

The People, Places and Priorities of Lawrence Heights:

A Health Promotion Approach to
Understanding Communities

*Findings from the
Community Quality of Life Project*



Table of Contents

Chapter 1. The Lawrence Heights Community Quality of Life Project	1
Chapter 2. Community Background	8
Chapter 3. Results from Community Members	11
Chapter 4. Coping and Managing in Lawrence Heights	34
Chapter 5. Desired Services and Programs	40
Chapter 6. Results from the Interviews with Persons With Disabilities	48
Chapter 7. Views of Service Providers	54
Chapter 8. Community Agency Mandates and Activities	73
Chapter 9. Results from the Political Representatives	101
Chapter 10. Elected Political Representatives Responses to Community Challenges . .	108
Chapter 11. Results from the School Trustees	113
Chapter 12. Trustees' Responses to Community and Educational Challenges	124
Chapter 13. Summary: The People, Places, and Priorities of Lawrence Heights	129
Chapter 14. Summary of Findings: Models of Quality of Life and Health Promotion . .	139
Chapter 15. Towards the Future	145
Chapter 16. Appendices	150

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This *Findings Report* was written by Dennis Raphael, Brenda Steinmetz, and Rebecca Renwick.

1

The Lawrence Heights Community Quality of Life Project

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the Lawrence Heights Project was to identify the community and neighbourhood factors that enhance the quality of life of Lawrence Heights residents. We also learned about some of the concerns and problems that Lawrence Heights residents face and how they cope with these problems. We heard about the kinds of resources and services residents would like to have. By having community members tell us about their community and neighbourhood, we identified strengths that should be protected and issues that need to be addressed. We also heard from service agency workers and from Lawrence Heights' elected representatives. They told us about how they have addressed some of these issues.

The Lawrence Heights project was part of a larger Community Quality of Life Project that involved learning about another Metropolitan Toronto community, Riverdale. The overall project produced a manual to guide other communities in carrying out quality of life projects. All of this work was a partnership of the Lawrence Heights and South Riverdale Community Health Centres, the North York and City of Toronto Public Health Departments, the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council, the Canadian Mental Health Association National Office, and the Department of Public Health Sciences and Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto. The Black Creek and Flemington Community Health

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How This Project Came About

Three main ideas guided us as we developed and carried out this project. First, we were interested in promoting the health of Lawrence Heights residents. Second, we wanted to look at the quality of life of Lawrence Heights residents. Third, we thought that the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre was a good base for carrying out the project.

Health Promotion Approach

We believe that health is more than not being ill. *The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion* of the World Health Organization says that health is the ability to have and reach goals, meet personal needs, and cope with everyday life. Health promotion involves helping people to have more control over their lives, which improves their health. Health promotion takes place by influencing government actions, creating helpful environments, building community action, developing personal skills, and improving health services. We also believe that health is influenced by having peace, shelter, education, food, income, a sound environment, and social justice. We will address the implications of this view in the closing chapters of this report.

Quality of Life Approach

Our approach towards quality of life defines it as: The degree to which a person enjoys the important possibilities of his/her life. We look at satisfaction in the three broad areas of Being, Belonging, and Becoming. Being reflects "who one is" and has three sub-domains. Physical Being encompasses physical health, personal hygiene, nutrition, exercise, grooming, clothing, and general physical appearance. Psychological Being includes the person's psychological health and adjustment, cognitions, feelings, and evaluations concerning the self such as self-esteem, self-concept and self-control. Spiritual Being refers to the personal values, personal standards of conduct, and spiritual beliefs which one holds.

The Belonging domain concerns the person's fit with his/her environments. Physical

Belonging describes the person's connections with his/her physical environments of home, workplace, neighbourhood, school and community. Social Belonging includes links with social environments and involves acceptance by intimate others, family, friends, co-workers, and neighbourhood and community. Community Belonging represents access to resources such as adequate income, health and social services, employment, educational and recreational programs, and community events and activities.

Becoming refers to the purposeful activities carried out to achieve personal goals, hopes, and aspirations. Practical Becoming describes day-to-day activities such as domestic activities, paid work, school or volunteer activities, and seeing to health or social needs. Leisure Becoming includes activities that promote relaxation and stress reduction. Growth Becoming activities promote the maintenance or improvement of knowledge and skills and adapting to change. In this report, once we identify the aspects of neighbourhoods and communities that are seen as affecting quality of life, we relate these back to the nine domains of quality of life that are part of our model.

Community Health Centres in Ontario

Community health centres provide health care to neighbourhood residents and promote health through local initiatives. Residents can visit physicians and nurses at a community health centre. Community health centres also establish community programs that meet the unique needs of residents such as young mothers, seniors, New Canadians or others. In Lawrence Heights there is a large number of diverse cultural groups and the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre strives to address their unique health needs.

The Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre is very active in working to promote the health of Lawrence Heights residents. It does so in collaboration with many other community organizations. This suggested to us that it would be an excellent base for connecting with community members and other local service organizations.

Methodology

We were interested in looking at the quality of life of youth, adults, and seniors. As the project began, we were asked to also talk to New Canadians and people with physical disabilities. We also wanted to hear the views of service providers and elected representatives about quality of life in Lawrence Heights. Since we wanted to see the world through the eyes of the people we spoke to, we did not use questionnaires or surveys, but carried out discussions and interviews.

In this kind of project, the emphasis is on in-depth understanding of the views of our participants. As compared to the entire population of Lawrence Heights, we focused on a relatively small number of people rather than carrying out a broad survey. We involved a significant number of people however, in a number of different groups. We also gathered information from four very different sources of people across three different age groups. We tried hard to hear from as many different kinds of people and organizations as we could but inevitably some voices were not heard. The result of these discussions and interviews is the outlining of a series of “working hypotheses” against which community residents, service providers, and others concerned with the community can examine their own views and experiences. They can then test our findings against these views and experiences, and seek further information if this is necessary.

The strength of our findings is heightened when there is agreement among different groups of individuals and among different kinds of participants in the project. In all cases, the views of participants are taken as “real” and worthy of consideration. Whether these results are “generalizable” across a larger population is a judgment of the reader based on this report and other sources of information that may be available to the reader.

Phase 1: Community Group Discussions

In the first part of the project, we carried out group discussions with community residents. Often, these came about by meeting with already functioning groups of community members and asking if there was interest in speaking to us about their neighbourhoods and communities. Sometimes, service providers, teachers, or agency workers arranged these

discussions. These meetings took about an hour and were taped for later analysis. We carried out seven discussions with youth, eight discussions with adults, and three with seniors. Among the adult groups, one was Spanish-speaking, two were Tamil-speaking, three were with Somali adults, one was with a group of adults from Eastern Europe, and one was with English-speaking adults. Most of the groups took place in languages other than English with translation into English. The project provided a lunch or dinner for those participating in noontime or evening group discussions. Other participants received some refreshments. In Appendix I we provide some information about the people we spoke with.

Phase 2: Elected Representatives Interviews

In the second part of the project we interviewed City Councillor Frank Di Giorgio, Metropolitan Toronto Councillor Howard Moscoe, Provincial Parliament Member Joe Cordiano, Mayor Mel Lastman, Public School Trustee Elsa Chandler, and Separate School Trustee Pina Losiggio. These interviews also took about an hour and were taped.

Phase 3: Service Provider Interviews

In the third part we interviewed service providers who work in Lawrence Heights. Twelve service providers were interviewed about their communities, the mandates of their agencies, and about barriers and supports to action. These interviews also took about an hour and were taped. In Appendix II we list the kinds of people who were interviewed.

Phase 4: Community Interviews

In addition, the disabilities coordinator at North York Community House interviewed 15 persons with physical disabilities about their quality of life. These people were paid a small fee for their participation.

The Questions We Asked

We asked everybody about the things that made life good for people in Lawrence Heights. We also asked everybody about things that did not make life good for people in Lawrence Heights. We asked community members about how they coped with problems and services they would like to see. Representatives were asked about their roles and how they helped the community. And service providers were asked about their agencies and what these agencies did in the community. The specific questions we asked are at the beginning of each relevant chapter. All of the questions together are in Appendix III of this report.

How We Analysed the Results

We tape recorded all of the group discussions and interviews. We then listened to these tapes, took notes and wrote down some quotations of what people said. We then carefully reviewed these notes to identify the main ideas that were present in these discussions and interviews.

We wrote up these main ideas as short narratives that described what the group or person said. To make sure that we were accurate in our write-ups, we worked together as a team and reviewed each other's work. More important, we provided the write-ups to the people with whom we spoke and asked them to confirm their accuracy. They also were allowed to correct or clarify the main points.

We then reviewed these write-ups and examined the degree of agreement and disagreement between the different groups and the different kinds of persons who provided information: the community members, the elected representatives, and the service providers. These reviews and analyses form the basis of the chapters that follow. The actual write-ups of the group discussions and the interviews are available in the report: *Write-Ups of the Lawrence Heights Quality of Life Group Discussions and Individual Interviews*.

Format of this Report

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides some background information and a short history of Lawrence Heights and the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre. Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 provide the results from community members. Chapter 3 contains their perceptions of the aspects of Lawrence Heights that support or do not support quality of life. Chapter 4 discusses how the participants cope or manage on a day-to-day basis, while Chapter 5 identifies the services or programs that participants would like to see in their community. Chapter 6 provides results from the individual interviews carried out with persons with physical disabilities.

Chapters 7 and 8 provide the views of service providers who work in the community. Chapters 9 and 10 provide the views of elected political representatives, and their responses to community issues. Chapters 11 and 12 provide information from the two school trustees. Chapter 13 summarizes the key ideas that emerged from all of our discussions and interviews. Chapter 14 examines the implications of the findings for understanding quality of life and Chapter 15 points towards future actions and activities suggested by this project. Each chapter can be read on its own. The Appendices at the end of this report contains details concerning the questions we asked and who we spoke with.

2

Community Background

In this chapter we present some background information on Lawrence Heights, its people, and its history. This includes information about the immediate area of Lawrence Heights, the surrounding areas, and the formation and role of the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre.

Geography and Demographics

Lawrence Heights is a large diverse low-income neighbourhood located in suburban North York. It has a population of between 5,000-8,000 people and consists of subsidized public housing in the form of low-rise apartment buildings, townhouses, and single family homes. It was, at one time, physically cut off from the rest of North York by a large wire fence that encircled the neighbourhood. Although large sections of the fence have been removed, the area remains somewhat isolated from other neighbourhoods (some of which are very affluent), with only four roadways leading in and out of the community.

Twenty-five years ago, most of the community residents were of European descent and spoke English as their first language. Many had recently moved to Ontario from other parts of Canada seeking jobs. Most families had two parents. No social or health services were located within the community.

History of the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre

The community contributed to the establishment of the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre. In 1974, as a result of lobbying efforts by community members, the Lawrence Heights Medical Centre was established. At that time there was one doctor, one nurse, and one nurse-receptionist. There was also a voluntary Board of Directors.

Over the next 13 years the clinical staff and services at the Medical Centre increased. In 1987 community development workers joined the staff, working on the broader determinants of health such as education, employment, housing, and more. In 1989 the name of the Centre was changed to the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre to reflect this holistic and community-based approach to health.

In August of 1991 construction of a new building to house what was until then a patchwork of offices and sites was begun. The shell of the building was finished in December of 1991 and the building was occupied in May of 1992.

In October of 1992 the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre established its catchment area. With the recession in the 1980's, changes in hospital policies and increased awareness of the Centre, the demands upon staff increased measurably. Because the Centre had no clear community boundaries it was important to establish a service area. This area is bounded by Wilson Avenue to Bathurst Street, and Eglinton Avenue West to Keele Street. This area is now home to a diverse group of 75,000 people. It also contains a number of distinct communities - Lawrence Heights being one of the largest.

There are currently 38 staff associated with the Centre. These individuals include nurses, physicians, community dietitians, community health workers, and administrative and office staff. There is active involvement by students from a number of local educational institutions who have practicum experiences at the Centre, as well as involvement from volunteers often recruited from the local community.

Recent Changes in the Community

Among those living in Lawrence Heights now, there are higher than average percentages of women, children and youth, sole-support families, seniors, and people who are unemployed and underemployed than the Metropolitan area as a whole. The community has also become

more diverse - culturally and linguistically. Some of the original residents remain, but many residents have recently moved from the Caribbean. In the last 7-10 years others have moved there from homes in Latin America, South Asia, and East Africa.

Amenities and Services

There are many more services and businesses in the area now, many of these at the nearby Lawrence Square Mall. There are still no businesses operating in Lawrence Heights itself. There is a family of public and separate schools as well as a community recreation centre, a library, and local offices of several social services organizations.

3

Results from Community Members

In this chapter we present the findings of the community quality of life group discussions. For each population of youth, seniors, and adults, we provide their views. We then compare and contrast the findings. First we present the areas that were viewed generally positively. Then we present areas that were viewed generally negatively. The order of presentation of these ideas for each group is in order of degree of agreement whereby ideas present in all or almost all group discussions are mentioned first, followed by those mentioned in some and then just one group. In the Appendix there is information about the people who participated in these groups. The questions we asked were: *What is it about your neighbourhood or community that makes life good for you and the people you care about?* And *What is it about your neighbourhood and community that does not make life good for you and the people you care about?*

Youth

There was much interest in this study by local schools. As a result of this interest we carried out no fewer than seven youth group discussions. One group involved youth associated with the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre. All of these youth were African-Canadian and lived in Lawrence Heights. A second group contained grade 6 boys and girls, many of whom lived in Lawrence Heights. A grade 8 class contributed two groups, one of boys and one of girls. All of the grade 8 students lived in Lawrence Heights. A grade 12

class also contributed two groups, one of boys and one of girls. In these two grade 12 groups some of the students lived in Lawrence Heights; others in the surrounding area. And finally, the secondary school group consisted of African-Canadian youth. Many of these youth lived in Lawrence Heights.

Strengths and Positive Factors

A complex picture emerged from the discussion with youth. There were some consensus across groups, but each group had a somewhat unique view of the positive and negative aspects of their community and neighbourhood.

Neighbourliness, Community Involvement and Community Solidarity

Almost all the youth groups discussed the people within the community and how they either care about or help each other. In most cases these aspects were considered in a positive light. The form this theme took differed among groups ranging from very concrete instances of helping behaviour through to ideas about cultural solidarity and commitment.

The community health centre youth group felt that most people knew each other within the community and that people were like a family. However, many in the community were not taking advantage of the opportunities to become involved and were not as involved as had been the case earlier. This may be changing however as more people are beginning to come out to tenants' meetings.

The grade 6 group had mixed feeling about their neighbours. Some felt that people were friendly and helpful but others felt that many neighbours had problems that needed attention. Similar views were expressed by the grade 8 girls. While some felt that knowing neighbours made them feel comfortable and like a family, others felt that there were many not-so-nice people in the area.

The grade 12 students, many of whom lived outside Lawrence Heights proper, did not emphasize this aspect of their communities except to mention the importance of friends. The secondary school group consisting of African-Canadian youth, had an extensive discussion about how people in the neighbourhood shared similar cultural backgrounds and interests, and experienced cultural identification and solidarity. People of similar backgrounds were seen as

being likely to be understanding and sympathetic. Also, the fact that people were sharing similar experiences and life situations promoted bonding.

Leisure and Recreation Activities

The more obvious and consistent finding from the youth group discussions was the importance of leisure and recreation activities. Having things to do is an important concern for the youth who were involved within these groups and in many cases this concern is focused upon the recreation centres and the opportunities they provide for a range of activities.

The community health centre youth group highlighted the importance of the Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre. It was a place for sports activities and for getting together. There were also after-school programs for children. The grade 6 participants were all involved in some form of organized sport or recreation activities. These took place at the Jewish Community Centre, the Columbus Centre, and at school. The local mall was also seen as a place to go shopping and see movies with friends.

The grade 8 girls and boys all spoke highly of the Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre. They listed off a great number of activities that took place there including the sports activities and the youth club, bake sales, and the presence of a day-care centre. Other leisure and recreation activities were discussed by the boys including the local shopping malls, and local arcades.

The grade 12 boys and girls had very different views concerning the presence of things to do. The boys carried out extensive discussions about local activities that involved community centres, restaurants and pool halls. They also discussed activities that were available throughout Metro such as sports venues, and the local shopping malls. However, none of the girls went to community centres, and almost all felt that there was nothing in their neighbourhoods to do. While they spend time in the shopping malls, they felt that all of the available recreation activities were for younger children. The cost involved in using a recreation centre was also an issue.

The secondary school group consisting of African-Canadian youth emphasized the importance to them of local recreation centres. Much discussion took place about the

Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre and the Maple Creek Recreation centre in the Sheppard-Keele area. A range of activities take place at each and it is a place where people can come together.

Parkland and Open Space

The presence of open areas, trees, and parks was seen as a positive aspect of communities and neighbourhoods. Interestingly, the older youth were likely to be clearly positive about this aspect while the younger children less so.

The community health centre youth group, grade 8 males, grade 12 females, and African-Canadian group all spoke positively about this aspect. The younger children spoke of the noise from the parks at night, teenagers going there to do drugs, and some of the “scary people” that were there in the evenings. They also felt that much of the equipment at playgrounds could be repaired or improved.

Public Transportation

Public transportation was seen as an important aspect of a neighbourhood by all the older groups (it was not raised by the grade 6 and 8 participants). While the subway was spoken of positively, there was concern about bus service and about cutbacks. The lack of an evening bus service after 7:00 PM on Sundays in Lawrence Heights was a very strong focus of annoyance by the CHC youth group and the African-Canadian group.

Education and School

There were many points raised in discussion that were positive about school and education. Specific aspects raised were the importance of education for getting ahead, and the presence of extracurricular activities. There were very many complaints about school by the older groups. These negative issues are discussed in the following sections.

The grade 6 students were generally positive about school as were the grade 8 girls. The grade 8 girls spoke positively about the educational program, and the many activities that were available there. The school was also nearby to their homes. The grade 12 girls valued the cultural diversity of the school and the presence of many curricular activities. Special comment was made of the music program. The secondary school African-Canadian group

spoke of the importance of education for getting ahead.

Access to Amenities

Being able to have easy access to things was seen as an important aspect of neighbourhoods. The CHC youth group appreciated having the mall nearby. Yet, they wished there was more variety there and would appreciate being asked for their opinions about how to improve it. The grade 8 girls and boys had similar positive views about the local malls. The girls however also felt it was not a good idea to hang out in the malls too much.

The older students were more likely to emphasize the ability to get things when they were needed. The grade 12 boys spoke of being able to get to hospitals and stores quickly as did the secondary school African-Canadian group. In the latter group, specific mention was made of the local malls, the public library, and the subway.

The Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre

The Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre was spoken of positively by both the CHC youth and the secondary school African-Canadian group. The CHC group saw it as being of value for a lot of people of different cultures. They saw it as more than a place to seek medical care and mentioned some of the support groups. They felt that they could go there for help with a range of problems. While several of the participants in the secondary school African-Canadian group who lived in Lawrence Heights knew about some of the groups there, they saw it primarily as a place to seek medical care.

Other Strengths and Positive Aspects Mentioned

There were a number of other ideas or themes identified, usually in one group. In some cases, these ideas were elaborations of themes already identified. In some cases, they were specific ideas that emerged from a particular discussion group.

The grade 6 group spoke about the importance of local libraries for both doing schoolwork and for meeting friends. The grade 8 boys felt that there had been many recent improvements to the local housing. The grade 12 girls spoke of the neighbourhood being safe. The secondary school African-Canadian group mentioned the Scott Mission having community programs for younger children, and that the neighbourhood was welcoming and

open to people of different backgrounds.

Liabilities and Negative Factors

There were some common themes that were consistent across the groups. There were also some unique concerns and issues raised.

Crime and Safety

Crime and safety issues were discussed in all seven groups. In many groups it was identified as a contested issue where some people felt safe and others did not. In the CHC youth group, while participants felt safe in their neighbourhood, they still were concerned about drug use in some of the buildings. The grade 6 participants were very concerned about personal safety. They mentioned gangs, drug use, and guns. The two grade 8 groups spoke of concern about personal safety, drug use, and car thefts. They felt afraid of some of the adults that were around.

The grade 12 girls, while feeling that it was a safe neighbourhood, mentioned that there had been fights previously in the neighbourhood, although things had gotten better. The boys felt less sure. Older youth did not feel especially safe when they were alone. The secondary school African-Canadian group, while also stating that they felt safe, felt that girls were safer than boys outside of the immediate Lawrence Heights neighbourhood.

Schools

There were general discontent among the older participants about schools and some teachers. Some of the CHC youth group felt that teachers were uncaring and not encouraging children to be successful. They did not like the security features that were in place.

The grade 12 boys were very concerned about the limited resources that were available within the school. Courses were not offered and the number of computers were limited. They were very annoyed with school regulations and felt they were being hassled about unimportant matters. They also felt that many teachers did not really care about them; they rarely used guidance counsellors.

The grade 12 girls felt that students were not treated with respect by teachers. They also

felt that many teachers were uncaring and didn't really know how to teach. Unfair and inconsistent treatment was also raised. The secondary school African-Canadian group felt that Black History Month had been ignored by the school and that many teachers had low expectations for black students.

Family and Social Problems

There were clear references to family and social problems among some of the participants. The grade 6 students had some discussion about peer pressure and how sometimes it leads to children engaging in problematic behaviour. There was also concern about parents not taking responsibility for their children's behaviour. This occurs because sometimes the parents themselves are very young and don't act as role models.

The grade 8 girls spoke of how some younger children sometimes act up and perhaps need some more discipline. Teenage pregnancy was also a major concern in this group. The grade 8 boys mentioned family fights and incidences of violence at parties.

Racism

There was extensive discussion of issues of racism among the secondary school African-Canadian group. There was a belief that they had been denied services such as food deliveries and being able to take taxis because of racism. Because of racism it was more difficult to obtain employment, and many believed that there was ongoing evidence of racism in the community. There was a belief that racism played a role in tensions at school and attitudes of some teachers towards them.

Specific concerns are related to the police and how they treat people who are African-Canadian. Many instances of harassment were presented, and it was felt that there is no recourse to complain about these instances. It was also felt that the media was racist and always putting down black people and portraying them in the worse possible light. There was also much discussion about how the participants cope with this and how it makes their lives very difficult.

Public Housing

The CHC youth group felt that housing maintenance and service were terrible and many

instances of this were presented. In contrast, the grade 8 boys felt that much was being done to renovate the housing. These interviews did take place at 6 month intervals so it may be that changes had been occurring.

Cuts in Services and Policy Changes

Cuts in services were a concern for the grade 12 boys group. They spoke of recent hospital closings and deterioration in medical care. They also spoke of poor public transportation. The secondary school African-Canadian group spoke of the possible privatization of housing within Lawrence Heights and the negative effects this would have on the community.

Other Liabilities and Negative Aspects Identified

There were a number of other ideas or themes identified, usually in one group. These are presented for each group.

The CHC youth group raised issues related to some of the people who work at the CHC. It was felt that not all staff were really caring and concerned about them. Similar issues were raised about staff at the recreation centre. There was discussion about the use of the term “Jungle” to describe the neighbourhood. Some felt it was a pet term, others felt it was pejorative.

The grade 6 students discussed life in Lawrence Heights and felt that it was not great during the summer. They also discussed the use of the term “Jungle” and clearly saw it as being negative. They were not happy with the police and felt that the police did not take their and others concerns seriously. The grade 8 boys mentioned issues of poor garbage pick-up and parking fees within the area. The grade 12 boys, many of whom lived outside Lawrence Heights, spoke of dirty streets and deteriorating roads. Some were annoyed at smoking by-laws, and abuse of the welfare system. The secondary school African-Canadian group was concerned about racial tensions in school.

Seniors

We carried out three seniors group discussions. A tenants group and a Spanish-speaking

seniors' group operated out of the community health centre. A seniors' recreation group was organized within the recreation centre. There were broad areas of consensus across these three groups of seniors.

Strengths and Positive Factors

Community Health Centre

All three groups viewed the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre very positively. They spoke of it in terms of both providing health care as well as its community activities. The tenants group saw it as helping people with health and tenants issues, as well as with family benefits. They also saw the staff as helpful and friendly and almost as family.

The seniors recreation group also used the centre for both health care and other activities. On Tuesday they play cards, and on Wednesday there is the tenants' meetings. Everyone at the centre was seen as being helpful and friendly. The Hispanic seniors saw the health centre as a place that helps people cope. It was important that their group existed and that they had a Spanish-speaking worker to help them.

Community Recreation Centre

The two-English speaking groups spoke of the importance of the community recreation centre. The centre was seen as helping people in the community by providing activities for them. The centre is seen as offering activities for everyone: children, adults, and seniors. The specific activities that seniors are involved with are ceramics, knitting, euchre, bingo, drama, bowling, and Tai Chi. Some of the seniors come to the centre four or five days a week.

Involvement with the Seniors Group

Each group highlighted the importance of their involvement in the group. The tenants' group meets to work on community and housing issues. They have been effective in getting things done and find it a great group to be part of. The recreation group was spoken of very highly as was the staff associated with the group. It was seen as a great way to see people

and to have fun. The Hispanic group was seen as a means of coping and as providing an opportunity for meeting other people and have discussions in their own language. They also were very happy with the staff person.

Community Involvement and Volunteer Work

In two groups being involved was spoken of as being very important. Seniors felt they were happier for being involved and others spoke of the benefits they get from helping others.

Access to Amenities

Two groups also spoke about the local mall and how easy it was to shop. Having the mall nearby was also a means to meet people they knew and to socialize.

Public Transportation

Two groups spoke of public transportation and how important it was for seniors. Members of one group were very happy with the TTC, the subway, and the buses. They also appreciate the community bus. Another group felt that it was good during the day but that cutbacks to service in the evening and weekends made it necessary for people to either have a car or take a taxi at those times. Some would like to see cheaper fares.

Neighbourliness

One group was very positive about their neighbours. They spoke of how helpful they were to each other and how people checked up on you. Another group felt that they had good relations with their neighbours as well. But some people were seen as having personal problems and evidence of family violence was seen on weekends.

Other Strengths and Positive Aspects Mentioned

The tenants' group spoke of how they feel safe in the community. They noted the presence of a security person and that neighbours watch out for each other. The tenants group also appreciate the parkland and outdoor space of Lawrence Heights. The Hispanic group appreciated the peacefulness of Canada and that it was not at war.

Liabilities or Negative Factors

There was also much consensus across the three groups concerning negative aspects of the neighbourhood.

Concern About Service Cuts

All three groups spoke about cuts to services and their effects. The tenants group spoke about cuts in terms of their effect upon housing and housing maintenance. There is now reduced services and increased garbage, dirt, and vermin. It was also felt that snow removal service was poor. The recreation group was concerned about the cuts to libraries, bus service, and maintenance of the community. The Spanish speaking group spoke of the effects on the school system, municipal services, and maintenance of the community.

Reduced Maintenance Services

All three groups felt that service and maintenance of the housing was very poor. All were aware that maintenance staff had been cut back. Roofs and walls are leaking and peeling, and repairs to appliances are delayed. Garbage is not taken care of and the buildings are dirty. There is increased evidence of vermin. In the winter the reduced snow removal was seen as dangerous for seniors by all three groups.

Other Housing Issues

The tenants group was concerned about the lack of buzzer access to buildings. This made it very difficult for seniors who might be expecting visitors or could be locked out if they forgot their key. Some residents of North Acres felt that the apartments were very small. The Spanish-speaking group was not happy with the housing or the maintenance of it. They felt that maintenance staff didn't really care and that being Spanish-speaking made them especially disadvantaged.

Crime and Safety

While members of the tenants group, and most of the recreation group felt safe, some members of the recreation group were wary of going out in the evenings. The Spanish-

speaking seniors group did not feel safe at all. They are especially afraid of being out at night.

Neighbourhood Diversity

While diversity was generally seen as positive, some seniors felt that communication was sometimes difficult among people of different languages.

Adults

There were eight discussion groups that involved adults. Two of them, the parent-child drop-in and the Spanish-speaking women were groups that were pre-existing at the local health centre. The two Tamil groups and the Eastern European group were organized by the local settlement agency. The three Somali groups, two female, and one male, were organized by a Somali service organization. Except for the parent-child drop-in and the male Somali group, these discussions did not take place in English and involved the use of translators.

Strengths and Positive Aspects

Across the groups there were a number of common themes that emerged. The form that each theme took was somewhat unique and represented the particular context within which members of three groups lived. In some cases, community aspects were clearly seen as strengths and positives, in other cases they were somewhat contested.

Community Agencies and Resources

Across groups there was common agreement that having community agencies and resources that could provide support and assistance when required was a strength. However, in many cases there was a sense that there could be more of these and that how they operate could be improved.

The parent-child drop-in group emphasized the importance of programs for parents and children. Programs such as the drop-in provided a place for meeting others and learning how to deal with issues and problems that members may face. Also emphasized was the presence of subsidies for some community programs for those who cannot easily afford them. And usually, applying for subsidies is not embarrassing, although it could be at times. Also

discussed however, were two community programs that had been cancelled. One was a Friday drop-in, the other was a child care program.

The Spanish-speaking Women's group felt that support groups such as the one they were involved in at the community centre were very important. They felt that the hiring of Spanish-speaking service providers was very important and that the centre should be supportive of them. They did feel however that there was more need for community outreach since many people did not know of the programs. They also felt that the sensitivity of some of the service providers at the Centre could be improved.

The Tamil groups felt that the programs offered by the North York Community House were very important to their well-being. The House provides a safe environment where people can get to know each other and avoid isolation during the day. The House also provides very needed services such as English as a Second Language classes, a community kitchen, and a parent-child drop-in. That these services are provided without fees, and that there is a Tamil-speaking worker there, is very important.

But these groups also felt that there were needs that are not being met. Some of the needs that were expressed include after-school programs for children, lack of nearby medical and legal services that can be provided in Tamil, classes in sewing and computer usage, and work experience. While the North York Community House tries to respond to expressed needs, the participants appreciated that lack of resources make the availability of these resources almost impossible.

The Eastern European group spoke positively of the services that were available to newcomers at the Jewish Community Centre. Those that were not Jewish said they would be less likely to take advantage of these and among those who did, it was felt that it didn't offer all the services that were needed.

The Somali Women's groups commented on how the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre was nearby. They also felt that staff were nice and helpful. They were however, not happy with access to doctors. Some were not happy with having to see a nurse, others were not happy with having to have an appointment, and having to wait a period of weeks if you were a new client.

The Somali men's group saw the community health centre as a positive aspect of the

community. They saw it primarily as a medical centre and felt that more effort was necessary to let the community know that other supports are available.

Access to Amenities

Some of the groups spoke about the importance of being near to things and being able to use public transportation. The parent-child drop-in group felt that the area was convenient for schools, parks, shopping, and public transportation. However the evening service was seen as terrible and the Varna bus stops running at 7:00 p.m.

The Spanish-speaking Women's group appreciated having the Lawrence Square Mall nearby. But some wanted to have a local convenience store in the neighbourhood. Currently there was none. The Tamil groups however, felt that stores at their local mall were expensive.

The Somali Women's groups both felt that there were many conveniences in the neighbourhood. These included access to shopping, the subway, schools, banks, and the health centre. They also felt that they had good access to traditional food which is either delivered from outside the neighbourhood or purchased from Kosher stores. The Somali Men's group and the Eastern European group did not raise access to amenities as an issue.

Parkland and Recreation Activities

Almost all of the groups discussed the importance of parkland and recreation activities for children. The parent-child drop-in and the Eastern European groups both were happy with the parks and playgrounds and the recreation activities in their neighbourhood. The Eastern European group spoke of the classes that were available through a local Ukrainian group and that there was entertainment, sports, and other activities available. The Spanish-speaking women's group also saw parks and playgrounds as a good thing. But they felt there should be more for older children, and some were not happy with animals that were not watched by their owners.

The Tamil groups felt that the neighbourhood parks were good in the summer, but one group felt that during the winter there was no recreation available. There are some local programs but these cost money. It was felt to be very important that programs be free or at very low cost. The other group felt that there were not very many facilities at their local park.

Local Schools

The two Tamil groups related very positive experiences with the local schools. One group spoke of the local Catholic school as being very receptive to newcomers and providing extra help when it was needed. The women liked the fact that their children mixed with other children and that the school was safe. The other group spoke of this local school as being excellent for the following reasons: the principal and staff communicate with parents, the school has good programs, and the teachers provide children with one on one attention when it is needed. One of the Somali women's group was happy that the local school was nearby. They had no complaints about the classes or the teachers. As will be discussed later, many of the Somali men were not satisfied with the local schools.

Services in Own Language

The Eastern European group felt that there were services such as video stores, shops, and drugstores where there were people who could speak in their language. They also all had Russian-speaking physicians. These services in their own language were seen as being especially important for seniors.

Neighbours, Neighbourhoods, and Sense of Community

The parent-child drop-in group spoke of how the cultural diversity of the community means that you will be able to find someone you can speak with or who have a sense of cultural solidarity. The Spanish-speaking women's group reported mixed experiences concerning their neighbours. Some related very positive experiences where they had been helped by neighbours, but others reported not so positive experiences. Some times these problems were related to issues of noise, drugs, and control of the building.

The Eastern European group, most of whom lived in the Steeles and Bathurst area, were very happy with their neighbourhood and neighbours. The neighbourhood was seen as being a mix of owner-occupied houses and apartments. They had moved there because they already knew people of similar background. They felt that it was important to live in an area with others that share your background and culture. But they also felt that it is important not to be constrained within your own area and to learn about other areas of the city and the people

who live there.

While one Somali women's group spoke of how having other Somali people in the community was very helpful, another spoke of conflicts with other neighbours who were not Somali. These issues are explored further in later sections.

Crime and Safety

The parent-child drop-in group felt safe during the day. But they felt this was not the case in the evening and that the neighbourhood had a bad reputation. The Eastern European group felt very safe in their neighbourhood. They felt it was safer than downtown and very much safer than some of the places they had come to Canada from.

Among the members of the Spanish-speaking women's group, those that lived in Lawrence Heights stated that they did not feel safe. Among those that lived out of the area, there was a greater likelihood of feeling safe within their communities.

Other Issues Mentioned

A number of other issues were mentioned, usually by one group. The Spanish-speaking women's group felt that health care was much better than in the United States. One Tamil group spoke of being able to live in affordable units. They had some concerns about this housing however. This same group mentioned COSTI as being a helpful resource in the neighbourhood.

The other Tamil group noted that there was daycare nearby but the waiting list was very wrong. Those already using it were very happy. The fact that a subsidy was available through Metro was seen as being very important.

The Somali men's group mentioned a number of issues that would make for good quality of life such as economic security, family and community involvement, and feeling safe. Unfortunately, many Somalis are felt not able to achieve these goals. It was noted that the Somali community is grateful to Canada and Canadians for accepting them into this country since their country had been thrown into turmoil.destroyed.

Liabilities and Negative Aspects

Many liabilities and negative aspects of the community were discussed in the adult groups. There was also much commonality concerning the issues discussed.

Poor Maintenance and Repairs

Every group had extensive discussion about poor maintenance of their homes and lack of needed repairs being made. The members of the parent-child drop-in group felt that there was lots of bureaucracy involved and that there was nowhere that tenants could go to complain. They felt helpless in light of the situation. The Spanish-speaking women's group felt that housing was dirty and was infested with vermin. While the rent is increased, maintenance seems to get worse. Some felt that housing managers were not concerned about maintaining the residences. They felt that this may be because newcomers to Canada would be less likely to complain to authorities.

Members of one of the Tamil groups felt that the building at Caledonia Village was poorly maintained. Because of lack of cleaning, it was infested with roaches and rodents. Though privately owned, neither the owners or management seemed to be concerned about maintaining the buildings. Repairs have to be done by the tenants themselves. The second Tamil groups voiced the same concerns. They added that the units did not have thermostats and felt that many people get sick because of excessive heat in the buildings.

Both the Somali women's groups felt that the conditions of the buildings were unhealthy. Whether repairs were done depended upon whether the materials were available. The Somali men's group concurred in stating that the maintenance of housing had deteriorated in the past three years.

Crime and Safety

Every group had concerns around crime and safety. Among the participants of the parent-child drop-in, problems of crime and safety focused on youth behaviour. They felt that there were a lot of older youth who were into causing trouble and using drugs. Issues with youth were related to their lack of respect for others and their parents having little control over them. They felt safe during the day, but at night it was a different story.

The Spanish-speaking women's group felt that there was a lot of drug use and dealing within the neighbourhood. These activities contribute to the feeling of not being safe in the

neighbourhood. The Tamil group reported that the building's security guards were only on duty until 4:30 PM and that after that time cars are frequently vandalized and stolen. They reported instances of other peoples' apartments having been broken into.

The Somali women were very concerned about drug use in the community. They saw drug users as being primarily youth. One group discussed issues related to vandalism in the area. All-in-all these women felt very unsafe in the neighbourhood. And they were very concerned that no one seems to take their concerns seriously or appears to be doing anything about it. The Somali men were also concerned about ongoing instances of vandalism. They were concerned about lack of police response.

Lack of Services

There was extensive discussion concerning the lack of services in the community among all groups. Specific issues raised were related to lack of child care, programs for families, and programs for youth.

The parent-child drop-in group were concerned about the cancellation of programs for mothers and children. They also felt that more daycare, programs for women and children, and activities for youth were needed. The Spanish-speaking women's group felt that there was a lack of daycare available. They also felt that there were not enough activities for youth and children. There was little access to low-cost facilities that could be used for family gatherings and events. They were very discouraged by the process of having to apply for subsidies for programs that were available in the community. It was seen as bureaucratic and intimidating.

The Tamil groups were very concerned about the lack of nearby services in their own language. There are few recreation services and most Tamil-speaking doctors are far away. To receive services they must go to Scarborough or downtown. For legal problems they must go to Downsview Legal Services or Broadview for services in Tamil. One group also raised the issue of lack of after-school programs for children.

The Somali women's groups raised issue of the need for ESL classes, sewing classes, and community kitchens. They also needed a place where they could meet and have heritage language classes. They also raised the need for child care and recreational activities for youth.

The Somali men raised similar concerns. The Eastern European group felt there was a lack of affordable day care as well as affordable housing.

Problems of Adjustment

Issues related to adjusting to life in Canada were raised in a number of groups. The Tamil groups spoke of the difficulty of obtaining employment without Canadian qualifications and experience. There are also issues related to a lack of English-language skills among Tamil women. Traditionally, many Tamil women have not been employed and there is some adjustment to changing cultural mores that must be made. The ability of Tamil women to travel to where opportunities was also raised. Nearby opportunities would help.

The Somali women's groups spoke of cultural conflicts with neighbours. There is a sense of fear of the unknown among both Somali and others. One group spoke of how schools expect parents to help out with children's homework. But with high school-age children parents feel they are unable to do this. There is no place to get help with these issues.

The Somali men's group pointed out how difficult it is for Somali men to obtain decent employment in Canada. Many newcomers are doctors, surgeons, biologists and other professionals, but are unable to obtain this kind of work in Canada. Because of this they are unable to earn a decent wage and this causes depression and frustration among their families. There are also very many cultural differences among Somalis and other immigrants. These include culture, religion, and education.

Health Care Access

An issue that was repeatedly raised concerned access to health care. This involved being able to see doctors at the local community health centre but also general concerns about health care.

The Spanish-speaking women's group felt that they were not able to get care at the centre when it was needed. Some also felt that access to care with doctors in general was a problem. Doctors in Canada (not necessarily those at the Centre) were said to be very quick to write out a prescription but were not willing to listen to you. The Tamil groups felt that Tamil speaking doctors were too far away. Both Tamil groups were concerned about the closing of the local hospital.

The Somali women had specific concerns about being able to access physicians at the health centre. While able to see a nurse easily, they felt that they should also be able to see a doctor.

Racism and Racial Tensions

There was discussion of racism and racial tensions in five groups. The parent-child drop-in group members felt that there were instances of racism and racial tensions in the neighbourhood. They spoke about how problems among tenants sometimes escalate when people belong to different groups. There was also concern that youth tend to stick together with similar youth in order to feel protected or safe.

In the Spanish-speaking women's group there was discussion about experiences of racism and discrimination. Some participants felt that poor maintenance of buildings could be linked to racial discrimination. Women in one of the Tamil groups related experiences of racial comments from other ethnic groups. On a positive note it was felt that there were few overt displays of racism directed at Sri Lankans in their daily lives.

The Somali women's groups reported many instances of harassment, intolerance and abuse. In one group, neighbours were reported as being verbally abusive. There were also many instances of having had bottles or objects thrown at them and having their homes damaged. In some instances there have been physical assaults upon children by other children. In the other Somali women's group the women related that they and their children experience racism on a day-to-day basis. They are criticized for how they look and dress, and many believe they are subject to employment and other discrimination.

Police

There was concern that police were unresponsive and did not take the concerns of residents seriously among some groups. Among members of the parent-child drop-in group, the police were seen as uncaring and unresponsive. Instances of police indifference were reported and it was seen as an open question as to whether their behaviour was due to racism or just rudeness.

All three Somali groups raised issues about the lack of responsiveness by police to their concerns. In one women's group, there was discussion of how police do not respond when

issues of harassment, vandalism, and drug use are raised. The other women's group felt that both the police and housing authorities did not take their concerns about crime and safety seriously. The men's group also raised this issue.

Children's Safety

In four groups concerns about the safety of children was raised. This took the form of concern about traffic for some. For others it was related to the use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs by other youth in the neighbourhood.

The parent-child drop-in group raised issues about speeding traffic and the danger it posed to children. The Somali women's groups are concerned that their children will pick up the bad habits of others in the community. They are concerned about the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs, and about crime and safety. They feel that they have to keep their children inside but this causes crowding problems for the family. The Somali men shared similar concerns with a focus on happenings at the local recreation centre.

Crowded and Unaffordable Housing

The three Somali groups specifically discussed their crowded housing conditions. Many Somalis have large families but are unable to get large enough units. The waiting list is very long and it is felt that the conditions under which they are living are not healthy. In one group, it was mentioned that ten people are living in a two bedroom unit. One woman with a three month child lives in the living room of a unit.

Housing that would be appropriate for them was seen as being too expensive. This concern about lack of affordable housing was shared by the Eastern European group. One woman had to pay \$900 for a two bedroom apartment. All of the participants in this group were concerned about the effects of the removal of rent controls.

Garbage and Pollution

Two groups discussed the presence of garbage and pollution. The Spanish-speaking group focussed on garbage and litter in the streets. One of the Somali women's group raised issues of air pollution and dog excrement on the lawns.

Other Concerns Mentioned

A number of other issues were raised, usually by one group. One group spoke of poor lighting and parking in the neighbourhood. Another group felt that there was not enough parks. And the Somali men felt that the school authorities didn't understand the needs of their children.

Summary: Community Members' Views on Quality of Life

Some clear findings emerged concerning what makes life good for people in Lawrence Heights. Across all groups, neighbours and how people get along are contributors to quality of life. Residents described both positive and negative experiences with neighbours. When neighbours are available to provide assistance and support, they clearly are an asset. When experiences with neighbours are not so positive they clearly do not contribute to quality of life. Having access to amenities is clearly a contributor to quality of life. Across all groups, being able to shop nearby and have access to public transportation is important.

For youth and seniors, and for some adults, it is important to have activities to participate in. The Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre and Community Health Centre, when accessed by community members, are clearly contributors to quality of life. For those youth and seniors who are connected to activity groups, these groups are very important.

For adults, especially newcomers to Canada, community services and agencies are vital to their well-being and quality of life. We heard very positive comments about these agencies from adults who were connected with them. We also heard that lack of such services for many is an important concern. The parkland and open spaces of Lawrence Heights are viewed positively by community members. And some groups were very happy with the local schools and libraries.

There is a strong concern about the quality of housing and deteriorating maintenance of this housing. There is worry about crime and personal safety among residents. Racial tensions in the neighbourhood and local school were described. For many residents there is a shortage of services and supports. Newly arrived Canadians have needs that are currently not being met. And people are not optimistic about the impact of current government policies on these

services and themselves.

Specific concerns centred about access to health care. There was also worry about the safety of children in the streets. African-Canadian youth were especially concerned about discrimination and their treatment by the police. How people cope with these concerns and their ideas on how to improve these things are discussed in the following two chapters.

4

Coping and Managing in Lawrence Heights

An important aspect of the Community Quality of Life Project was identifying some of the means by which Lawrence Heights residents cope and manage in their daily lives. Coping can refer to many things but in this project we were interested in two main aspects. The most obvious is how people cope when they, their family members, or friends have specific problems. To find out about this aspect we specifically asked: *What are some of the things in this neighbourhood or community that help you cope or manage when you or your family have problems?* This was asked after we collected information about the positive and negative aspects of the neighbourhood or community. Within this way of seeing coping, it refers to what people do when problems arise -- with the implication that these problems are out of the ordinary.

But there is another important way of looking at coping and managing. In this way of looking at things, coping can refer to what people do in their everyday lives to either fill up their days, or even to get by. For a person or family under stress, coping can be an everyday activity that is part and parcel of living. It became clear to us as we asked people about the positive and negative aspects of living in Lawrence Heights, that for some people the things identified as being good for them involved exactly this kind of coping. For a person who says that having having a parent drop-in where they can relax and talk to other young parents is a good thing, clearly having this service is related to coping and managing. In the sections that follow, we describe the things that help the people we spoke to cope and manage, both with problems and everyday life. We present these by age group, youth, seniors, and adults.

Within each group the ideas are presented in alphabetical order.

Youth: Coping and Managing

Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre

For the CHC youth group, the CHC was seen as a place where people could go if they had a problem or needed someone to talk to. The group itself is clearly a means of coping since it provides a forum for youth to deal with day-to-day issues. The community health centre was also mentioned by the grade 8 boys and grade 8 girls as well as the secondary school African-Canadian group. None of these latter participants were currently involved in any youth group however.

Community Organizations

In most groups there were occasional references to local services that could be used. In one group, there was mention of going to the local doctor, or using a walk-in clinic. While one grade 12 female mentioned a worker at a local centre, others felt that there was no place in the area to go for help.

One member of the secondary school African-Canadian group spoke of the Black Secretariat and how it provides summer programs and educational activities. None of the other group members knew of it. Generally, there was a sense among this group that there was little community support in the form of agencies available.

Neighbours and Friends

The grade 6 group, grade 8 girls, and grade 12 males mentioned neighbours and friends as places where one could go for help.

Parents and Relatives

Family members were seen by a number of groups as people where one could go for help. Depending upon the particular issues involved, parents were seen as being sources of support by the grade 6 participants, grade 8 males and females, grade 12 males, and the secondary school African-Canadian group.

Self-Coping Mechanisms

In a number of groups, mention was made of numerous self-coping strategies. Some of the grade 6 students said they like to cope with things on their own, preferring to just think about their problems. Some of the grade 12 boys spoke about coping with problems by getting angry, drinking, sleeping, smoking, or eating.

The secondary school African-Canadian group spoke about the coping mechanisms they have developed to deal with issues of racism. They said they spend a lot of time thinking about things in order to cope. Some said they focus on school work, others said they involve themselves in recreational activities. One person had received counselling and now stands up to people if incidents arise.

Teachers

In a number of groups teachers were seen as people who could help if help was needed. These groups were the grade 8 girls and boys and the grade 12 males and females.

Other Supports Mentioned

One grade 8 boy said there was a community council that deals with issues. One person in the grade 8 boys and one in the grade 12 females mentioned the Kids Help Line.

Seniors: Coping and Managing

Activity Groups

Clearly, for all participants their involvement in their respective groups was a means of coping and managing their lives. These groups provide social contacts, meaningful activities, and ways of keeping active.

Area Alliance

In both the seniors tenants group and the recreation group, the Lawrence Heights Area Alliance was seen as a place where one could obtain help.

Centre for Spanish-Speaking People

This organization was seen as being very helpful for people when they first arrived in Canada.

Family and Friends

Family was mentioned by both the tenants group and the Spanish-speaking seniors group as a source of support. The tenants group also mentioned neighbours as providing a support system.

Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre

Among all three seniors group the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre was seen as a resource for support and assistance.

Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre

In both the seniors tenants group and the recreation group the Recreation Centre was seen as a place where one could obtain assistance.

Medical Emergencies

The recreation group spoke of how they would call a taxi or ambulance to get them to a hospital if this was needed.

Adults: Coping and Managing

There were differences in the supports that were available to participants in the adult groups. Since each group was somewhat different, results are presented in terms of whether the groups were organized by the local community centre, the local settlement agency, and the Somali service agency.

The Community Health Centre Groups

There were two groups that operated out of the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre: the parent-child drop-in and the Spanish-speaking women's group. Among the parent-child drop-in group, support and assistance was provided by the group itself, as

well as friends and neighbours. The kind of assistance was emotional as well as involving baby-sitting and sharing of food.

The Spanish-speaking women's group spoke of the support received by the community health centre group and the group community worker. They also mentioned friends, the church and parish members, as being available to provide help when needed.

The Settlement Agency Groups

The two Tamil-speaking groups spoke about the supports provided by the North York Community House. As discussed earlier, the Community House provides a venue for social contact and for receiving important skills and knowledge. The Community House also makes referrals and the participants spoke highly of these. The importance of these services being free were highlighted.

The Eastern European group spoke of friends, families and cultural networks as providing support and assistance. In terms of medical issues, they would go to their doctor or local hospital. And in cases of harassment they would call the police.

The Somali Groups

Participants in these groups felt that there was no place to turn to in the area for assistance. While the community health centre was available for health issues, there were problems in communicating. The Somali agencies that could provide assistance all not in the area but rather in Etobicoke, Scarborough or downtown. There are some informal networks that provide help when it is needed.

Summary: Coping and Managing in Lawrence Heights

Lawrence Heights residents cope and manage in many ways. Among youth the emphasis is upon neighbours, family, friends, teachers, and self-coping. Most youth are aware of some of the supports that are available from local agencies, but few take advantage of these. Seniors appear to benefit from their involvement in activity, tenants, and agency-sponsored support groups. These are offered by the both the local community recreation centre and the community health centre.

For many adults, especially newcomers to Canada, involvement with agency-sponsored groups are a clear contributor to their coping and managing. For those adults who do not have access to such supports, coping and managing appears to be an ongoing concern. How their coping and managing could be improved is the subject of the next chapter.

5

Desired Services and Programs

One part of this project was finding out from community members about services or programs they felt were needed. We specifically asked: *What would you like to see in this neighbourhood that would help you cope or manage when you have problems? Are there services you would like to see? Are there any programs you would like to see?* In addition to the responses to these questions, information relevant to this issue was also provided in the course of the group discussions as positive and not so positive aspects of the community were discussed. In the following sections we provide the suggestions made by community residents. We first present findings from the youth groups, then seniors, and then the adults discussion groups.

Youth: Desired Services or Programs

There were a number of common themes across many of the youth groups. These are discussed in order of degree of agreement across the groups.

Activities and Programs for Youth

In almost every group a need for youth activities, and in some cases, programs was raised. In the community health centre youth group it was spoken of as a need for more and diverse programs for youth that would encourage them to develop their talents and skills. It was felt that there is a lot of talent in the community that needs to be supported.

The grade 6 students felt that the community would be a safer place to be if there was

more things for young people to do. The grade 8 girls spoke of a need for a teens club where kids would be able to decide for themselves what to do. The grade 8 boys wished to see more things in the park and more basketball courts. Some of the grade 12 females said they would spend more time in the community if there were more places to go to such as shops, restaurants, and arcades. The secondary school African-Canadian group wanted to see crafts activities for youth in the community. They also felt that the local park could be improved and the basketball courts fixed up.

Counsellors

In four groups, there was discussion about the need for counsellors that could provide assistance when needed. The community health centre youth group mentioned counselling in terms of the provision of youth programs for the talented people in the community. The grade 6 students spoke of this in terms of people with problems who need support. The grade 8 girls spoke about the many teens who have problems and stress and could benefit from seeing a counsellor. The secondary school African-Canadian group spoke about the lack of support in the community that would help them cope with many of the issues and problems they face.

School-Related Issues

The grade 12 males and females, and the secondary school African-Canadian group all voiced a number of things they would like to see in the school. The grade 12 males wanted to see more educational programs and programs that they liked, such as photography, not to be cut. They wished to see more athletic programs such as wrestling and boccie. School spirit could be improved.

The grade 12 girls wanted more money to be spent on equipment and supplies. They also wished to see a better air conditioning system, clean bathrooms, and bigger hallways. They wanted more courses to choose from, including creative arts, and smaller classes. They thought they would benefit from more assistance in making the transition from high school to college or university. They suggested peer tutoring and visits to post secondary institutions would be helpful.

The secondary school African Canadian group wished that teachers would be more

sensitive to students' needs. They also expressed a need for some after-school services. The health centre youth group also wished that teachers would be more caring.

Crime and Safety

A number of issues were raised related to crime and safety. The health centre youth group and the grade 8 boys mentioned a need for better lighting in the community. The grade 8 boys wished there could be less crime, drugs, and more security.

More Stores

The health centre youth group wanted a greater variety in the stores at the mall. They thought it would be nice to be asked about the kinds of business they would like to see there. The grade 8 girls also wished to see more and stores close-by in the neighbourhood. And the grade 12 girls said that they would spend more time in the community if there were more stores and commercial establishments.

Other Issues Raised

The health centre youth group wished to see more mailboxes and pay phones in the community. The bus not running after 7:00 PM on weekends was also a sore point. The grade 8 boys wanted lower rent and cleaner streets. The grade 12 males wished a greater police presence and the grade 12 females more inexpensive things to do. And the Lawrence Heights high school group felt that part-time jobs and local agencies that could support them would be helpful.

Seniors: Desired Services or Programs

Improved Maintenance and Repairs

As noted earlier all three groups were unhappy with the state of repair of the residences. They related this to service cutbacks and reduced staff.

Saturday Community Bus Service

The tenants and recreation groups voiced few other concerns. As noted earlier some seniors felt that transportation on the weekends was not great in the community. Similarly, many members of the recreation group use the Community Bus which goes to the local malls, Baycrest, and the subway. They would like to see this bus run on Saturdays, since this is when many people do their errands.

Spanish-Speaking Seniors

This group had some unique concerns. They felt they needed better sources of information about current events, social issues, and politics in Canada. They wanted to know more about changes taking place in health care and education, for example. They also felt that better drug benefits and higher incomes would improve the lives of seniors.

Adults: Desired Services or Programs

The adults groups discussed a very large number of programs or services that would allow them to cope and manage better. There was general agreement across the groups concerning what these should be.

Child Care

Almost all adult groups spoke of the importance of, and lack of, affordable child care. Members of the parent-child drop-in expressed a need for more subsidized child care services. Participants have experienced long waiting lists for day care and a lengthy application process. It was stated that it can be stressful at home with children, and that children who stay at home are not as advanced as those who go to day care. It was also felt that not having child care prevents people from looking for a job, working, or attending school or training.

This concern about lack of child care was also expressed in the Spanish-speaking women's group. They saw it within the context of a general lack of services for families and children. The two Tamil groups also spoke of the long waiting lists for child care.

The two Somali women's and the Somali men's group spoke of the importance of child care in light of the strong needs for Somali women to take ESL classes and receive

employment training. Without child care, it is impossible for women to receive needed instruction and skills.

The Eastern European group all felt that the lack of affordable child care was a significant issue. The lack of it makes women unable to work. They pointed out that in Russia and Romania, child care was free. This allowed women greater freedom to work or study and to participate in the community.

Programs for Children and Families

There was virtual unanimity that there was a need for programs for children and families. The form that these needs take are different for each group and their situation.

The parent-child drop-in group spoke of the importance of programs for parents at home with children. These could involve art, sewing, and computers. These would provide places for building social networks and for gaining useful knowledge and skills. Programs to assist parents with teenagers would also be useful. Parents need help in dealing with their children and such help could help alleviate some of the problems this group saw youth having.

The Spanish-speaking women's group spoke of the need for low-cost recreation activities for families. These programs could include swimming, camping, or other family activities. A venue for holding family events was seen as being especially important. It was important that these programs be low-cost. The Tamil groups spoke of the need for programs for families that would be in their own language. They also spoke of the need for tutorial programs for their children

The Somali women's groups spoke of the need for the community health centre to offer a place where they and their children could practice their heritage and learn English. They would also like to be able to have heritage classes on the weekends so their children could learn about the Somali culture. They also felt a need to assist their children with tutoring. The Somali men would like to have someone who understood Somali culture at the local recreation centre so that their children could be supervised.

The Eastern European group wanted programs to be accessible through a central information service in their own language. This would include information about child

benefits.

Training Programs

All of the adult groups spoke about the need for training programs to help people find work. Women especially were very eager to gain employment but felt they needed skills that could be acquired through training. These programs included use of computers, and for the Tamil and Somali groups, classes in sewing in addition to training in computers. Other possible courses included training as cashiers. Since some women already work during the day, it would be important to have classes offered in the evening.

English as a Second Language Classes

English as a Second Language was especially important for newcomers. It was felt, among the Tamil and Somali groups, that men were much more likely to speak English than women. Without English people are unable to work and to fit into Canadian life. It is because of this that ESL classes were felt to be very important among participants of all the groups. These classes would be especially useful for women and children.

Tutorial Help for Children

It was felt by the Tamil and Somali groups that their children needed tutorial help. This could be offered by the schools or by local community organizations. It could take place during the evenings or the weekends.

Community Outreach

The Somali men had many ideas about how to involve the Somali community in community life. They felt it was important to build linkages with community organizations. This could be done by hiring Somali speaking workers or by having a Somali on the community board. Involved in this would be the building of communication channels with Somali community members as part of community agencies' outreach. Once people became connected to an agency they would be able to begin the process of community development. They saw the quality of life project as a good beginning of this process.

Other Desired Programs or Services

The parent-child drop-in group saw the need for programs for teenagers. This would include summer programs or school-related activities. The Spanish-speaking women's group saw a need for programs to control drug use. The Tamil groups saw a strong need for services in their own language. They also felt the need for more resources to be given to the North York Community House to help meet the Tamil community's needs.

One Somali women's group wanted larger park spaces to be available. The other mentioned greater security, and a Somali facilitator to whom they could turn for help. This group also wanted improved access to the community health centre possibly through the availability of a translator.

And as noted earlier, the Eastern European group wished to have a central service where information in their own language could be accessed. They also wished greater assistance in integrating into the community as well as more affordable housing.

Summary: Desired Services and Resources in Lawrence Heights

Community members had many ideas about the services or programs that would improve their coping and managing. Youth want more things to do in the community such as recreational activities and for some, greater variety of stores. They want to see the neighbourhood being safer and better lighting. They want the buses to run in the evening.

Youth had suggestions for how schools could be improved. This involved greater resources allocated to desired courses, changes in attitudes among some teachers, and greater respect for students. Seniors would like to see improved maintenance of the buildings and better public transportation.

Adults in Lawrence Heights see a strong need for more services and resources. Of specific concern is lack of day care and employment training. They wish to see more supports for children and families, tutorial help for children, and greater community outreach on the part of service agencies. They want the police and local authorities to be more responsive to their concerns.

6

Results from the Interviews with Persons With Disabilities

The purpose of this sub-project was to hear from persons with physical disabilities. A worker from the local settlement house carried out individual interviews with 15 persons with disabilities. These individuals were all clients of the agency and resided, for the most part, across western North York.

Each person was asked what was it about the neighbourhood or community that helped make life good for them and the people they care about and what did not make life good. They were also asked what they did to cope or manage with problems and what services or programs they would like to see to help them cope or manage better. To give an idea of the number of people who mentioned each kind of issue we provide the total number of times that something was mentioned across the 15 individuals.

Strengths and Positive Factors

In all, 78 specific responses about strengths and positive factors were given. These involved 31 different aspects of the community from the 15 people who participated in the project. These 31 aspects have been grouped into 8 general categories. Not surprisingly, there was a strong emphasis on having amenities nearby and being able to have access to these amenities. The categories are presented in alphabetical order.

Access to Amenities (19 mentions)

This category is concerned with not only having a variety of restaurants and shopping nearby but being able to have access to these amenities. Specific responses were: having shopping nearby (12 mentions), having access to stores (2), hairdresser close by (2), having banking nearby (2), and restaurants (1).

Access to Community Activities and Services (12 mentions)

This group of responses concerned being able to have access to a variety of community activities and services and included aspects of both proximity and access. The specific responses included: access to community activities (5), access to community services (3), nearby doctors or dentists (2), help for newcomers (1) and a nearby church (1).

Attractive and Peaceful Neighbourhood (18 mentions)

A range of responses included references to the physical nature of the surrounding neighbourhood. This included references to attractive buildings, the presence of parks and trees, and the lack of cars and noise. The specific sub-categories were: attractive neighbourhood (9), nice park nearby (4), and peaceful/quiet/few cars (5).

Friendly and Safe Neighbourhood (10 mentions)

A number of responses focused on friendly and helpful neighbours. These were spoken of in terms of being able to talk with people, being able to receive help when needed, and feeling safe in the neighbourhood. There were eight references to friendly people and two to feeling safe in the neighbourhood.

Friends and Relatives Nearby (7 mentions)

Six responses referred to having friends nearby, while one referred to having relatives nearby.

General Accessibility of Neighbourhood (6 mentions)

There were six references to issues of general accessibility of the neighbourhood and community. These responses were: close to work, access to subway, presence of a ramp to a park, accessible streets, accessible arena nearby, and good accessibility.

Residences (5 mentions)

There were five responses that were related to housing. These were: building well-maintained, apartment accessible, can contribute to how residence is run, presence of automatic doors, and pets being allowed in the building.

Other Issues (2 mentions)

One person spoke of the good ambulance service while another mentioned the presence of a good local school.

Liabilities and Negative Factors

In all, 26 responses were given by the 15 participants. These responses involved 18 different negative aspects of the neighbourhood or community. These aspects were categorized into 6 categories. Many of the responses concerned issues of proximity and access to amenities.

Communication Problems (2 mentions)

Two responses concerned difficulty speaking with people whose first language was not English.

Difficulty with Access (12 mentions)

Twelve mentions were related to lack of and difficulty with access and mobility. These responses included the following: stores/restaurants not accessible (4 mentions), roads could be smoother (2), poor snow and ice removal in winter (2), church not accessible (1), door to building difficult (1), construction makes access difficult (1), and need better accessibility (1).

Distance to Amenities (5 mentions)

There were mentions of amenities being too far away. These included: shopping too far away (2), few restaurants (1), work too far away (1), and bingo not nearby (1).

Noisy, Congested Neighbourhood (3 mentions)

Two responses concerned the neighbourhood being noisy and one about congested traffic.

Safety Concerns (3 mentions)

There was reference to incidence of break-ins (1), lack of security in the building (1), and presence of police cruisers (1).

Other Mentions

One person spoke about the local school being closed and not being used for anything.

Coping and Managing With Problems

In response to the question of what helps you cope or manage when problems arise, 42 responses were given by the 15 persons interviewed. This involved 20 different themes and these were grouped into 5 categories. As noted earlier, it can be assumed that many of the activities that people engage in as part of their “positive aspects of the community” probably assist them in coping and managing as well.

Building Agent (3 mentions)

Three responses involved an authority within the building. One response was the building administrator. Two involved the building superintendent.

Community Services or Resources (12 mentions)

Eleven different community services or resources were mentioned by the respondents. These included such agencies as North York Community House, Jewish Family and Children Services, North York Women’s Centre, Reena Foundation, York Community Services, VITA Community Services and others as well.

Emergency Services (10 mentions)

Seven responses were to call 911 or the police. Three responses were the fire department.

Friends, Neighbours and Relatives (14 mentions)

This category had the most responses. There were seven responses focused on friends, five on relatives, and two on neighbours.

Medical or Health Services (3 mentions)

One response was to go to the hospital, while two were about visiting their physician for assistance.

Desired Services or Programs

The 15 interviewees were asked what would they like to see that would help them cope or manage better. In all 25 responses were given. These responses involved 21 different things which were organized into four general categories.

Accessible Amenities and Services (10 mentions)

The largest number of responses were concerned with access to and accessible amenities and services. The specific responses included accessible stores and shops (2), accessible restaurants (2), accessible apartments (1), accessible vans (1), accessible bowling alleys (1), and an accessible church (1). Two other responses sum up this category. These were: “accessible facilities”, and “accessible everything!”

Greater Proximity of Amenities (6 mentions)

People wished to see a nearby variety store (2), more restaurants (2), a nearby theatre (1) and a nearby bingo hall (1).

Programs for Persons With Disabilities (5 mentions)

Five specific kinds of programs for people with disabilities were mentioned. These were recreational programs, educational programs, self help groups, a community health centre, and an information services centre.

Other Programs (4 mentions)

Four different kinds of needed programs were mentioned. These were after school programs for children, programs for newcomers, programs for seniors, and programs for Spanish-speaking seniors.

Summary of Findings from the Community Interview Project

The things that make life good for these individuals are being able to access the amenities of their neighbourhoods. For person with physical disabilities, being able to live in an attractive and friendly neighbourhood are important contributors to quality of life. And not surprisingly, being able to have access to stores and restaurants, things that many people take for granted, is especially important.

When access to thing things is not possible, quality of life suffers. Virtually all of the negative aspects of communities centred on being unable to have access to services and amenities. For these individuals, services available through agencies is an important contributor to their coping and managing. Also important is the availability of friends and neighbours to provide supports and assistance when necessary. And finally, individuals wish to see greater access to amenities and services, and more programs for both persons with disabilities and others.

7

Views of Service Providers

Twelve interviews were carried out with some of the service providers who work with people in Lawrence Heights. They included three educators: the vice-principal of an elementary school, and teachers at a middle school and secondary school. At a community health centre, the programme director, a youth worker, and a community health worker were interviewed. We spoke with four of the staff of a settlement and service agency: the executive director, the coordinator of person-to-person support, the coordinator of a language instruction program, and a community worker. A recreation worker from a community centre and the executive director of a Somali women's organization were also interviewed.

In this chapter we explore the service providers' perceptions of community strengths and community issues or problems. We also explore what they see as supports and barriers to effective action.

Strengths and Positive Factors

There were many commonalities among the service providers concerning the strengths and positive factors in the community. We first identify those aspects that were commonly mentioned. We then focus upon aspects that were mentioned by particular service providers.

Community Agencies and Resources

Most of the service providers saw the agencies and services that are available in Lawrence Heights as being important to community well-being. The middle school teacher commented that families are often connected to a number of community organizations. The language instruction coordinator reported that there are a fair number of services that play a role in settlement and transition. The executive director of the settlement and service agency spoke of the strong sense of community that is supported and enhanced by the services in the area. She also emphasized that the services are high quality and that agencies work closely with the community to identify issues and take collective action. The recreation worker also spoke of the collaborative work done by community agencies. The community health worker and the youth worker at the community health centre, as well as the community worker at the settlement and service agency, also felt that the agencies and resources were a positive factor.

The programme director of the CHC noted that there is also a community-based organization which works on behalf of residents in the local community. The Lawrence Heights Area Alliance has been working for over twenty years now and works in partnership with other agencies and groups in the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood.

Access to Amenities

More than half of the service providers mentioned that having easy access to amenities such as stores, libraries, parks, and recreation activities was a positive factor for many community residents. These amenities were seen as important for youth, as they provide a place to go, and additionally, there are some employment opportunities in the local stores. Access to stores and services also was seen as helpful for newcomers and persons with physical disabilities. The language instruction coordinator noted that there are ethnic foods and newspapers available to newcomers. The executive director of the Somali organization also felt that access to amenities made life easier for the Somali community, although language difficulties still presented a barrier when accessing services. The coordinator of person-to-person support stressed the importance of proximity to shops and services for persons with physical disabilities.

Diversity

The diversity of the Lawrence Heights community, in terms of culture, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status, was mentioned by many service providers as a positive feature of the community. The vice-principal and the high school teacher felt that this diversity contributed to a positive learning environment. The CHC programme director noted that Lawrence Heights residents appreciated the community's diversity and that most anyone could feel a sense of familiarity in the neighbourhood. Similarly, the language instruction coordinator felt that the multicultural nature of the community contributed to a sense of comfort and community for newcomers. The settlement agency's executive director and the CHC youth worker also saw cultural diversity as a strength of the community.

Public Transportation

Half of the service providers mentioned good public transportation as one of the community's strengths. For children and youth, the public transit enables them to get to school and recreation activities easily. The CHC community health worker mentioned that proximity to the subway station was particularly important. The CHC programme director noted that, in addition to the subways and buses, the highways are also easily accessed from the Lawrence Heights area. The language instruction coordinator also commented that the public transportation and the central location makes the area near Lawrence Heights an easy neighbourhood to get around in. The executive director of the Somali agency also felt that access to public transit helped to make life easier.

Education and Schools

The community worker and the executive director of the settlement and service agency identified Joyce Public School in particular as a community strength. It was also noted that the quality of education for Tamil children is seen as especially important, and that most Tamils who have recently come to Canada are happy with the quality of Canadian schools. While the three educators did not explicitly state that education and schooling was a positive factor in the community, their remarks throughout their interviews certainly

indicated this.

Social and Community Supports

Three service providers spoke about supports from one's community as being an important strength of communities. The middle school teacher described the Lawrence Heights community as stable and tight-knit. The CHC programme director spoke of the community's history of resident activism and how this provides a mechanism for residents to gain support from each other. The Lawrence Heights Area Alliance often plays a key role on local advocacy issues. The executive director of the Somali organization noted that members of the Somali community support each other in practical ways, such as someone with good English skills accompanying others to the doctor. The social support that the Somali community members offer each other was also seen as very important.

Physical Aspects of the Neighbourhood

Three service providers described some of the area's physical characteristics as positive features. The CHC programme director felt that the distinct geographic boundaries of the Lawrence Heights helps to give it a strong neighbourhood feeling. She also remarked that there is a lot of green space, and that the community is clean and well maintained on the surface. The coordinator of person-to-person support emphasized that the attractiveness of a neighbourhood is particularly important to many person with disabilities. For persons with limited mobility, being able to see trees, flowers, and the green space used by community members was seen as an important part of quality of life. The recreation worker also identified the Lawrence Heights community's green space as a positive factor.

Affordable Housing

Two service providers mentioned that there is affordable housing in the Lawrence Heights area. This is seen as a benefit because many people in the community have low incomes.

Cultural Sensitivity of Service Providers

Two of the service providers who work closely with newcomers felt that a strength of the community that was particularly helpful and valued was the cultural sensitivity displayed by service providers. The language instruction coordinator commented on the importance of this sensitivity and awareness of issues and values for different cultural groups. The community health worker at the CHC also reported that clients have commented that community workers are sensitive to the cross-cultural make-up of the neighbourhood, and that they appreciate services being offered in a culturally-sensitive manner.

Safety and Peacefulness

The language instruction coordinator commented that for some of the participants in her program, the neighbourhood where they live is felt to be a safe one. The community worker at the settlement agency reported that members of the Tamil community appreciate the peacefulness and relative safety in which they live. In the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood, community policing was seen by the recreation worker as an initiative that enhanced safety.

Other Positive Factors

The language instruction coordinator felt that the language instruction program was a very helpful support for newcomers. Access to a Tamil advocate was seen as important for the Tamil community. Low traffic volume in the neighbourhood was seen as a strength by the coordinator of person-to-person support. The availability of programs and services for seniors was highlighted as a strength by the executive director of the settlement and service agency.

The vice-principal recognized the commitment of the school staff. Having community input into decisions was seen as important to quality of life by the recreation worker. The Resource Group and the Tenant Management Group were seen as two mechanisms by which community members were able to have their voices heard.

Problems and Issues

A number of problems and issues were raised concerning challenges being faced in Lawrence Heights. We first identify those issues that were commonly mentioned. We then focus upon aspects that were mentioned by particular service providers.

Crime and Safety

Six service providers, including the three educators interviewed, discussed issues related to crime and safety. The secondary school teacher expressed concern about crime. He felt that there was a high crime element in the community (this involves not just the Lawrence Heights area) which was encouraged by the presence of adult gangs. He was also disturbed by students' acceptance of crime as normal. The middle school teacher also spoke of crime and safety concerns, including shootings that have taken place in the community, children telling her about hearing gunshots and seeing knives at parties, and incidents of police chases in the school. It was felt that many students are exposed to violence in their homes and in the community. The vice-principal noted that her elementary school deals with issues related to violence and crime, especially among those children who live in subsidized housing and are bussed in to school.

Safety was also identified as a concern for the Somali community in Lawrence Heights. The executive director noted that sometimes Somali children are involved in fights and there is a perception that some of these fights are related to gang activity. Some Somali residents also feel unsafe on the street at certain hours of the night. Additionally, it was felt that Somali children are being exposed to drugs in the community. The recreation worker remarked that there is a fear of going out in the Lawrence Heights community at night, especially for seniors. It was felt that this fear can be fed by a negative media impression of the community. The CHC programme director also identified violence as a community issue that needed to be addressed.

Poverty and Unemployment

Half of the service providers spoke of the problem of poverty and unemployment. The secondary school teacher identified poverty as a significant issue for many of his students and expressed concern about its impact on education. Unemployment and underemployment are serious issues for newcomers. The language instruction coordinator mentioned that newcomers can experience difficulty adjusting to a lower income level. Low income was also identified as an issue for the Tamil community. The community worker remarked that most Tamil families are on full or partial social assistance. The coordinator of person-to-person support described how issues of poverty, disability, and physical access can be intertwined. She also commented that for persons with disabilities, finding a job can be particularly challenging, and that unemployment was high among the consumers she works with. The executive director of the settlement and service agency also identified low and decreasing incomes as a major problem. She reported that already low incomes have decreased even more in the past two years due to such factors as unemployment, underemployment, changes to unemployment insurance, and cuts to welfare payments.

The CHC community health worker felt that poverty was the major problem in the Lawrence Heights community. Closely related to poverty is the lack of jobs for community members. The community health worker noted the impact of poverty on health and how it affects access to recreation. She also described how seniors on fixed income are vulnerable to even small changes in cost of living, and the struggle many women face to buy food and clothing for their families. Additionally, many people, particularly women, face barriers to entering the work force, including lack of personal financial resources for clothes, day care and transportation, as well as a need to acquire or upgrade skills. The CHC programme director also noted that the majority of residents in Lawrence Heights, including seniors, young people who are unemployed, and single parents, are dealing with issues related to low income.

Education and Schools

Half of the service providers, including the three educators, spoke about education issues. The secondary school teacher had concerns about education not being highly valued. He felt that limited opportunities for students, tolerance of gangs and crime, and lack of parental involvement contributed to education not being valued. Concern about student conduct was expressed by the middle school teacher. The vice-principal spoke of tension among students from varying backgrounds.

The language instruction coordinator mentioned that sometimes children who are newcomers have difficulties in school and parents need support to interact with the schools and be involved in their children's education. Education, especially the interactions between Somali parents and the school system, is a very important issue for the Somali community as well. Problems are seen as resulting from parents being unfamiliar with the language and the school system, and schools being unfamiliar with the Somali culture. In addition, the feeling that school resources are inadequate for the needs of refugee children is a serious concern of the Somali community. Somali children have particular needs for support as many have no previous experience with school and are unfamiliar with the English language. The CHC community health worker commented that obtaining services for children with disabilities and special needs can be very stressful for parents and this is intensified due to the perception that school-based services for their children are being cut.

Housing

Five of the service providers discussed problems related to housing. The generally poor condition of housing in Lawrence Heights was seen as an important issue by the recreation worker. In particular, she felt that some of the seniors' housing was not appropriate for their needs, as the buildings are generally not accessible to people with mobility impairments. The youth worker at the CHC also spoke about the poor condition of the homes in Lawrence Heights and that repairs are not done promptly. Additionally, the youth worker felt that the relationship between residents and the Housing Authority could be improved.

The executive director of the Somali organization also reported that the housing stock in Lawrence Heights is old and in poor repair. A related problem is that the Housing Authority is seen as being slow to respond to requests for repairs. Also mentioned was that many Somali families are underhoused, living in dwellings meant for fewer people.

Some housing outside of the immediate Lawrence Heights area was also described as being old and in poor repair by the executive director of the settlement and service agency. Housing issues are also a key concern for persons with physical disabilities. The coordinator of person-to-person support noted that while many persons with disabilities require subsidized housing, it is very difficult to obtain, with waiting lists being as long as five years. Moreover, the cost of housing, even when subsidized, can be prohibitive for persons on fixed incomes, particularly in the face of social assistance cuts. Finally, it was felt that some people feel powerless in trying to address issues such as landlord-tenant disputes and rent increases.

Issues of Newcomers: Language Barriers, Access to Services, and Related Issues

The CHC programme director emphasized that the issues related to low income are intensified for newcomers. Additionally, newcomer families are unfamiliar with the Canadian system, in terms of accessing resources and supports. The language instruction coordinator also remarked that accessing services can be difficult for newcomers. She also discussed newcomers having to deal with racism and the language barrier. She felt that newcomers sometimes experience disappointment with their life in Canada. The executive director of the Somali organization also spoke of communication barriers, specifically in regards to accessing services. The CHC community health worker also felt that language barriers can create problems in terms of service access. Additionally, communication problems contribute to misunderstandings and conflicts with neighbours.

Language barriers were also cited as an issue for the Tamil community; the community worker noted that this can affect self-esteem. Most Tamils have only grade 10 education and upgrading is difficult because of limited English skills. In addition to language barriers, it was noted that the Tamil community is not familiar with the Canadian service

approach, that is, seeking counselling from outside the home, especially in a group forum.

Issues of Newcomers: Work and Family Roles

The language instruction coordinator and the community worker both discussed the challenge newcomers face adjusting to new roles. The coordinator commented that women having to work can be a difficult adjustment for some families to make. Similarly, Tamil women, especially those from rural areas, are used to staying home with the children while the men go to work; they tend to have neither work experience or training. However there is some realization among the women that they will need to prepare themselves to work as their children get older.

Negative Publicity and Stigma Associated with the Neighbourhood

The CHC programme director spoke about the ongoing problem of negative publicity. It was felt that the media focuses on the negative aspects of the community and also reinforces stereotypes associated with certain ethnic groups. The negative media portrayal of the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood was also a concern for the youth worker. Both the programme director and the youth worker felt that the neighbourhood was negatively stereotyped and stigmatized by referring to it as “the jungle.”

Other Problems and Issues

Educators identified specific issues related to their students and learning. The vice-principal identified neglect as a serious issue that impact on students’ learning. Family instability was also a concern. She also stated that the school board does not have sufficient funding to support extra programs such as snack programs.

The secondary school teacher saw lack of parental involvement as an issue. He also felt that there were few opportunities provided to students to celebrate their ethnicity. As well, he noted some limitations in terms of amenities in Lawrence Heights, namely the lack of a good public library and no buses after 7:00 pm. He also discussed that students’ exposure to culture is often limited to what is presented in the mass media, and that part-time jobs can detract from academic and recreational pursuits and aspirations. Low self-esteem is also an issue for some high school students.

The middle school teacher reported that there have been problems with drugs and substance abuse in the school and in the community at large. She also commented that children who are older siblings sometimes have to take on a great deal of responsibility in the home, which can be stressful. The middle school teacher discussed that the cultural expectations of parents can be very different from those of the school and neighbourhood. Finally, she felt that the insularity of the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood, while contributing to its strong sense of community, can also prevent children from being exposed to broader experiences, such as cultural events.

The coordinator of person-to-person support discussed access, attendant care, and language barriers as issues for persons with physical disabilities. Accessibility issues include problems with sidewalks and curb-cuts, and access to restaurants and stores via ramps and appropriate doorways. Access to transportation can also be problematic, and winter conditions make physical accessibility problems worse. Attendant care is a necessity for some persons with disabilities; waiting lists are very long throughout the Toronto area. Language barriers can contribute to social isolation which is a serious issue for persons with disabilities.

The executive director of the settlement and service agency felt that more assistance was needed to help persons with disabilities access, and advocate for, services they need. It was also felt that some community members needed support before they are able to access traditional employment services. As well, the executive director remarked that while the services presently available in the community are of high quality, there are relatively few of them. She also said it is difficult for newcomers and people on low income, who must spend most of their time and energy on day-to-day survival and adjustment, to engage in community development or collective action. Other issues mentioned were a lack of training programs and activities for youth, and a lack of programs for children that focus on enrichment, such as skill development or tutoring.

The executive director of the Somali organization commented that many Somalis do not feel welcome in Lawrence Heights. Many Somali parents also experience difficulty communicating with their children. Finally, many Somalis perceive a lack of support from community agencies.

The recreation worker was concerned that while the population of Lawrence Heights is growing, the number of social services are not. Redevelopment of Lawrence Heights was also a concern. The recreation worker wants to be sure that there is strong community input into the process and design of redevelopment.

The CHC community health worker mentioned that there is a need for parent relief. Seniors' isolation is also a concern. The programme director said that the cutbacks to social assistance are intensifying the problems that existed before. The youth worker was concerned about negative stereotypes of Lawrence Heights youth.

Supports to Effective Action

Some supports were commonly mentioned by the service providers. These include partnerships and working collaboratively with other organizations, support from one's own agency and staff, the contributions of volunteers, program participants and other individuals the service providers work with. These common supports are discussed first, followed by others mentioned by individual service providers.

Agency and Staff Support

Many of the service providers spoke highly of their agencies and the staff; this included all three of the educators. The vice-principal identified the school staff, as well as the North York Board of Education as strong supports. Similarly, the secondary school teacher described the teaching staff as being committed and supportive. The administration and support staff were also said to be helpful. The middle school teacher spoke very highly of the staff at her school and felt that were the key support.

The recreation worker felt strong support from the centre's administration, and identified in particular her supervisor as someone who challenges the centre to undertake innovative projects to address community issues. She also felt that the achievements of the centre are supported by the long term commitment of the staff.

The executive director of the settlement and service agency commented that the staff and board are strengths of the organization. Their commitment to do the work with limited resources forms an important support. The CHC programme director also

identified a committed board of directors as a support. The CHC youth worker spoke of support from the agency and its staff.

Partnerships and Collaborations with Other Organizations

The majority of the service providers felt that partnerships and working collaboratively was a strong support. The vice-principal noted that many local agencies and businesses have been supportive of the school's programs. The secondary school teacher gave credit to local small business owners who show their support by offering donations to school events.

The community worker at the settlement and service agency reported that her work is supported by the network of other agencies to whom people may be referred. For example, the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture has been very supportive in terms of providing housing and other services for victims of war. The language instruction coordinator at the same agency also identified referrals, community partnerships and collaborative initiatives as a support. Much of the work of the coordinator of person-to-person support is to link people with resources. These links are especially important when working in an integrated model of service provision, that is, a model in which emphasis is not on providing all services in-house, but in assisting persons to access available services.

The executive director of the settlement and service agency reported that the agency does extensive networking and partnering with other organizations. This includes agencies in the same local community, as well as on a larger scale lobbying for services which could be shared by a larger geographic region. It was felt that the next step will be to look at partnerships with the business community and possibly religious institutions. The executive director of the Somali agency reported that linkages with other resources and agencies for advocacy and service provision are important to the organization's work.

The CHC programme director identified partnerships with community agencies as a support that assists the CHC to achieve its mandate. These agencies include schools, North York Parks and Recreation, the Lawrence Heights Area Alliance, the Children's Aid Society, the Jamaican Canadian Society, the YMCA, and to some extent the Metro Housing Company. The youth worker at the CHC also identified good relationships with

community partners such as the school board and North York Parks and Recreation as a support to her work. These partnerships also help to ensure that services are provided in an efficient and coordinated fashion.

Support from Community Members: Program Participants, Students, Consumers

Several service providers identified the people they work with and provide service to, be they students, program participants, and others, as supports. The middle school teacher was motivated by students who are dedicated to learning. The language instruction coordinator described the people she works with as inspiring. The consumers were also identified as one of the best supports for the coordinator of person-to-person support. She felt they had tremendous courage and had taught her a lot about advocacy. The recreation worker said that her work is supported by the trust of community members. The executive director of the settlement and service agency also saw community members, who get involved in programs and support each other, as a major support to their organization.

Volunteers

The CHC programme director, and the executive directors of the Somali organization and the settlement and service agency, acknowledged volunteers as a key support. The secondary school and middle school teachers discussed this in terms of contributions made by parents. The secondary school teacher described the Parents Council as a hard-working group of parents. The middle school teacher commented that partnerships between parents, teachers, and administrators were a major support.

The volunteers working with the Somali organization, who bring with them a familiarity with the issues and the language, were described as committed and a strong support. Volunteers were identified as a main support of the work of the settlement and service agency. The CHC programme director reported that volunteers are a strong support for the community health centre. Volunteers include newcomers and people who have had difficulty entering the work force and would like to build skills, while others are interested in working to bring about a better community. Medical, social work, and community service students also provide support.

Other Supports

The vice-principal spoke of continued progress as a support -- better academic results, a growing sense of community, and greater parental involvement. The community worker identified two supports in her work with the Tamil community, one is having programs with a social component, and second, that the community understands her role as a facilitator. The language instruction coordinator felt it was important that funding bodies acknowledge the importance of community issues, even if not all issues can be funded. The coordinator of person-to-person support identified the work done by the consumer movement and other persons involved in systemic advocacy as supports. The CHC community health worker felt that the fundamental support to her work with the Spanish-speaking community of Lawrence Heights is her background in and her commitment to social justice.

The programme director noted that the CHC has good physical resources; having this physical space for the community facilitates interaction with community members. It was felt that local politicians have also been supportive of the CHC.

Barriers to Effective Action

Barriers identified include cutbacks and limited funding and resources -- this theme was discussed by all the service providers -- as well as language barriers, volunteer issues, and outreach and communication issues. These common barriers are discussed first, followed by those reported by individual service providers.

Cutbacks, Limited Funding and Resources

The vice-principal was concerned about lack of government support and lack of funds for things such as snack programs. The secondary school teacher stressed that basic educational resources, including books, physical resources such as overhead projectors and adequate space for classrooms, as well as human resources are limited. The middle school teacher reported that government cutbacks have led to a decrease in staff; this is seen as especially problematic in a school that been designated a special needs school.

At the settlement and service agency, limited funding and resources means that many positions are part-time, including that of the Tamil community worker. The language instruction coordinator also cited insufficient funding as the most important barrier. As a result, there is not enough staff or resources to meet community need. For example, service cannot be provided in some languages, even when there is a need. The coordinator of person-to-person support described how funding issues have implications at the individual level and at the service level. Cutbacks affect individuals by limiting their incomes and making housing more difficult to obtain. Within the agency, the resources allocated to advocacy for persons with disabilities is limited. This limits the number of consumers to be assisted and the types of initiatives that can be offered.

The executive director reported that the agency does not have base funding from the provincial or Metro governments. This creates a barrier due to lack of stable resources. Having enough money to carry out the current programs is always an issue. This can pose a barrier to program implementation and continuity. Finally, the agency has identified program needs which it is unable to meet due to resource constraints.

Similar to the remarks from staff of the settlement and service agency, the community health worker at the CHC noted that because resources are finite, it is difficult to address new program needs. Contract and part-time positions also impact on program planning and the types of activities undertaken. The youth worker also felt that many more community needs could be met with more funding. For example, the summer camp can only accept 30 children but she was certain that there are many more who would like to attend. The programme director described the challenge of working with limited resources in a rapidly changing environment. While new families are always moving into the community and the needs of residents are intensifying, the staff are under resourced and over-worked. Some community needs cannot be met. The programme director also emphasized the impact of social assistance cutbacks on residents of the Lawrence Heights community.

The executive director of the Somali organization reported that while there are new demands on the organization all the time, resources are finite. This forces them to set priorities in terms of both geographical focus and problems to address, thus not meeting

the needs of all members of the Somali community.

The recreation worker spoke of personal financial barriers some members of the community experience. Although the centre strives to reduce financial barriers as much as possible, many residents are not able to pay for programs, equipment, and training.

Language and Cultural Barriers

The diversity of Lawrence Heights results in language and cultural barriers for service providers and it was felt that there were limitations in what programs the CHC could provide. The settlement and service agency lacks staff and/or volunteers to serve Somali, Chinese, and Vietnamese community members, many of whom require settlement services. The vice-principal noted that language barriers can pose difficulties in teaching the children and communicating with parents.

Outreach and Communication Issues

The CHC programme director reported that the health centre is seen largely as a place to obtain clinical services; it is a challenge to increase the awareness of the centre's health promotion services. The community health worker was aware that many people in the community who could be benefitting from available services are not hearing about them. It was felt that specific outreach strategies must be developed for particular groups, such as the Somali community. Outreach to Latin American youth was identified as a challenge for the youth worker. The executive director of the settlement and service agency commented that outreach activities can be very labour, and therefore resource, intensive.

Parental Involvement

Lack of parental involvement was an issue identified by the vice-principal and the secondary school teacher. The middle school teacher noted that sometimes parents do not support the actions that the teacher believes will be helpful for the child.

Volunteer Issues

The executive director commented that volunteers provide valuable assistance to the settlement and service agency, but frequently use the work as a bridge to employment. While this is positive for the individuals, it can present a barrier to continuity of service for the organization. The community worker at the settlement and service agency noted that there is an ongoing need for volunteers to assist with escorting and interpreting. It is difficult to find volunteers and there is some resistance by Tamil community members to trust volunteers with confidential information.

Other Barriers

The secondary school teacher emphasized that gangs and a high crime element act as barriers against learning. Poverty also impacts on students' ability to learn, and the lack of educational resources in the school is very difficult for students from poorer backgrounds. In terms of resources, the middle school teacher reported that lack of access to computer technology has become a barrier for the school. The vice-principal reported that there is some distrust of the school.

According to the recreation worker, negative experiences with bureaucracy and lack of trust can be a barrier to cooperation, participation in programs, and participation in community development activities.

The executive director of the settlement and service agency discussed limits to solutions for poverty, disempowerment of community members, and lack of space as barriers. Community agencies are limited in the practical solutions they can provide for the unrelenting problem of poverty. While they can provide programs, such as community kitchens, and provide help to obtain housing, the underlying issue of poverty cannot easily be resolved or remedied. A barrier to community development is that many people have not had a positive experience of having the power to change their lives through collective action. Finally, the agency experiences barriers to mounting new programs because of lack of space.

The language instruction coordinator mentioned that persons who wish to be involved in programs can face barriers to participation, including lack of child care or money for

public transportation. The coordinator of person-to-person support discussed limits in the amount of affordable, accessible housing as a real barrier for persons with disabilities. She also discussed philosophical issues related to use of an integrated service delivery model versus provision of specialized or segregated services.

8

Community Agency Mandates and Activities

In this chapter we continue the presentation of findings from the interviews with service providers in the community. The focus here is on agency roles and activities. In some cases, there are specific responses to problems and issues identified in the previous chapter.

The agencies include a community health centre where three staff were interviewed, and a settlement and service agency where four staff were interviewed. Also, one service provider from a Somali women's organization, a vice principal and two teachers from three schools, and a community recreation centre were interviewed.

Community Health Centre: Program Director

Roles

The programme director discussed the overall roles and initiatives of the agency. The dual roles of the CHC are health promotion and prevention activities at the community level, and provision of primary health care at the individual level. The programs provided at the centre can be divided into four main areas: seniors, youth, families, and women. The centre's response to specific issues and problems and some of their current initiatives are

presented below.

Responses to Issues

Issue of Negative Publicity

It was felt that there were both positive and negative impacts of negative publicity. On one hand it brings people in the community together around a common issue. However, at the same time it entrenches various micro-communities into ethnic groups, and reinforces stereotypes. The CHC has been continuously working with the community to address this issue.

Issues of Newcomers

The community health centre responds to the needs of newcomers by providing people with the information they need to make informed decisions. The CHC provides education and promotes the development of advocacy skills among newcomers. It was felt that making information accessible to newcomers was an essential service provided by the centre.

Social Assistance Cutbacks

The CHC has made a concerted effort to respond to the effects of the cutbacks on community members. They attempt to assist people by trying to find financial resources to tide them over. They also advocate with them when dealing with government agencies such as the Social Assistance Review Board or the Immigration and Refugee Board.

Violence

One way the CHC responds to the issue of violence is by providing educational workshops. They are also developing a program to address issues of family violence, particularly wife abuse. In addition, one of the youth groups received funding to develop educational sessions to address the issue of violence among youth.

Initiatives

Collaborating to Address Culturally Specific Needs

The CHC has been involved with other community agencies to help address the needs of specific cultural groups. Currently, they are developing some linkages with the North York Community House to work with the Tamil population. The health centre is also working with the Somaliland Women's Organization to address needs of the Somali community in Lawrence Heights.

Parent Relief Program

The CHC is currently investigating a parent relief program that was identified as a strong need by women.

Youth Council

A local youth council was established which provides youth with an opportunity to develop leadership skills. The council is encouraged to take a proactive approach in addressing issues related to youth in their community. The council receives training to go out into the community and mobilize other youth. They also identify the needs of youth in the community on an ongoing basis. They are working with the CHC to establish a youth sexual health clinic.

Youth Group

The health centre also runs a youth group with primarily African/Black Canadian youth. This group has been working on community issues such as youth violence.

Other Programs and Partnerships

The programme director listed a number of other programs and partnerships that the CHC is involved with in Lawrence Heights. The programs include: the parent-child drop-in, Nobody's Perfect for parents of young children, and a pre-natal program. The CHC has partnerships which include: North York Parks & Recreation, Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre, Jamaican Canadian Association, Lawrence Heights Area Alliance, YMCA, Children's Aid Society, and Black Cap, a community-based agency focusing on youth and HIV.

Community Health Centre: Community Health Worker

The community health worker discussed the roles and initiatives of the community health centre with a focus on her work with families and the Latin American community.

Roles

The CHC provides community members with a way to understand and deal with their health in all of its dimensions: physical, social, psychological, and spiritual. Services are of two main types: primary health care, which uses a team approach, and community development and health promotion services. The CHC deals with health-related issues in an integrated way.

Initiatives

Empowerment Approach

An empowerment approach is used to address many community issues. The service focus is to enable clients to take better control of their lives. For example, in groups there is emphasis on members finding their individual and collective strengths, taking control of their own health and contributing to community well-being. The direction of these group, in terms of content, is very much participant-directed. These groups provide feedback about services and identify community needs. Access to information is seen by the health worker as a powerful component of this approach.

Identification of Unmet Needs in the Community

An important part of the CHC's work is to identify, through formal needs assessments and through ongoing contact with community members, community needs which are not yet being met. Some of these needs are described below.

Addressing Elder Abuse. There is a need to find resources to deal with issues of elder abuse. Such cases can be particularly challenging given current (case management) resources because they must be dealt with on an individual basis, and frequently involve

issues of isolation.

Addressing Issues of Domestic Violence. The CHC has few resources to deal with the topic of domestic violence, which is an important issue in the community. It was noted that issues around family violence often differ in families who are refugees, recent immigrants, and long-time Canadians.

Analysis of Cultural Issues. It was felt that the whole area of conflict resolution and culture needs more analysis in the community, particularly with respect to Spanish-speaking persons. While Spanish speakers are thought of -- and served -- as a group, many people fail to realize that they come from many diverse countries and do not necessarily know each other's customs and identify with each other. Discrimination may exist within the group as well as in the larger society; this needs to be addressed.

Parent Relief. There is a need in the community for low-cost parent relief, so that children could be dropped off for short periods of time while parents carried out other activities or simply took a break. The CHC is discussing this issue and looking for funding for such a program.

Prenatal and Parenting Programs

The prenatal program at the Centre integrates primary care and health promotion issues. Parenting programs address the issues of understanding the development of children and also the parents' own feelings. This is an important aspect of service in a community where there are many parents (mostly mothers) who are in their homes with young children for long periods of time and may be under significant stress.

The community health worker noted that the drop-in addresses issues of women and their roles, parenting young children, and growth and development issues. It also provides a forum for community members to learn about different aspects of each other's cultures as they pertain to raising families. It was felt that some improvements could be made to this program in terms of perhaps offering more structure, and more information about parent-child communication, especially around discipline issues.

Services for Spanish-Speaking Persons

The CHC offers services for Spanish speaking clients. The community health

worker works as a case manager for these clients, particularly the elderly, to provide assistance to individuals around their particular issues (for example, settlement issues). The CHC also coordinates a support group for Spanish speaking women, and services (including a support group) for Spanish speaking seniors. In addition, the community health worker works with other programs at the health centre when they wish to incorporate input or participation from the Spanish speaking community. Spanish speaking clients may also access more “generic” programs at the centre, such as the family drop in program.

Spanish-Speaking Seniors’ Group

The seniors’ group enables Spanish-speaking seniors to participate in a community program without any language barriers. The group often brings out the potential for development and leadership among the group members. It also provides a safe place to vent concerns. The seniors’ group offers its members the additional advantage of a network of resources with which to solve their problems. This is accomplished through the knowledge gained in the group, plus the ready contact with service providers in the community health centre.

Women’s Group

The Spanish speaking women’s group facilitates in-depth discussion of issues that are affecting women’s lives, such as sexuality or roles of women. The group has an educational component which is driven by the interests of participants. The group is intergenerational, incorporating individual differences in experience, knowledge and skills.

Community Health Centre: Youth Community Worker

The youth community worker discussed the roles and initiatives of the community health centre with a focus on her work with youth.

Roles and Initiatives

Employment Help

The community worker strives to find job opportunities for the youth she works with. For example, some youths from the community are hired to work in the summer program.

Harambee Youth Group

The community worker runs a group called Harambee which targets youth of African descent between the ages of 15 and 19. Harambee has about 20 members and 12 to 16 individuals come on a weekly basis. Much of the group's work focuses on developing personal and leadership skills. The community worker emphasized the partnership approach to the program.

Make Referrals

Providing referrals to other programs and sources of support is another part of the community worker's job.

Summer Camp

The community health centre's six week summer camp program targets low income youth ages 11 to 14. It provides educational, recreational and social programming, including in-class activities and trips to Canada's Wonderland or Ontario Place.

Trillium Foundation Grant

A grant was recently received from the Trillium Foundation to do some work on the issue of violence in the community. Two 'stop the violence' workshops are being planned. The first workshop will involve a youth panel discussion. The second workshop will involve a guest speaker who can engage young people in a discussion around violence and come up with solutions and alternatives. Another avenue they will take to highlight the abilities and talents of young people in the community is to stage a talent show.

Youth Advisory Committee

The community worker also runs a Youth Advisory Committee and this is targeted at an older group than Harambee. There are ten members of mixed ethnicity. Half of the members belong to existing youth groups in Lawrence Heights and this ensures that information goes from the Youth Advisory Committee back to the existing youth groups.

Settlement and Service Agency

Four staff people from the settlement and service agency provided information about the agency's roles and initiatives. They included the executive director, a worker with the Tamil community, the coordinator of the language instruction program, and the coordinator of person-to-person support and advocacy.

Executive Director: Settlement and Service Agency

Roles

The mandate of the settlement and service agency is viewed as having three components. These relate to: 1) geographic priorities, 2) service priorities, and 3) community responsiveness.

1) The agency's mandate is to address gaps in service for all of North York. However, they have focused their efforts in specific areas for two reasons. First, the lack of staff (they started in 1991 with two staff) made it impossible to serve all North York

communities. Now, because services are starting to make an impact, and it does not seem prudent to change geographic focus, the agency continues to concentrate its efforts on the area bounded by Wilson Avenue, Highway 401, Bathurst Street, and the Humber River. The second reason for this geographic focus is that the agency was started with a large grant which was conditional on service development in the Bathurst-Lawrence area. Since that time, they have discovered that more need exists west of Bathurst-Lawrence, and so their efforts have been focused accordingly. However, all of the agency's services are open to residents who live anywhere in North York.

2) The second element of their mandate relates to service priorities. Within their current geographic focus, the agency has found that a number of needs were not being met. Specifically, programs for newcomers have been developed.

3) Thirdly, the agency aims to be responsive to community needs. Service priorities ebb and flow with community needs and available resources.

Initiatives

Action on Housing Issues

Housing is a key issue because of its general condition and the difficulty that tenants have had in getting landlords to make necessary repairs. The agency has worked with a group of tenants from one of the large buildings at Keele and Lawrence. The tenants formed an association and they were able to make changes and get the landlord to deal with some of the most immediate issues. In addition, the agency has staged several workshops on housing access and tenant rights.

Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities

The agency has had good demand for their services to assist persons with disabilities advocate for the services they need. While they have been able to work with some persons to access needed services, threats to service access whether in terms of employment, transportation, or housing continue to be an issue for this population.

Bridging to Employment Services

It is apparent that the employment issue is a key one, and one that the agency struggles to deal with as best it can given limited resources and a rather bleak economic climate in the community. Some bridging services are offered, in order to get people to a level where they feel comfortable being referred to another organization. In addition, the agency has a resource centre for employment, which provides community members access to computers, general information about employment issues, and access to newspapers.

Identification of Unmet Needs in the Community

The identification of community needs forms an important part of the agency's work. This information is used when planning future programs, engaging in networking, or soliciting funding. Examples of needs that have been identified but for which no programs have been initiated to date include enrichment services for children and activities for youth. In addition, the problems with unemployment in this community are clearly the subject of ongoing discussion and strategizing.

Multilingual Services

An important part of settlement services and other services has been the agency's ability to offer service in the language of the groups who live in the community. At present they are able to offer services in Tamil and Spanish. In the past, through the NDP-sponsored Multilingual Social Assistance Program, they were able to provide service to Tamil, Spanish, and Vietnamese communities specifically geared to interacting with the social assistance system. Since the change in government, the funding has been withdrawn and thus the agency no longer offers services in Vietnamese.

Networking with Community Agencies

Extensive networking with other community agencies is used to look at different ways of doing things or doing whatever it takes to provide needed services. Examples of networking include the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre, the Macaulay Centre and Metro Toronto Housing Authority in the Trethewey community. There is also

networking with the Board of Education around seniors programs, and numerous organizations such as the Centre for Independent Living, Barrier Free Health Program, and Anne Johnson Health Centre regarding issues of persons with disabilities.

Partnerships: Example of Providing Service to the Latin American Community

Recently the agency has started networking on a broader scale, in order to lobby for services which could be shared by a larger geographic region. They have been working with agencies outside their community, such as Jane Finch Community Family Centre, Northwoods Neighbourhood Services, Daystream, Delta, and other organizations to form a partnership to serve the Latin American community across western North York. This group has received some funding from Metro Toronto and hopes to acquire additional funding from other sources.

Partnerships with Business

The next step for the agency will be to look at partnerships with the business community and possibly religious institutions. While business is often seen as having different priorities and different ways of doing things, there is the feeling that such partnerships should be developed in the future.

Support for Settlement

Settlement issues were identified as a priority from the inception of the agency, since it's mandate is to work with persons who traditionally have the most difficulty in accessing services. Many services have been provided over time, including English as a Second Language classes, support groups, and parenting groups. The types of services offered have changed over the years, in response to community issues and needs.

Community Worker: Settlement and Service Agency

The community worker discussed the settlement and service agency's roles and initiatives working with the Tamil community.

Roles

The mandate of the agency is to serve newcomers and assist them with settlement issues. The Tamil community is one focus of the agency. An important part of the services provided to Tamils is the facilitation approach used by the community worker. She sees her role as building confidence in the women she works with so that they can become more independent. The philosophy of the agency is to help newcomers gain access to resources and information, so they are able to help themselves and each other.

Initiatives

Community Kitchens

The community kitchen meets a variety of needs in the Tamil community. First, it is seen as a social event and as such, is well-accepted by community members. Second, many food-related topics of interest are covered, such as how traditional and Canadian foods are prepared. Third, it has enabled members to buy their familiar foods in bulk. Fourth, it has enabled the women to use their strengths and abilities to co-organize the group and teach each other skills. And perhaps, most important to the work of the agency, it has allowed the women to come together as a group and become familiar with mutual aid as a mechanism for sharing their problems and solutions. The community worker indicated that it has served as a “bridge” to get women interested in coming out to support groups and educational sessions.

Employment

Partly due to the agency’s shortage in resources, it was felt that employment is an issue which they have not been able to address well. The Tamil women have indicated some interest in cottage type industries (sewing, for example) and the agency is not equipped to meet this need. Some women have gained work experience by volunteering with the agency.

English as a Second Language Program

The agency runs the Language Instruction Program for Newcomers to Canada (LINC). It is open to all cultural groups.

Health Information

Educational sessions have focused on health issues of interest to Tamil women. Child health and women's health have been discussed.

Heritage Language Program

Since the community was interested in preserving their language skills, particularly amongst the children, the agency helped the Tamil community set up a heritage language program. A community member with language teaching skills conducts the program.

Housing

The agency assisted tenants in the Keele and Lawrence area to form a tenant association. The tenants met with the landlord and advocated for changes.

Identifying Needs in the Community

An important part of the work done by the agency is identifying community needs. A few years ago, the Multilingual Access to Social Assistance Program was funded that enabled the hiring of a worker to escort and interpret for community members in their interactions with the welfare system. The agency used that opportunity to get to know the Tamil community and their needs. Now, there is a continual checking with members for what they feel are the needs of the community. Examples of programs which have responded to identified needs include the heritage language program, tenant's association, self-teaching groups, parent-child drop ins, and resource centres.

Outreach

Outreach is very important in the Tamil community. The community worker has found that her day to day interaction in the community fosters interest in programs. Often outreach is accomplished by word of mouth.

Support Groups

Support groups are convened for the women on topics of their interest. These groups have a mutual problem solving approach.

Settlement and Service Agency: Language Instruction Coordinator:

The language instruction for newcomers program coordinator discussed the settlement and service agency's roles and initiatives in its work with newcomers, in particular, the language instruction program.

Roles and Initiatives

Advocacy

The coordinator described advocacy as a key part of the agency's work. This includes advocating for individuals and groups, and trying to change policies or programs. Also, implementing programs that the government may not necessarily be funding. This is important as there may be a strong need for services within the community, and helping people advocate for themselves may be a means of achieving these.

Collaboration with Other Agencies

Working in partnership with other community agencies was seen as key when addressing many community issues and problems. The coordinator stated that the settlement and service agency often collaborates with other groups. They collaborate with other organizations in the community, as well as some outside the immediate area who have similar mandates and work with similar populations.

Increased Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities

The coordinator noted that the agency is improving access to services for persons with disabilities. This should also increase participation of persons with disabilities in the LINC program.

LINC Program (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada)

The LINC program addresses the need of many newcomers to learn English. It also provides knowledge and skills to help the transition to a new country. The coordinator felt that LINC is a very successful program. Although not much tracking of graduates is undertaken, she was aware of several LINC participants who had jobs. She emphasized the need for LINC participants to practice their English as much as possible. The coordinator was grateful that funding cuts had not yet affected the LINC program.

Outreach

The agency does outreach at schools and community centres to inform newcomers of the LINC program. Government representatives also provide general information and brochures to newcomers arriving at various points of entry, such as airports and bus terminals. This includes information about the LINC program.

Settlement and Service Agency: Coordinator, Person-to-Person Support and Advocacy

The coordinator of person-to-person support and advocacy discussed the settlement and service agency's roles and initiatives in its work with people with physical disabilities.

Roles

The coordinator's job is to provide person-to-person support and advocacy for persons with physical disabilities in North York. The agency uses a broad definition of disability and a consumer-driven, individualized partnership approach.

Most of the people the coordinator works with are adults. Although the mandate of the organization is to work with all age groups, other services are available in the area for children. Some clients live independently, others live independently but with attendant care, some with families, some are in institutions and residential settings. The types of homes they live in is often related to care requirements. The coordinator's involvement with the person varies depending on the nature of the issue to be dealt with.

Initiatives

Barrier-free Kitchen

The agency is building a barrier-free kitchen and will be able to offer programs around food preparation to people with disabilities. It was felt that this can help people to live more independently. It would offer participants the opportunity to prepare food and take it home, an alternative to buying prepared food or to services such as Meals on Wheels. Social contact would also be an important component of this service.

Employment

The agency has taken steps to examine and develop employment-related services. While they applied for funding to improve their employment services (such as having support workers, a career bank, and job finding club), they were unsuccessful in obtaining it. They do offer a resource room. The current focus is to link people up with other employment resources. While there are many resources in the community, it is often important to provide a "bridging" function to them. The coordinator is also investigating funding opportunities in partnership with another organization for bridging and other issues related to employment of persons with disabilities.

Finances and Service Access

People are assisted on an individual basis to interact with social services and processes such as applications and appeals for welfare, FBA, or Wheel Trans.

Housing

The agency is sponsoring workshops on housing issues with a community advocate and a housing advocate. The purpose of the workshops is to have people come together to identify their own issues and to organize what they want to do, which might be around their individual living situation or might be more broad based -- for example, looking at housing problems in the province. For persons with disabilities, issues of housing and access at the individual level are often intertwined. The coordinator helps consumers sort out their individual housing concerns through activities such as applying for alternative housing.

Physical Accessibility

Physical accessibility issues are dealt with on an individual basis. These often relate to accessibility of homes. Possible solutions might be renovations, or assisting a person to apply for and move to an accessible apartment. Funding for renovations through programs such as RRAP (Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program) has decreased recently, which means there are fewer resources available to assist with renovation costs.

Somali Women's Agency

Roles

The mandate of the organization is to help Somali women and children to settle. The settlement process involves working with the schools and neighbourhood resources. Extensive use is made of links to neighbourhood resources, and to other community resources for Somalis.

There are five staff and a large volunteer core. Funding is mainly from the private sector, although the organization has been funded by the government for particular projects. The Ministry of Housing funded them for several projects related to housing; Trillium Foundation currently funds a Somali Families and Student Support Project in

Scarborough, which has the highest concentration of Somalis in the Metro area.

Initiatives

Education

The organization has made numerous efforts to address education issues, both in terms of facilitating communication and in developing appropriate resources for Somali children. At present, much of the effort is focused in Scarborough. The Somali Families and Student Support project helps parents understand the school system through workshops, information sessions, and one to one counselling. Service is also provided for children, including counselling and tutoring. Training is also provided to teachers about the situation of students. Sometimes the organization's workers sit in on student assessments and provide advice.

In Lawrence Heights, the organization responds to requests of individuals or schools for mediation. They try to bridge the gap between parents and schools, schools and students, and parents and students. Volunteers are also available to help individuals work through problems.

Housing

The organization works in the area of housing taking both an individualized and a community approach. It has helped individuals obtain repairs from Metro Housing. In addition, they have met with the head of Metro Housing and presented a summary of the issues. The result of this meeting is that they were "promised a lot of things" and given a list of appropriate contact persons within the Housing office, which has assisted them to solve problems more effectively.

Linkages

Linkages with other agencies for advocacy and service provision are seen as important to the work of the organization, in order to use resources efficiently and facilitate a coordinated approach to issues. Examples of linkages include other Somali organizations such as Midaynta, North York Somali Support Group, and Somaliland

Canadian Society. Often groups will work collectively on issues. The organization also works in collaboration with schools and the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre.

Elementary School: Vice Principal

Roles

The vice-principal described the role of the school as much more than academic. It was felt that all needs must be taken care of if children are to benefit from their education. In addition, she spoke about the role of the school in the community. Working in collaboration with local agencies was seen a way to address the needs of children more effectively. She also spoke about providing the children with skills in order to become better citizens in society.

The school's academic expectations are quite high. It values academic results and has had the largest improvements across the school board. The children were seen to have amazing potential, both on an individual level and collectively to have a positive impact on their community.

Responses to Issues

Crime and Safety Issues

The school responds to the issue of violence and crime by ensuring that the school environment is a place where the children feel safe. They work at making the school environment a safe haven for the children, a place where they will feel secure and develop a sense of pride. Verbal and physical abuse are not tolerated within the school. The children are also being given strategies on how to avoid violence.

Funding Issues

The school responds to cutbacks by obtaining funding from local businesses. The school has been rather successful at obtaining funds for initiatives such as the snack program.

Issues of Neglect

The school responds to possible neglect by offering support programs that address more than just the academic needs of the children; physical and emotional needs are also a priority. The school meets these needs by working with parents and the community and offering services such as a snack program.

Tension Among Students

It is a priority of the school to reduce tension between students of varying socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, and to build a sense of community and belonging.

Initiatives

Enhancing the Physical Environment

As the school is being renovated, the vice-principal spoke about the importance of the physical environment. Plans include having kitchen facilities open to the public and an arboretum. Improving the physical environment was seen as a means to enhance learning and facilitate community building.

National Quality Institute Certificate of Merit

In 1997, the school underwent an evaluation process with the National Quality Institute. The school was the winning submission in the category of Education and received a Certificate of Merit.

School Advisory Council

Last year, the school began an Advisory Council. This initiative will provide the children with an opportunity to develop leadership skills. In addition, the children are involved in addressing community issues. For example, last year the children were

involved in reaching out to newcomers in the community.

Middle School: Teacher

Roles and Initiatives

Addressing Issues of Concern

Through their language program, teachers address adolescent concerns such as the pangs of growing up, responsibilities, gender issues, drug abuse and violence. Staff strive to help their students make healthy life choices.

Exposing Students to Wider Experiences

The teacher felt that it is important to expose the students to a range of experiences, both within and outside the Lawrence Heights community.

Help for Low Income Families

The teacher reported how the school assists students with issues related to poverty and low income. For example, a daily lunch, shoes and clothing, may be difficult for the families of a few students to provide. These students may be subsidized by the school for a variety of things. As well, the company that provides the school's lunch program recently started a free breakfast program. Very few students attended, although the teacher felt there are many students who would benefit from it.

Improving Academic Skills of the Students

It was reported that many of the students are below level in reading, writing and math compared to other students within the system. This can be due to second language learning or other difficulties. The teacher expressed that it is important for teachers to work hard to bring the students' academics to a comparable level with students at other schools in the system. The school has a very strong literacy program to help with this. The teacher stressed the importance of academic success for these children.

Making the School a Positive Place

The teacher saw the school as working to be a positive place, to counteract some of the negatives in the community and in society, including violence. She specifically identified the teachers as being good role models. As well, the school's activities, both academic and sports-related, are seen as giving students something they can work towards, instead of becoming involved in the more negative aspects of the community. For children who disclose violence or abuse at home, the staff strive to be seen by the children as people that support them and advocate for them.

Staff Sensitivity and Skills

The school hires staff who will work well with the challenges the students from this neighbourhood bring. The staff try to be conscious of the different types of students and their needs, be sensitive to difficulties that might be occurring, and set the academic and guidance programs accordingly. There is a tone set in the school that the teachers can work appropriately with all the concerns. The school has a strong staff advisor guidance program and an intervention program, where students who are having difficulty can access guidance counselling.

Staff Support and Availability

The staff were seen as being very dedicated and supportive. For example, they are there for some students who arrive at the school soon after seven in the morning for sports activities. Also, many teachers are available until five or later in the evening, especially through the winter months. There are also special lunch-time activities including house league, basketball, computers and library.

Substance Abuse Counselling

The school has helped some children involved with inhalants receive counselling at the Hospital for Sick Children.

Work with Other Agencies and Organizations

The school has collaborated with many other agencies and organizations. They have worked with Harambees in the past, but cutbacks have decreased that this year. The Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre has provided presentations to the students on health and communicating with parents. The Caribbean Youth Association has been working with young women this year. The Trails organization works with potential leaders: children who are seen as having some significant abilities and who could benefit from some time away. They provide weekends away with their staff, which include goal setting activities, visiting universities, and exposing children to different things. Many of the staff have worked with the Children's Aid Society when abuse is occurring in the home.

Work with Parents

The school works closely with parents. An even stronger partnership with parents has been formed now that a school advisory committee has been established. They listen carefully to what the committee believes needs to be done in the school. As well, the school sometimes works individually with parents.

Secondary School: Teacher

Roles

The teacher described the role of the school as much more than academic. He explained that the school tries to address the needs of each student in a holistic manner. He summarized the roles of the school, both with individual students, and with the community as a whole. It involves dealing with the human needs, the spiritual needs, the self-esteem needs, and the self-awareness needs of individuals. It also tries to build links with the school, the community, the home, and the parish.

Responses to Issues

Improving Self-Esteem

As one way of promoting self-esteem, the school offers a course where senior level students tutor younger students, peers, or special needs students who have physical or intellectual/developmental disabilities.

More generally, the school tries to promote students' self-worth by offering students opportunities to exploit their own talents and interests. The teacher described the school's music program as a fifth period after school, which appeals to many students. He also described the school's computer program as quite extensive; it is career-oriented and allows for a creative outlet.

Providing Opportunities to Celebrate Ethnicity

In the classroom, the teacher helps students build links with their own ethnic communities, as a tangible way of expressing pride in their ethnic backgrounds. He shared the example of students becoming involved with community groups for their course *Society: Challenge and Change*. During the term, students volunteered with a community organization of their choice. At the end of the course, they wrote a full report on the organization, including their personal reflections of the volunteer experience.

Providing Positive Role Models and Alternatives to Gangs

As a coach for a school team, the teacher has tried to introduce students on the team to other role models and experiences outside of the immediate Lawrence Heights area. Some of the staff at the school were also viewed as positive role models.

Initiatives

Classes for Deaf Education

Within the school, there are specific classes for students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, as well as integrated classrooms with sign interpreters. The school is also equipped with flashing red lights as fire alarms, and close-captioned decoders.

Community Service Projects

The school plans to expand its course with community service projects across all grades within the Religious Education Department. The projects allow students to learn about community agencies and the services that are offered, and provide a way for students to involve themselves in community groups.

Think Fast

In the classroom, the teacher has tried to broaden students' perspectives. He shared the example of the Think Fast project in which students raised money for development projects.

Walk Against Male Violence

Another community-based initiative with which the school has become involved is the Walk Against Male Violence, a march that occurs in downtown Toronto. In addition to raising money for local women's shelters, participation in the event gives the students an opportunity to educate themselves about issues of violence and to articulate their concerns.

Recreation Worker: Community Recreation Centre

Roles

Promoting the wellness of the community was seen as the community recreation centre's main purpose. Over time, the centre has moved from providing custodial or

“babysitting” programs and services to a more instructional approach. Embedded within their approach has been an emphasis on upgrading the instructional skills of staff, as well as fostering skill development and leadership among young community members.

Initiatives

Collaborations / Multipurpose Facility

The community recreation centre also houses a Youth Employment Centre and the Children’s Aid Society. This fits in with the philosophy of the centre that it should be for many purposes, not just one. The fact that three services are under one roof can lead to networking opportunities which benefit the participants. For example, young persons seeking work can be referred to the employment centre, and the outcome of the referral followed.

Developing Expertise in Community Residents

The centre has worked hard to develop instructional expertise within the community. For the first group of persons hired shortly after the mandate of the organization shifted from custodial to instructional programs, this meant providing the opportunity and expectation that people would upgrade their skills on the job. This was facilitated by pairing community staff with other “expert” staff, and with funding community staff to obtain certification.

The centre also offers a leadership in training program so that young participants from the community can acquire basic skills. Interested people can then work as junior coaches and work on obtaining their certification.

Ensuring Access / Reducing Cost Barriers

The centre works to reduce cost barriers as much as possible. For example, fitness programs and a weight room are available which are not cost-prohibitive. It is also an important consideration for staff that they do not offer programs to families that they will have to refuse for reasons of cost. To this end, the centre offers to waive fees for anyone who cannot afford them. They also exert care not to offer prohibitively expensive

programs in the first place, which might create barriers to use in the community.

Hiring from Within the Community

An important mechanism which the centre has used to ensure its ownership by the community is hiring people from within the community to work there. This has been done for both instructional staff and for other staff, such as those involved in security.

Programs Help Reduce Isolation

An important component of the recreation centre's offerings has been to reduce the potential for isolation of all age groups. To do this, they offer programs for mothers and children, seniors, as well as other age groups.

Responsiveness to Community

The community recreation centre prides itself on belonging to the community. A recurrent theme of the interview was the view that the centre is owned by the community. Part of this is achieved by hiring staff from that community. Some of it is achieved by the attitude of administrators that they are tools for the community. The recreation worker felt that it is important to take quick action when concerns are expressed by the community, so that a sense of trust develops and community members are more likely to come to them with issues. The centre also prides itself on addressing community needs as quickly as possible through its programs. Part of community responsiveness also involves a commitment to try programs not necessarily initiated by the community, and then ask for feedback and take responsibility for acting on that feedback.

In summary, it appears that a loop of responding to community need and community evaluation of the appropriateness of service, in a climate of mutual trust and with administration who sees their primary roles as facilitative and responsive, are at work to address the needs of the community. It should also be noted that community responsiveness goes beyond program planning to also include issues such as safety and security, which are described in more detail below.

Safety Issues: Responsiveness to the Community

While safety is a community issue, the centre's response to it illustrates their commitment to responding to the community and working with community members, while maintaining high standards. The particular concern was around issues such as drug use and other undesirable behaviours in or near the centre. Their approach was multifaceted: to hire a trained security person from the community who knew the community members well; to make signs listing appropriate behaviour; to train staff so that all would give the same message of what was and was not allowed; and to develop a response system that utilized the trained person and did not jeopardize the safety of staff.

This approach -- of using a community member with expertise, plus developing a strong idea of the direction desired -- is also successful in other areas such as advocacy and program development. It was felt that this approach has done much to turn around the image that the Centre had at one time of being a place that was poorly used and drug-infected.

9

Results from the Elected Political Representatives

In this chapter we report on the interviews that were conducted with City Councillor Frank Di Giorgio, Metropolitan Toronto Councillor Howard Moscoe, Member of the Provincial Parliament Joseph Cordiano, and City of North York Mayor Mel Lastman. We first present representatives' views on community strengths or positive factors and community problems or issues. In chapter 10, we present government and community responses to these issues. We conclude this chapter with a presentation of supports and barriers to action as seen by these individuals.

Strengths and Positive Factors

We first present the areas where there was agreement among the elected representatives. We then present the unique issues identified by each elected representative.

Low Density Housing/ Lay-Out of the Community

Three representatives spoke about the low-rise buildings and low density of the Lawrence Heights as a positive aspect. One representative pointed out that the low rise aspect was a result, not of any specific plan, but a necessity due to the nearby Downsview airport which was active at the time of construction. The low density provides lots of

open green space and parkland. The range of housing types was identified as a strength as was the grouping of seniors housing within specific areas.

Access to Amenities

Three of the representatives spoke about the good access to amenities that were available to residents of Lawrence Heights. These include access to shopping at Lawrence Square, public transportation, and local libraries. There are also nearby schools and churches. One aspect of having access to amenities is the Community Bus. When first established it was very important since there had been little commercial activity in the area. This bus continues to exist although there appears to be an ongoing struggle to maintain its operation. The health centre and recreation centre are also within the community.

Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre

The Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre was discussed by three representatives. It was seen as being an important and essential institution in the community. The Centre was seen as being especially important within a community where there were a large number of low income people and single mothers who may have more health problems than others. Additionally, a number of residents are unemployed due to health problems and the availability of the health centre is seen as important.

Additionally, the centre was seen as being proactive in helping people to understand the components of good health. The groups that are organized by the centre were also recognized by these elected representatives.

Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre

The recreation centre was spoken of by four representatives as being a community asset. The centre was seen as providing a venue for many community members and groups in addition to its provision of recreational activities. It was also seen as being especially important for teens within the community by providing a range of activities for them.

Community Stability and Community Spirit

All four representatives spoke of the existence of a community spirit within the neighbourhood. It was spoken of in terms of active community groups, a stable and aware community, and as a close-knit community. It was felt that people who have lived there a while know the community, its people, and its problems. While it can be difficult for people to be involved since many have to worry about getting by, community involvement was seen as an essential aspect of community well-being.

Community Agencies and Organizations

All four representatives spoke about community agencies that work to improve the quality of life of residents. These include the health and recreation centres, the North York Community House, and the Lawrence Heights Area Alliance. One representative highlighted the range of services that are available to community members; another highlighted how these agencies work together to avoid duplication.

City Maintenance of the Physical Area

Two representatives spoke about maintenance of the area by the City. This included repair of roadways and laneways as well as keeping the area clean, tree and bush cutting, and improved lighting.

City of North York Support

The Mayor pointed out that the City of North York provides support to the community through Grants-in-Aid, a Problem Addresses Task Force, and a Race Relations Committee. A new gym floor was recently provided to the recreation centre by the City.

He also listed a number of programs that support children. These include before and after school programs, a breakfast club, a Helmet Two Wheel Drive program, and a Beavers program for boys and girls through the Onyx Lions and Eureka Lodge. Community gardens have also been successful, as have a Christmas light display contest and a flower garden contest.

Problems and Issues

All four representatives spoke of issues related to the geographical and social isolation of Lawrence Heights from the surrounding communities. Each felt that a redevelopment of the site would be an important way of addressing these issues.

Geographically Isolated Community

All four of the representatives spoke about the geographical isolation of the Lawrence Heights community. It is bounded on the South by Lawrence Avenue and on the West by the Allen Expressway. Originally there was a wall surrounding it and there are periodic attempts by the neighbouring communities to close the few walkways off.

Socially Isolated Community

All four representatives spoke of the social isolation of the Lawrence Heights community from the areas around it. Much of this has to do with the housing in Lawrence Heights being subsidized and those around it not so. Sometimes this social isolation leads to friction with the surrounding communities. Rightly or wrongly, members of the surrounding community sometimes blame Lawrence Heights residents for the incidence of crime in their neighbourhoods. There is also conflict between the communities in terms of the residents of the surrounding community being older and non-minority and the residents of Lawrence Heights being more likely to be younger and members of minority groups.

Unemployment and Low Income

All four representatives spoke of the issues faced by people on low incomes. Many residents of Lawrence Heights might be considered the working poor. Others are seniors who are on fixed incomes or might have disabilities. Some of the unemployment and underemployment is due to people having their jobs eliminated as a result of restructuring of the economy.

The large number of people who are on low incomes is associated with problems of poor health and for some a sense of hopelessness and alienation. Many people may have to take two or three jobs which creates tensions in families. Seniors who are on fixed

incomes are also seen as being at risk as funding for seniors services is not available. Youth unemployment is a problem across the wider community, not just in Lawrence Heights.

Crime and Safety

Crime and safety is seen as an ongoing concern within the community. One representative raised the issue of gang violence that resurfaces from time to time. Another representative spoke of tension in surrounding communities where residents see vandalism as emanating from Lawrence Heights. A third representative said that while most people feel safe in Lawrence Heights, there is ongoing concern about break-ins and vandalism. The fourth representative spoke of ongoing issues of after hours clubs and crime.

Provincial Social Policies

In one way or another all the representatives spoke about the effects of policies of the provincial government. One representative highlighted the continuing high levels of unemployment and the need for governments to address this issue. Another representative highlighted the deteriorating housing stock. Plans that had been formulated to renovate portions of Lawrence Heights were halted by the present provincial government.

Another representative highlighted issues related to deteriorating health care and the lack of community health care. This same representative highlighted the effects of cutbacks to social services upon residents. The lack of child care was seen as a continuing concern. The fourth representative expressed uncertainty about future funding arrangements.

Other Issues

One representative felt that improved cohesion would benefit the community. Another mentioned the need for more housing for seniors and improvements to the community recreation centre.

Supports to Action

There was some agreement among the four representatives about the supports in Lawrence Heights for effective action.

Communication Links with the Community

Representatives all mentioned the need to be available for members of the community. One representative spoke about this in terms of being in communication with the community recreation and community health centre. Another spoke about the importance of being in touch with a range of groups and individuals. He felt that it was important to attend all of the functions he could in Lawrence Heights.

A third representative discussed the importance of being in contact with individuals in the community. The fourth saw himself as being accessible to the community as well as being an advocate at other levels of government.

Community Agencies and Groups

In addition to the communication links with agencies, one representative spoke of the work being done by seniors and other activists at the community recreation centre, the community health centre, and at the Mormon Church on Ranee Avenue. He felt that he is supported by the community as he tries to develop and implement a vision of the Lawrence Heights community and where it could go.

Cooperation of Levels of Government

One representative mentioned that cooperation at all levels of government supports effective action.

Barriers to Effective Action

All representatives agreed financial constraints were a barrier to effective action. They also raised some other issues as well.

Financial Constraints/Provincial Policies

The City Councillor spoke about how financial cutbacks serve as a major barrier to effective action. Not only is money not available to implement needed programs, but it also creates a difficult environment for agencies to exercise their mandates. They begin to concentrate on maintaining their current activities and cannot consider other initiatives. The Metro Councillor discussed how there is no institutional support from the federal or provincial levels of government to carry out important action. The Ontario Housing Corporation, for example, has no capital budget. He felt that many problems must be dealt with by government and it is not reasonable to expect that charity groups can look after these issues.

The Member of the Provincial Parliament felt that provincial government policies were a strong barrier to effective action. There are increasing levels of unemployment and the cutbacks to education, health care, and social services are seen as having a negative effect on quality of life. It was felt that the government is not only not doing something to improve things but is actually making things worse through their actions.

The Mayor mentioned that budget cutbacks, grant reductions and the costs of provincial downloading are barriers to effective action.

Other Issues Mentioned

The Metro Councillor spoke of the difficulties faced by people on low incomes who are so busy putting food on the table that it is difficult for them to get involved in community issues. The Mayor said that programs that come from the top down rather than the ground-up were also a barrier to effective action.

10

Elected Political Representatives Responses to Community Challenges

In Chapter 9 we presented the views of the elected political representatives concerning the strengths and challenges being faced by the Lawrence Heights community. In this chapter we present details concerning government and community responses to these challenges. For each representative we first identify the issue for which the responses are being made.

City of North York Councillor

Responses to Geographical Isolation

Thus far, none of the walkways between Lawrence Heights and the neighbouring communities have been closed. Mr. Di Giorgio worked closely with a youth group to address the problem of the closing of the walkways. The group was able to share concerns with the neighbouring community. It was agreed to leave them open and monitor the situation.

Responses to Social Isolation

Councillor Di Giorgio felt these problems are best addressed over the long term, through a redevelopment of the total site. He felt that there should be change to both the physical composition of the buildings and perhaps even the occupancy of some of the

areas to promote a better blend between the surrounding community and the occupants of the area. He felt that an orderly redevelopment of the site will be a major responsibility the municipality will have in the future.

Responses to Conflict Between Lawrence Heights and Surrounding Neighbourhoods

This is seen as an ongoing issue. The best way to deal with it is to have people come together and get to know each other. Central to this is having key community leaders come to the table. Mr. Di Giorgio was a member of the Race Relations Committee.

Responses to Lack of Community Cohesiveness

Agencies collaborating with key community leaders is seen as one possible way to begin the process of strengthening community cohesiveness. Ideally, one or two people could devote their time to bringing some of the leaders in the community together to meet and discuss common objectives.

Responses to Unemployment

To address the problem of unemployment, Councillor Di Giorgio sees roles for the individual, community, and government. Again, Councillor Di Giorgio expressed the importance of strengthening community cohesiveness by having the active involvement of key community leaders.

Councillor Di Giorgio was optimistic about future employment opportunities for Lawrence Heights residents. For example, he saw potential employment opportunities for community residents in the redevelopment of the neighbourhood. In terms of long-term solutions to unemployment he felt that government has to come to the understanding that they have to do something about the situation. They have to be able to provide assistance, and in some cases jobs as the employer of last resort.

Councillor Di Giorgio felt that youth could also create opportunities in the community, but that they need support. This support could come from donations from corporations or from agencies that would provide seed money to get them off the ground.

Responses to Gang Violence and Crime

Again, a cooperative community effort was seen as the approach to take to combat the problem of violence.

Metropolitan Toronto Councillor

Responses to Housing and Living Conditions Issues

To improve the housing and living conditions, as well as the design of Lawrence Heights, Mr. Moscoe was very involved in the plans to rebuild the North Acres seniors buildings. Since Lawrence Heights is low density, there was an opportunity to use North Acres as a catalyst for redesigning and rebuilding the community in the way that John Sewell had done some work in the Regent Park area. It was felt that it had enormous potential for creating a more user-friendly community. Through redesign, it would have brought people in closer touch with each other and created safer streets.

It is felt that the province downloading of costs to the municipality, when combined with the lack of adequate resources, will make it difficult to repair and bring the place up to standards. The plans for redevelopment of the CMHC (Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation) lands fell through because the federal government has been abandoning the housing field as well.

Response to Conflict With Neighbouring Communities

Mr. Moscoe has worked to get dialogue going between groups. And this is felt to have helped.

Member of Provincial Parliament

Responses to Youth Unemployment

The problem of youth unemployment requires efforts on a number of levels. Solutions are seen as requiring action on broad policies that governments undertake. He felt that governments were ignoring youths' plight.

Mr. Cordiano described some proactive steps that could be undertaken by government such as an initiative like a youth opportunities act, which would define for young people what government's role is in their lives. Mr. Cordiano also suggested that government consider ways in which parents could help students finance post-secondary education. He suggested a plan that allows parents to save on behalf of their kids education and receive tax credits for it. He focussed on the importance of post-secondary education being accessible and suggested that, the government of Ontario consider making first year tuition available to any student that has a B or better average and qualifies to go on to post-secondary education .

Access to education was seen as fundamental to improved employment opportunities for youth. Mr. Cordiano expressed concern about how the Conservative government's policies will affect young people's opportunities for education.

As MPP, Mr. Cordiano contributes to increasing opportunities for youth. He has tried to encourage the Yorkdale shopping mall to hire people from the local community. Lawrence Square is another mall that opened in the last number of years that has helped to give some employment to young people.

Mr. Cordiano also advocates looking at our tax laws to provide incentive to companies to hire young people. He also supports an apprenticeship program for young people where they would be given the chance to work with large corporations.

Responses to Low Income and Unemployment

Mr. Cordiano viewed government collaboration with the private sector as key to reducing underemployment. The political will is necessary to bring the private sector in on creating opportunities. Government is seen as acting in a facilitating capacity. He felt that a premier and government committed to working with the private sector was needed.

An example of this kind of collaboration which Mr. Cordiano advocates is the Individual Training Account, where there would be a joint employer-employee contribution to a training fund. The employee would receive a tax credit for that as well. This ongoing training would enable workers to respond to changes in the workplace with a built-in incentive for employers to keep employees.

Responses to Concerns About Health Care

As with the problem of unemployment, Mr. Cordiano felt that there are also no easy answers when it comes to health care. However, he felt that you could not just throw money at the problem but must start planning for it in a better fashion than we have. For example, it is important to have home-based care, then additional resources must be allocated.

Responses to Increasing Polarization between Lawrence Heights and Neighbouring Communities

Mr. Cordiano felt that redevelopment of the Lawrence Heights site would have a positive impact on the community. Since there is plenty of land it could be done in a logical, systematic fashion where no one need be put out of house and home. He felt that many new kinds of things could be accomplished.

Responses to Safety Concerns

Mr. Cordiano feels that as an MPP he has worked with people to address issues when there has been a concern.

City of North York Mayor

As noted in the earlier chapter, the City provides support to the recreation centre and the local libraries. The Mayor tries to be accessible to his constituents and to act as an advocate at different levels of government.

11

Results from the School Trustees

In this chapter we report on the interviews that were conducted with Separate School Trustee Pina Losiggio and Public School Trustee Elsa Chandler. We first present their views on community strengths or positive factors. We then present the issues and problems faced by the community. This includes some specific school-related issues that are of concern. We conclude with a presentation of supports and barriers to action as seen by these individuals.

Strengths and Positive Factors

Separate School Trustee Losiggio

Trustee Losiggio focused primarily on educational issues in her discussion of strengths. She mentioned links with seniors, school staff, and students as strengths and positive factors.

Links with Seniors

Ms. Losiggio described the partnership one school has with a seniors residence as a positive factor. The students work with the seniors, visit them, talk to them, and support them. It was felt that these sorts of community partnerships were the “wave of the future.”

Staff

Ms. Losiggio spoke highly of the staff in the Separate Schools. She noted that the teachers are talented and some have won Prime Minister's awards.

Students

Similarly, she mentioned that the students are very talented as well and several of them have also won awards at the national level. Students are also involved in student government and play an active role in dealing with student behaviour problems which impact on the schools and the larger community.

Public School Trustee Chandler

Community Health Centre

The Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre was identified as a positive factor in the community. It is important because it provides not only health services, but programs which help people become better parents, and programs to promote health.

Community Recreation Centre

Ms. Chandler noted that the Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre caters to community members of all ages. It provides many programs that are very good for young people.

Community-Based Organizations and Committees

Organizations and committees which are run by community members were seen as very important to quality of life. For example, this community has a seniors committee, as well as the Lawrence Heights Area Alliance.

Diversity

The differing racial backgrounds, religions, and ages of the community members make the Lawrence Heights area an interesting community and a nice one to live in.

Library

The Barbara Frum Library plays a very important part in the Lawrence Heights community. Not only does it provide services, but it also provides representation to many community committees.

Resource Group

The Resource Group consists of a number of community agencies and organizations who meet regularly. This is positive for information sharing and planning.

Schools

Ms. Chandler felt that the school programs in Lawrence Heights are excellent. In particular, the program at Flemington Elementary, which is designated a special needs school, is very good and includes Montessori and English as a Second Language programs. Bathurst Heights Secondary School has a large component of adult learners. She felt that this sends a good message to younger students who are attending school there, that it is worthwhile to stay in school because otherwise upgrading is needed later.

Problems and Issues

Separate School Trustee Lossigio

Ms. Lossigio outlined a number of issues related to her mandate as trustee. Many of these concern cutbacks to school services and funding arrangements. There are also issues related to the school and the neighbourhood.

Cutbacks in Continuing Education Programs

The availability of continuing education for adults is seen as very important to the community. However, there have been many Ministry funding cuts in this area.

Cutbacks in Services

A serious problem which impacts on schools is the service cutbacks which are continually increasing. These cutbacks are not just in the area of educational assistants, but also in other areas impacting on the school population such as social workers, community workers, psychiatrists, and services for the hearing impaired. Demands for these services appear to be rising at the same time that funding is being cut.

Impact of Cutbacks and Hold-Backs on Building Conditions

Recently the government has “held back” portions of the annual budget. The funds held back are often earmarked for maintenance of the schools. Therefore, some students “live” in substandard facilities for a very large portion of their day, facing conditions such as poor ventilation. This is a big concern for parents.

Lice and Primary School Children

Lice are a problem in young children, up to Grades 2 and 3, because they play in close proximity to each other.

Lower Per Capita Funding of Separate School Students

The trustee noted the current discrepancy in funding between the public and separate school boards. For example, per capita spending on a Grade 9 student in the public system is approximately \$2500 more than for a similar student in the Separate system. And yet the expectations of what each student must receive in terms of education are exactly the same. The trustee felt that Bill 160 may make the funding more equitable.

Media Image

It was felt that there is a tendency for the media to focus on problems within the school system, rather than positive occurrences such as students or teachers winning awards.

Overcrowding in Separate High Schools

It was mentioned that the majority of Separate high schools are seriously overcrowded. Many of the children spend their school days in portables, which have notoriously poor heating and ventilation. Some do not have appropriate washroom facilities, and students must cross to the main buildings to use facilities there, which is inconvenient in inclement weather. The Trustee receives numerous complaints from parents about this issue.

Smoking Policy

School policies disallow smoking on or near school property. However, enforcement of this rule means that children must leave the school property to smoke. Students who do not leave the facility face suspension, because there is zero tolerance of smoking in the schools.

Student Littering in the Community

There was a problem at one particular school with students littering the neighbourhood with food and wrappers from fast food restaurants. There were several complaints from community residents.

Traffic Congestion and Speeding

Problems around speeding and traffic congested were mentioned. This is particularly an issue near the high schools. Residents complain of traffic, speeding, parked cars, and loud music.

Violence in Schools

Violence is an issue in the schools, as in society as a whole. Media reports seem to indicate that incidents of violence are greater in Scarborough than in North York. Compared to Scarborough, it was felt that the schools in this trustee's wards were still "pretty safe." There are occasional incidences of violence, usually only involving one or two students. Only one serious incident has occurred recently: Students who were not from the high school entered it one day, using baseball bats as weapons. A fight ensued.

Apparently the fight was a carry-over from an earlier incident which occurred off the school property. One of the major issues was the students from within the school knew that the outsiders were planning violence, but did not alert school authorities.

Public School Trustee Chandler

She discussed a wide range of problems and issues faced by the community and herself in her role as trustee.

Challenges of Working with Committees

Ms. Chandler noted that at times the Resource Group and other meetings generate a feeling of purposelessness. For action oriented people like herself, such meetings can cause frustration because they are not results-oriented. On a larger scale, it is difficult to maintain a sense that the work of such groups is moving forward.

Children's Safety

There is a concern not only in this community but generally in our society that children can no longer play safely outside without supervision.

Drugs

Drug use is an issue in Lawrence Heights.

Family Stability of Lawrence Heights Area Students

Despite excellent programs at the Flemington Elementary School, it was noted that students from this school often do not arrive at Lawrence Heights Middle School as well prepared as their counterparts from Joyce Public School, the other feeder school. It was felt that a contributing factor may be that the students at Joyce School experience more family stability than the other students, and that this somehow enhances their educational achievements.

Hopelessness and Lack of Opportunities for Mobility

Ms. Chandler felt that poverty and lack of opportunity can affect many persons in Lawrence Heights. Ms. Chandler did note that many of the new immigrants manage to leave the community eventually, through personal striving, and a willingness to live very frugally.

Over-Employment

For people who can find work, low wages or unstable working conditions mean that often people must carry two jobs. Some people work day and night, and do not have time to spend with their families.

Unemployment

Unemployment was identified as a major problem. This is particularly serious in Lawrence Heights. Also in Lawrence Heights, youth unemployment is a real concern. Jobs and opportunities for young persons are lacking.

Violence in the Media

One potentially harmful influence on children is the content of television and other media to which they have ready access. Concern was expressed about the amount of violence portrayed on television, and the number of hours children spend watching it. Violent and racist material is also accessible on the Internet.

Supports to Effective Action

Separate School Trustee Losiggio

She outlined three main sources of support for effective action.

Community Organizations

The schools maintain a relationship with the local Health Unit, which provides public health nurses to do educational sessions with students. Other teachers make use of community field trips and visitors as part of their curriculum.

Corporate Sector

Working with the corporate sector is a new venture for the separate school system. They have provided computers and equipment for students. One organization has provided some mannequins for CPR training, on the condition that the Board purchase some additional mannequins. Being involved with the corporate sector was seen as logical for schools and beneficial for students.

Police

It was mentioned that the police have been one of the greatest sources of assistance in the high schools. For example in the incidence of school violence recounted above, police provided education, a confidential reporting mechanism to students, and a presence in the school.

Public School Trustee Chandler

In her discussion of her activities, many supports for effective action were mentioned.

Board Services

The North York School Board offers many services for children. These include “regular” education for school aged children but also programs for gifted students, French immersion, learning disabilities, autism, and developmental challenges. Within elementary

schools in the area, many children are immigrants, and English as a Second Language programs are offered.

Community Agencies

There are many community agencies that have links with the board of education. These include the Hugh MacMillan Centre, Children's Aid and others.

Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre and Community Recreation Centre

As mentioned earlier, these centres are important components of the community and provide much support to residents.

Barriers to Effective Action

Separate School Trustee Losiggio

Barriers to Parent Participation on Councils

Language is one barrier to parent participation on councils. Particularly in high schools, in which the students and therefore the parents tend to be older, the trustee has noticed that there is some reluctance for parents to become involved in councils (parent committees) because of a lack of English skills. She feels that parents who are not confident in their English skills may be intimidated by sitting on a committee with educators. Thus representation of the interests of diverse groups can potentially be an issue. Parents also experience other barriers to participation, including being busy with the demands of work and home.

Communication with Ratepayers

To communicate with the larger community, the Board maintains a web page, has an information line, and also prepares numerous publications. As well, each individual school distributes a newsletter. However, it can still be a challenge to communicate effectively with ratepayers. Distribution of information may not be timely; or it may be distributed in written form and not read by parents.

Student Fears of Retaliation by Other Students

Student fear of retaliation by other students or gangs if they report activities creates a barrier for a school to be able to manage the threat of violence proactively.

Public School Trustee Chandler

Government Actions

While Ms. Chandler did not elaborate, she stated that at times it appears that governments are trying to undo much of what the schools are trying to accomplish.

Lack of New Input in Community Committees

Many of the people who have been most active in the Lawrence Heights community have been involved in this work, as organizers and members of boards and committees, for many years. However, there does not seem to be a new generation of such persons entering into this vital work. Younger people often work on such initiatives in their capacity as paid staff, but paid staff are often transient because jobs come and go depending on funding availability.

Low Expectations of Student Achievement

It was felt that one barrier to students' achievement in education is that generally there are low expectations placed upon them; that as a society, we have not been demanding of students. There is the feeling that as long as young people are provided the opportunities and environment to learn, that they will do so. Ms. Chandler believes that if we are more rigorous and communicate high expectations, we will get the best from young people. Also achievement is often fostered by competition, as long as competitive and non-competitive opportunities to participate in education are balanced. However, pushing children to achieve does not mean eliminating opportunities to play, since playing also affords learning opportunities.

Media Portrayal of Education

Ms. Chandler commented that the portrayal of the educational system in the media is critical and does not reflect the work being done or the barriers faced by those working within the system. This creates a negative image in the community for public education.

12

Public School Trustees' Responses to Community and Educational Challenges

In Chapter 11 we presented the views of the separate and public school trustees concerning the strengths and challenges being faced by the Lawrence Heights community. In this chapter we present details concerning school and community responses to these challenges. For each representative we first identify the issue they discussed for which the responses are being made.

Separate School Trustee Losiggio

Responses to Cutbacks in Continuing Education Programs

The Board has been able to maintain most programs, but are concerned that they will not continue to be able to do so. They are exploring other creative strategies to continue funding these programs, such as corporate sponsorship.

Responses to Cutbacks in Services

The Separate School Board tries to find money within their yearly budget to put money into crucial areas. However, finding money for these services means that corners must be cut elsewhere.

Responses to Lice and Primary School Children

A newsletter is sent to parents every year warning parents to be vigilant regarding lice, and outlining prevention strategies. However, the problem resurfaces every year.

Responses to Lower Per Capita Funding of Separate School Students

The Board brings this discrepancy to the attention of officials at the provincial level as often as they can. One of the positive outcomes of the amalgamation of School Boards which has been verbally promised, is that funding per child will be equalized for private and public school children throughout the province.

Responses to Overcrowding in Separate High Schools

This is an ongoing dilemma as no funding is available to improve the school buildings.

Responses to Smoking Policy Issues

Some schools have set up smoking areas nearby so that students have a place to go and do not wander from the school. This also avoids the problem of having to suspend smokers.

Responses to Student Littering in the Community

Student leaders were educated about the problem, and developed a strategy to educate their fellow students. At the beginning, a committee of students went out and picked up litter until the students were educated to do this for themselves as a matter of course. Bins were set up for garbage and recyclable material.

Responses to Traffic Congestion and Speeding

One response has been to educate parents and students, via newsletters and the student council, for example. It was felt that there were few restrictions that a trustee could enforce. It was seen as more of the role of the local councillor to put in speed limits or speed bumps if necessary.

Responses to Violence in Schools

The Separate Board has a zero tolerance policy regarding violence, which includes six areas and is based on suspensions from 2 to 20 days or expulsion (which is the consequence of carrying a weapon). The definition of “violence” is strict and includes use of profanity or disruption of a teacher as well as more serious offenses such as threats and use of weapons.

In the case of the example given earlier, however, the strategy taken by the Board was a comprehensive, school-wide one. In this case, the police were involved at the outset to meet with involved students, and to remain in the school for about a week (in plain clothes) to ensure that the incident was not repeated. The students were made aware of the need to inform those in authority if they know that such an event is to occur. The police assured informants anonymity, since one of the issues that the students brought out was that they feared reprisals if they informed authorities of the events. The police and students formed a liaison group to work together on the issues. In addition, sections of the school were closed down during the noon hour. Dealing with this incident in such a comprehensive manner was seen as a very good thing.

Public School Trustee Chandler

Trustee Chandler discussed responses to community and educational challenges in terms of the overall role and mandate of the board.

Public School Roles and Initiatives

Roles

The Public School Board seeks to improve the quality of life for people in the community by providing a quality education based on the needs of children. They also provide programs for adults and seniors.

Ms. Chandler’s job as trustee is a very broad one in that she deals not only with education, but with social problems, families, the police, and the community at large. She

is called upon to assist for a very wide variety of educational problems from helping children to get into the right courses to assisting families and schools to ensure that special needs of children are met through placement in appropriate programs. She also gets involved in many social problems affecting students, such as crisis situations (missing children), family problems, and investigations around abuse. She also helps people to link to other people and services.

While the Trustee job was not originally envisioned to be so broad, Ms. Chandler felt that it has evolved in this way partly because of her connections to the many components of the community, including local politicians, the police department, Children's Aid and of course the schools. One concern is the impact of the "Megaboard" on this ombudsperson approach to the work of Trustee.

Public Board Initiatives

Services: Community-Wide

The spectrum of services offered by the School Board is very diverse. As well as "regular" education for school aged children, there are also programs for gifted students, French immersion, learning disabilities, autism, and developmental challenges. Within elementary schools in the area, many children are immigrants, and English as a Second Language programs are provided. As well, the Board offers programs in a wide variety of venues, based on specific needs of students, for example at the Hugh MacMillan Centre, the hospitals, and home programs for children who are medically fragile. Two secondary schools-- Bathurst Heights and Yorkdale-- are primarily for adult learners. Finally, programs are also available to seniors at venues such as Baycrest, the Betel Centre, and synagogues.

Services: Lawrence Heights

In Lawrence Heights, Flemington Elementary School offers education for the youngest children. Because it is designated as a special needs school, it has additional staffing. The school includes a Montessori component, special education, and English as a

Second Language education. The extra resources at the school are designed to provide additional enrichment to students, and to cater to the needs of immigrant students. Students go on to Lawrence Heights Middle School, and then to Bathurst Heights or Sir Sanford Fleming, which offers a more academic program.

13

Summary of Findings: The People, Places, and Priorities of Lawrence Heights

A number of key findings have emerged from this project. There are clear aspects of the Lawrence Heights community that are valued by community members, service providers, and elected representatives. There are also many issues of concern about life in Lawrence Heights. And many suggestions were made about how to deal with these concerns. We have organized these findings in terms of the People of Lawrence Heights, the Places of Lawrence Heights, and the Priorities of Lawrence Heights. This chapter is devoted to these issues. A later chapter will point towards the future. The focus of this chapter, as was the case for the community quality of life project, is on Lawrence Heights proper, though issues related to the surrounding community are also considered when appropriate.

People of Lawrence Heights

The people of Lawrence Heights are very diverse and include many newcomers to Canada. Such diversity has advantages, but is also associated with the presence of community needs. Community members, as well as service providers and elected representatives, told us about these needs. Community members also told us about how they cope and manage. We consider each aspect in turn.

The Diversity of Lawrence Heights

Lawrence Heights is a low-income community. It includes many working poor as well as people who have disabilities and cannot work. Among those who are employed, frequently more than one job is held to make ends meet. There are also many who cannot find work and are on social assistance. Health issues are an important concern.

Many people have lived in the community for long periods of time and this has promoted a sense of community and familiarity with others in the area. Some community members are able to find time to be involved in helping others in the community and work towards solving problems. But many face barriers to community participation such as lack of time and money, and family responsibilities. Seniors, who may have more free time, are especially likely to be involved in community activities and development.

There are many newcomers to Canada who live in Lawrence Heights. These include people from the West Indies, Latin America, Asia and Africa. Such diversity allows residents to find other people who come from similar backgrounds. And indeed, participants frequently spoke about the sense of community solidarity that accrues from being in contact with people with similar backgrounds and situations.

But newcomers to Canada have special needs as they adjust to life in Canada. For many this may involve being able to gain education and employment. Specifically, many newcomers need to learn English, acquire practical employment skills, and become familiar with how the various service systems operate in Canada. Many newcomers come to Canada with education and employment experience, but are unable to apply these in Canada.

In addition to having to deal with these adjustment issues, newcomers have to deal with the presence of discrimination. For those who are members of visible minorities, either newcomers or not, racism is an ever present issue. There are also tensions among different ethnic and cultural groups. When combined with issues of unemployment and low income, this situation creates significant barriers to attaining health and well-being.

The Concerns of Lawrence Heights Residents

Community members have a variety of concerns. Almost every group we spoke to was concerned about the quality of housing, and housing is discussed in the following section. There is concern about the lack of programs for families and children. These include the lack of after-school programs, parent-child drop-ins, and summer activities for children and families. Affordable day care is not available for many. Such a lack of day care is a barrier for women who wish to gain education and employment experience. There is concern about youth and the lack of activities and employment opportunities for them. This is related to a concern about crime and drug use.

For newcomers, there are concerns about gaining education and employment experience. An ongoing issue is being able to access services in their own language: too few services are available nearby. For newcomers, discrimination is an important concern. Many feel that they are subject to employment discrimination. Some feel that their concerns are not taken seriously by housing authorities and the police because they are newcomers to Canada. Sometimes they are harassed by other community members for speaking, dressing, and acting differently. They do not know where to go for help.

Persons with physical disabilities, many of whom lived outside Lawrence Heights, are very concerned about issues of access. They are frustrated by their inability to enter stores, and to get around their neighbourhood. They wish there were more services and programs for them. These would include educational, vocational, and recreation programs.

Older youth feel that gaining an education is important and at the same time they are concerned about their education. Secondary school students are concerned about lack of facilities and educational opportunities. Many feel that some teachers are uncaring. For some African-Canadian youth, racism is an everyday concern. Some feel that they are subject to discrimination in the workplace and at school. They feel they are constantly harassed by the police. There are some racial tensions in the schools.

Younger children are concerned about crime and safety. They worry about other children and about their families. They wish there were more things for them to do in the

community. They want their community to be safer and wish that people would drive slower in the neighbourhood.

Coping and Managing in Lawrence Heights

Considering the many concerns that were raised as part of this project, it is important to consider the means by which Lawrence Heights residents cope and manage. For many people their connection with community-based agencies are an important means by which they cope and manage. In many cases, this involved attending a group that was offered at the agency. For people in general the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre and the Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre are seen as important community resources.

Among the persons with physical disabilities, the support of the North York Community House and other agencies are essential to their well-being. They also depend upon friends and neighbours for help when it is needed. The Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre youth group spoke of the group and the Centre as an important place for dealing with day-to-day-issues. All three seniors groups, organized by either the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre or the Recreation Centre, spoke of the importance of the activity groups, and the respective centre which organized it, for their well-being.

Among some of the adult groups there were similar feelings. The community health centre's Spanish-speaking women's group and the parent-child drop in group, and the settlement agency's Tamil and Eastern European groups spoke highly of the agencies and the support they provide. For newcomers such as the Tamil groups, these agencies provide means by which they acquire required skills as well as social contacts.

The availability of these agency supports was known to other groups. For example, among Lawrence Heights residents such as the grade 8 girls and boys, and the secondary school African-Canadian group, the community health centre was seen as a potential source of support. But the primary means of coping when problems arose for these and the other students involved parents, friends, some teachers, and personal coping mechanisms.

Among the Somali groups, it was felt that there were few if any community supports available. While the community health centre was a place to go for medical assistance, it was not currently seen as a support for other issues. And importantly, the secondary school African-Canadian group, felt that there was nowhere in the community to go to for support in relation to issues of police harassment and racial discrimination. Elected representatives were not mentioned as being a source of assistance by community members.

The Places of Lawrence Heights

Lawrence Heights constitutes a distinctive geographic community that consists of government operated housing. There was much discussion about the physical aspects of this living environment. Access to amenities, the ability to get things when needed, was another important aspect of living in Lawrence Heights. Finally, the community agencies and services of Lawrence Heights are important. These agencies work hard to help Lawrence Heights residents.

The Physical and Housing Environments of Lawrence Heights

Lawrence Heights consists of low-rise housing with ample open green spaces. There was common agreement among community members, service providers, and elected representatives that this made for a physically attractive community. Within the area there is seniors housing as well as low-rise apartment houses and some townhouses. Lawrence Heights also constitutes a distinct physical entity that is isolated from the surrounding community. For some community members, this isolation facilitates the development of community.

For the elected politicians, it is seen as having led to geographical and social isolation from the surrounding community and is seen as a liability and issue to be addressed. All four elected representatives spoke of the need for redevelopment of the site. The neighbourhood isolation issue is encapsulated by the use of the term “Jungle” for the community. For many it serves as a pejorative term used by the surrounding community to refer to Lawrence Heights. For some community members, it is seen as

their pet name for the community. Some service providers and residents saw it as an illustration of negative racial attitudes towards the community.

There was universal agreement among community members that the maintenance of the housing stock and physical area is poor. Garbage is common and has led to the presence of vermin. For many seniors, housing size is inadequate and waiting lists for those with large families are long. Community members see the deterioration in maintenance as resulting from cutbacks to funding and the reduction of service staff. Some maintenance work is underway, but the perception of poor housing is shared by many service providers as well.

Outside Lawrence Heights proper, housing is also an issue. Affordable housing is seen as being in need of repair and adequate housing as being out of reach. Within Lawrence Heights, there is concern about possible privatization of the housing stock; outside Lawrence Heights there is concern about the ending of rent controls.

Accessing Amenities in Lawrence Heights

Having access to amenities is an important aspect of life in Lawrence Heights. The opening of nearby Lawrence Square has provided residents with choices concerning food and other necessities. The nearby subway allows people to get to where they need to go. There are other shopping malls within a short distance. The presence of the Community Health Centre and the Community Recreation Centre within the neighbourhood provides health care and recreation opportunities. There are also nearby schools and libraries.

Nevertheless, there are no commercial businesses, even a variety store, within the community itself. And some community members raised concern about the lack of choice concerning the stores that were nearby. Similarly, there is a general belief that weekend bus service is poor and the lack of a local bus after 7:00 pm is a real sore point among community members. Residents commented that they are unable to have deliveries made to the community after dark by commercial outlets who avoid the community because of crime fears.

The Community Services of Lawrence Heights

The local community agencies work hard to assist community residents. The Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre offers programs for four main groups: seniors, youth, families, and women. In addition to running programs on its own, the centre is working closely with other organizations to maximize their impact. These other groups and agencies are North York Parks & Recreation, Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre, Jamaican Canadian Association, YMCA, Children's Aid Society, and Black Cap, a community-based agency focusing on youth and HIV. There is also emphasis upon meeting the needs of newcomers to Canada. This involves both hiring community members as well as forming alliances with other organizations such as the Somaliland Women's Organization, among others.

The North York Community House offers a range of programs including advocating for persons with disabilities, supporting tenants on housing issues, working with the Tamil community, providing multilingual services and language classes, among others. Like the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre, there is an emphasis upon forming alliances and networking with other agencies.

The local school boards also work closely with community agencies to support children and their families. Education staff work hard to provide children with positive learning experiences and to be culturally sensitive. Educational officials and teachers develop their own programs and work closely with community agencies to develop programs that support families and children..

All of these agencies know that they cannot meet all the needs that exist within the community. They suffer from a lack of resources and are concerned about further cuts to funding. They are forced to establish priorities and must identify those in greater need as they develop and implement programs. Potentially, support could be received from the private sector to carry out some of these activities.

Service workers and teachers feel they are supported by their agencies and fellow staff, other agencies, and by community members. The barriers to carrying out their work include cutbacks and limited funding and resources, as well as language barriers, lack of

volunteers, and difficulty in reaching community members about the services that are available.

The Priorities of Lawrence Heights

Lawrence Heights, like many communities in North America, has its share of problems. Some of the issues related to housing and community concerns have been previously mentioned. This section focuses on three main priority issues of employment and income, service needs, and the future of the community in specific relation to potential redevelopment.

The Employment and Income Issues of Lawrence Heights

Many of the residents of Lawrence Heights are either the working poor or on fixed incomes such as persons with disabilities or seniors. Those that are working sometimes have to hold down more than one job. These create tensions within families. Those on fixed incomes are at the mercy of rental increases and cuts to social assistance rates. User fees are seen as especially onerous for people on low incomes and some community members commented that having to apply for subsidies for services was degrading.

Many community residents are unable to find work. This is especially the case among youth. In addition, the recent provincial cuts to social assistance rates have created even more hardship for poor people. Service agencies must struggle to help people to simply get by from day-to-day.

Community agencies attempt to help people find work. In some instances they advocate for changes to social policies and programs. They provide support to groups on housing issues. They also develop programs that are sensitive to the pressures under which community members must live. Support for young parents is provided through the development of drop-ins. Community kitchens assist residents in preparing low-cost food. Agencies try to assure that costs does not deter potential clients from using their services.

They try to use methods that will empower individuals and help build the community. But service providers feel that things are getting worse and they can only do so much. When these needs are combined with ongoing cuts to resources, service

providers feel frustrated and worn-out.

Local schools establish special programs to assist students in need. They work with other agencies to support children at risk in the community. They try to provide a positive learning experience for children who may be at risk. They work in close collaboration with other agencies to support families and children. They also see the effects of low income and income cutbacks upon children and their learning.

The elected representatives speak out about the effects of cuts to services and social assistance rates. Provincial policies are seen as hurting the most vulnerable in the community. Representatives try to be responsive to the needs of these vulnerable individuals. They try to remain in touch with community members.

The Service Needs of Lawrence Heights

There are clearly a wide range of service needs within the community. Programs are needed to support families and communities. Newcomers to Canada are remarkably perceptive as to their needs for education and employment experience. Children wish to have more activities.

Needs for education and employment training are common to all Canadians. They are especially important for those whose language and culture may be different than those who have been in Canada for a while. Resources are required to provide English as a Second Language classes, and training in employment skills. But agencies that are charged with providing these services are themselves being cut back and having their budgets reduced. Many needs of newcomers go unmet.

Service providers concur in believing that services that are needed within the community. The results of their needs analysis have identified supports needed by newcomers to Canada, youth, and seniors. Unfortunately, lack of resources does not allow them to address these needs. Requests for funding are submitted and only sometimes funded. Assistance is being requested from private sources. Collaborations and alliances are being formed to address identified needs. In the meantime, residents cope as best they can.

The Future of Lawrence Heights

Among community residents there is concern about the effects of future cuts to services. All the adult and seniors groups spoke of the deterioration in maintenance and repair of the housing stock. Some groups spoke of the general concern with further cuts to community services. Many residents have seen their unemployment and social assistance benefits cut. All of these occurrences are a threat to the future of Lawrence Heights and the people who live there.

All four elected representatives spoke of potential redevelopment of the Lawrence Heights site. Whether such redevelopment is possible considering the downloading of social housing costs to the local municipalities is unclear. It is also uncertain what the effects of such redevelopment would be on Lawrence Heights residents.

Whether redevelopment takes place or not, the housing is in need of repair and improved maintenance. Whether such improvements are possible in light of these ongoing funding reductions and cut-backs is unclear. Will the needed services be provided? If not, what will be the effects on Lawrence Heights and the people who live and work there?

Conclusion

Residents, service providers, and elected representatives are doing all they can to improve the quality of life in Lawrence Heights with the resources they have. While some things can be done at the individual and community levels, the employment and income issues and the need for services that have been identified in this report need to be addressed at the policy level. These issues should be brought to the attention of those responsible for formulating social policy.

14

Summary of Findings: Relationship to Models of Quality of Life and Health Promotion

At the beginning of this report, we presented two approaches that influenced this project: The Centre for Health Promotion Model of Quality of Life and the *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion*. Over the course of the project, it was evident that many themes and ideas mentioned by the project participants were very closely connected with these two approaches. How these major themes and ideas are related to the approaches are now summarized and discussed.

Themes Related to the Quality of Life Approach

In our approach to quality of life we define it as involving satisfaction within three domains: Being, Belonging, and Becoming. Being reflects "who one is" and has three sub-domains, Physical, Psychological and Spiritual Being. Belonging concerns the match between a person and the environment. It has sub-domains of Physical, Social, and Community Belonging. Becoming refers to the activities a person carries out to achieve personal goals, hopes, and aspirations. Its three sub-domains are Practical, Leisure and Growth Becoming.

Belonging

Of the three broad areas of life associated with the Quality of Life approach (described in Chapter 1), themes related to *Belonging* were noted most often by participants. Of the three aspects of life included in *Belonging*, the concept of *Community Belonging* or access to services and resources, was the most common thread running through participants' comments. Some of their comments reflected the idea that access to these services and resources within the community helped to make life good while others noted that access to better ones or more of them would improve quality of life. A wide and diverse variety of services and resources was seen as important to degree of community quality of life residents experienced. Some of the major ones ranged from programs offered by CHCs, community and recreation centres, and hospitals, public transportation services, to availability of convenient shopping areas, to services focused on recreation, education, and health promotion. In particular, a pressing need for greater access to educational and employment opportunities was emphasized by many participants. The need for employment was linked to a access to a better income. In addition, a need for more and appropriate resources (e.g., educational and vocational programs) which are accessible to community residents who are newcomers to Canada or have disabilities. However, the cultural sensitivity of providers of existing services were generally seen as contributing to community quality of life.

The second most common set of themes related to this *Belonging* area of life centred around *Social Belonging*, or links to other people, the neighbourhood, and the community. For example, a recurring message throughout the study was that Lawrence Heights is a close-knit community characterized by interdependence that people have with their families, relatives, friends, and neighbours. For many residents, participation in cultural groups also helped to foster a feeling of belonging to their neighbourhood.

A third strong set of themes focused on the *Physical Belonging* aspect of life. It includes people's connections with the physical environment of their neighbourhood and community. This area also includes the quality of physical conditions and degree of safety they perceive within their environment. One example of this aspect of life was reflected in

participants' comments that the physical location of their neighbourhood made access to resources and services (see *Community Belonging* above) easier or harder. A number of participants emphasized that the lack of ongoing repair and maintenance of housing in their neighbourhood detracted from their enjoyment of community life. Others noted that the presence of some attractive buildings as well as green spaces and parks enhanced their enjoyment of their neighbourhood. Some residents commented on the lack of traffic and noise in their neighbourhood. A number of individuals and groups who participated were concerned about safety (e.g., violence and presence of drugs) and the associated threats to community quality of life. However, some newcomers to Canada, commented that the neighbourhood was safer than places they had lived before arriving in this country.

Being

Generally, themes associated with the other two broad areas of life (i.e., *Being* and *Belonging*) seemed to be important to participants. However, these themes were less frequently mentioned or the references to them were indirect. Within the area of *Being*, *Physical Being* received some attention. There were a few references to food, access to food, and food preparation in keeping with cultural preferences. Physical health was often embedded in discussions of the importance of and need for health services and programs (see *Community Belonging*). Themes associated with *Psychological Being* were expressed in terms of the need for services and resources as well as the development of personal skills that support mental health, emotional coping, and self-esteem. Themes associated with *Spiritual Being* were alluded to in the context of discussions about the services, programs, and roles of schools, churches, and resources for newcomers to Canada.

Becoming

The *Becoming* area of life, like *Being*, was usually referred to in an indirect way. *Practical Becoming* includes practical life daily activities such as working, going to school, caring for children, and volunteering. *Leisure Becoming* encompasses recreational and leisure time activities. *Growth Becoming* refers to activities that foster or enhance people's knowledge, skills, and their ability to adapt to change. This aspect of life shares common ground with the third strategy (i.e., Develop people's personal skills and

knowledge so that they can meet life's challenges) addressed below in the section on the Health Promotion approach.

Practical Becoming was alluded to most often during discussions of services and resources needed to support this aspect of quality (e.g., the need for access to steady employment, educational programmes, and daycare services). The same pattern emerged for *Leisure Becoming* in that the contribution of leisure and recreation to quality of life was embedded in participants' expressed needs for the services, programs, and resources that facilitate and promote participation in leisure and recreational activities. Organized activities (e.g., sports and other forms of recreation) for youth of the neighbourhood were seen as especially important. *Growth Becoming* was captured in discussions of the needs for services to help people develop new skills (e.g., coping, parenting, language, educational, and job-related skills). For participants who were newcomers to Canada, acquiring new skills that would help them adapt to their life in Canada was cited as an important aspect of enjoying life in their community. The information concerning *Community Belonging* (see above) refers to some of the skills, services, and resources which assist people as they strive for high quality in the *Becoming* area of life within their community.

Other Aspects of Community Life

The information provided by participants suggests that some additional aspects of life should be considered within a quality of life approach as applied to the community context. Briefly, these aspects are material well-being or the sense of basic economic security on the part of community residents and political features of the community environment that directly affect the life of its citizens (e.g., cutbacks to funding for needed services).

Themes Related to Health Promotion Approach

Health promotion enables people to get more control over and improve their own health. The *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion* refers to some important aspects of life that are required if people are to be healthy. Many of these requirements for health were

discussed by study participants. The requirements they noted included the following: employment, access to educational programs, decent and affordable housing, safety, and fair treatment for all citizens of Lawrence Heights (e.g., by providing appropriate and good resources, programs, and services). While some of these requirements were seen to be in place, to varying degrees, in Lawrence Heights, others were seen as needing considerable development (e.g., employment and affordable housing).

The *Ottawa Charter* emphasizes that access to these requirements for health cannot be provided by the traditional health care system alone. Rather, coordinated action by all sectors of society are needed in five areas. Issues related to the five areas identified for action by the *Ottawa Charter* were raised by study participants during the course of their discussions. The five areas for action and examples of each one which were noted by the participants are noted below:

1. *Create supportive environments which contribute positively to people's health.*

Participants, especially members of the community and service providers interviewed, gave many examples of services and resources that help to promote and ensure benefits to people's health. However, it should be noted that participants emphasized the need for more of some services and resources mentioned. Many of these services and resources are also related to the *Community Belonging* area of the Quality of Life approach (see the previous section) which emphasizes the importance of accessibility. Some of the many services and resources noted include: multilingual services for newcomers to Canada, resources and programs for people seeking employment, services for seniors and people with disabilities, daycare programs, programs for families and children, and organized recreational programs.

2. *Strengthen community action on issues that affect their health.* Service providers, in particular, spoke to this strategy for promoting health. They noted how organizations within Lawrence Heights (e.g., school, and community health centre) encouraged community action by such means as advocacy efforts and involvement by residents in community issues. Examples of this kind of community action included the formation a

student advisory council at one school (i.e., so that students could be become involved in issues important to them at school and in their community) and the ongoing evaluation by community members of programs offered through the CHC.

3. Develop people's personal skills and knowledge so that they can meet life's challenges. Strategies, resources, and programs focused on acquiring these kinds of skills and knowledge were mentioned mainly by community members and service providers. Some examples provided were: programs promoting parenting skills, ESL classes, and vocational programs.

4. Improve health services in ways that emphasize a focus on the whole person as well as partnerships between services providers and users. Service providers interviewed highlighted a number of health-promoting services that either had an holistic focus or involved such partnerships, or both. The programs offered by the Lawrence Heights CHC and the Settlement and Service Agency exemplify such services.

5. Influencing government action to ensure that policies they make promote people's health. This area of action was mentioned by the elected political representatives interviewed. For instance, they noted how much activism by community-based agencies (e.g. the CHC and community recreation centre), had supported attempts to influence government policy and decision-making. They also noted the availability of elected representatives to members of the Lawrence Heights community. The political representatives also noted that many people in Lawrence Heights are just getting by and so often cannot be involved in community activism. However, they also alluded to the potential of residents to carry out effective action if the proper supports and strategies could be put into place.

15

Towards the Future

In this final chapter we present some possible directions for action suggested by this report. We do not make recommendations, but draw attention to some issues. This presentation is organized within the framework of the *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion*, the World Health Organization document that since 1986 has influenced the direction of health promotion activities around the world. There are three main sections in this chapter: the conditions necessary for health, the elements of health promotion, and health promotion actions. The full Charter is provided as Appendix IV.

The Conditions Necessary for Health

According to the Charter, the necessary conditions and resources for health are peace, shelter, education, food, income, a stable eco-system, sustainable resources, social justice and equity. Clearly, there are people in Lawrence Heights for whom many of these basic conditions are not being met. For some, there are immediate needs for decent housing, and greater income through employment opportunities or life-enhancing levels of social assistance. And while peace may not be a current issue, there are issues of personal security related to crime and vandalism.

For many newcomers to Canada, issues of education are essential to their adjustment to life in Canada and to personal well-being. Yet many newcomers are not

able to take advantage of English as a Second Language classes or get employment experiences.

Many of the changes associated with economic globalization are increasing the distance in income levels among Canadians in general and Lawrence Heights residents in particular. If the literature from other jurisdictions is any guide, such differences lead to less community cohesion and increases in community and personal problems. Clearly, these are issues not only of social justice and equity, but also of maintaining the quality of life in Lawrence Heights. Means of reducing economic inequality include progressive taxation policies, maintaining quality services and economic supports for those who require it, and fostering economic development.

The Elements of Health Promotion

According to the *Ottawa Charter* there are three elements at the heart of health promotion. These are 1) advocating for health; 2) enabling people to work towards health; and 3) mediating among the range of societal institutions and local groups to support health.

Advocacy

Advocacy involves recognizing and working towards the conditions necessary for health. It frequently involves speaking out about the effects of government actions and policies on communities and individuals. While some agencies in Lawrence Heights have been speaking out these actions may become even more necessary in the future.

Enabling

Enabling involves providing individuals with the means and opportunities to reach their fullest health potential. This involves providing security within a supportive environment, and access to information, life skills and opportunities for making healthy choices. People can only achieve health when they can control those things which determine their health. Much of the community work in Lawrence Heights appears congruent with these principles. But the community work that is occurring is threatened

by funding cuts and policy changes. There are also many identified needs that are not being met. And many people in Lawrence Heights are either unaware of many of the available resources and services, or are unable to access them.

Mediating Among Institutions and Groups

The foundations for health cannot be provided by health workers alone. Health promotion requires coordinated action by governments, health and other social and economic sectors, nongovernmental and voluntary organizations, local authorities, industry, and the media. People in all walks of life should be involved, and the task is to bring these sectors together even though competing interests may exist. Again, Lawrence Heights is carrying out creative partnerships among diverse sectors. These efforts need to be extended.

Health Promotion Actions

The Charter outlines five key health promotion actions. These are 1) building healthy public policy; 2) creating supportive environments; 3) strengthening community action; 4) developing personal skills; and 5) reorienting health services.

Building Healthy Public Policy

Promoting health means more than providing health care. It makes the health of communities and individuals part of the work of policy makers in all sectors. It points out to them the health effects of their work, and makes them responsible for the effects of their actions. These policies include fiscal measures, taxation and organizational change. The outcomes of these actions should be safer and healthier goods and services, healthier public services, and cleaner, more enjoyable environments. To date, Lawrence Heights residents have had some access to policy makers at the municipal level. Access to policy makers at all levels needs to be improved.

Creating Supportive Environments

Health of communities and community members are closely linked to environments. One guiding principle is to have communities where people take care of

each other, their communities and the natural environment. Changing patterns of life, work and leisure effect health. Work and leisure should be a source of health for people, but for many people in Lawrence Heights there is either no work or part-time work, and few resources for leisure. Work towards providing living and working conditions that are safe, stimulating, satisfying and enjoyable should continue.

Strengthening Community Action

Health promotion involves concrete and effective community action to achieve better health. Key to this is fostering community ownership and control of their activities and futures. Community activities should draws on existing community human and material resources to enhance self-help and social support, and to promote public involvement. One outcome of this project may be a process of engaging community members to consider and address the findings in this report.

Developing Personal Skills

Health promotion supports personal and social development with information and education for health and enhancing life skills. It allows people to exercise more control over their own health and their environments, and to make choices conducive to health. These skills can be facilitated in school, home, work and community settings. The involvement of educational, professional, commercial and voluntary bodies is necessary. Dissemination of the findings of the Lawrence Heights Community Quality of Life Project and the involvement of community members to respond to its challenges can contribute to this goal.

Reorienting Health Services

Bringing health promotion principles to health services is a responsibility of individuals, community groups, health professionals, health service institutions and governments. Health services should be sensitive to and in respect of cultural needs. They should be aware of and supportive of the needs of individuals and communities. Perhaps dissemination of the findings of this project to health care workers can contribute to improved health care services in Lawrence Heights.

Conclusion

In summary, the Lawrence Heights Community Quality of Life Project has allowed us the opportunity to learn about and from the community. The immediate outcome of this project has been this report that has documented the strengths, issues, and activities of the people who reside, provide services, and represent the people of Lawrence Heights. We urge that as much of the community as possible consider its findings and its implications for Lawrence Heights. It is imperative that these findings lead to thoughtful and effective action.

16

Appendices

Appendix I: Questions Asked in the Community Quality of Life Project

Questions Asked in Community Focus Groups

What is it about your neighbourhood or community that makes life good for you and the people you care about?

What is it about your neighbourhood and community that does not make life good for you and the people you care about?

What are some of the things in this neighbourhood or community that help you cope or manage when you or your family have problems?

What would you like to see in this neighbourhood that would help you cope or manage when you have problems? Are there services you would like to see? Programs?

Questions Asked of Elected Representatives

What is it about this neighbourhood or community which makes life good for its members?

What are some of the problems that this community has?

How do these issues relate to your role as an elected representative?

How do you attempt to improve the quality of life of community members?

Can you give some examples of things you have done that have been successful? And perhaps not so successful?

What are some barriers to these efforts? What helps you carry out these efforts?

Questions Asked of Service Providers

What is it about this neighbourhood or community which makes life good for people like those who attended the community discussion?

What are some of the problems which this community has that affects people like those who attended our discussion?

How do these issues relate to the mandate and programs of your agency?

How does your agency attempt to improve the quality of life of community members like those in our discussion group?

Can you give some examples of things your agency is doing that are working well? And perhaps not so well?

What are some barriers to carrying out these efforts? What helps you carry out these efforts?

Appendix II: List of Community Group Discussions and Interviews

Group Discussions: Youth

Community Health Centre Youth Group
Grade 6 Group
Grade 8 Males
Grade 8 Females
Grade 12 Males
Grade 12 Females
Secondary School African Canadians

Group Discussions: Seniors

Seniors Tenant Group
Seniors Recreation Group
Spanish-Speaking Seniors Group

Group Discussions: Adults

Parent-Child Drop- In
Spanish-Speaking Women
Tamil Women's Group I
Tamil Group II
Somali Women Group I
Somali Women Group II
Somali Mens Group
Eastern European Group

Interviews with Representatives

Else Chandler, City of North York Public School Trustee

Joe Cordiano, Provincial Parliament Member

Frank Di Giorgio, City of North York Councillor

Mel Lastman, City of Toronto Mayor

Pina Losiggio, Metro Separate School Board Trustee

Howard Moscoe, Metropolitan Toronto Councillor

Interviews With Service Providers

Community Health Worker: Community Health Centre

Community Worker: Settlement and Service Agency

Coordinator of Person-to-Person Support: Settlement and Service Agency

Coordinator of Language Instruction Program: Settlement and Service Agency

Executive Director: Settlement and Service Agency

Executive Director: Somali Women's Organization

Program Director: Community Health Centre

Youth Worker: Community Health Centre

Recreation Worker: Community Centre

Teacher: Middle School

Teacher: Secondary School

Vice-Principal: Elementary School

Appendix III: Characteristics of Discussion Group Members

Participants were asked to provide their gender and age. They also were asked to rate their health as being either Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, or Poor as compared to other people their age. We also asked them how many problems they had as compared to other people. The answers to that question were either A Lot More, More, Same, Less, or A Lot Less. In a very few cases, information about these questions were not provided. That is why responses may not equal the number of participants.

Group	Gender	Ages	Health	Problems
CHC Youth Group (4 participants)	female (3) male (1)	16, 18, 18, 19	Very Good (2), Good (1) Fair (1)	Same (4)
Grade 6 Group (10 participants)	female (7) male (3)	all 12 years old	Excellent (3), Very Good (7)	Lot More (1), Same (5), Less (3), Lot Less (1)
Grade 8 Males (7 participants)	male (7)	all 14 years old except one 15	Very Good (4), Good (3)	Lot More (3), Same (1), Less (3)
Grade 8 Females (11 participants)	female (11)	all 14 years old	Very Good (5), Good (4), Fair (2)	More (3), Less (6), Lot Less (2)
Grade 12 Males (13 participants)	male (13)	all 18 years except two 19	Excellent (3), Very Good (4), Good (5), Fair (1)	Lot More (1), More (4), Same (4), Less (4)
Grade 12 Females (8 participants)	female (8)	18, 18, 18, 18, 18, 19, 19, 20	Excellent (1), Very Good (4), Good (3)	More (4), Same (4)
High School African Canadians (10 participants)	female (6) male (4)	16, 18, 18, 18, 18, 18, 18, 19, 19, 21	Excellent (2), Very Good (4), Good (4)	Lot More (2), More (4) Same (3), Less (1)
Seniors Tenant Group (8 participants)	female (4) male (4)	not collected	not collected	not collected
Seniors Recreation Group (13 participants)	female (12) male (1)	61, 69, 74, 75, 77, 80, 83	Good (2), Fair (5)	Same (2), Less (3)

Spanish-Speaking Seniors Group (6 participants)	female (3) male (3)	58, 62, 64, 66	Excellent (1), Good (2), Poor (1)	Same (2), Lot Less (2)
Parent Child Drop- In (7 participants)	female (6) male (1)	not collected	not collected	not collected
Spanish- Speaking Women (12 participants)	female (12)	27, 30, 32, 32, 35, 44, 46, 47	Very Good (2), Good (3), Fair (2), Poor (2)	More (2), Same (6), Less (1)
Tamil Women's Group I (4 participants)	female (4)	24, 30, 40, 44	Fair (2), Poor (2)	Lot More (2), More (2)
Tamil Group II (5 participants)	female (4) male (1)	29, 31, 35, 40, 57	Very Good (3), Good (3)	More (1), Same (2), Less (2)
Somali Women Group I (5 participants)	female (5)	31, 32, 32, 32, 33	Excellent (5)	More (1), A Lot More (4)
Somali Women Group II (9 participants)	female (9)	28, 28, 31, 32, 32, 33, 35, 35, 39	Excellent (3), Very Good (4), Good (2)	Lot More (2), More (4), Same (2)
Somali Mens Group (8 participants)	male (8)	24, 34, 41, 45, 45, 45	Excellent (1), Very Good (4), Good (2)	More (3), Same (4)
Eastern European Group (6 participants)	female (4) male (2)	28, 29, 30, 35, 41, 41	Very Good (4), Good (2)	More (3), Same (2), Less (1)

Appendix IV: Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion

The first International Conference on Health Promotion, held in November 1986, presented a charter for action to achieve Health for All by the year 2000 and beyond. This conference was primarily a response to growing expectations for a new public health movement around the world. Discussions focused on the needs in industrialized countries, but took into account similar concerns in all other regions. The following text provides a good framework to understand what health promotion is.

Health Promotion

Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. To reach a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, an individual or group must be able to identify and to realize aspirations, to satisfy needs, and to change or cope with the environment. Health is, therefore, seen as a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. Health is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities. Therefore, health promotion is not just the responsibility of the health sector, but goes beyond healthy life-styles to well-being.

Prerequisites for health

The fundamental conditions and resources for health are peace, shelter, education, food, income, a stable eco-system, sustainable resources, social justice and equity. Improvement in health requires a secure foundation in these basic prerequisites.

Advocate

Good health is a major resource for social, economic and personal development and an important dimension of quality of life. Political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, behavioural and biological factors can all favour health or be harmful to it. Health promotion action aims at making these conditions favourable through advocacy for health.

Enable

Health promotion focuses on achieving equity in health. Health promotion action arms at reducing differences in current health status and ensuring equal opportunities and resources to enable all people to achieve their fullest health potential. This includes a secure foundation in a supportive environment, access to information, life skills and

opportunities for making healthy choices. People cannot achieve their fullest health potential unless they are able to take control of those things which determine their health. This must apply equally to women and men.

Mediate

The prerequisites and prospects for health cannot be ensured by the health sector alone. More importantly, health promotion demands coordinated action by all concerned: by governments, by health and other social and economic sectors, by nongovernmental and voluntary organizations, by local authorities, by industry and by the media. People in all walks of life are involved - individuals, families and communities. Professional and social groups and health personnel have a major responsibility to mediate between differing interests in society for the pursuit of health.

Health promotion strategies and programmes should be adapted to the local needs and possibilities of individual countries and regions to take into account differing social, cultural and economic systems.

Health Promotion Action Means:

Build healthy public policy

Health promotion goes beyond health care. It puts health on the agenda of policy makers in all sectors and at all levels, directing them to be aware of the health consequences of their decisions and to accept their responsibilities for health.

Health promotion policy combines diverse but complementary approaches including legislation, fiscal measures, taxation and organizational change. It is coordinated action that leads to health, income and social policies that foster greater equity. Joint action contributes to ensuring safer and healthier goods and services, healthier public services, and cleaner, more enjoyable environments.

Health promotion policy requires the identification of obstacles to the adoption of healthy public policies in non-health sectors, and ways of removing them. The aim must be to make the healthier choice the easier choice for policy makers as well.

Create supportive environments

Our societies are complex and interrelated. Health cannot be separated from other goals. The inextricable links between people and their environment constitutes the basis for a socio-ecological approach to health. The overall guiding principle for the world nations,

regions and communities alike, is the need to encourage reciprocal maintenance - to take care of each other, our communities and our natural environment. The conservation of natural resources throughout the world should be emphasized as a global responsibility.

Changing patterns of life, work and leisure have a significant impact on health. Work and leisure should be a source of health for people. The way society organizes work should help create a healthy society. Health promotion generates living and working conditions that are safe, stimulating, satisfying and enjoyable.

Systematic assessment of the health impact of a rapidly changing environment - particularly in areas of technology, work, energy production and urbanization - is essential and must be followed by action to ensure positive benefit to the health of the public. The protection of the natural and built environments and the conservation of natural resources must be addressed in any health promotion strategy.

Strengthen community action

Health promotion works through concrete and effective community action in setting priorities, making decisions, planning strategies and implementing them to achieve better health. At the heart of this process is the empowerment of communities, their ownership and control of their own endeavours and destinies.

Community development draws on existing human and material resources in the community to enhance self-help and social support, and to develop flexible systems for strengthening public participation and direction of health matters. This requires full and continuous access to information, learning opportunities for health, as well as funding support.

Develop personal skills

Health promotion supports personal and social development through providing information, education for health and enhancing life skills. By so doing, it increases the options available to people to exercise more control over their own health and over their environments, and to make choices conducive to health.

Enabling people to learn throughout life, to prepare themselves for all of its stages and to cope with chronic illness and injuries is essential. This has to be facilitated in school, home, work and community settings. Action is required through educational, professional, commercial and voluntary bodies, and within the institutions themselves.

Reorient health services

The responsibility for health promotion in health services is shared among individuals, community groups, health professionals, health service institutions and governments. They must work together towards a health care system which contributes to the pursuit of health.

The role of the health sector must move increasingly in a health promotion direction, beyond its responsibility for providing clinical and curative services. Health services need to embrace an expanded mandate which is sensitive and respects cultural needs. This mandate should support the needs of individuals and communities for a healthier life, and open channels between the health sector and broader social, political, economic and physical environmental components.

Reorienting health services also requires stronger attention to health research as well as changes in professional education and training. This must lead to a change of attitude and organization of health services, which refocuses on the total needs of the individual as a whole person.

Moving Into The Future

Health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play and love.

Health is created by caring for oneself and others, by being able to take decisions and have control over one's life circumstances, and by ensuring that the society one lives in creates conditions that allow the attainment of health by all its members.

Caring, holism and ecology are essential issues in developing strategies for health promotion. Therefore, those involved should take as a guiding principle that, in each phase of planning, implementation and evaluation of health promotion activities, women and men should become equal partners.

Call for international action

The Conference calls on the World Health Organization and other international organizations to advocate the promotion of health in all appropriate forums and to support countries in setting up strategies and programmes for health promotion.

The Conference is firmly convinced that if people in all walks of life, nongovernmental and voluntary organizations, governments, the World Health

Organization and all other bodies concerned join forces in introducing strategies for health promotion, in line with the moral and social values that form the basis of this Charter, Health For All by the year 2000 will become a reality.