Membership in such a group should include, at the very least:

- City of Toronto
- United Way of Greater Toronto
- Toronto Community Foundation
- Atkinson Charitable Foundation
- Laidlaw Foundation
- Maytree Foundation

Obviously, any other funding body that feels it is or wishes to be involved in supporting social planning or social development in the City of Toronto should be included. This might involve other foundations such as the Counselling Foundation of Canada or the Wellesley Central Health Corporation, for example.

As well, it would be important to attract appropriate representation from the **provincial and federal governments**, given the various ways the seniors levels of government end up funding social planning and social development under various programs.

**What is the advantage of such a network to individual funders?** Some advantages of such a funders' table:

- Funders can share information and upcoming programs with each other, allowing for potential funding partnerships, while avoiding either duplication or initiatives which may work at cross purposes;
- Funders can focus on cross-cutting issues which affect the entire social planning sector (for example, capacity building measures, centralized data capabilities) and provide support collectively, something which an individual funder may be reluctant or unable to do;
- By working in concert, funding decisions can be mutually supportive, resulting in an accumulated critical mass of work, or the possibility of an on-going sequence, allowing for a build-up of impacts;
- Funders can engage the social planning sector as a whole in a dialogue regarding strategic directions and priorities and settle on a common agenda, one which need not be mandatory, but certainly compelling.

### **Making it happen**

Calling for the creation of these bodies will not make it happen – these mechanisms will come into existence only if some effort is put into starting them up. Moreover, their actual functions, processes and early priorities should emerge from deliberation among the membership of these groups, not be mandated as a result of a City report.

**Recommendation #6: In order to bring Recommendations #4 and #5 into effect, the City of Toronto will need to provide the resources to facilitate a process which leads to the creation of these two bodies.**

The City will therefore need to provide the resources to facilitate the process of bringing these two groups into existence, a process which would include defining the working arrangement that allows these two bodies to interact with each other. This does not mean that the City should be the facilitator of this process, but rather that the process, if it is going to be a serious attempt to forge a meaningful structure, needs to have resources to make it happen. Indeed, it would be far more beneficial if the process to create a Social Development Network was managed amongst the community sector players themselves, with perhaps the City facilitating the coming together of the funders. These processes would need to define the roles and responsibilities of these two groups. In the case of the Toronto Social Development Network, this could involve a memorandum of understanding relating to its mission, mandate, membership, procedures and so on.

No one is suggesting that this process would be simple – the range of interests and perspectives will more often as not find areas of disagreement as areas of agreement. But the need for focused dialogue across the community sector, and between the community

sector on the one hand and governments and the business sector and so important that a concerted effort needs to be made to allow such a process to produce concrete results.

### **Content recommendations**

Content recommendations refer to the *what* of the social planning infrastructure – what are users and stakeholders looking to see happen with regards to how social planning is practiced and delivered in this city.

Actual initiatives of this sort should more properly come forward from the Toronto Social Development Network, however these represent a collection of ideas from the social planning stakeholders which merit consideration, and can serve as an illustration of the types of issues the TSDN could put its mind to, a potential starting menu for its deliberations after it has sorted out its functions, roles and relationships. The actual implementation of any of these could be done by the TSDN as a whole, or through the Network supporting a particular organization taking on a specific initiative.

Similarly, these also form a potential menu of projects which a funders' table may wish to consider, who may also seek to signal their interests and priorities in this regard. Because many of these suggestions relate to strengthening the infrastructure for social planning in the city, there may be reason and opportunity for possible joint funding arrangements.

- Articulate in practice the concept of multiple hubs of social planning activity, shaping inclusive and participative processes at the local level that incorporate geographic communities, ethno-specific communities and communities of interest;
- Develop a model for neighbourhood level civic engagement and community development which can be concretely tested – incorporating it into the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force work;
- Seek out a role/a position with regards to the City's (as well as the province's) civic engagement initiatives – what would the community sector propose as appropriate mechanisms and vehicles for engaging Toronto citizens, neighbourhoods and communities in these processes? Consideration could be given to philosophers' cafes, community deliberation processes in the United States, relevant community engagement customs among different cultures that could take place at a local or neighbourhood level;
- Electronic clearinghouse for research, information, upcoming events, funding opportunities, partnership matching, discussion;
- As a further step, create the capacity for the electronic clearinghouse to be a resource to the community, in terms of building the capacity of others to do social planning, serving as a resource and aid in such work, acting as a repository of information, and to a degree, acting as a "reference desk;"



- Strategy for academic-community sector partnerships;
- Social planning agenda day – following on a successful event promoted by CSPC-T, convening stakeholders/practitioners to discuss on-going and planned activities.

### **Final recommendation**

This report has provided a review of social planning in this City, having regard to what social planning is, how it has evolved, and what appropriate future direction it should take. The recommendations which form this report are few in number, but substantive in content. They have been devised to effect a significant reorientation in the way social planning takes place in this City. For this reason, these recommendations need to be considered in their entirety. The whole package is greater than the sum of its parts, and dissecting one or the other diminishes not only the cumulative effect, it weakens each remaining recommendation.

**Recommendation #7: That Recommendations #1 to #6 be considered as one package.**

## **APPENDIX A:**

### **COMMENTS ON THE PRECEDING REPORT FROM:**

- ABORIGINAL PEOPLES COUNCIL OF TORONTO
- ALTERNATIVE PLANNING GROUP AND PARTNERS
- COMMUNITY SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL OF TORONTO
- TORONTO NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES

**COMMENT FROM THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES COUNCIL OF TORONTO**

Thank you for providing us with an opportunity to participate in the roundtable discussions which formed the basis for this report. Such an initiative has been a long time coming.

The Aboriginal Peoples Council of Toronto (APCT) agrees with the recommendations in the report and is willing to participate in the formation of the Toronto Social Development Network. Hopefully the City of Toronto will facilitate this process.

While we agree with the three principles for equity in funding as outlined in the Executive Summary, namely 1) equity in social planning; 2) priority to intersection of equity concerns; and, 3) special attention to locally focused activities, we recognize that a considerable amount of attention will have to be placed on ensuring that a balanced perspective is achieved.

We are particularly concerned about the special relationship Aboriginal Peoples have with the federal and provincial governments as a result of Aboriginal rights and Treaty obligations. These factors must be taken into account in relationship to equity concerns in order to ensure that federal and provincial off-loading to municipalities is not in breach of those rights and obligations as is currently the case.

The APCT has developed a Draft Comprehensive Aboriginal Community Plan for the GTA. This document proposes an internal community planning process involving Aboriginal stakeholders in Toronto. This plan will be approved by the APCT following six months of community consultation. We feel that it is timely, therefore, for the Aboriginal community to participate in a social development network as recommended.

Meegwetch.

### **COMMENT FROM THE ALTERNATIVE PLANNING GROUP & PARTNERS**

The Alternative Planning Group, OCASI and PIN, as articulated in our report entitled “Alternative Social Planning: A Paradigm Shift Developing an Inclusive, Healthy Toronto”, strongly believe in the need for a shift in the current social planning paradigm for the City. In our report, we propose a decentralized, equity-based, alternative model for social planning that acknowledges the multiplicity of players in this area and that will lead to a more inclusive and relevant strategy for social planning in the future.

APG and partners support the direction “A Review of Social Planning Activities in the City of Toronto” report has taken in terms of contextualizing the need for a new agenda for social planning while recognizing the limitations of the current system. In particular, we support the report’s emphasis on the fact that monetary allocations to social planning in the City are severely limited and that there is inequitable distribution of these resources. We acknowledge that this is a fundamental challenge that needs to be addressed. To this end, we support the recommendations for increased investment in social planning activities and a reallocation of existing resources to build the planning capacity of multiple players.

However, we also assert that inter-sectionality of race/gender/class and sexuality is a critical and necessary concept to utilize in social planning if we are to move planning beyond those who have an organized voice in the system today. The City should be responsible for proactively bringing in those who are not represented in the existing system but whose need for social planning is identifiable on the basis of the systematic inequalities they face. To this end, it is imperative for the City to clearly articulate a position on the future of planning by identifying “priority” groups that ought to have the capacity to do planning, for example, racialized communities both established and newcomer; women’s groups; non-unionized labour, Aboriginal communities etc. There needs to be a clear articulation in planning of who are the planning constituents? There is also a need for the City to establish an intersectional approach as a precondition for financial and political support for the groups proposing to work in these areas.

Thus, any new model must address both historical and emerging structural inequities through the creation of a system that will be flexible and transformative enough to accommodate current, changing and future needs. The network being recommended (Toronto Social Development Network) within this report must at its genesis develop a terms of reference that addresses the afore-mentioned issues and priorities.

As agencies and groups that conduct social planning activities in the current under-resourced and inequitable environment, we believe that our own contribution to the planning review provides an innovative re-conceptualization of community planning that has the potential for becoming a cornerstone for a re-structuring of the planning arena in the City. Incorporation of our ideas in the City’s report is a good starting point for a dialogue on the future of social planning for the City.

**COMMENT FROM THE COMMUNITY SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL OF TORONTO**

The Community Social Planning Council is pleased that this report addresses a number of critical issues regarding funding for social planning in Toronto. We are disappointed at the degree to which the report minimizes the current work of the CSPC-T, and the Council's work since amalgamation. As a result, we feel that the report underestimates the ability of the Council to continue to play a leadership role, in continued cooperation with other organizations, in social planning activities in the city.

We are pleased that the report correctly identifies reductions in as having played a critical role in the reduction of capacity across the sector. The reductions in absolute funding, the decreased flexibility that has come from increased reliance on project funding, and the resulting instability and inability to do long-range planning have seriously damaged the ability of all organizations involved in social planning to meet traditional expectations, let alone address emerging needs and issues. The suggestion that bodies funding social research should consider building the capacity of the local planning sector as one of their guiding principles is a welcome one. Coupled with a return to core funding, this would go a long way to address the funding crisis the sector faces.

One of the key areas identified (in this report and others) as having suffered under the funding and service cuts of the past decade is the local "community planner" function. We look for a renewed, and expanded, commitment to supporting this function as an independent support and catalyst for community-based planning, research and analysis.

The social planning landscape has changed dramatically in Toronto over the past decade. We support recommendations calling for increased financial support for the diversity of communities that are working independently and collaboratively in the field. We have a range of partnerships with a number of these organizations, and believe that the broad experience and specific expertise and resources that the CSPC-T brings to such partnerships are real 'value added'. We also have concerns about the degree to which funders can compromise an independent social planning sector.

Rather than establishing and resourcing a brand new layer of organization, such as the proposed "Toronto Social Development Network", it would be much more effective, and supportive of long-term capacity building in the sector, to provide the key players with the resources which we collectively need to come together to establish the most effective model, and to support our participation. To have any chance of success, this process must be directed and resourced from within the organizations themselves.

A key area omitted from the report is the relationships which exist with organizations beyond the City. Social planning does not exist in a Toronto "island" – organizations such as the Social Planning Network of Ontario have important relationships with the Toronto sector.

Despite the challenges that it has faced, the CSPC-T continues to play a city-wide role in research and policy analysis, as a community convenor, and in community mobilization and advocacy. This has been our historical role. It is a role that many partners have made clear they continue to look to us to perform. We look forward to working with our funding and program partners to build a more stable, inclusive, and effective social planning sector in the city of Toronto.

### **COMMENT FROM THE TORONTO NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES**

The TNC is deeply concerned about the future of social planning resources in our City. It is clear from our "on the ground" experience that a lack of social planning capacity in Toronto at this time is crippling the effectiveness and impact of our local organizations' interventions. As noted in our initial submission, Toronto's community agency infrastructure is also suffering from severe inequities at present, with fewer supports for agencies serving new and emerging communities and a lack of organizational infrastructure in inner suburb communities relative to downtown communities. Many neighbourhoods and racialized communities are completely under-resourced in terms of organizational infrastructure, community building and service delivery capacity.

It is simply not possible for Toronto's community sector agencies to respond to the local networking, community engagement and service planning demands across all communities without stable and sufficient resources dedicated to these tasks. As well, there is a critical need for stable and sufficient social planning resources for community-led research, policy development and advocacy that links local agencies and constituencies in broader efforts to affect change. These deficiencies are a challenge to us all, and we desperately need to rebuild sector solidarity to re-dress these conditions.

**Inequities in communities across our city will continue to widen if these deepening divides are not met head on with increased resources to support community building and planning work at the local agency, community and city wide levels.** In this regard the TNC strongly supports the financial recommendations of this report that recognize the needs for both increased and equitably distributed resources for social planning in Toronto.

The TNC members hold varied opinions as to the structure that may be best suited to moving city-wide planning objectives forward, but would recommend that if this report's proposed secretariat function and attendant resources are put in place, they should be directly controlled by the community-based organizations involved, as opposed to the City or another funder taking on this role. With regard to the proposed "Toronto Social Development Network", the TNC is of course open to meeting with the range of constituencies suggested in order to identify common objectives, and discuss possible strategies for moving forward on our shared goals. Unfortunately few communities or agencies have staff resources to achieve substantive results in this regard, as discretionary funds that once supported community development are being re-directed to sustain inadequately funded services. In addition to stable and sufficient resources for city-wide research and advocacy activities, we believe that increased staff who can conduct local mobilizing and planning activities will be a key success factor in realizing community planning objectives in our City.

Finally, we urge the City to distribute this report widely and solicit responses to its recommendations from the many community agencies and other interested constituencies that were not engaged in the review process to date.

**APPENDIX B:**

**LIST OF INTERVIEWEES: KEY INFORMANTS AND  
STAKEHOLDERS**

**LIST OF INTERVIEWEES: KEY INFORMANTS AND STAKEHOLDERS****Key Informants**

1. John Campey, Executive Director, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto.
2. Judy Brooks, Community Development Officer, City of Toronto.
3. Gord Floyd, Executive Director, Children's Mental Health Ontario.
4. Liz Greaves, Executive Director, Youthlink.
5. Rob Howarth, Coordinator, Toronto Neighbourhood Centres.
6. Susan MacDonnell, Director of Research, United Way of Greater Toronto.
7. Margarita Mendez, Executive Director, Jane Finch Community and Family Centre.
8. Raymond Micah, African Canadian Social Development Council.\*
9. Duberlis Ramos, Executive Director, Hispanic Development Council.\*
10. Chung Tang, Executive Director, Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter.\*
11. Ted Richmond, Coordinator, Inclusive Communities for Children, Youth and Families, Laidlaw Foundation.
12. Uzma Shakir, Executive Director, Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA).
13. Susan Sheppard, Policy Officer, Social Development and Administration, City of Toronto.
14. Dr. John Shields, Professor, Department of Politics and School of Public Administration, Ryerson University.

\*Meeting as Alternative Planning Group (APG)



**Other Stakeholders**

1. Maureen Adams, Vice President, Allocations and Community Services, United Way of Greater Toronto
2. Michele Carroll, Policy Advisor, Toronto Board of Trade.
3. Peter Clutterbuck, Social Planning Network of Ontario (SPNO).
4. Sue Cox, Executive Director, Daily Bread Food Bank.
5. Scott Dudgeon, Executive Director, Toronto District Health Council.
6. Joey Edwardh, Executive Director, Community Development Halton
7. Ann Fitzpatrick, Community Development Officer, Children's Aid Society.
8. Russ Ford, Executive Director, Lakeshore Area Multi-Services Project (LAMP) Community Health Centre.
9. Frances Frisken, GTA Forum
10. Nathan Gilbert, Executive Director, Laidlaw Foundation.
11. Vivien Green, Executive Director, Woman Abuse Council.
12. Liyu Guo, Campaign 2000 Coordinator, Family Service Association.
13. Axelle Janczur, Executive Director, Access Alliance Multicultural Health Centre.
14. Alison Kemper, Executive Director, The 519 Church Street Community Centre.
15. Punam Khosla, Author, *If Low Income Women of Colour Counted in Toronto* (August 2003)
16. Ange Kinnear, Diversity and Community Engagement Consultant, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, City of Toronto.
17. Jen Liptrot, Community Animator, Advocates for Community-Based Training and Education for Women (ACTEW).
18. Harvey Low, Planning Analyst, Community and Neighbourhood Services, City of Toronto.

19. Duncan MacDonald, Program Coordinator, Ontario Federation of Labour.
20. Janet Maher, President, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto
21. Sylvia Maracle, Executive Director, Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres.
22. Cheryl May, Executive Director, Community Information Toronto.
23. Heather McGregor, Executive Director, YWCA Toronto.
24. Joe McReynolds, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Community Support Association (OCSA)
25. Natalie Mehra, Provincial Coordinator, Ontario Health Coalition.
26. Dana Milne, Community Development Coordinator, Toronto Disaster Relief Committee.
27. Marvyn Novick, Professor, School of Social Work, Ryerson University.
28. Ratna Omidvar, Executive Director, Maytree Foundation,
29. Charles Pascal, Executive Director, Atkinson Foundation.
30. Susan Pigott, Executive Director, St. Christopher House.
31. Dr. Norene Pupo, Director, ORU Centre for Research on Work & Society, York University.
32. Kenn Richard, Executive Director, Native Child & Family Services.
33. Wayne Roberts, Project Coordinator, Toronto Food Policy Council.
34. Mary Rowe, Editor, *Ideas That Matter*
35. Yves Savoie, Executive Director, Family Services Association.
36. Trish Stovel, Executive Director, Labour Community Services of Toronto.
37. Anne Swarbrick, President; and May Wong, Vice-President, Toronto Community Foundation.
38. Lisa Tolentino, Community Animator, Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition

39. Linda Torney, Board Member, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto
40. Ben Viccari, President, Ethnic Journalists' Association.
41. Dr. Leah Vosko, School of Social Science, Atkinson College, York University.
42. Diane Werner, Executive Director, People and Organizations in North Toronto (POINT)
43. Greg Yarrow, Executive Director, Toronto Training Board.

**APPENDIX C:**

**LIST OF ATTENDEES, MARCH 12, 2004  
ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**

**LIST OF ATTENDEES, MARCH 12 ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION  
“SOCIAL PLANNING IN THE CITY”**

1. John Campey, Executive Director, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (CSPC-T).
2. Peter Clutterbuck, Social Planning Network of Ontario (SPNO).
3. Debbie Douglas, Executive Director, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)
4. Rob Howarth, Coordinator, Toronto Neighbourhood Centres (TNC)
5. Alison Kemper, Executive Director, The 519 Church Street Community Centre
6. Raymond Micah, African Canadian Social Development Centre (ACSDC)
7. Marvyn Novick, Professor, School of Social Work, Ryerson University
8. Cidalia Pereira, Portuguese Interagency Network
9. Duberlis Ramos, Executive Director, Hispanic Development Council
10. Ted Richmond, Coordinator, Inclusive Communities for Children, Youth and Families, Laidlaw Foundation
11. Dr. Anver Saloojee, Professor, Department of Politics and School of Public Administration, Ryerson University
12. Uzma Shakir, Executive Director, Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA)
13. Chung Tang, Executive Director, Chinese Canadian National Council—Toronto Chapter

**APPENDIX D:**

**LIST OF ATTENDEES, CONSULTATION WITH  
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES COUNCIL OF TORONTO**

**LIST OF ATTENDEES, CONSULTATION WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLES  
COUNCIL OF TORONTO, MARCH 23, 2004**

1. Francis Cadeau, President, Toronto Metis Association
2. Joe Hester, Executive Director, Anishnawbe Health
3. Harvey Manning, Manager, Tumivut Aboriginal Youth Shelter
4. Mae Maracle, Diversity Management Consultant, City of Toronto; and Executive Member of the Board, Native Canadian Centre
5. Roger Obonsawin, President, Aboriginal Peoples Council of Toronto
6. Greg Rogers, Executive Director, Native Men's Residence
7. Frances Sanderson, Executive Director, Nishnawbe Homes Inc