

The People, Places and Priorities of Riverdale: A Health Promotion Approach to Understanding Communities

*Findings from the
Community Quality of Life Project*

University



of Toronto



Community Health Centre



Community Quality of Life Project

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

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The Riverdale Community Quality of Life Project

Purpose of the Project

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

The Riverdale project was part of a larger Community Quality of Life Project that involved learning about another Metropolitan Toronto community, Lawrence Heights. 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 South Riverdale and Lawrence Heights Community Health Centres, the City of Toronto and North York 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 Centres provided some advice. We carried out the project with the support of funding from the Jessie Ball duPont Religious, Charitable, and Educational Fund, an agency based in Jacksonville, Florida.

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 Riverdale residents. Second, we wanted to look at the quality of life of Riverdale residents. Third, we thought that the South Riverdale 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 chapter 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. 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 South Riverdale there is a unique emphasis upon environmental health and urban planning.

The South Riverdale Community Health Centre is very active in working to promote the health of Riverdale 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. We wanted also to hear the views of service providers and elected representatives about quality of life in Riverdale. 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 Riverdale, 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 three discussions with youth, five with adults, three with seniors, and three with new Canadians. One of these latter groups took place in Chinese 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 Peter Tabuns, Metro Councilor Jack Layton, Provincial Parliament representative Marilyn Churley, Mayor Barbara Hall, and Public School Trustees Laura Jones and Soo Wong. 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 Riverdale. Eleven 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.

Phase 4: Community Interviews

In addition, we hired some people who were in our discussion groups to carry out interviews about quality of life with people they knew. We obtained 63 community interviews in this process. The people who participated in the group discussions and the elected representatives and service providers were not paid for their participation. We did however, pay the community interviewers and the people they interviewed a small fee. In Appendix II we list the kinds of people we interviewed.

The Questions We Asked

We asked everybody about the things that made life good for people in Riverdale. We also asked everybody about things that did not make life good for people in Riverdale. 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 its 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 Riverdale 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 Riverdale and the South Riverdale Community Health Centre. Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 provide the results from community members. Chapter 3 contains their perceptions of the aspects of Riverdale 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 community interviewer project.

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 public 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 section we present some background information on Riverdale, its people, and its history. This includes information about its tradition of citizen activism, and the formation and role of the South Riverdale Community Health Centre.

Geography and Demographics

Riverdale is a downtown community in the eastern section of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. It is bounded on the west by the Don River Valley, the east by Coxwell Avenue, the north by Danforth Avenue, and by Lake Ontario on the south. Its geographic boundary conforms to the former provincial riding of Riverdale and is the catchment area of the South Riverdale Community Health Centre. Gerrard Street is the unofficial boundary between North and South Riverdale.

The neighbourhoods of Riverdale include mixed residential, industrial, and commercial/retail areas. The heavy industrial areas are in South Riverdale. Demographic profiles of Riverdale show a population of approximately 85,000 people, 20% of whom are of Chinese ancestry. Riverdale has a large low-income population and many recent immigrants. Riverdale is a very diverse community in terms of ethnicity and social class. Overall however, as compared to Toronto as a whole, Riverdale, and South Riverdale in particular, has a higher percentage of lone parent families with children; more persons with less than a grade nine education; and more on social assistance.

Social History

From the early part of this century until the 1960's South Riverdale had a strong industrial economy. Today much of the heavy industry has closed or moved except industries in the Port Industrial Area. More recently, film studios have moved into the area along with related industries such as catering and props. However, unemployment has been increasing. The Northern area has a vibrant restaurant/shopping/retail area known as the Danforth. There are also restaurant/shopping/retail areas along Gerrard and Queen Streets.

Environmentally, there have been many challenges. Within Toronto, South Riverdale has the largest concentration of pollution sources from industry, traffic, and waste disposal. This has meant that many citizen groups have been formed and have worked for better air, water, and soil quality. Citizen movements were instrumental in shutting down large incinerators, and having the largest lead contaminated soil removal in North America carried out.

Citizen Movements

The report *Riverdale 2000* describes the many citizens' movements that have been part of the Riverdale community. Similarly, an entire issue of the *Moment*, published by the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, was devoted to describing community action in Riverdale. Riverdale is best known for its "Get the Lead Out" movement which led to having tons of contaminated soil being removed from house lawns and gardens.

Riverdale also became known for "Citizens' for a Safe Environment's" campaign to shut down a large polluting incinerator. Other movements have included "Partners for Food" that established Riverdale People's Food Market as a response to the presence of hunger; the Greater Riverdale Economic Action Together organization focused on economic development; and the South Riverdale Environmental Liaison Committee, focused on environmental issues. There have also been recent responses to issues of violence and racism, and an environmental initiative focused on indoor pollution and health.

The South Riverdale Community Health Centre

The establishment of the community health centre resulted from these same citizens' movements as the community responded to environmental health threats. Established in 1975, the Centre is a private nonprofit corporation which a volunteer Board of Directors governs. The Ontario Ministry of Health funds it. Almost since its founding, the health centre has existed in three separate buildings. The primary care clinic is within a former police station on Pape Avenue; the community health section is in a storefront on Queen Street; and meeting rooms are in an office building on Carlaw Avenue. A new building is under construction at Queen and Carlaw Avenues that will bring together all these components. It will open in the Spring of 1998.

The Centre is committed to giving clients culturally relevant and sensitive quality health services. At present its 31 staff members include doctors, nurse practitioners, nutritionists, community health promoters, social workers, outreach workers, receptionists, and administrative staff. A very wide range of community health programs is offered and all services operate within a framework of holistic care and addressing the broader determinants of health. As a result of a strategic planning process, the Centre will be defining and addressing health risks that are relevant to its users and to the whole of Riverdale.

Other Key Aspects of the Community

Riverdale has many government supported community services and facilities. There are many City-supported community centres and community recreation centres in Riverdale. These community resources include the Frankland, Eastview, Ralph Thornton, Woodgreen, and Applegrove community centres, and the Jimmie Simpson and Pape Recreation Centres. Staffing at these centres range from less than 15 to more than 100. There are also five libraries in Riverdale. The United Churches in the area are also very active in the community and there are a number of service networks that meet regularly.

The north end of Riverdale is served by the east/west Bloor Danforth subway line, and Queen and Gerrard Streets have east/west streetcar lines. The Dundas and King

Streetcars run up and down Broadview Avenue and there are north/south bus routes on Jones and Pape avenues. Five clinics and hospitals are in the area. There are more than eight public and privately owned senior citizen nursing homes and residences. The largest jail in Metropolitan Toronto, the Don Jail, is also in Riverdale.

There are many parks and green areas in Riverdale. There also is access to the natural wilderness area of the Don Valley, the landfill now natural area of the Leslie Street Spit, and the shore of Lake Ontario. Finally, Riverdale has a tradition of electing progressive politicians. The four local political representatives who participated in this project are all associated with the New Democratic Party, a social democratic political party. The Toronto Board of Education has a reputation for fostering community involvement and outreaching to Toronto's diverse communities.

3

Results from Community Members

In this chapter we present the findings of the community quality of life group discussions. For each population of adults, youth, seniors, and new Canadians, we provide their views. We then compare and contrast the findings. First we present the strengths and positive factors. Then we present the aspects of the community that are seen as liabilities or negative factors. 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?*

Adults

We carried out five adult group discussions. There were two church groups, and one each with a literacy group, a healthy weight group, and one with community members of the South Riverdale Community Health Centre.

Strengths and Positive Factors

Community Agencies and Resources

The important role that numerous community agencies and resources play in promoting the quality of life of Riverdale residents was discussed in four groups. In the other group, emphasis was placed on community agencies and resources focused on recreational activities. Across all groups, these agencies are seen as helping to bring people together. They are also very important for people with specific health, food, housing, recreational, or other personal needs. Participants see Riverdale as especially blessed with these agencies and express concern about the effects of service cutbacks to the community and to those with special needs.

The agencies that were repeatedly mentioned were the Woodgreen, Jimmie Simpson, Ralph Thornton, Pape, and Eastview community and recreation centres. The South Riverdale Community Health Centre was frequently mentioned as were other community resources such as FoodShare, volunteer groups, environmental groups, and activist groups. Also seen as important was the work done by local churches. The work carried out by these kinds of agencies are presented in chapters 7 and 8 of this report.

Neighbourliness

Neighbourliness, the perception that people in Riverdale are helpful and friendly was explicitly discussed in four groups and peripherally referred to in another. At one level, people on the street are seen as friendly. At another level, people can depend upon their neighbours and friends to help when they need help. At even another level, people are seen as willing to work together to solve problems through community action. Neighbourhood churches and community agencies and organizations play an important role at this last level of neighbourliness.

South Riverdale Community Health Centre

The South Riverdale Community Health Centre is viewed as an important community resource. It was explicitly discussed in four groups. It was spoken about in terms of

primary care, community health promotion programs, and community advocacy. That it, it was spoken of in terms of its doctors, nurses, and foot specialists. Others spoke about its community programs related to weight management, self-esteem and anger control, and supporting food access programs in the community. The South Riverdale Community Health Centre was also spoken of in terms of community action around issues such as lead pollution. All-in-all the South Riverdale Community Health Centre was viewed as a community resource that could be called upon to help with all kinds of issues that might arise for community members.

Access to Food

Food and its availability were identified as important issues and extensively discussed in three groups. It was briefly mentioned in two others. The various locations identified where inexpensive or free food could be obtained included three United Churches, various community dinners, food banks, and community centres. The Good Food Boxes provided by FoodShare were well known to participants. There was also mention made of community gardens, the Bruce School Breakfast Program, the Morris School Good Food Box Program, and food resources associated with Woodgreen Community Centre and St. Michael's Hospital Clinic. Partners for Food, the Riverdale Market, and the nutrition programs of the South Riverdale Community Health Centre were also seen as important.

Public Transportation

Public transportation as an issue was raised in three groups. The Queen Streetcar was seen as very important to community members. The King and Dundas Streetcars were also mentioned as being reliable.

Volunteering at Community Agencies

In three groups there was extensive discussion of the importance of volunteering at local community agencies. Volunteering was seen as an important part of living in the community. In many cases participants volunteered at the agencies that had once been available to help them when they needed it. These agencies included Meals on Wheels,

recreation centres, parent drop-ins, food markets, and local hospitals and churches. Participants felt their involvement allowed them to give something back to the community.

Other Strengths and Positive Aspects Identified

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.

In one group there was a perception that community agencies in Riverdale were very responsive to concerns raised by community members. These agencies included the public health department and the Children's Aid Society. This group also felt that the city councillor had always been helpful. Another group concurred in feeling that the councillor had always been responsive to their concerns.

In a similar vein there was discussion in one group about how important community involvement was to life in Riverdale. In another group it was important that people in Riverdale had come together to address environmental concerns. And another group felt that neighbourhood events were important to the community.

And finally, in one group there was discussion about how people in Riverdale had access to many amenities, the important role that churches played in the community, the presence of libraries, and the availability of low-cost housing. This same group valued the diversity, both cultural and socioeconomic, of people who live in Riverdale, and the many parks in the area. The important contribution played by the New Democratic Party in Riverdale in supporting community members and supporting the availability of services was also discussed.

Liabilities and Negative Factors

Crime and Safety

Crime and safety issues were discussed in all five groups. In four groups crime and safety were important concerns. In the fifth, some participants felt safe and others did not. Among participants much crime was attributed to youth and this mostly involved

vandalism. There was also concern with major crimes such as break-ins, muggings, drugs, and prostitution. Crack-houses were mentioned and one group expressed concern about crime within the Asian community. The high level of crime was attributed to poor parenting by some, lack of police presence by others, and generally poor behaviour on the part of children and youth. Two groups raised safety issues related to speeding traffic in the neighbourhood.

Cuts in Services

Cuts in services were clear concerns in four groups and in the fifth it was considered as part of a general dissatisfaction with provincial government policies. Cuts in services were seen as impacting most severely on the vulnerable in the community. Specifically mentioned were those who needed subsidized dental care, people with psychiatric problems, people with AIDS, single mothers, and the frail elderly. Participants had already noted the effects of service cuts on local agencies with some programs being curtailed. Also of concern were general policy directions such as eliminating social housing, cutting welfare benefits, and reducing funding to agencies.

Environmental Concerns

Environmental concerns were explicitly discussed in two groups. Participants discussed the lead problem in South Riverdale, the closing of the local incinerator, the effects of the Gardiner Expressway, and the regeneration of the Don Valley. Also mentioned was the continuing problem of landfills and PCBs. A third group viewed the issue in terms of garbage on the streets and the effects of car pollution. And a fourth group considered the trade offs between losing jobs by closing the Lever and Colgate factories and the benefits in reducing local pollution.

Other Liabilities and Negative Aspects Identified

There were a number of other ideas or themes identified, usually in one group. In one group there was discussion of how poor neighbourhoods are viewed negatively by the media. Additionally, it was felt that tenants are frequently spoken down to at meetings.

This same group was concerned about police attitudes and felt that the police unfairly target poor and minority youth.

In another group there was concern about children's behaviour and their lack of respect for others. This group also raised issues related to prejudice against people from different backgrounds. There was concern about small businesses being forced to close by larger stores. Another group felt that since there were no large stores on Queen Street this was difficult for seniors.

One group spoke of the lack of affordable housing. It was also felt that group homes should help to teach people independence skills. And one group raised issues related to the continuing impact of poverty and unemployment on the entire community. The political situation at Queen's Park [provincial government] was seen as making the problem worse. This same group raised issues related to inappropriate and unwanted businesses in the community. Specifically mentioned was a strip club and a large entertainment tavern. Finally, in one group there was divided opinion as to the physical appearance of the community with some thinking it was run down and others disagreeing.

Youth

We carried out three youth group discussions. One group of males and one of females were carried out at a community recreation centre. A third group was carried out with young mothers.

Strengths and Positive Factors

Community Centres

All three groups viewed the local or neighbourhood community centres positively. These centres were a place for youth to meet friends, enjoy activities, and celebrate special events. The community centres mentioned included Eastview, Pape, Jimmie Simpson, and Applegrove. The two youth groups participated in sports such as soccer, baseball, basketball and volleyball. The young mothers spoke of swimming, skating, aerobics, parenting classes, and the availability of child care. The female youth spoke of celebrating

special events such as Black History Month, Canada Day, and Thanksgiving. The male youth spoke of the leadership club.

The two youth groups referred to few other positive aspects. The young mothers however discussed a number of community features that they felt enhanced quality of life. These features are now presented.

Community Agencies and Resources

The wide range of services that are available in the community was mentioned. These include several parks with wading pools for their children. The benefit of drop-in centres was mentioned as were the medical centres in the community. The group commented on the presence of nonprofit housing, though they felt there are long waiting lists.

Other Positive Aspects

A number of other positive things were mentioned by this group. It was felt that there was easy access to amenities. Things such as stores, doctors, and the beach were seen as being nearby. It was felt that the neighbourhood is family-oriented. The public transportation was viewed positively. The ability to attend the young mothers' drop-in was seen as very important. It provided an opportunity to learn about parenting from other young mothers.

Liabilities or Negative Factors

There was little consensus across the three groups concerning negative aspects of the neighbourhood. The female youth group had one participant who appreciated the space in her neighbourhood but there were others who were frustrated by the lack of things to do and the lack of resources in the neighbourhood. Similarly, while one person thought that the neighbourhood stuck together, another felt that children who lived in the area were poorly behaved and had no respect for others.

The male youth group felt that the neighbourhood had a bad reputation. Some felt that this was due to outsiders coming into the neighbourhood and making trouble. The

participants felt that there were limited employment and educational opportunities for them and hardly anything to do in the neighbourhood.

The young mothers group identified a number of areas that were seen as negative. These included a lack of affordable child care, a concern with crime and safety, worry about cuts in services, their neighbours' judgments, and a high level of noise in the neighbourhood.

Concerning child care, the lack of child care was seen as limiting their ability to continue their education. One example given was not being able to attend college because of lack of day care. There was much discussion about crime and safety issues. Much of this was laid at the doorstep of youth who felt that they could get away with anything. Numerous break-ins and attempted break-ins were mentioned.

There was discussion about cuts in services. It was felt that services that were free now would cost money in the future. They felt that one reason that some services would be cut would be lack of use by members of the community who were not aware of their availability. Some felt that neighbours looked down on them because of their being young mothers. Finally, some felt that their neighbourhood was very noisy. This was especially bothersome at night.

Seniors

Three seniors groups took place. One involved a seniors wellness group associated with the community health centre. Another was with a group of seniors who used programs at the local community centre. The third group was with seniors in a seniors residence.

Strengths and Positive Aspects

Neighbourliness

The community was seen as consisting of helping and caring people in all three groups. In two groups neighbours were clearly seen as a resource that could be drawn upon to provide assistance when needed. Examples were provided of how people will watch

houses for others, offer rides when needed, and generally support each other on an ongoing basis. In a third group it was mentioned that the people in the community are nice to each other.

Neighbourhood Stores

The presence of neighbourhood stores was discussed in three groups. While one group felt there were many nearby and inexpensive stores, some felt that there was little access to fresh fruits and vegetables. In another group, there was concern about the many smaller stores that had been forced to close. In the third group, as noted earlier, the residents were seen as having good access to local stores and other amenities.

Community Agencies and Resources

Community agencies and resources were seen as being very important to the quality of life of participants by two groups. In a third group, the seniors' residence, participants were not as well connected with community agencies and resources, although there was some awareness of them. Of particular importance to the two connected groups were the activities at Woodgreen Community Centre and for one group, the South Riverdale Community Health Centre. Woodgreen was mentioned for its birthday parties, bazaars, choir, crafts, and CARE program for those with Alzheimer's disease.

Other agencies discussed were the Jimmie Simpson and Pape Recreation Centres, the activities at Woodgreen United Church, and the seniors wellness group at the community health centre. Also, the many libraries in the neighbourhood were mentioned. Among the third group some individuals had once been involved with Woodgreen Community Centre, but were not now, and some knew of the local Meals on Wheels Program.

Access to Amenities

In two groups discussion was made of access to amenities. In one group, the focus was on access to the beach with the Queen streetcar. In another group, it was noted that everything that people needed was right by the residence. This included stores, doctors, and restaurants.

Housing

Housing was discussed in two groups. In one the group spoke of Woodgreen Housing in a very positive way. In another, there was general satisfaction with the residence but there was concern about the rising costs of rent.

Public Transportation

In the two groups that discussed it, public transportation was viewed very positively. The Dundas, Queen, and King streetcars were especially valued as was the Jones Avenue bus. In one group there was concern that an up-front fee was now required for use of Wheel-Trans.

Diversity of the Neighbourhood

The diversity of the neighbourhood was discussed in two groups. In one it was seen as a generally positive development. In another it was felt to create problems when people are unable to communicate with each other.

South Riverdale Community Health Centre and Health Care

One group discussed the importance of the South Riverdale Community Health Centre to the community. It was seen as a place where one could go to deal with all kinds of problems not only health-related ones. In addition, the importance of the community health programs such as the wellness group and the Home Safe Home program was noted. In a second group the South Riverdale Community Health Centre was used by participants, and they described the service as wonderful. Some participants access medical care at the local hospitals. All agreed that the medical care they received was excellent.

Liabilities and Negative Aspects

Crime and Safety

Crime and safety was a concern for many seniors and was discussed in all three groups. In one group, seniors felt very unsafe about going out at night. In the other two groups, while seniors reported feeling generally safe, all related stories about break-ins and crimes in the neighbourhood.

Cuts and Their Impacts

Two groups had extensive discussion about the effects of cuts and their impacts on community agencies and people in general. There was concern about the effects of cuts on the community health centre, the local community centres, and Wheel-Trans. One group was especially concerned about the possible loss of community health centres; the other was concerned about the effects of cutbacks and job losses on both the employed and unemployed.

Maintenance of Sidewalks

In two groups discussion was made of sidewalks. In one group it focused on ice removal during the winter and how important this was for seniors. In the other it focused on cracked sidewalks and how this was dangerous for residents of the building.

Police Presence

For one group, there was discussion about how police was important for the neighbourhood. They mentioned the automated police line that warned of problems and the generally high police presence in the neighbourhood. In another group however, it was felt that there was reduced presence of police in the neighbourhood. This was seen as a very negative development.

Children and Youth Behaviour

In two groups the behaviour of children and youth was discussed. In one group it was viewed in generally negative terms. Children were seen as having little respect for others. This was also in the case in another group, but there was disagreement by some. For these others, youth were seen as being generally alright. The problems and issues that youth were facing were highlighted in this second group.

Other Liabilities and Negative Factors Identified

In the seniors' residence group a number of other concerns were raised. These included very local issues such as dissatisfaction with how the recreation room was used and the isolation, apathy, and lack of involvement by some seniors in the building. The importance of children and family was highlighted and there was discussion about the past and how things used to be in the building and in the neighbourhood.

New Canadians

In all, three groups with New Canadians took place. Two groups took place at a New Canadian Centre in Riverdale. The participants however, lived across Metropolitan Toronto. The other group involved members of a Chinese Women's Parenting Group, most of whom lived in Riverdale. This group was carried out in Chinese.

Strengths and Positive Factors

Health Care

All three groups felt positively about the medical care they received in Canada. Some participants receive care at the local community health centre with which they are very satisfied. All felt that the care they received under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) was very good. Some expressed concern about long waits to see a doctor for just a few minutes, and how expensive dental care was. Some were concerned about how expensive prescriptions were and that OHIP covered only Western medicine.

Libraries

All three groups discussed libraries and viewed them as an important resource. The library was seen as a place where participants could obtain materials in their own languages. It was also a place which could help them learn English. Also mentioned was that children could use the library, that access to the Internet was available, and that people can learn about different cultures at the library.

Community Centres

Community centres were spoken of very favourably in all groups. Community centres are seen as places for recreation as well as places where one could get help when needed. Woodgreen Community Centre, for example, organizes trips for families, provides classes, and provides day care. Other centres were places where one could swim or do sports. However, in one group, participants who lived in East York and Scarborough had complaints about the costs involved in using these centres. They had to pay to use the swimming pool and the gym.

Public Transportation

In all three groups there was discussion about public transportation. Participants in all three groups depended upon public transportation. All felt that it was convenient and that the system worked well. In one group however, it was felt that it was very expensive.

Access to Amenities

In two groups there was discussion of how easy it was to shop and obtain food. Stores were seen as being nearby and having a wide choice of goods. For the Chinese parenting group, it was important to be able to buy Chinese groceries and food in nearby markets.

Parks

Parks and green spaces were discussed in one group. In another having parks and access to the lake was mentioned. In the third group it was felt that there was not enough parks.

Liabilities and Negative Factors

Employment and Education Opportunities

There was extensive discussion about issues related to employment and education opportunities in all three groups. All felt that it was very difficult for newcomers to gain employment. Many participants in all three groups were without work. For those who were well educated, and this applied to many participants, there was a belief that they would not be able to practice their professions. This was especially the case for those who were medical doctors, scientists, or other types of professionals. This was very distressing for participants. A strong need for Canadian experiences and further training was also expressed. In the third group a strong need for English as a Second Language courses was discussed. Related to the need for training and education opportunities was a need for child care to enable people to take these courses. Participants wanted to contribute to Canadian society by working and did not want to be on welfare.

Crime and Safety

Crime and safety was a concern for two groups. Participants related many stories of crime and incidences where they felt threatened. They also saw persons on drugs and people being threatened by teenagers. Concern was greater at night than during the day.

Environment and Pollution

In all three groups issues related to the environment and pollution were discussed. In one group there were specific concerns about air pollution from incinerators and chimneys. In another it was felt that there was garbage on the streets and sidewalks. A third group felt that the environment was alright but that pollution was getting worse.

Other Liabilities and Negative Factors Identified

A number of other issues were raised in the different groups. Many of these involved aspects of being new to Canada. One New Canadian group discussed the stresses of being new to a country. It is seen as being difficult to make friends, get homes, and find jobs.

Related to this was a perception that people were indifferent and not friendly to others. There was also concern about the future of Canada, and worry about welfare and tax issues. Another group expressed concern about children's behaviour and lack of respect for others.

The Chinese Parenting Group felt that some teachers neglected children from minority groups and had problems communicating with these children. This same group was concerned with housing conditions and worried about cuts to services. They also were worried about the increasing costs associated with sponsoring relatives to Canada.

Summary: Community Members' Views on Quality of Life

There were both similarities and differences among the discussion groups carried out with adults, youth, seniors, and New Canadians.

Adults

Among adults there was an appreciation of the importance of services and resources provided by community agencies, including the community health centre. Among these resources access to food was specifically emphasized. The neighbourliness and helpfulness of people who live in the community was another important finding together with the importance of people volunteering and helping out at local agencies. The public transportation that was available was also a positive aspect of the community.

The concerns of adults included the incidence of crime and lack of personal safety within the community. There is worry about the effects of funding cuts on services to the community. Environmental issues are a continuing concern as is the lack of affordable daycare for those who need it. Other concerns mentioned were lack of jobs, the behaviour of children, and attitudes towards people who were less well-off.

Youth

Among youth there was a similar recognition of the importance of community agencies and resources. In their case there was a particular emphasis upon the value of community

centres and how they provide a place for youth to meet and to receive supports. Among young mothers the parent-child drop-in was a real plus.

The concerns of youth were related to lack of jobs and leisure activities. For those who need it, lack of affordable child care is a real concern. The attitudes of neighbours and others towards youth and the neighbourhood they lived in was also seen as a liability of the community. Cuts in services was a real issue for the young mothers.

Seniors

The results from seniors were very similar to those of the adults with some specific additions. Seniors emphasized the importance of community agencies and resources as well as the general neighbourliness of the community. Emphasis was placed upon being able to receive health care, in some cases at the community health centre. Not surprisingly, seniors placed great emphasis upon access to amenities and the availability of stores and shopping. There also was clear importance ascribed to public transportation and to issues of housing. And, the diversity of the neighbourhood was valued.

Seniors also had concerns about crime and safety. They had concrete concerns about the maintenance of the neighbourhood, specifically the care of sidewalks and snow removal. Specific discussion was also on police presence, and there was concern about children and youth behaviour, in specific relation to respect for others.

New Canadians

New Canadians had unique concerns related to their special situation of creating a new life in Canada. There was appreciation of the Canadian health care system, and the availability of materials in both English and their own language in libraries. The importance of community centres was noted. Being able to have access to amenities by using public transportation was also important.

The concerns of New Canadians were very centred on gaining employment and having educational opportunities. Without these it is very difficult to create a new life in Canada. And, like others, they are concerned about crime and safety and about the environment. For women, not being able to have access to affordable child care is a continuing issue.

4

Coping and Managing in Riverdale

An important aspect of the Community Quality of Life Project was identifying some of the ways by which Riverdale 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 Riverdale, that many things identified as being good for them involved exactly this kind of coping. For a person who says that having a food bank nearby, or having a parent drop-in where they can relax and talk to other young parents are good things, clearly these are 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 group:

adults, youth, seniors, and New Canadians. Within each group the ideas are presented in alphabetical order.

Adults: Coping and Managing

Community Activities

For many of the people we spoke to, having community activities are a means by which people cope and manage in their lives. All five adult groups discussed how the presence of things to do in the neighbourhood or community help people. These community activities include attending drop-ins, helping others by volunteering, and engaging in recreation.

Community Agencies

In many cases, community agencies provide specific assistance when people have problems as well as helping people cope and manage day-to-day. This was discussed in all five adult groups. Woodgreen for example has a program to help people cope with anger. The Ralph Thornton Centre has parenting programs. Many other such supports are provided by these kinds of agencies.

Community Health Centres

Community Health Centres were discussed in four groups as important community resources that assist people to cope and manage. They assist in health issues but are also seen as a general support.

Food Access

We also heard, in every group discussion, about the importance of being able to go places to receive inexpensive or free food. These places included churches, community centres, community markets, food banks and programs organized by FoodShare. Many of the people in our groups had extensive knowledge of places to obtain food. Clearly, for many this is based on their own experience or observations of people being unable to afford sufficient amounts of food.

Local Representatives

Four groups discussed experiences where they were able to obtain assistance and support from the city councillor. In some cases, this involved crime issues, in other cases it was related to garbage. The City Councillor was seen as a resource who could be called upon when problems arose. One group identified all of the local representatives as being responsive and helpful.

Neighbours and Friends

Four groups discussed how neighbours and friends help them cope and manage. This was discussed in relation to the specific question about problems but also in terms of day-to-day activities. Neighbours watch out for each other, provide assistance when necessary, and work together to solve problems when they arise. Interestingly, family as a means of coping was mentioned in only one adult group. This may be due to their being taken for granted, or not being seen as part of the neighbourhood. It is also possible that discussants did not have family nearby.

Police

The police (and 911) were seen as being available to help when problems arose in relation to crime. This is clearly obvious and was not the subject of extensive discussion. There was some concern in one group about police attitudes towards the poor and towards minority groups, especially minority youth.

Personal Learning and Coping

In every group, people related personal stories of coping and managing. In addition to all of the preceding, people talked about coping by sharing, helping others, and learning from their experiences.

Youth: Coping and Managing

Community Centres

Clearly, for the youth groups, the local community centre was an important means by which they coped and managed. One group mentioned that staff there were available for

assistance if it was needed. There was also an outreach service. The young mothers group also identified community centres as a support.

Neighbours

One youth group spoke of how neighbours stuck together. In both youth groups, family was not mentioned.

Other Supports Mentioned

The young mothers group identified a wider range of resources that were available for assistance. These included drop-in centres, the public health department and local clinics. Also seen as a resource was the Hospital for Sick Children Information Line, and the members of the parenting group to which discussants belonged.

Seniors: Coping and Managing

The three seniors discussion groups mentioned many of the same things as the adult groups.

Community Activities

Community activities are important to seniors. Two of the groups we spoke with were organized by the South Riverdale Community Health Centre and Woodgreen Community Centre. These groups were seen as opportunities for seniors to remain active and continue learning.

Community Agencies

Local agencies provide specific assistance when it is needed. Woodgreen's CARE Program for families with someone with Alzheimer's disease was provided as an example of such assistance. Also mentioned were a range of services that were specific to seniors. All three groups discussed the importance of Meals on Wheels for some seniors. The Victoria Order of Nurses was mentioned by one group; another discussed Wheel-Trans. Two groups talked about the important role of churches in assisting those in need. Also mentioned as an important service was Home Care.

Community Health Centres

Two groups saw the local community health centre as an important source of support and assistance. The third mentioned the local medical clinic.

Family Members

Family members were cited by members of two groups as sources of support.

Local Representatives

Two groups specifically mentioned the responsiveness of local representatives.

Neighbours and Friends

Two groups discussed how neighbours and friends help people cope and manage.

Police

The police (and 911) were seen as being available to help when problems arose in relation to crime. This was clearly discussed in two groups. The automated police line was also mentioned in one group.

Woodgreen Community Centre

All three groups discussed the services provided by Woodgreen Community Centre for seniors.

Other Supports Mentioned

Also mentioned as providing help when needed by each of one group were local hospitals, local physicians, and a therapist or counsellor.

New Canadians: Coping and Managing

The range of supports mentioned by the three groups of new Canadians was short. Likely this is because two groups consisted of many people who had been in Canada only a short time.

Community Health Centres

One group consisted of a Chinese Women's Parenting group that was organized by the South Riverdale Community Health Centre. Clearly, for this group, the Centre was an important source of support. In the other groups only one or two participants were familiar with community health centres.

Community Centres

Among those individuals who knew about them, community centres were seen as providing support and services.

Settlement Services

Within two groups there was some mention of an immigrant centre and multicultural services. Most of the participants within the New Canadian Centre groups knew little about these services.

Other Supports Mentioned

Some other supports mentioned by members of the groups included: neighbours, the local hospital, the police (911), lawyers, doctors, and the local church. These supports were mentioned only by those who had been in Canada for a number of years. Most newcomers knew little about where to get help if problems arose.

Summary: Coping and Managing in Riverdale

Related to coping and managing, community services were a common theme across all four project groups. Adults also emphasized the community health centres, community activities, and being able to access food. Neighbours were available to help and when necessary, local representatives and the police could be called upon. And people had personal means of coping and managing when problems arose.

Youth emphasized the importance of local community centres and sometimes neighbours. The young mothers emphasized the importance of parent supports such as drop-ins, help lines, and the public health department.

Seniors spoke about how community activities, frequently organized by local agencies, help them cope and manage. They also call upon family members and neighbours when necessary. The community health centre is an important source of support. When required, the local representatives and police are seen as helpful. The seniors services provided by Woodgreen Community Centre are especially important.

New Canadians saw the availability of community services as being important as well. The community health centre is helpful as are local community centres and local settlement services. Many New Canadians however, were not aware of many of the supports that are available in the community.

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. First, we present findings from the adult groups, then youth, seniors, and then from the New Canadian discussion groups. Prior to this we discuss the issue of maintaining current services that are available in the community.

Maintaining Level of Services

As presented in earlier chapters, two important themes were common to almost all community discussions: *Community Agencies and Resources* and *Cuts to Services*. Riverdale is seen as having a good and important network of services that are available through a range of agencies. The concern about the effects of cuts clearly reflects a concern that these services are at risk. All of the following comments about desired services should be viewed within this context of general satisfaction with existing services and a desire to see these services maintained.

Adults: Desired Services or Programs

Outreach and Communication by Agencies to Community Residents

In all five discussions, the importance of agencies letting people know about programs and services was raised. In one group, it was pointed out that if you knew where to go for help you would be fine, but if not you would be lost. In another group there was extensive discussion about how important it was for pamphlets and information about where to get help be made available to members of the community. One group emphasized the importance of providing outreach to seniors in the community, many of whom may be isolated and in need.

Agency outreach was discussed by another group in terms of preparing books about available resources and having these kind of information in local libraries. And one group discussed this issue as being especially relevant for those whose first language was not English.

Programs to Support Children and Families

A number of desired programs and services that would serve to support children were raised. One group of women spoke about the importance of having parenting programs that would help teach parenting and conflict resolution skills. This same group emphasized the importance of free or low-cost daycare. This same group emphasized the importance of recreation programs for children.

Another group emphasized the importance of more food programs for children and developing programs such as Parents Without Partners. This same group raised the issue of taking allegations of child sexual abuse seriously.

Programs to Support Vulnerable Adults

In one group the importance of having programs to support people with special needs was raised. This was done in specific relation to providing rehabilitation programs for people with drug or alcohol problems. There was also a need to provide psychiatric services for those who needed it. In another group, the importance of maintaining the

social safety net was discussed. Specifically the need for housing for those in need and the importance of teaching skills to people living in group homes were highlighted. In this group politicians who were cutting these services were seen as being irresponsible and uncaring.

Providing More Resources to the Disadvantaged

In one group there was discussion of the importance of providing more money to the less well-off. Also discussed was the importance of dental care for those who cannot afford it.

Police and Media Attitudes Towards the Poor

It was felt that the media should not be so negative towards those who are less well-off. In addition, police should improve their attitudes towards the poor and youth from minority groups.

Providing Support to Small Businesses

In one group, there was discussion about how small businesses in the community could be supported. This included providing financial support and other forms of help such as providing space. It was suggested that a Job Creation Centre would be of value in support of these initiatives.

Neighbourhood Security

In one group, need for an increased police presence was noted. Unwanted businesses such as strip bars and rock bars in the neighbourhood were mentioned.

Youth: Desired Services or Programs

Community Centre Changes

The female community centre youth group would like to see more programs for girls. The male group wanted newer and better equipment.

Need for Things to Do in the Community

The two community centre groups spoke of the need for more things to do in the community. There are apparently very few resources for youth outside of the local community centre.

Jobs

The young mothers' group and the male youth group spoke of the need for jobs in the community. The mothers' groups highlighted the importance of jobs being available for people with disabilities.

Programs for Parents and Children

The young mothers group discussed the need for a drop-in kinder gym for children and for a parent drop-in at a more convenient location.

Seniors: Desired Services or Programs

Activities for Seniors

In all three groups the importance of seniors having activities was discussed. In one group it was important to maintain the ones already available while in another group, more programs were seen as needed. In this same group, more activities in nursing homes was seen as important. In the seniors' residence, people wished to see more building activities and trips for residents. Some wanted to have jobs available for seniors.

Crime and Safety Issues

In one group, an increased police presence in the neighbourhood was desired. This same group wanted to see a Neighbourhood Watch program begun.

Other Issues

One group was concerned about proposed changes to seniors' pension plans. Another group wanted to be able to access legal advice at the local community centre.

New Canadians: Desired Services or Programs

Assistance Upon Arrival in Canada

While one group explicitly raised the issue of receiving assistance, it was clear that members of all three groups felt they could benefit from having more information and support upon arrival in Canada. Information about community health centres and other sources of support could be provided.

Information in One's Own Language

Being able to get information about health services in their own language was seen as very important by all three groups. Information is also needed about jobs, education, and community recreation and community health centres.

Services in Their Own Language

Being able to obtain health and other services in their own language is very important. This is especially the case when people arrive in a new country such as Canada. This was the case across all three groups.

Support in Finding Employment and Volunteer Experience

In all three groups discussion took place about obtaining employment and Canadian job experience. Many participants have had a difficult time finding a job in Canada. Many are not able to use education degrees they obtained in their home country. People also have trouble finding volunteer work. Participants felt that courses they completed in their country of origin were sometimes not recognized by Canadian universities.

Assistance in getting Canadian work experience was seen as extremely important. For example, when people complete courses offered by the local boards of education, there should be something in place to help them find a paid or volunteer job.

Other Desired Services

In one group the issue of providing support for seniors was raised. In another group the importance of recreation services was mentioned.

Summary: Desired Services and Resources in Riverdale

A clear commonality across most groups was programs to support children and families. Also a common desire was efforts to reduce crime and improve personal safety.

Adults, as noted, wished more programs to support children and families and improving safety. There was also a desire on the part of some groups to provide resources to the disadvantaged, both those on low incomes and those recovering from illness. There was also a desire for improved attitudes on the part of the media and police towards the less well-off. Also mentioned were programs to support small businesses.

Youth wished to see more employment opportunities and things to do in the neighbourhood. There was also a desire for programs to support children and families. Seniors wished to see more activities and efforts to reduce crime and improve safety.

New Canadians had specific wishes related to adjusting to life in Canada. They wish to have more support available upon arrival to Canada. They need information about services and opportunities in their own language. New Canadians would benefit from assistance in gaining employment and volunteer experience in Canada and more educational opportunities.

6

Results from the Community Interview Project

The purpose of the community interview project was to have community members conduct quality of life interviews with their friends and neighbours. This would allow us to hear the views of other people in the community who may not be connected with agencies or groups. It would also allow us to confirm some of the findings we heard in the group discussions. Finally, it would allow us to assess the usefulness of having community members themselves carry out community quality of life assessments. Each community interviewer asked the person they were interviewing what was it about the neighbourhood or community that help 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.

In total 63 interviews were carried out. Eighteen interviews were carried out with youth, that is, individuals up until the age of 25. Twenty-three were carried out with seniors, individuals 55 years or older. Seventeen were carried out with adults between the ages of 25 and 55. And five were carried out in Chinese with four adult women and one man. 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 63 individuals. When an area was especially relevant to a particular group of people, this is mentioned.

Strengths and Positive Factors

In all we heard about 45 different aspects of the community from the 63 people who participated in the project. These 45 aspects have been grouped into 14 general categories. Many of these are similar to the ideas we heard from the community discussion groups but some are new.

Access to Amenities (41 mentions)

This category is concerned with having a variety of restaurants and shopping nearby. These aspects were mentioned by a majority of all groups. All five New Canadians mentioned this issue.

Activities in the Community (23 mentions)

A number of people identified having things to do in the community as being positive. These include neighbourhood festivals, and activities at nearby centres or in their housing complexes or residences. Specifically mentioned was community dinners that allow neighbours to meet each other. This area was most mentioned by adults and seniors.

Affordable Neighbourhood (7 mentions)

A number of people mentioned low cost is an important factor making life good for them. This was in specific reference to both services and programs as well as stores.

Community Agencies and Resources (38 mentions)

Many people mentioned having agencies and resources in the community that provide services. Included within this category were community centres, local churches, facilities for the disabled, responsive local politicians, parent drop-ins, good public services, recreation facilities, and in one case, a special bus for seniors to take them to the local shopping mall. Health-related agencies make up their own category. This area was mentioned by almost all adults, and most youth. Four of five New Canadians mentioned this aspect.

Culturally Relevant Resources (7 mentions)

All of these references to culturally relevant resources came from New Canadians. All five mentioned being able to shop in Chinatown. Two mentioned being able to get services in Chinese.

Clean Area (3 mentions)

Two adults and one senior felt the area was clean.

Convenient Location (5 mentions)

The proximity of Riverdale to other neighbourhoods and downtown was mentioned primarily by seniors.

Cultural Diversity (8 mentions)

The cultural diversity of the community was mentioned equally across all groups.

Family and Friends (42 mentions)

A common idea was how having friends and neighbours help to make life good for people. Also mentioned was having relatives and family nearby. A majority of all groups except the New Canadians spoke of these aspects of the community.

Health Care Services (12 mentions)

Having health care services was seen as supporting quality of life. Included within this category was the local community health centre, nearby doctors and clinics, as well as hospitals. Most of these mentions were by seniors.

Housing-Related Issues (38 mentions)

Many people spoke positively of their housing and apartments. Some spoke of their housing as being child-oriented. Some said there was good maintenance and that the laundry room was convenient. Office staff being helpful was mentioned by one person and others spoke of how privacy and quiet were good things. A majority of adults and seniors mentioned these issues.

Libraries (7 mentions)

Having good libraries was spoken of as supporting quality of life. Four of these responses came from the five New Canadians interviewed.

Natural Amenities (27 mentions)

A common aspect mentioned was having natural amenities such as parks and trees. People also spoke of the beach area as something that was a positive aspect of the community. This was mentioned by about a third of each group except where four of five New Canadians mentioned it.

Police and Emergency Services (6 mentions)

Having responsive police and emergency services was mentioned as a positive aspect of the community. This was mentioned most by youth and seniors.

Public Transportation (38 mentions)

Having good public transportation was mentioned as being important to people. Almost all seniors and New Canadians mentioned this and about half of the other groups.

Quiet Neighbourhood (8 mentions)

An equal proportion of groups felt that the area was quiet.

Safety (11 mentions)

An equal proportion of all groups felt safe in the community.

Schools (12 mentions)

Nearby and good schools was mentioned by people as supporting their quality of life. This was most mentioned by youth; about a half. Having English as a second language classes was also mentioned by one New Canadian.

Other Mentions

One senior liked the activist and caring nature of the community. Another senior felt youth were well-behaved.

Liabilities and Negative Factors

In all 70 different negative aspects of the neighbourhood or community were mentioned by participants in the community quality of life project. These aspects were categorized into 17 categories. While some of these categories were homogeneous, such as concern about children or youth or crime, others were much more diverse as many concerns were very specific to each individual.

Children and Youth Behaviour (25 mentions)

A negative factor mentioned by two individuals was the occurrence of child abuse. More common was concern about parents not watching over their children. Much more common were concerns about youth hanging out on the street and being verbally abusive to adults. Concerns about children were equally likely among the different groups of interviewees.

Crime and Safety (36 mentions)

People mentioned crime and safety as being a concern. Many people did not feel safe in the community, especially at night. There was also much mention of drugs, break-ins, and fear for personal safety. This concern was distributed across all groups.

Environmental Issues (18 mentions)

Concern was expressed about bad air in the neighbourhood, and smell from businesses. Three persons spoke of a lack of trees and another about the polluted beaches. This concern was especially relevant for New Canadians where all five were concerned about bad air. The remainder were distributed across all groups.

Harassment (6 mentions)

All the mentions of harassment, except one, were made by youth. These referred to police and security guards where they lived. There was a mention of racist people in the neighbourhood.

Housing (20 mentions)

The concerns about housing tended to be very specific to the person who was being interviewed. Some people were unhappy with their housing. Other people mentioned alcohol in the recreation room, the building elevator being broken, locked doors, a need for visitors' parking and the water being turned off. These concerns were focused among seniors, youth, and New Canadians.

Neighbourhood Dirty and Run-Down (26 mentions)

There were a number of different concerns expressed about the state of the neighbourhood. These included comments about animals being loose, dirt, dog excrement, a neighbour feeding birds, noise, and vermin. A number of people considered the neighbourhood to be run down. These concerns were mainly from seniors and youth. Also, all five New Canadians spoke about this issue.

Neighbourhood Lacking Activities (11 mentions)

Some felt that there was not enough to do in the neighbourhood. These concerns came primarily from seniors though it was mentioned by some people from the other groups.

Neighbourhood Lacking Restaurants and Shopping (10 mentions)

Some felt that the local restaurants were of poor quality. Others felt that all the good restaurants closed too early. Some felt that shopping was not nearby enough. One person wished to see an organic food store nearby. Almost all of these mentions came from seniors.

Neighbourhood Lacking Services (14 mentions)

Some concerns about a lack of services were expressed. Some spoke of a poor library, others mentioned a lack of daycare, lack of facilities in general, a need for a recreation centre, or lack of a post office. Also mentioned was health care not being nearby, and the closing of a local hospital. Another person felt that the waiting list for housing was too long. One felt the police responded too slowly. Half of these came from adults. A majority of new Canadians were concerned about services.

Neighbours (18 mentions)

Some interviewees were not happy with their neighbours. The complaints about neighbours ranged from being noisy to being unfriendly. Others were not happy with the fighting that took place among people. One person commented there didn't seem to be any community spirit. These concerns were distributed across all groups.

Parking and Traffic (9 mentions)

Some people felt that there was too much traffic. Others felt that there was not enough parking available. One person wished to see more cross-walks in traffic. These complaints came from youth, adults, and new Canadians.

Poverty and Cost of Living (3 mentions)

Mentions were concerned with the amount of poverty in the community and the cost of living. Another was concerned about the stereotyping of the poor.

Reputation of the Neighbourhood (5 mentions)

Four adults and one new Canadian felt that because of subsidized housing the neighbourhood had a bad reputation.

Public Transportation (4 mentions)

Some people were unhappy with the public transportation. Others felt that new transit was needed and one person felt that Wheel-Trans needed to be improved. Three of these mentions came from seniors.

Unsavory People (25 mentions)

Mentioned by people were the presence of beggars and drunks on the street. Also mentioned by some was the presence of "perverts." These complaints were distributed across groups with the largest number coming from seniors, adults, and New Canadians.

Unwanted Local Businesses (8 mentions)

Included in this category were complaints about local bars, donut shops, and the local strip bar. These concerns were voiced by adults and seniors.

Other Concerns

Three adults did not like the cultural diversity in the neighbourhood. Two seniors were not happy with snow removal. One person complained about bicycles on the sidewalk and local construction. One person was not happy with the local politicians.

Coping and Managing With Problems

In response to the question of what helps you cope or manage when problems arise, 34 different items were mentioned by the 63 persons interviewed. These items were grouped into 15 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 (13 mentions)

The staff person at a residence was seen as a source of assistance. For those living in a co-op, the manager was seen as helpful. Eleven of these mentions were from seniors; the others from adults.

Charitable Agencies (4 mentions)

Some people mentioned charitable agencies such as GoodWill, the Salvation Army, and St. John’s Ambulance as places to go for help.

Churches (4 mentions)

Some people mentioned the local church as a means of support when problems arose.

Community Agencies and Resources (36 mentions)

A number of interviewees mentioned local community agencies as places to receive help. Included within this category were community centres, parent resource centres,

social programs, recreation centres, and women's shelters. These mentions were distributed across groups; all five New Canadians mentioned this support.

Elected Representatives (2 mentions)

Local elected representatives were mentioned as places to go for help.

Emergency Services (35 mentions)

Emergency services such as calling 911, the fire department or police were a common source of assistance if a serious problem arose. These were distributed across all groups.

Family (12 mentions)

Family members were included in this category. Eight of these mentions were from seniors.

Friends and Neighbours (35 mentions)

Friends and neighbours were seen as a source of assistance. These responses were distributed across all groups.

Government Agencies (6 mentions)

The Children's Aid Society, public health department, and the social service office were mentioned as places where one could go for help if necessary. Five of these mentions were from youth.

Health Care Facilities (28 mentions)

Some people mentioned health care facilities such as local clinics, the community health centre, hospital, or family physician as places to go for help. These were distributed across all groups with the exception of New Canadians.

Help Lines (2 mentions)

Help lines were mentioned by two youth.

Legal Services (3 mentions)

Some people mentioned local legal clinics as places that can help. Others mentioned their own lawyer.

Personal Alarms (2 mentions)

Some seniors mentioned having a personal alarm that can call for assistance in case of a fall or other emergency.

Personal Coping (4 mentions)

Four adults said they coped by themselves or by drinking or sleeping.

School (4 mentions)

Four youth mentioned school guidance counsellors as people who could help when problems arise.

Other Sources of Help

Two adults mentioned using the yellow pages, and one would get in touch with the bank.

Desired Services or Programs

The 63 interviewees were asked what would they like to see that would help them cope or manage better. In all 61 different things were mentioned. These are organized into 13 categories.

Activities and Events (35 mentions)

The desired activities or events mentioned included things such as movie theatres, bowling alleys, concerts, dance clubs, picnics, recreation centres, seniors' activities, and winter activities. Almost all seniors mentioned a desired activity or event and all New Canadians did so. About half of youth mentioned these issues as well.

Beautification of Area (4 mentions)

Four seniors mentioned that more flower beds and gardens would improve the area.

Friendlier Civil Servants (5 mentions)

Three youth wanted police to spend less time hassling them and more time patrolling. One New Canadian felt that police could be friendlier and another that Toronto Transit Commission drivers could be more courteous.

Improved Security (12 mentions)

Included in this category were better security, more police patrols, and setting up of a neighbourhood watch. These responses were spread across the adult, seniors, and youth groups.

Improved Maintenance (7 mentions)

Better garbage pick-up, better building maintenance, new paint and better sidewalks were included in this category. Four of these mentions were from youth and three from seniors.

Improved Transportation (3 mentions)

Two seniors wanted better public transportation; one adult wanted a co-op car set-up.

Language-Related Services (3 mentions)

All of the desires for translation services, medical services in Chinese, and libraries with Chinese books were expressed by New Canadians.

More Community Interaction (4 mentions)

Three youth and one adult wished to see more community opportunities for the community to interact and communicate.

Neighbourhood Services (8 mentions)

An after-hours clinic, first aid training, an information number, a home-care agency, and a post office were all desired. Five of these were mentioned by adults, one each by the other groups.

Programs For Children and Families (12 mentions)

More daycare, more children's programmes, drop-ins, recreation programs for families and programs for single parent families were mentioned. Half of these were mentioned by youth, the others spread across the other groups.

Programs For Vulnerable People (5 mentions)

Three youth and two adults called for programs for people with disabilities, more drug rehabilitation programs, and hostels for the homeless.

Stores and Restaurants (14 mentions)

The request for bookstores, cafes, cleaning services, health food stores, restaurants, supermarkets, and a weight loss clinic were in this group. Seven requests came from seniors, five from adults, and two from other groups.

Teen and Youth Services (21 mentions)

Fifteen of these requests came from youth, and five from adults. These included action on teen problems, alternate school programs for youth, jobs for teens, more outreach workers, teen dances, youth activities, and a youth centre.

Other Mentions

One person desired better housing, another dental insurance, another more parking, and one, parkland for running dogs.

Summary of Findings from the Community Interview Project

There were some similarities as well as differences in the findings from this project with the group discussions. Similarities included an appreciation of the many agencies in the community and the services they provide. Another similar finding was the sense that Riverdale has many amenities such as stores and restaurants. Public transportation is seen as a positive as are the natural amenities. Positives mentioned in the community interviews but not very evident in the group discussion was the importance of housing -- mentioned very often by seniors -- and schools -- mentioned often by youth. Another noted addition was the importance given to family and friends in the community interview project.

There were many similarities in concerns and issues. These included concern about children and youths' behaviour, crime and safety, the environment, and the neighbourhood being dirty and run-down. Things that were new in the community interview project were concerns about housing, the neighbourhood lacking activities and amenities, and specific complaints about neighbours. These new findings suggest that when interviewed alone, people may mention things not spoken of in groups. Overall, however, there was much congruence between information received from the two different approaches: the group discussion and community interviews.

In terms of coping and managing the responses of going to community agencies and local health care facilities was very similar to what we heard in the group discussions. Also common was going to neighbours and friends for help when needed. In the community interviews there was much more reference to obvious sources of support such as emergency phone numbers, the police, and help lines. This suggests that in the interviews, people mentioned things they would do if an emergency occurred.

7

Views of Service Providers

Eleven interviews were carried out with service providers who work with people in Riverdale. In this chapter we explore their perceptions of community strengths and community issues or problems. We also explore what they see as supports and barriers to effective action. The kinds of service providers we spoke with are provided in the Appendix.

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.

Caring and Neighbourly Community

Over and over we heard that Riverdale is a community in which people care about each other. This characteristic emerges in differing ways from different people but the essence is the same. The community health centre program director speaks of this in terms of it being an activist community. Specific emphasis is placed on Riverdale's history of environmental activism. The many community agencies that exist grew out of this activism and concern about others.

Others such as the church minister, community dietitian, community health promoter and community centre support services manager speak of this in terms of community involvement. People get involved in what's happening within Riverdale. They work to improve the community and they support their local agencies. Still others, such as the youth worker and church minister speak of it in terms of being a caring neighbourhood that is willing to provide concrete assistance to people when they need it. The community health worker spoke of the positive network and the strong social supports that are available to newly arrived people from China. The community health promoter felt that seniors were very familiar with the area and had built up their social networks, providing a strong sense of connectedness for them.

Community Agencies and Resources

Almost everyone saw the agencies and services that are available in Riverdale as being important to community well-being. The two managers and the dietitian spoke of the general network of agencies that are available to assist people in need. These agencies are seen as being community-based and responsive to community needs. The community health promoter felt that the service providers in the neighbourhood really complement each other without a lot of overlapping.

Others spoke of specific agencies that are available in the community that assist and support their specific client groups. The youth worker stressed the importance of the local community centre as did the seniors' residence worker, and the New Canadian Centre teacher. The public health nurse emphasized the importance of the mothers' support group. The literacy coordinator felt that the presence of so many services within walking distance was a real strength of the community.

Diversity

Like others, some of the service providers spoke of the diversity of the community as an asset. The seniors' support manager emphasized that communities such as Chinatown and Greektown provide a cultural identity and sense of security for seniors. The community health centre program director emphasized the intellectual, social, and cultural mix as providing for an interesting place to live. Newcomers are attracted to Riverdale

because of the generally lower cost of housing, and the number of settlement services that are available. Newcomers also know that there are services and different kinds of foods that will be accessible to them. The importance of access to ethnic services and resources was also emphasized by the seniors' residence worker. The community health worker stressed the importance of a range of resources for Chinese-speaking people. These included the availability of Chinese goods, the availability of services in their own language for Chinese people, and the availability of seniors' accommodation for Chinese seniors.

Education and Schools

The public health nurse and the youth worker emphasized the importance of having schools and educational opportunities nearby. For the young mothers, having flexible and special programs was emphasized. These programs include the S.O.L.E. program at Greenwood School. The proximity of the local school was seen as important by the youth worker.

Parks and Natural Amenities

The public health nurse and the New Canadian Centre teacher spoke of the importance of parks and natural amenities for residents.

Public Transportation

Public transportation was mentioned by both the seniors services manager and the residence worker as being important to seniors. It also allows them to get to appointments and participate in the community. The importance of public transportation was also discussed by the public health nurse.

Safety

The dietitian and the seniors' residence worker both felt that people feel safe in the community. People know each other; the number of crimes committed is still relatively low.

Other Positive Aspects

For the public health nurse, living in a familiar neighbourhood was seen as important for young mothers. The seniors' residence worker emphasized the building's community kitchen as being helpful. The quality of the local libraries and their importance for New Canadians was emphasized by the New Canadian Centre teacher. The literacy coordinator and the community health worker stressed the importance of low cost goods in the neighbourhood as being important. Additionally the health promoter discussed the availability of low-cost accommodation in the neighbourhood.

Liabilities and Negative Aspects

A number of issues were raised concerning challenges being faced in Riverdale by community members like those who participated in our groups. Because some of these issues are specific to client groups, these are presented in terms of the views of each service provider.

Program Director, Community Health Centre

The main liabilities and issues that face Riverdale residents include unemployment and poverty, environmental issues related to poor housing, continuing issues of access to food, and lead contamination, Also mentioned was a recent incidences of racism and distribution of hate literature.

Changes in the local economy have had serious impacts in South Riverdale. There were significant job losses when the local economy shifted from heavy industry to service industry. Consequently, lower wages and unemployment have contributed to poverty in South Riverdale and many families and individuals are struggling to make ends meet.

Access to affordable, fresh food is a problem in South Riverdale. In the past Queen Street had a disproportionately high number of licensed bars and liquor stores, compared to the number of places to purchase fresh food.

Environmental health issues related to poor housing are a significant problem. In a local subsidized housing complex a number of environmental issues were identified

including asbestos and sewer problems. The serious environmental concerns in South Riverdale related to lead from Canada Metals was described as an obvious community problem.

Community Dietitian

The main issue identified was poverty and lack of money. The lack of money is associated with all kinds of problems: poor housing, inability to get education or training, and becoming isolated from the community.

Community Minister

The challenges being faced by community members in Riverdale include access to food issues, addressing the needs of vulnerable people in the community, poverty and homelessness, and a sense of dislocation experienced by residents as neighbourhoods change.

The minister felt that a major challenge in South Riverdale is food access. It was felt that access to affordable, fresh food was a poverty issue for some residents due to their limited incomes, as well as the limited number of places in the area where one could purchase healthy foods.

The community minister expressed concern for people who are vulnerable or socially isolated. It was felt that there were a number of issues related to the high degree of poverty among residents. Several residents must manage on social assistance. Others face significant issues such as problems with alcohol and drugs, and homelessness.

Ethnic diversity is evident among South Riverdale's residents. Despite an overall sense of community, some long-time residents have experienced feelings of dislocation with the many newcomers to South Riverdale.

Literacy Coordinator

The coordinator identified poverty, crime, and drugs as community issues. Regarding crime, some women are afraid to come to the literacy program after dark because of concern about personal safety.

Youth Worker

The main issues faced by youth include drugs, unemployment and poverty, and a sense of hopelessness. Many youth experiment with drugs, mainly because they want to see what they are all about. There appear to be a lot of drug dealers and misuse of drugs in this community.

This area of the city has a very high rate of youth unemployment, partly due to its high youth population. There are no industries in the immediate community. The local mall can only employ a few people. In a needs assessment, youth said they needed meaningful long-term jobs, and not just short term jobs. As a result of these problems, many of these youth have a sense of hopelessness.

Public Health Nurse

Lack of community feeling, limited access to services, expensive housing, and negative perceptions of being a young mother are seen as the main issues being faced by young mothers. It is felt that there is not much community support for young mothers and services are not found in one place.

Manager, Seniors Support Services

The main issues being faced by seniors are seen as the need for in-home supports, lack of government funding for needed services, limited mobility of seniors in the community, poverty, and social isolation.

According to the manager, there is a need for increased in-home supports due to the aging population in South Riverdale. There is an increasing number of seniors in South Riverdale who are becoming frail and need more in-home supports to maintain their independence.

Limited mobility was also identified as an issue for many of the seniors. It is felt that frail seniors have difficulty accessing the services and programs at the community centre due to their limited mobility. The manager stated that there are various issues and problems related to high levels of poverty among seniors that affects access to services, including not being able to afford the nominal fees charged for some programs.

Given these needs, the lack of government funding was identified as a major issue that has many effects on the community centre's programs. These effects include long waiting lists for many support services and under staffing. For some programs, funding has been frozen for over ten years.

Community Health Promoter

There is an ongoing concern about substance abuse in the community. There is also incidence of mental illness in the community that needs to be addressed. Seniors are also worried about crime and violence in the community. Related to this is the sense that police are sometimes not attentive to responding to calls and concerns from neighbourhood residents.

There is a relatively high degree of low literacy levels in the community. There are also gaps in housing for seniors, as well as slum landlords that are allowing housing to deteriorate. Access to food is an ongoing issue. Transportation and safety are important concerns for seniors. Finally, it is difficult for people to access the natural amenities that exist in Riverdale.

Seniors' Residence Worker

The main problems faced by seniors in the residence are seen as alcoholism, prostitution in the building, individual problems that residents have, and ongoing issues related to the provision of long-term care.

There are some problems associated with alcoholism and some residents bringing in women. This is disagreeable to some other residents. Also, since residents are now admitted on the basis of greater need; new tenants are more likely than before to have problems with alcohol, to be isolated and to have weak social skills. The new tenants are much less likely to participate in building activities.

Government cutbacks have forced many nursing homes to close and seniors are now staying in the building longer and are less able to care for themselves. This sometimes leads to safety issues as seniors forget to turn off stoves.

New Canadian Centre Teacher

The problems and issues being faced by New Canadians are seen as adjusting to life in Canada, unemployment and poverty, and ongoing environmental problems in the neighbourhood.

New Canadian students are seen as facing a monumental task in adjusting to Canada. The students speak of how hard it is to find a job. They cannot find work because they do not have any Canadian experience and find it difficult to obtain such experience.

The number of homeless people and beggars, as well as the boarded up stores and restaurants in the area is seen as being very disheartening for newcomers to Canada. The teacher has also noticed that garbage is everywhere and that boxes where the city has planted flowers and trees are now used as garbage cans. She thinks this gives the message to new Canadians that this is a place where people do not respect the environment.

Community Health Worker

The community health worker identified housing as a significant issue for New Canadians. Housing is seen as old and run-down with some having vermin. In some cases there is significant crowding of houses within the neighbourhood and there is crowding within houses as families must share accommodation. Related to this is a sense that there is lack of green space.

New Canadians are also concerned about environmental issues such as the incinerator at the Metro Sewage Works. There is also a cultural component to this as many Chinese people consider it bad luck to live near chimneys or smokestacks.

There are also issues related to crime and safety. Many people are afraid of petty crime and for their personal safety. They are especially afraid in the evening and fear for their children. There is concern about children being exposed to drugs.

Finally, there is concern about economic decline of the community. Many small businesses are closing. There is also ongoing concern about unemployment and the lack of opportunities in the neighbourhood.

Supports to Effective Action

There was very strong agreement across the service providers on the supports that are available in Riverdale for effective action. These supports include the partnerships that exist among agencies, support from the community, and support from the agency and committed staff. There were also some specific aspects mentioned by some individuals.

Partnerships Among Community Agencies and Groups

The community health centre program director, the dietitian, seniors' support services manager and the seniors' residence worker all emphasized the importance of the collaborations among different service agencies and groups. The importance of the community health centre working with both health and social service agencies was emphasized. All agencies are working to assist the members of the community. The dietitian stressed that people have many needs that must be met from different agencies.

The literacy coordinator is provided with space free of charge by a city agency. The Metro Separate School Board provides books as does the Toronto Public Library. The community health worker felt that the cooperation, rather than competition, among agencies was a strong point for the community. The seniors health promoter emphasized the working relationships among her agency and Woodgreen, East Toronto Seniors, Ralph Thornton Centre, the Home Safe Home Project, and the Toronto Mayor's Committee on Aging.

The seniors' support manager emphasized that the comprehensive network of supports that included Riverdale Hospital, Toronto East Hospital, the South Riverdale Community Health Centre, and the Jimmie Simpson and Pape Recreation Centres were all essential to the quality of life of seniors in the community. Finally, the seniors' residence worker felt he could draw upon community agencies for assistance as issues arose in the building.

Support from the Community

Community support for their activities was discussed by the dietitian, community minister, youth worker, and the seniors' residence worker. The dietitian felt that her work was supported by members of the community. The community minister spoke of the commitment provided by the church congregation for its activities. The youth worker noted that there was a lot of goodwill towards his work from people in the community. The seniors' residence worker received support from people in the community for his work. The literacy centre depends upon volunteers to provide the tutoring that is the mainstay of the program. The seniors health promoter saw the seniors themselves as a real support to her work.

Support from the Agency and Other Staff

The importance of the support provided by the home agency and its committed staff was discussed by virtually all interviewees. The health centre program director spoke about the committed staff as did the community minister, and New Canadian Centre teacher. The dietitian spoke about the recognition factor associated with the agency as being of assistance in her work. The community health worker felt that the creation of her position and the presence of the Chinese doctor really assisted efforts in meeting the needs of the community. The youth worker emphasized the role played by volunteers, while the public health nurse noted the supported provided for her work by the public health department. The seniors' residence worker felt that staff helped to maintain the residence in good repair and state. The seniors health promoter emphasized the support of the agency and its staff as being essential.

Other Supports Mentioned

The support of the local elected representatives was highlighted by the community health centre program director. Funding for the Centre's new building was announced during the previous government. The church is benefitting from its recent capital legacy. The seniors' residence worker and the teacher spoke of the sense of accomplishment they get from their work. The teacher also mentioned the support she gets from her students and her family.

Barriers To Effective Action

The barriers to effective action were consistent across many of the service providers. These were focused on lack of resources and staff and the effects of funding cuts. Also discussed were issues of identifying those in need, and cultural barriers. These are presented in alphabetical order.

Cultural Barriers

Three service providers spoke of how cultural barriers sometimes serve as a barrier to effective action. The public health nurse mentioned that sometimes young moms would feel more comfortable if other mothers were of the same cultural background, which is sometimes the case but not always. The seniors' residence worker indicated that sometimes staff have difficulty communicating with residents because of the many different languages spoken.

The community health worker outlined a number of cultural barriers including isolation related to language problems and lack of knowledge about programs. Persons who speak only Mandarin can also be more isolated than those who speak Cantonese. There are also limited amounts of language-appropriate services available.

Effects of Service Cuts

There was specific mention of the effects of service cuts upon service provision. The community minister noted the effects of provincial funding cuts on community agencies, such as staff overwork and burnout. Also, the cuts to benefits have directly impacted upon people who are the most vulnerable in the community. The seniors' support services manager believes that the lack of funding has affected the ability of the agency to provide for the needs of seniors in the community. They have had to put a cap on services, and now there is only one staff person working on all the programming for active older adults. The New Canadians Centre teacher spoke of the effects on morale that

impending cuts are having on her and her colleagues. There is also concern about the effects of the new mega-school board on the quality of education. The literacy coordinator felt that funding was needed to provide a more welcoming atmosphere for clients.

Identifying Those in Need

Some service providers are concerned with difficulties in identifying those in need in the community. The community health centre is seen by the program director as having to let more people know about its services and resources. While those that use the centre are very happy with it, it is felt that they are reaching only a small part of the population. The dietitian felt that it is important to reach those who are in need but are not using services. It is difficult to reach Chinese-speaking men according to the community health worker. The public health nurse spoke of the difficulties in connecting with teen mothers.

Lack of Resources

All the service providers spoke of the problems associated with insufficient resources and lack of staff. The community health centre program director felt that there was not enough staff or time to begin to meet the needs of community members. The dietitian was concerned about maintaining volunteer involvement and helping to maintain the community spirit of activism that is so important for the centre's work. Lack of staff is also seen as a barrier to effective action by the youth worker, the community minister, and the public health nurse. The community minister emphasized the difficulty in maintaining volunteer involvement. The community health worker spoke of pointed out that recent cuts led to a lay-off of a worker in the women's health area.

Other Barriers Mentioned

The teacher felt that students' initial fear upon entering the school is a barrier but this is taken care of very quickly. Another barrier is that sometimes students leave school as soon as they find a job. This and problems with erratic attendance makes teaching and learning difficult. The transience of the population was an issue according to the community health worker. They come for help when their need is greatest and then move out of neighbourhood when things improve. The literacy coordinator felt that lack of child

care was a barrier for people to attend the centre and receive tutoring. The youth worker felt that the lack of good public transportation to the Centre was a barrier. Finally, the seniors' service support manager was concerned about the effects of the new provincial policies on Community Care Access Centres (CCAC). The need for agencies to provide a funding proposal to the CCAC makes future funding uncertain. This makes it very difficult to plan for future services for seniors in the community.

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 mandate and activities. In some cases, there are specific responses to issues identified in the previous chapter. In this chapter we first present material focused on agency work with adults, then youth, seniors, and then new Canadians.

Community Health Centre

Mandate

The community health centre's dual roles include health promotion and prevention activities in the community, and providing primary health care. At the community level, community health workers act as catalysts. They promote community members' abilities to manage their own issues. To develop the community's own activist efforts, community health workers withdraw once the building blocks are put into place. The centre has been involved in organizing coalitions such as the People's Food Market, East Toronto Organizing Against Racism and Hate and Greater Riverdale Economic Action Together.

The community health centre has developed services and programs to address the specific needs of target groups such as seniors, the Chinese community, women and children, teenage mothers and their children, and new immigrants and refugees.

Seniors

The community health centre provides primary care services staffed by family physicians, nurses, and social workers. Staff chiropractors provide foot care management to address seniors-specific health needs, such as diabetes. On the health promotion and prevention side, the community health centre has developed education programs for seniors. For example, Injury Prevention is a program which teaches seniors to watch for environmental hazards around their homes. The Safe Medications program has received national, and to some extent international, recognition. Staff are also developing a program to promote seniors looking out for other seniors.

Chinese Community

Having Chinese-speaking staff in both the clinic and health promotion programs has greatly facilitated access to culturally sensitive services for this target group. The health centre's Chinese community health worker has made links with this community. One health promotion program is a Chinese women's health education and support group. The community health centre has a Chinese-speaking dietitian.

Violence Against Women And Children

In the area of violence against women and children, the community health centre has been working on several levels, from education to support groups. Videos have been developed and by working with physicians, they have been helped to understand what their role is in preventing violence. Clinical protocols on dealing with wife assault have been developed.

Maternal And Newborn Child Health

Within their Maternal and Newborn Child Health program, the community health centre provides obstetrical, prenatal and newborn care. It collaborates with other agencies in developing programs to meet the unique needs of residents in this community. One partnership programs is with a local hospital, Baby's First Week Home program, which provides post-partum care.

Teen Moms is a program to meet the needs of teenage mothers. The Newcomers Prenatal program is a partnership with Public Health. At the Red Door Shelter, a local refugee reception centre, there are unique health needs among the pregnant, refugee women that the health centre helps to address.

Other Programs and Services

Other programs and services that the centre offers include Environmental Health, Urban Planning and Land Use, Chiropody, Social Work, Quit Smoking Program, Metamorphosis and the Nutrition Ambassador programs. Additionally, the centre has developed reader-friendly educational resources to facilitate access to health promotion and prevention materials.

Activities

Responses to Environmental Issues

In response to sewage back-up and asbestos problems, Community Health Centre staff advocated, on behalf of local residents, to the local City Councillor, Peter Tabuns. By working with the City Councillor's office, Community Health Centre staff were able to get the building management to clean up these problems at the housing complex.

The Community Health Centre staff worked to have the building management clean up the poor heating and ventilation systems that were affecting residents' health. Staff began educating residents about managing their own living spaces, such as looking at the chemicals they used indoors.

Responses to Food Access Issues

The community health centre facilitates community actions around food access. For example, community members were able to bring about the People's Food Market with the Community Health Centre's help. The market, which is now in its sixth year, offers local residents fresh fruits and vegetables at affordable prices. South Riverdale's food market is the only volunteer-run food market in Toronto. South Riverdale now has a Food Co-op to further promote food access.

Responses to Hate Literature Incidents

The community had a swift response to the presence of hate literature. The community health centre, and staff from Woodgreen Community Centre, Ralph Thornton Community Centre, and the Toronto Board of Education collaborated on this issue. They mailed letters about the hate literature incident to elected officials and Boards of Directors of several community organizations. A community meeting attracted 70 people and a rally was carried out during the week of Martin Luther King's birthday.

Responses to Lead Issues

Through an ongoing battle over the last 10 to 15 years, pressure from the community resulted in Canada Metals stopping its lead emissions. Additionally, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment gave \$11 million to replace the affected soil of 1000 homes. Immediate harm to residents has been managed through the activist efforts of the community.

United Church

Activities

The church carries out many activities that address health and social welfare issues in South Riverdale. In addition, the church tries to meet the spiritual needs of individual members and the community as a whole. There have been some changes at the church that have allowed development of this unique role. One has been the church's receipt of a large capital legacy. Building on that the church developed a number of initiatives that allowed it to build beyond its small congregation and connect with the community. These initiatives are discussed below. We then present some specific church responses to issues identified in the previous chapter.

Community Meal Group Program

The Community Meal initiative brings out many members of the community who are vulnerable or socially isolated. For the 20-25 people who stay for the group program

which follows the meal, the approach of focusing on social interactions has helped them stay connected.

Red Door Shelter

The church operates a major outreach project for refugees, the Red Door Shelter. Refugees come from several countries including Nigeria, Zaire and the Congo and are served by multilingual staff. Funding is received from several sources including the federal government, municipal (Metro Toronto) government, and the church itself. The history of the Red Door dates back to Reverend Ray McCleary, the minister of the church in the 1930s. He painted the door of the parsonage red so that neighbourhood children knew this was a place where they could come and play. In the late 1970s, Reverend John Hilborn envisioned the Red Door as a first stop for refugees. The Red Door provided temporary housing while financial arrangements were made and more permanent housing found.

The Red Door Shelter, in partnership with the community health centres has developed programs for newcomers. Programs exist for prenatal care, abused women and their children and evicted families. One program addresses issues of post-traumatic stress among young children. The success of the Red Door Shelter and continued need for services for refugees are evident by requests for services in other areas of Metro Toronto.

Spirit Happening

Spirit Happening is a Saturday night service which serves as an alternative to the church's Sunday worship. This non-denominational service has attracted many community members who attend the Community Meal and helped them stay connected with others.

Women's Group - "Miriam's Sisters"

The community minister leads an innovative women's group that consists of a mix of older, established congregational members and women from the community.

Responses to Food Issues

Community Meal

In response to the food access issue, the church provides its free Community Meal, which is open to anyone. It takes place once a month, and serves 120 to 130 people. The Community Meal and the group which follows it helps some of the vulnerable members of the community stay connected.

English as a Second Language (ESL) Cooking Class

The church provides kitchen facilities for an ESL cooking class operated by the Toronto Board of Education. Thus far, most of the participants have been Chinese. The cooking class allows participants to make healthier choices on limited incomes.

People's Food Market

The church provides space for the People's Food Market, a Riverdale Partners for Food program.

Responses to Poverty

Promoting Advocacy and Activism

The church helps community members to become politically active and advocate for themselves. The church congregation has also aligned itself with the Riverdale Against the Cuts Coalition. The church participated in the Metro Days of Action by having a service outside so that people could join the protest and march on to Queen's Park.

Links with Other Organizations

The Church collaborates with other community organizations on poverty issues. These include the East End Network, Riverdale 2000, Riverdale Partners for Food, and the Greater Riverdale Economic Action Together group. The Partners for Food Coalition

includes Woodgreen Community Centre, South Riverdale Community Health Centre, YWCA (Pape), and the Ralph Thornton Centre.

Operation: Economic Concern

Operation: Economic Concern helps residents manage poverty issues. It operates a free income tax clinic and Share-A-Christmas, which collects funds and toys for families in need.

Responses to Community Dislocation

To reduce feelings of dislocation among long-time residents and promote positive interactions with their Chinese and Vietnamese neighbours, the church has tried to involve new residents in community activities such as their monthly Community Meal and an annual community meal sponsored by the Riverdale Partners for Food.

Community Health Centre, Community Nutrition

Mandate

The centre tries to tailor their programs to respond to the risk factors that are present in the community, including poverty and low income. The dietitians help the community by working to increase access to affordable, healthy food and by supporting people in making healthy food choices. Much of this occurs through partnerships with other community organizations.

Activities

Food Access Initiatives

To increase access to healthy, affordable food, the community dietitian is involved in a People's Food Market, and a food buying co-op. Cooking demonstrations and a menu contest to generate interest in vegetarian cooking have also been held.

Another initiative is the Partners for Food group, started two years ago by South Riverdale Community Health Centre with other agencies. They focus on food access issues in the community and have organized two annual community dinners. The dinners are vegetarian; the last one fed 250 people for \$300.

Healthy Weight Programs

The community dietitian facilitates two programs to support people around issues of weight and body image. The My Weight, My Plan program includes three components: healthy eating, active living and feeling good about yourself. People who have participated in My Weight, My Plan can continue in the Metamorphosis support group.

Individual Counselling

The other dietitian at the health centre provides clinical one-on-one counselling.

Literacy Program

Mandate

The program has been running since 1992, after surveys indicated a need for such a program in the area. It provides free one-to-one tutoring to adult who have trouble reading and writing. It is the only adult one-to-one literacy program in South Riverdale, although there are similar programs north on the Danforth and west of the Don Valley. Most of the people attending are from the South Riverdale area. Most of the learners and some of the tutors are social assistance recipients.

Activities

It has 40 learners and appears to be successful. Many of the learners have been coming for over two years. The program's capacity is 45 to 50 learner-tutor pairs. Not all learners have been matched with tutors because of a lack of daytime volunteers. Tutors need to be fluent readers and writers, but they are expected to not act as a teacher, but to form a peer relationship with the learner.

Address Issues of Unemployment and Crime

The program addresses the connection between poverty and illiteracy, and lack of employment and crime. By building literacy skills, the program addresses these issues. The improvement in literacy skills is felt to impact on the quality of life and employment possibilities of the learners.

Provide Referrals

The program provides referrals to vocational or employment counselling and information about other educational opportunities, including free adult education available in the area. If a learner feels that the program is not an appropriate program for them, for example, the learner needs the structure of a classroom or wants to attend fulltime, or if they are ready to move into a different educational opportunity, the program helps locate the appropriate place.

Provide a Social Network

Because many participants attend on a regular basis for quite a period of time, the program provides people with the opportunity to make friends and build their social network.

Community Centre Youth Programs

Mandate

In their youth program, the community centre serves people aged 12 to 24. Approximately 90% of the youth served are black, 5% are Chinese and 5% white. Many of the black youth have recently immigrated from Somalia. There are three youth workers at the community centre. They connect with the youth in the community, assess their needs and create programs for them, and find funding for those programs. The centre recently received an award from the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada for their innovative, creative programs.

The centre works closely with other community agencies. Close to the community centre is a youth outreach service that provides counselling, advocacy for youth around the criminal justice system, housing and welfare issues. For youth who need immediate shelter, the community centre refers them to another youth service. This summer the centre formed a partnership with Pape Adolescent Resource Centre and they offer programs for youth in care. If youth are interested in a program which is related to their own ethno-cultural background, the community centre staff will refer them to the appropriate agency.

Activities

The community centre provides counselling, an employment program, a teen mothers program, a site for a food bank and a good food box program, a women's safety committee, a children's after school program, music programs, a steel band program, piano classes and citizenship classes. The centre is also hoping to start a youth computer program. The Toronto Board of Education runs an Ontario School Program in the centre. The centre's specific initiatives for youth are presented below.

Art

The centre is trying to diversify its youth program to include more arts and creative activities. A new arts-based program is being developed because it was recognized that there are youth who are not interested in athletic activities, but who would like to develop their artistic talents.

Cultural Festivals

The centre holds festivals to recognize people's cultural heritage in a tangible way and to enable people to learn about other cultures. For example, the Chinese Youth Program, the Chinese Heritage Seniors Program and Riverdale School hold a large festival to celebrate the Chinese New Year. The community centre hosts a large dinner to celebrate Black History Month. Muslim holy days, particularly Ramadan, are recognized. Other groups in the neighbourhood are encouraged to use the centre to hold cultural

celebrations. There are special programs for the Somali, Chinese and Vietnamese youth on Saturdays.

Funding for New Programs

The agency works hard to secure government grants for relevant programs. They recently received funding for a youth employment program and their teenage mothers program. They also recently received a small grant from the City's drug abuse prevention program to run a program next year for young women between 15 and 20.

Recreation

The centre provides recreational programs including gym, soccer, basketball, and games such as pool and table tennis. Youth may become members or participate on a drop-in basis. The recreation programs can act as a springboard for youth to obtain other services if necessary. Staff are trained to notice problems and provide someone the youth can talk to. They will also refer youth to programs at other agencies if necessary.

Youth Employment

The centre has a youth employment program, designed to help youth with their first on-the-job experience. The program is run, as near as possible, to a real work situation. Youth report to a supervisor, fill out a time sheet, structure job descriptions, participate in an interview and do a written test. The youth worker also sees a need for an employment program for people over age 24.

Public Health Department Young Mothers Support

Mandate

The public health nurse facilitates a Young Mothers Support Group, provides support around breastfeeding, participates in the Babies First Week Home program and clinic, and does health promotion activities. The Public Health Department also participates in the East End Young Mom's Project with South Riverdale Community Health Centre and Woodgreen Community Centre. This federally funded program

provides a variety of services for young mothers including cooking, shopping, outings with their children and a drop-in centre.

The primary role of the public health nurse is to provide information to mothers so that they can access existing services. In addition to providing information, the nurse may provide support by accompanying the mother to a new program or to apply for subsidized day care, for example.

Activities

Young Mothers' Support Group

The Young Mothers' Support Group is for women up to age 21 and they meet once a week. The group is ongoing and most mothers stay connected for their first year. When their children are older, some mothers will still drop in to visit or attend the program's annual picnic.

Programs such as the Young Mothers Support Group provide a support network of other mothers in the same area of the city. The nurse saw a need for a young mothers' group because the mothers in the existing parenting groups were often in their late 20s and early 30s and the younger mothers did not feel comfortable. To ensure that the young mothers can come to the program, the public health department provides TTC tokens. They also provide snacks.

Community Health Centre: Seniors' Health Promotion Programs

Mandate

The health promoter described her work with seniors as keeping people independent and living within the community under their terms as long as feasible. In addition to specific initiatives described below, the health promoter offers support, especially to gather people together around issues. She also makes referrals, for example to the CHC's social workers or to the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly, and provides some crisis intervention.

Activities

Clear Language

For the last five years, the health promoter has been working with a group of seniors on clear language issues. They received a Health Canada grant to examine printed material from both health and social services, including government services. This group of seniors have developed expertise in this area and have become a consulting group around clear language and design issues. For example, they helped design a poster for Home Care.

The health centre develops printed information in clear language about problems experienced by seniors. In the past years they have addressed ear wax, cost codes and constipation. The pamphlets are used by the clinical staff at the CHC and disseminated in the community. The health promoter was also very involved in starting Literacy for East Toronto.

Hearing Day

The health centre hosts a Hearing Day once a year. Hearing screening and education are provided and the clinical staff from the CHC remove ear wax.

Injury Prevention - Home Safe Home Project

The CHC received Health Canada funding to address safety issues. In seniors' residences, for example, people decided they needed to provide their own safety net in case a resident became ill or injured. After a recent incident, the seniors became motivated to start checking up on each other on a regular basis. They designed their own way of checking on each other to make sure that they are all right. Seniors have a tag for their door. If it is still there at 10 a.m., someone will knock and get help if there is no answer.

Safe Medications Project

The CHC also received Health Canada funding for a project on the wise use of medication. The Safe Medications Project involved different groups, including the local pharmacists, working together on the issue of safe medication use.

Seniors Wellness Group

The health promoter facilitates a Seniors' Wellness Group. She felt that groups like the Seniors Wellness are a testimony to the capacity the community has.

Community Centre Seniors Community Support Services

Mandate

The agency is a neighbourhood-based, multicultural organization that provides a wide range of programs to the East Toronto community. These programs include children's, seniors, community support, employment and training, and neighbourhood services such as managing close to 400 units of non-profit housing. The community support services enable seniors, persons with disabilities, and other people with difficulties to live independently in the community through the provision of home support, group, and counselling programs.

Activities

Dealing with Issues of Social Isolation

The community centre responds to the problem of social isolation by educating seniors about available services and programs. They try to develop a relationship with seniors and provide them with the appropriate services. The centre also offers a wide range of different programs for active older adults such as Tai Chi, fitness, music, bingo, and educational/health-related programs.

Forming Partnerships With Other Organizations

Forming partnerships with other community agencies and health care facilities assists in supporting the community centre's efforts in carrying out their mandate. This is necessary as the centre's role is becoming more demanding due to earlier discharges from hospitals, and with long-term care reform that aims to keep seniors in the community longer. These partnerships are being formed with agencies such as Riverdale Hospital, Toronto East General Hospital, Applegrove Community Centre, and the South Riverdale Community Health Centre.

Providing Support for Seniors' and Their Caregivers

The community centre supports seniors and their caregivers by offering a Day Program to provide respite care for caregivers. The centre also assigns a case-worker to seniors to assist in taking care of their needs. The case worker has a number of roles. These include providing counselling services, helping to plan for the future, linking seniors up with in-home services, and coordinating all of the support services. The community centre attempts to provide comprehensive services including social, emotional and tangible supports.

Responding to Issues of Poverty

The community centre responds to issues related to low-income by adjusting their fees for programs and advocating for increased funding. They treat seniors with respect and provide services in a dignified manner. The centre also advocates for increased financial support from the government to respond to the needs of seniors.

Supporting Seniors With Limited Mobility

The community centre responds to seniors' limited mobility by making their programs more accessible. They have begun to develop satellite programs that are offered in seniors' apartments, making it easier for them to participate. Developing satellite programs is a growing trend. The community centre is currently in the process of

exploring a project with Metro Housing that involves setting up permanent satellite offices in all of the seniors apartments.

Responses to Government Cuts

The community centre has had to respond to lack of government funding by implementing a cap on their services. For example, in the Client Intervention Assistance Program, 400 to 500 cases have to be divided among three case workers. It is felt that they are unable to address the needs of some ethnic groups due to limited resources. They do not consider caps on services as the best solution, but feel they have no other options. They can no longer accept new clients, but they are trying to increase government funding to meet the demands for services in their catchment area.

Seniors' Residence

Mandate

The seniors' residence is a rent-geared-to-income building where tenants pay 30% of their income towards their rent. The building provides independent living for people aged 55 and over. The community development worker's role is to work with residents in a number of buildings in East Toronto. The worker acts to maintain a healthy community within each building, with a focus on keeping people active. With tenants, programs and social activities are developed, as are connections with agencies that can provide activities and programs in the building or can provide needed services such as Meals on Wheels or Home Care.

Agency Activities

Long Term Care Issues

The community development worker and the social worker are currently examining long term care issues with Woodgreen Community Centre. There is a focus on

supportive housing and creating the support networks needed for people to stay in their apartments, such as Home Care, Meals on Wheels and medical attention, when necessary.

Resident Involvement Plan

The housing company has developed a resident involvement plan in all the buildings. This partnership with residents gives them a voice in the day-to-day business of the housing company, within certain parameters. Tenants in each building were asked to elect two people to bring ongoing, unresolved issues to the housing company. In this building, an English speaking and a Chinese speaking representative were chosen, to reflect the dominant populations in the building.

Tenant Association

A tenant association was established to deal with issues that tenants want addressed. However, it needs support to work effectively.

Workshops and Programs

The community development worker sometimes organizes workshops for the residents, on topics such as safety, fire safety and herbal medicine. Crafts activities, such as knitting and sewing, are also offered, which in the past have appealed primarily to women. The worker wants to also provide crafts options that may be more interesting to some of the male residents, such as woodworking. Residents also initiate some of their own programs, including Bingo, dinners and a mini pool tournament.

A consulting firm found that tenants who were active in their communities and their building, and who had a lot of interactions with family and friends, remained healthier longer. Participation therefore is also seen as an important way to help people gain a sense of ownership in their building.

Adult New Canadian Centre

Mandate

The school has been teaching English as Second Language to new Canadian adults for almost thirty years. Students come from all over the world and from very diverse educational backgrounds. The two main mandates of the school are seen as teaching and helping students heal. The school also plays a role in employment issues, offers guidance services, a library, and a students council, as well as providing a social network.

The primary mandate of the school is to give students skills in all areas of the English language: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The teacher felt that teaching in these areas is done well.

The teacher felt that the school's second mandate is to help students regain their psychological, emotional, mental and physical health, especially those who have experienced extreme trauma. The classroom provides an environment where people can express themselves and find their voice. The school strives to help integrate New Canadians into Canadian society.

Activities

Employment

Students who are having difficulty finding paid work are encouraged to break into the job market by taking volunteer positions. Information and assistance is given from the teacher and guidance centre.

Guidance Counselling

The school has a guidance counsellor who is seen as being compassionate and very helpful. The counsellor is able to put students in touch with those agencies that can provide assistance with many kinds of problems.

Library

The school is equipped with a library. The library is seen as being very well-staffed and with excellent resources

Social Network

The school class provides students with an opportunity to connect with others. This contact allows them to start living a normal life again. At the end of the semester students feel that they have become part of a caring family.

Students' Council

The students council became very politically active because of the possibility of cutbacks to programs. The students participated in a rally where they were part of a huge chain formed by adult students around Queen's Park. The school is seen as giving them a voice in issues that affect them.

Community Health Centre Multicultural Health Promotion Services

Mandate

The community health centre provides primary health care for their patients. A team approach is offered to patients using this service, which includes doctors, nurses, a Chinese social worker, and a psychiatrist. An important part of primary health care in this Community Health Centre is to make services accessible to the Chinese-speaking community. This is done by hiring of Chinese staff, most notably a Chinese physician. Additional cultural interpretation for other staff is provided by the Chinese health promoter. This is seen as an important aspect of services since patients are expected to ask questions and be active in their care.

The Community Health Centre also has as its mandate to address the broad determinants of health, which it does through the activities of its health promotion team. This team works in the area of health education, environmental issues, seniors issues,

women's issues, and safety. Specific activities which relate to the Chinese community under this mandate include Health Education sessions and a Chinese women's group.

Activities

Cultural Interpretation

Health education sessions and the women's group are conducted in Cantonese. However, primary care at the Community Health Centre may involve Chinese clients with no English skills interacting with non-Chinese health workers. The health promoter functions as an interpreter, not just of language but of the culture. The Centre also provides more direct cultural interpretation for some (primary care) services through its employment of a Chinese physician and social worker.

Environmental Issues

Other health promotion initiatives of the Community Health Centre have included work on environmental issues, which is a major concern for the South Riverdale community as a whole. The health promoter mentioned that these projects provide good information for the Chinese community.

Health Education Sessions

Health education sessions for the Chinese community are conducted monthly. Some are focused on specific health problems like diabetes and heart health, while others are more general, such as insomnia and stress management. The purpose of the sessions is to involve the community and raise awareness about the issues that affect health, as well as to provide knowledge to people that they have the power to manage their own health better. Topics for the sessions are solicited in each session. In addition, a needs survey was carried out a year ago to identify topics of interest. Sessions are popular and community members frequently call to enquire about upcoming sessions.

Networking with Other Agencies

Networking with other agencies takes place on at least three levels. First, cooperative planning occurs and collaborative projects are undertaken. For example, at Chinese New Year a health fair is organized with all community centres participating. Second, outreach occurs as a result of agencies using each other's expertise. And third, cross-referrals are facilitated because each agency understands the work of other agencies.

Outreach

The health promoter does outreach to the Chinese community to inform them of available services. The health centre also uses networking to extend its outreach ability. Because of their good relationship with Woodgreen Community Centre and other local organizations, they are often called to provide information for other groups. For example, they have been giving health information sessions to senior's groups in one organization.

Women's Group

The women's group consists of 10 to 15 women with children aged 0 to 6 who meet weekly. It is an open membership group and includes a physical activity component. The group is conducted in Cantonese but Mandarin speakers are welcome. The group decides on topics to be covered. Thus far, topics covered have included self-development, voluntarism, and parenting. The health promoter described involvement in this group as an empowerment process.

For example, when the women learned through visits what various community agencies had to offer, they developed a social service list, which they then distributed widely. Similarly, they organized a women's health day and then ensured that the information was shared with other community members. So while the group determines its own focus and activities, the impact of its efforts extend beyond its own membership.

9

Results from the Elected Political Representatives

In this chapter we report on the interviews that were conducted with City Councillor Peter Tabuns, Metropolitan Toronto Councillor Jack Layton, Member of the Provincial Parliament Marilyn Churley, and City of Toronto Mayor Barbara Hall. 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 chapter 10 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.

Politically Active and Caring Community

Riverdale was seen by all four elected political representatives as a uniquely committed and involved community. In many cases this takes the form of political activity and advocacy on environmental issues, concern about poverty and hunger, and more recently, service cuts and threats to services. The source of this unique identity was related

to the fact that many politically active people were attracted to the area during the 1960's and 1970's by its location near the downtown core and the availability of reasonably priced housing.

Combined with the presence of activist people were the many threats to the well-being of the community that led to citizen involvement and action. These threats were environmental, involving the lead pollution from the Canada Metals Smelter and air pollution from the Commissioners Street incinerator. Other issues that provoked a response were increasing levels of unemployment, poverty, and hunger. Riverdale is seen as the kind of community where even if people are doing well they are concerned about those that are not. Additionally, the experiences related to responding to these issues served as a training grounds for people to develop their analysis and community building skills.

One representative felt that the community tends to elect progressive politicians who have emerged from the community and have proven themselves to the community. All the representatives felt that Riverdale was the kind of community where representatives had to work with the community and could not expect to come in and dictate policies or actions. Similarly, another representative pointed out that as a result of these experiences in action and advocacy, a well-developed volunteer network of individuals and organizations has developed that is able to address and respond to community issues as they arise.

Community Agencies and Resources

The range of community agencies and resources that are available to residents of Riverdale is seen as an important contributor to quality of life by all four elected political representatives. These include the recreation centres such as Jimmie Simpson, Pape, Eastview, Applegrove, and Frankland. They also include the range of social services that are available including Woodgreen, Ralph Thornton and other community centres. The South Riverdale Community Health Centre is seen as providing both sensitive and good health care as well as taking a progressive approach towards a range of community issues.

Representatives pointed out that for many residents, these agencies are essential during difficult times. It was also pointed out that these agencies are funded by the City of Toronto and do not have user fees associated with their use. These agencies and their work are seen as being under threat by the recent cost-costing policies of the provincial government.

Diversity of Community

The diversity of the community was outlined as a community strength by three representatives and was seen as presenting important challenges that need to be addressed by the fourth. The diversity of Riverdale is seen as making it a vibrant and dynamic community. It is also seen as being a welcoming place for a range of different groups such as New Canadians and members of the gay and lesbian community. Multicultural services are available as are groceries and foods for different cultural communities. Accepting such diversity however raises issues of settlement and providing services to meet the needs of community members.

Access to Natural Amenities

Riverdale was seen by two representatives as having unique access to natural amenities. These included the Don Valley and the Leslie Street Spit -- a unique urban wilderness area. However, another representative pointed out issues of access to lake parkland, and ongoing issues related to pollution of these areas. These issues are considered in following sections.

Healthy Urban Environment

Riverdale was seen by one representative as benefitting from being located within a still-vibrant urban environment, the City of Toronto. This provides opportunities for education, employment, and recreation. However, another representative, however pointed out that one aspect of this, a strong neighbourhood identity, is under threat from the planned amalgamation of the City of Toronto, and its neighbourhoods, into one large metropolitan Toronto city.

Problems and Issues

Environmental Problems

All four elected political representatives discussed the history of environmental problems in Riverdale and South Riverdale in particular. The earlier well-known battles to have lead removed from soil and to close down the large incinerators in the neighbourhood were identified as the kind of issues that Riverdale community members have had to deal with. But ongoing problems were also highlighted. These include continuing air pollution from businesses in the port areas, and pollution from the Gardiner and Don Valley Expressways. Additionally, there is an ongoing water pollution problem at the local beaches and with the Don River. One representative pointed out that Metropolitan Toronto Works continues to burn sludge at the waterside and that half the flow of the Don River comes from the Metro North Sewage Treatment Plant.

Poverty and Unemployment

Poverty and unemployment was seen as an important issue in Riverdale in general and South Riverdale in particular by all four representatives. The causes of the problem include globalization and the loss of industry in the area. These include loss of jobs in the Port area as well as job loss associated with the closing of the Lever and Palmolive plants. Federal and provincial policies are seen as making the situation worse.

The Impact of Social Policies

Many social policies are seen as affecting quality of life. Each representative mentioned some specific instances. These concern the cutting of social services and the reduction in welfare benefits. Also mentioned were planned provincial elimination of support for social housing, the downloading of costs by both the federal and provincial governments, and the proposed end of rent control. It was also pointed out by one representative that the promised federal program to ease the transition to free trade was never developed. The effects of provincial changes such as the amalgamation of the six

metro cities and further reduction to service agencies was seen as potentially devastating to the Riverdale community.

Other Issues

Other issues were identified by the representatives. The city councillor highlighted issues related to traffic flow and parking. It was felt that the streets of Riverdale were never intended to carry the large amount of vehicular traffic that is now present. He also considered how East-West public transit was generally good but North-South transit less so. The local councillor also reviewed ongoing conflicts among residents and retailers related to traffic, parking, and neighbourhood atmosphere.

The Metro councillor focused on the difficulties related to moving Metro ahead on issues of sewage treatment. The provincial parliament member highlighted how the provincial government was undermining communities by setting one group against another. It was seen as promoting a meanness of spirit among the population. Finally, the mayor discussed the importance of settlement issues and providing needed services. She was also concerned about the renewal of housing stock in Riverdale.

Supports to Action

There was strong agreement among the four representatives about the supports in Riverdale for effective action. Of particular note was the supports provided by an activist and caring community and by community agencies and groups.

Community Activism and Support

As noted earlier, Riverdale was seen as an activist and caring community. All four representatives identified citizen activism as being an important support for effective action. The political culture that developed in the 1960's was seen by one representative as serving as a training ground for individuals and groups. Another representative felt that anything that has been achieved has done so on the basis of the support and involvement of community members. One representative felt that the representatives can serve as facilitators to allow the community to come together and reach their own solutions.

Riverdale was felt by one representative not to be the kind of community where you come in and impose a solution. It has to be solutions that are worked out in partnerships with citizens.

Community Agencies and Groups

All four representatives highlighted the importance of community agencies and groups in supporting effective action. A very large number of agencies and groups were discussed. These included the established organizations such as Woodgreen and Ralph Thornton Community Centres and the South Riverdale Community Health Centre. Also of great importance are citizen groups and voluntary groups such as Citizens for a Safe Environment, Ontario Campaign Against Tobacco, Greenpeace, and Riverdale Against the Cuts. Also discussed was the role of economic development associations such as the Business Improvement Associations and Greater Riverdale Economic Action Together. One representative felt that the contribution of groups and citizens has been responsible for being able to accomplish anything at all.

Supportive Area Representatives

Two representatives specifically mentioned the presence of other elected representatives as a support for action. These representatives are seen as facilitating and supporting each other in promoting effective responses and building community capacity for effective action.

Barriers to Effective Action

All representatives agreed that the effects of the changing economy and resultant unemployment was a barrier to effective action. They also discussed the following barriers:

City Councillor

In addition, the city councillor felt that the conservative media, including all three Toronto newspapers were a barrier to progressive action on issues such as social housing. The local Liberal party was also seen as a barrier to progressive action. Some

conservative members of City Council were felt to have a very different vision of society. And provincial policies were seen as being an extremely important barrier to action.

Metro Councillor

The Metro councillor felt that bureaucratic mind sets were a barrier to effective action. He also highlighted how globalization with its resultant polarization of society into rich and poor were a strong barrier to progress.

Member, Provincial Parliament

The member of provincial parliament outlined in detail how provincial policies were threatening communities and promoting a meanness of spirit among Canadians. She was especially concerned about the effects of the end of social housing and cuts to important service agencies.

City Mayor

Finally, the Mayor felt that high levels of unemployment serve as both personal and structural barriers to moving ahead on development of effective and progressive actions.

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 Riverdale 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 Toronto Councillor Peter Tabuns

Responses to Issues of Unemployment and Poverty

As Board of Health chair Mr. Tabuns was involved in studies that assessed the effects of cuts in levels of social assistance. These studies were able to highlight the short and long-term detrimental effects of these cuts upon individuals and communities. While there are few economic levers that the city can use to affect levels of poverty and unemployment, the city supports local economic development and helps maintain business in the port and downtown.

Locally, provincial funding was secured to provide 500-600 units of non-profit housing. At City Council \$4,000,000 was allocated to a Survival Fund to communities to

provide for food programs and underwrite housing projects. Monies were set aside to support private investment, and provide youth employment, housing, and food.

Responses to Issues of Environmental Pollution

The City launched a business partnership to reduce CO₂ emissions. These initiatives promoted better air quality while maintaining economic viability. Regarding air pollution in the port, the city pressed the Ontario Ministry of the Environment to prosecute polluters. There has also been efforts to work with Ontario Hydro and local district heating corporations to reduce the number of boilers.

The City has used its power as landlord to evict polluting tenants, and has used zoning and by-law powers to block establishment of new polluting industries in the port area. One notable success in South Riverdale was closing down the Darling Rendering plant.

Responses to Traffic and Parking Issues

Traffic volume and parking issues are not easily resolvable. Much work is done with neighbourhoods on a street by street basis to reduce traffic speed and provide parking. Some solutions are modified double sized parking and barriers to slow traffic. These solutions are practical, inexpensive and positively by received local residents.

Responses to Conflicts Between Retailers and Residents

This issue is also related to traffic flow and parking. As a response, some merchants in Greektown have brought in tour buses in partnership with the Toronto Transit Commission. Others have also been trying to bring in customers without their cars.

Responses to Provincial Policies Adversely Affecting Quality of Life

The Board of Health did a critique of service cuts. Council fought against the megacity and the downloading of services. The City had been active in mobilizing people against the abolition of rent control. These were attempts to stop the deterioration in the quality of life.

Other Responses

The City enacted a strong anti-smoking by-law but it was not successfully implemented. The City continues to purchase polyvinyl chloride pipe which is seen as a concern since its manufacture and disposal releases dioxin and other toxins.

Metropolitan Toronto Councillor Jack Layton

Responses to Unemployment and Poverty

While services have been cut by the province Metro has resisted cutting its own service budgets and has actually backfilled the cut. Metro is trying to preserve the public transit system but is finding it difficult.

Community responses to poverty and unemployment has involved the organization Riverdale Against the Cuts which was co-founded by Mr. Layton. It is a volunteer network of people which formed against Metro cuts but now deals with a range of issues.

Responses Related to Environmental Pollution

Significant improvements were implemented by Metro to reduce the amount and incineration of sewage sludge. Much of this occurred as a result of pressure from a citizen's group, the Safe Sewage Committee. This group also got the Works Department to replace everybody's toilet with a low flow toilet and to take the sewage out to farmland. The community had mobilized to shut down the Commissioners Street Incineration Plant. This occurred in cooperation with the City of Toronto Board of Health.

In relation to air pollution, the east end of the Gardiner Expressway is being taken down. Its removal will also take down a barrier boundary between the community and the lake. Finally, Metro has been collaborating with the Don Valley Task Force to help clean up the Don River.

Member of Provincial Parliament Marilyn Churley

Responses to Poverty and Unemployment

While part of the previous provincial government Ms. Churley was involved with Jobs Ontario, that was directed to people on social assistance. Local business would be supported in having salaries topped up. The program also created day care places to support single mothers. Another program was Jobs Ontario Community Action which was concerned with supporting community initiatives. While in government, she felt she could do more for the community.

Within the current government's cutting of services the community group Riverdale Against the Cuts was seen as a very active group. It grew out of Riverdale 2000 which was a community visioning exercise that was initially convened by Ms. Churley. Another group that has been active is G.R.E.A.T. , Greater Riverdale Economic Action Together. It is a way of dealing with high unemployment and poverty problems by involving people to deal with local problems. Ms. Churley also works with community and social agencies on issues of food access and hunger. One such initiative is called Hunger Watch.

Responses to Environmental Pollution

Ms. Churley had her start in politics around environmental issues. She got involved in successfully stopping two new huge garbage incinerators. Later she worked with the community to shut down the polluting Commissioners Street Incinerator. She was co-founder of Citizens for a Safe Environment. Citizens also got rid of the Darling Rendering Plant which polluted the community for years.

The community was also successful in closing down the Canada Metal smelter that had polluted the environment and poisoned people's soil. In the end, the Provincial Government spent \$8,000,000 to remove soil from South Riverdale after children were found to have abnormally high levels of lead in their blood.

In relation to the pollution of the Don River, Ms. Churley and Jack Layton started the Don River cleanup in 1988. Then the community took it over. In terms of the actual cleanup, however, it is seen as moving too slowly.

Responses to Policy Changes that Affect Quality of Life

In spite of the attempt of the provincial government's attempt to pit one group against the other, Ms. Churley feels that the community has resisted this and has been successful in opposing the cuts being made. The megacity was also resisted and identification of the effects of downloading has been made. She believes that these changes will affect all Riverdale residents but especially the less well-off. Cuts to social housing are also being resisted. In these efforts she is working with other local elected representatives.

City of Toronto Mayor Barbara Hall

Responses to Poverty and Unemployment

Responses to unemployment and poverty have come from both the community and government. The community has come together and has identified strategies to deal with these issues. The City of Toronto provided funding to some youth employment initiatives and has worked with the local Business Improvement Associations. But this work is difficult and while it has been successful it is a slow process.

Responses to Environmental Pollution

The City of Toronto has always supported the community in its many battles around environmental issues. The City supported these efforts through the Public Health Department which did a lot of work with citizens and citizen groups. The most notable victory was the massive soil clean-up that was in response to findings of dangerously high levels of lead in the soil of South Riverdale. The City of Public Health Department carried out a lot of education around what could and could not be planted by residents. City departments also worked with citizens to close down Commissioners Street garbage incinerator.

In relation to the pollution of the Don River and the neighbouring area, the city financially supports the Task Force to Bring Back the Don. It created a recreational space for running, walking, and cycling. It built a staircase that gave access to the valley to residents of South Riverdale.

City of Toronto Contributions to Community Quality of Life

The City of Toronto provides funding for many community agencies. Recreation centres such as Jimmie Simpson have summer programs, with day care and are totally funded by the City. The Ralph Thornton Centre is in a city-owned, historic building that provides a number of important community programs. The City also gives grants to agencies like Woodgreen Community Centre for youth employment programs, Chinese seniors programs, and others.

The City of Toronto also provides support to Business Improvement Associations (BIA) across the city. In Riverdale the City supports the Queen Street East BIA. One specific initiative has been the significant funding of public art by the City. The City assists with the street banners used by the BIA.

Responses to Housing Shortages and Issues of Settlement

The community has supported non-profit and co-op housing. South Riverdale has quite a number of these units. City agencies provide seniors' programs for newly arrived Canadians.

11

Results from the Public School Trustees

In this chapter we report on the interviews that were conducted with Public School Trustees Laura Jones and Soo Wong. 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

We first present the areas where there was agreement among the public school trustees. We then present the unique issues identified by each.

Caring and Neighbourly Community

Both public school trustees saw the community consisting of caring and concerned individuals. Each discussed how the community cares about members and comes together to act on local issues. Ms. Wong spoke about the many business and community partnerships that exist. These partnerships act to provide jobs for residents, support applications for neighbourhood beautification, and raise money for worthy causes.

Diversity of Community

The diversity of the community was seen as a strength by both public school trustees. Children are exposed to different kinds of people and different ways of living. Ms. Wong highlighted the presence of many creative and artistic residents in Riverdale.

Safe and Solid Community

Riverdale was seen as a safe and stable community. People feel safe in the community and many have lived there for a long time.

Other Positive Aspects of Living in Riverdale

Ms. Jones offered the following as benefits to living in the community: good schools, parks, good public transportation, many stores, and still relatively reasonable housing costs.

Problems and Issues

A number of issues were raised concerning challenges being faced in Riverdale. These focused on issues related to children, effects of policy changes involving cuts in services, and access for those whose first language was not English.

Children and Their Needs

Both trustees voiced concern about children. Concern was expressed by Ms. Jones about the lack of opportunities for youth and increased violence in the schools. Ms. Wong expressed concern about the number of children with learning disabilities and the need for adolescents to have their special needs met in both age and culturally appropriate ways. She also pointed out a number of safety concerns related to children both within and outside of schools.

Effects of Policy Changes

Ms. Jones outlined her concerns about the effects of provincial policies on neighbourhood residents. She saw increasing job losses, deteriorating health care, and the

potential decline of the public education system as reflecting uncaring policies originating with the provincial government.

Environmental Health Problems

Both trustees provided background on Riverdale's ongoing concerns with environmental health. It was important to have community input on these problems.

Issues Related to Access

Ms. Wong discussed issues related to providing access to services for those whose first language may not be English. She also had concerns about providing information about community resources and services to all members of the community. She also highlighted the importance of English as a second language classes for those people in the community who needed such instruction.

Supports to Effective Action

Community Support

Both trustees felt that community members were a strong support to effective action. People in the community are willing to work to promote change and are very supportive of the efforts taken by the school trustees.

School Board Support

In addition, the school board had been supportive in getting the word out about the effects of government actions on education and the community.

Barriers to Effective Action

Ms. Jones felt the pace of change from the provincial government is a barrier to effective action. It is difficult to get information out about the effect of these changes. Ms. Wong felt it is difficult to reach some people because they feel disempowered and powerless. Also, many people hold down two or three jobs, and it is difficult for them to get involved. There is also difficulty reaching people whose first language is not English.

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Public School Trustees' Responses to Community and Educational Challenges

In Chapter 11 we presented the views of the two public school trustees concerning the strengths and challenges being faced by the Riverdale 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.

Public School Trustee Laura Jones

Responses to Needs for Alternative Schools

Ms. Jones was involved in an initiative to set up an alternative grade 7/8 school in the east-end. Ms. Jones was also involved in trying to set up an alternative arts school, however this may not happen due to the funding cuts.

Responses to Needs of Gay and Lesbian Youth

Ms. Jones was involved with developing the Pink Triangle Program at Metro Community Church. The program is for gay and lesbian students who have been victims of homophobia or who wanted to be in a more gay-friendly environment.

Responses to Provincial Changes in Education

The province plans extensive cut-backs to the provision of adult education. In Riverdale both the City Adult Learning Centre and the Jones Avenue Adult New Canadian Centre will be affected. The excellent resources of each is seen as being under threat as the province mandated that the amount spent on older students be reduced from \$8,000 to \$2,300. The Toronto Board of Education resisted these actions, but now as able to control funding. The students at these schools have organized to resist these changes. They have collected petitions and these were given to the provincial member of parliament, who was able to visit the school. Students have also been involved in letter writing campaigns and demonstrations.

The Board trustees and local residents worked to opposed the amalgamation of boards bill, Bill 104. Many meetings have been held and information has been given out to community members. They went to every school and met with a number of other community groups and staff associations. Copies of the budgets have been given out so that parents and children can learn about the budget. In relation to the provincial cuts the neighbourhood has responded positively and has worked to oppose the cuts.

Other Educational Initiatives

A successful initiative is community gardens. These include rooftop gardens in the east end. Help was received from the South Riverdale Community Health Centre as well as from students at Danforth Technical School. There is extensive community involvement.

Public School Trustee Soo Wong

Response to Access Issues

As noted in an earlier chapter, access and communication issues are seen as important in Riverdale. Ms. Wong has been active in getting the Parks and Recreation Department to communicate to the community about its programs. Community members frequently have questions and problems related to issues of immigration, property tax, and

connecting with the right channel. She works hard to communicate with people and provide assistance when necessary.

Ms. Wong described a partnership whereby a large number of new, modern computers were brought into the Jones, Queen, and Pape Avenue libraries in order to connect with the local unemployment insurance offices. Community members can use these computers to find out what jobs are available.

Responses to Special Needs of Students

Ms. Wong noted that there many children who have learning disabilities, but these are sometimes not identified until grades eight or nine. One response has been to work with the University of Toronto's Medical Education program. In this program, first year medical students spend time in elementary schools in order to study children in their communities. The schools that are involved in the Riverdale area are all considered inner city schools.

The medical students write a report of their experiences and do some assessment of children. In return the school staff helps educate the medical students. It is seen as important to raise health issues early with children, otherwise the learning opportunity is lost.

Another aspect by which special needs of students are met is through business/community partnerships. These involve the raising of money by businesses to support school programs. One partnership with Danforth by the Valley Business Association saw the Riverdale Christmas Concert raising \$4,000 for a breakfast program. Businesses in Greek Town raised \$10,000 last year for breakfast and crafts programs. Forming these partnerships is seen by Ms. Wong as part of her role as school trustee.

Responses to English as a Second Language Issues

Since there is a large proportion of students whose first language in schools is neither English nor French, English as a Second Language is an important issue. It is important not only to educate students but also to communicate with parents. Much effort goes to having school information available in different languages and working to involve parents in the education of their children.

Responses to the Needs of Youth

Riverdale has a large young population of youth and an increase is expected in the near future. Adolescents aged from 9 to 17 years are felt to have special needs that need to be age and culturally appropriate. Ms. Wong often visits schools to find out what is really happening there. For example, when the Board was replacing equipment much time was spent talking to youth to find out what was desired. In the end it was found that they were interested in basketball, volleyball, and tennis.

Youth also have needs for positive activities and employment. The Queen Street Business Improvement Association suggested to Ms. Wong that children be asked to paint a mural on Queen Street near Degrossi Street. Some funding was received from the federal government. In a second part of the grant the underpaths for the Canadian National will be done over the next two years.

The business community has been responsive in helping the youth in the community. For the community festival, the Taste of Danforth, the community hired 25 youth to work for the weekend. These partnerships among business and the community are seen as especially important, and provide services and ongoing resources that benefit the ward and its residents.

Responses to Safety Concerns for Children

There are a number of safety issues in the community. These extend beyond issues of crime, violence, and muggings. Since the number one cause of death among young people is accidents, Ms Wong has looked beyond the school and school classroom to issues such as safety in school playgrounds. Some of this involves equipment in the play areas as well as the general appearance of the areas. There is also an ongoing concern with traffic and the safety of children in the ward.

To improve safety equipment in playgrounds is now plastic. In addition to the equipment, she felt it is important that the actual grounds be safe and free of glass. Ms. Wong and the community worked to have a flashing light installed and decrease the speed limit along Dundas Street before the bridge. Since there are four schools in the neighbourhood, it was very unsafe. There is also now a crossing guard there.

13

Summary of Findings: The People, Places, and Priorities of Riverdale

A number of key findings have emerged from this project. There are clear aspects of the Riverdale Community that are valued and prized by community members, service providers, and elected representatives. There are also common issues of concern about life in Riverdale. We have organized these findings in terms of the People of Riverdale, the Places of Riverdale, and the Priorities of Riverdale. This chapter is devoted to these issues. A later chapter will point towards the future.

The People of Riverdale

The findings that emerge from this project is that of a rich and vibrant community that is uniquely caring and active. This caring takes many different forms. It is also a community that is very diverse. This diversity includes both cultural and socioeconomic diversity. Another unique aspect of this community is its elected representatives. The people chosen to represent the community are in touch with the issues and concerns of Riverdale residents. We consider each aspect in turn.

The Caring Community of Riverdale

In many ways, the picture that emerges of the people in Riverdale is that of people who care. They care about their immediate neighbours and friends. They care about what

is happening in the community-at-large. And in a manner that is very unique, they care about government actions and policies that affect their community.

This characteristic of caring shows itself in many forms. It shows itself in people's views of the roles played by neighbours and friends. In our group discussions and the community interviews, friends and neighbours were repeatedly described as making life good for people in Riverdale. Friends and neighbours were seen as being sources of help when it is needed. These same people who say they benefit from friends and neighbours are themselves willing to help their neighbours and friends.

There are many forms that such help takes. For some, it takes a very concrete form such as being available to assist in day-to-day needs of their neighbours. For others, it means volunteering with community agencies. For many, it is supporting the community agencies that work to support both community residents in general, and assist those most in need. Not only did many of our participants know of the work being done by these community agencies, they were clearly supportive and praiseworthy of their efforts. It is also noteworthy that many service providers, in their interviews, spoke of the support they receive from community members as they carry out their activities.

The concern with government actions and policies shows itself with the concern about funding cuts and the effects of these cuts on both the people and the agencies of Riverdale. In the group discussions the issue of cuts was repeatedly raised. In terms of action, we heard about the citizen activism and willingness of Riverdale residents to take stands on issues. Community members spoke about the many advocacy groups that are active in the community.

Both service providers and the elected representatives told us about the many citizen movements that have taken place in Riverdale in response to challenges faced by citizens. Many of these were related to environmental issues such as lead contamination and incinerators. But this tradition is continuing with citizens responding to issues of service cuts, municipal and school restructuring, and increasing evidence of the effects of unemployment and poverty. All of these themes, concern with neighbours and friends, support for those within the larger community, and the history of citizen activism, illustrate the caring aspects of the people of Riverdale.

The Diversity of Riverdale

Riverdale is clearly a diverse community. There is cultural diversity reflected in the presence of entire areas such as Chinatown, Greektown, and Little India. There is diversity in socioeconomic status with a range of people from well-off to poor to be found in Riverdale. There is also a growing number of gay and lesbian people in Riverdale. And there is supported housing that allows seniors, persons with disabilities, and people recovering from medical and social problems to live in Riverdale.

For many people, especially seniors and New Canadians, cultural diversity provides a supportive environment. People of different backgrounds are able to access the kinds of foods they are used to having. They also can receive services in their own languages and speak to others in their own language. For people whose first language is English, we learned that diversity makes for an exciting and cosmopolitan community. As one school trustee noted, children learn about different kinds of people and different ways of living. They can see the world without leaving their own neighbourhood.

Within a community such as Riverdale where there are well-off, getting-by, and poor people, there is an opportunity to work together to solve problems. As one elected representative put it, people who may be doing well in the north end of Riverdale are concerned about the presence of poor children in South Riverdale. This mix of people help make for a tolerant and activist community where people are willing to work together for the common good of all the members of the community.

Diversity is supported by the presence of supportive housing. For many seniors the rent-geared-to-income housing that is available in Riverdale is essential for their well-being. Similarly, supportive housing for vulnerable people helps to make sure that all people are able to have decent housing in the community. The people of Riverdale support the presence of diverse people who require both housing supports and other kinds of supportive services.

Finally, Riverdale is seen as a welcoming community. It has been welcoming for gay and lesbian people and for newcomers to Canada. While diversity creates some problems -- such as the stress which some experience when a neighbourhood changes or

the isolation of long-time residents who cannot communicate with their new neighbours -- the preponderance of views from community members, service providers, and elected representatives were positive and appreciative of the diversity of the people of Riverdale.

The Elected Representatives of Riverdale

We found both the political representatives and the school trustees to be highly knowledgeable about Riverdale, its people, its places, and its problems. They knew the history of Riverdale, its many agencies, organizations, and groups, and the issues people face on a day-to-day basis. Another aspect of these elected representatives were their understanding of the forces that act upon communities and their members. They outlined the economic effects upon Riverdale of globalization, discussed the forces within communities that support and inhibit effective action, and specified the effects upon individuals of the challenges that people face who may be unemployed, of low income, and marginalized or isolated.

These elected representatives also have lengthy resumes of effective action within the community. All have been involved, at one time or another, with the many environmental efforts that are the history of Riverdale. All have worked to support economic development and reduce unemployment and poverty among Riverdale residents. And the forms that these efforts have taken are creative and innovative. They included reorienting government policies, forming business/community partnerships, creating innovative employment works projects, and supporting community movements.

It is in this emphasis on the community that Riverdale representatives excel. That is, they believe that the best solutions to problems come from the community itself. All of the elected representatives view themselves as having come from the community, as their main role being to facilitate community action, and see themselves as being responsible to the community.

The Places of Riverdale

Riverdale also exists as a geographical entity. As such, it has, in addition to its people, both natural and human-made features. We found in Riverdale an urban

environment that was rich in natural amenities such as parks. It has many urban amenities that allow residents to meet day-to-day needs such as public transportation, places to shop, health care facilities, and recreation facilities. It has many agencies and services that are available to residents of Riverdale. There are places where residents can engage in recreation activities, receive assistance in times of need, and contribute to help others in the community. And it is obvious that people are concerned about the future of their community and are very concerned about the future of the agencies and services that serve the people of Riverdale.

The Urban Environment of Riverdale

Riverdale was described by many community members as a place which has lots of parks. It was also seen as a community that was near a range of natural amenities such as the lake and the Beach area, the Don Valley, and the Leslie Street Spit. Access to natural amenities, while carefully explicated by some elected representatives and service providers, was not widely discussed by community members. There are numerous reasons for this and many of these involve environmental pollution. As one elected representative noted, Riverdale is named after a river, but most people thought of the river as an open sewer.

The beaches of Riverdale are frequently polluted and the Don River continues to be a dead river. Access to the lake is blocked by the Gardiner Expressway, and until very recently there was only difficult access from the other side of the valley to the Don Valley. The potentialities of these natural amenities are known however, and action is being taken to improve them. The Task Force to Take Back the Don works to improve the river and its surroundings. Access was recently provided to the Don Valley from Riverdale by way of a Queen Street stairway. The eastern end of the Gardiner Expressway is being taken down. So while Riverdale residents appreciate its many parks and trees, their access to other natural amenities remains somewhat unfulfilled.

Beyond natural amenities, people in Riverdale are able to access the things they need. When these are not within walking distance, public transit allows them to get where they want. Since Riverdale has numerous shopping areas, people are able to buy almost

all the things they need from supermarkets, stores, and shops. People of Chinese descent are able to buy the foods they are used to in Chinatown. Persons of Indian descent can shop in the Little India area. And people of other backgrounds are usually able to find stores that will meet their needs as well. For seniors however, distance to stores and the availability of specific kinds of stores are sometimes problems and the closing of the post office on Pape and Queen reflects a general difficulty some seniors have accessing amenities. Some seniors and others are not able to access transportation in the form of Wheel-Trans when they need it.

Riverdale also has a range of health care and medical facilities for people to use. And Riverdale is rich in restaurants. But in the Queen Street East area, some restaurants close early and some community members feel that there may not be enough activities for seniors and youth. There are no cinemas in the Riverdale area.

Finally, some areas of Riverdale are run-down. Some of the housing is deteriorating and for some, housing is crowded and dirty. While some speak of the area as quiet, others see it as noisy. Some of this has to do with heavy traffic flow which leads to problems of congestion and parking.

The Community Services of Riverdale

Being in the City of Toronto, Riverdale residents have access to the many city-wide supports such as social assistance and Children's Aid Society. But additionally, Riverdale has a rich network of community-based agencies and services. These include recreation and community centres, a community health centre, churches, and other organizations. Within these agencies Riverdale residents can engage in activities, receive assistance when needed, and work with others to improve the community. Community members emphasize the important roles these organizations play in supporting and improving the community.

Many of these organizations take a community development approach in their activities. Service providers attempt to build upon the strengths of the community and aim to improve community members' capacities and abilities. In Riverdale, these organizations work together to improve the quality of life of Riverdale residents. They work carefully to

reduce overlapping of activity and the forming of coalitions and partnerships are the norm rather than the exception. These local agencies also work closely with city-wide government institutions such as public health and parks and recreation. Together, they work to improve access to food, improve the environment, and develop specific initiatives to support youth, seniors and other vulnerable people.

Nevertheless, we heard about some gaps in resources and services. Many women felt that adequate and affordable childcare was not as available as it could be. People spoke about the need for activity programs for youth and seniors. Sometimes it was felt that agencies didn't work hard enough to let community members know about what was available in the community.

Overall, Riverdale community agencies are activist and creative organizations. They work closely with community groups to speak out on policies and government actions that will impact their communities. They communicate with Riverdale's elected representatives. In these actions they are supported by community members. Finally, the nature and form these actions and services take are creative. Programs are developed that attempt to meet the unique needs of Riverdale residents. Whether these residents be New Canadians, young mothers, frail seniors, vulnerable people, or the entire population of Riverdale, the emphasis is on meeting their needs in a growth-enhancing and sensitive manner. From all quarters however, we heard that the future of these agencies and services is in doubt.

Concern About the Future of Community Services

There is widespread concern about the effects of funding cuts on the community services and people of Riverdale. From service providers we heard about some of the services that have already been capped, and in many instances reduced. They told us and we heard from community members about the effects of welfare cuts on families and children and how it has increased hunger and the need for emergency food services.

Concerning the network of services that are available, it is clear that for many people of Riverdale the presence of low-cost services are important means by which they cope and manage their lives. From service providers we heard about the specific groups of

Riverdale residents that benefit from their activities. What will the effects be on these individuals, and the community within which they live, of these reductions in services?

To date, in the City of Toronto many of these services have been delivered at little or nominal cost. And the City of Toronto funds many of the services that are delivered within Riverdale. But after January 1, 1998 the City of Toronto, as currently constituted, will not exist. Instead the new City of Toronto will incorporate the six Metropolitan Toronto cities into a single municipality or megacity. Will current levels of city funding for these services be maintained?

Many services that are available are currently provincially funded in part or in whole. The Department of Public Health and its programs are currently funded in part by the province. The province however, plans to down load the costs of public health to the municipalities. Will services such as prenatal and post-natal supports for young mothers be maintained? The province plans to end its support of social housing. As noted, Riverdale is rich in supports. People are concerned about the implications of these changes for Riverdale and its residents. There are also going to be significant changes in how community agencies provide seniors' support services. Will places like Woodgreen Community Centre that have reputations for quality service delivery be able to compete in a new market economy approach to health services?

As noted, Riverdale welcomes many New Canadians. An important part of their settlement involves their learning English as a Second Language and benefitting from the support being provided by places like the Adult New Canadian Centre. Already the province has mandated reductions in the amounts of money that can be allocated to educate adult learners. Will these reductions, and possible further reductions with the passage of new education legislation, further handicap people who already face difficult adjustments to a new life in Canada?

The future, therefore, of community services in Riverdale is unclear. The present network of services, while under stress and already feeling the effects of funding cutbacks, is still delivering services and providing support to those in need. Will this continue? One elected representative put it this way: We have a great community here and we are in danger of losing some of the agencies that make it such a great community to live in.

The Priorities of Riverdale

Riverdale, like many urban communities in North America, has its share of problems. These problems are focused in three main areas. There are environmental problems in Riverdale. These have been associated with the well-known lead contamination and incinerator fights. Environmental problems persist and centre around issues of bad air and bad water. There are also employment and income issues in Riverdale. These involve ongoing problems of poverty and unemployment. Finally, there are safety and security issues in Riverdale. These focus on concerns about crime, vandalism, and personal safety.

The Environmental Issues of Riverdale

Within Toronto, South Riverdale has one of the largest concentrations of pollution sources from industry, traffic, and waste disposal. Riverdale is best known for its many citizen community movements that formed and worked for better air, water, and soil quality. Citizen movements were instrumental in shutting down large incinerators, and having the largest lead contaminated soil removal in North America carried out. These citizen movements served as a training ground for many residents in advocacy and political action. The South Riverdale Community Health Centre was established as a result of these environmental battles. And at least three of Riverdale's current elected representatives had their start in politics in voluntary organizations such as Citizens for a Safe Environment. Most recently a major source of air pollution, a local rendering plant, was shut down as a result of community pressure.

While some of the major sources of air pollution have been removed, work needs to continue. While community members are likely to speak of issues related to cleanliness of the streets and air and noise pollution from traffic, some of the elected representatives and service providers outlined a number of continuing problems related to environmental pollution.

A major source of air pollution is the industries in the port area which includes some of the newly established recycling plants. Another source is the presence of the

Gardiner and Don Valley Expressways which border Riverdale on the south and west respectively. Another ongoing problem is the Metropolitan Toronto Sewage Treatment Plant that continues to incinerate waste on the southern border of Riverdale. Within the community, heavy traffic flow produces both air and noise pollution.

Water pollution is not as obvious an issue for Riverdale residents, but they are usually not able to use the lake for swimming due to beach pollution. Similarly, the Don River is effectively a dead river. The natural processes that contribute to its flow have all been completely disrupted. Half of its flow comes from the Metro North Sewage Treatment Plant and the rest comes from storm water that overflows the sewers. For many Riverdale residents, the memory of clean water is so distant as to reduce its importance.

There is awareness of these issues and actions to deal with them are apparent at the local level. Elected representatives are working with community groups and their respective councils to develop and implement responses to these concerns. A rich network of community-based environmental groups and organizations continue to highlight these issues and support effective actions to combat them.

In one way, the fact that Riverdale residents and agencies have had to deal with a range of environmental problems has had many positive spin-offs such as developing community spirit and a network of concerned service providers and elected representatives. These efforts need to continue, but they require ongoing governmental support in word and deed.

The Employment and Income Issues of Riverdale

As compared to Toronto as a whole, Riverdale, and South Riverdale in particular, have a higher percentage of lone parent families with children, more persons with less than a grade nine education, and more on social assistance. Unemployment and poverty were issues universally identified by elected representatives and service providers. Community members speak of it in terms of the importance of maintaining the network of services and supports that are available for people in Riverdale in general and for families and children in particular, and in terms of ensuring access to food.

Riverdale has lost many industrial jobs. Perhaps more so than other communities, it has shown the effects of increasing economic globalization and the shifting of industry that followed in the wake of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The result of these changes have led to part of the population moving up and another part moving down. One elected representative described it as increasing economic polarization in the community. In addition to these changes in economic conditions, federal and provincial policies have impacted negatively on the most vulnerable of Riverdale residents.

The federal and provincial governments have made a commitment to end their involvement in social housing. This will affect those who may already be near or living in poverty. More immediately the provincial government has been cutting social services that has affected a large population of people with low incomes, but has also had a ripple effect on commercial establishments in Riverdale. These reductions have led to increased hunger and is seen as having both short-term and long-term health consequences for individuals and the community. People become more vulnerable to illness, and, as one elected representative put it, it is not the kind of situation you want in a crowded urban setting.

Like Riverdale's response to its environmental problems, there have been community responses to these issues. Local community groups have worked to educate and advocate for policies that will reduce unemployment and poverty. Local economic groups and coalitions have been established to promote economic development. Grassroots alliances between community businesses and community agencies and schools have worked to improve opportunities for youth. And local organizations and community members have established a number of projects to improve food access.

Locally, municipal governments have supported business improvement associations and struggled to maintain services and supports for the most vulnerable in the community. The City of Toronto allocated millions of dollars to provide food programs, underwrite housing projects, and provide levers for private investment to support youth employment. The Metropolitan Toronto government has tried to backfill those services that have been reduced by provincial cuts.

Safety and Security in Riverdale

Most people feel generally safe in Riverdale -- during the day. Crime is an almost universal concern among community members as is personal security. There is worry about drug use, prostitution, and the presence of crack houses. There is concern of and experience with break-ins and muggings. There is a belief among many that vandalism can be attributed to youth. And there is a belief that youth are not as respectful to others as they could be. In addition, there is concern about the increasing number of beggars and homeless people on the streets. And concern exists about unwanted businesses in the neighbourhood and their associated clientele.

In light of these concerns, it would be expected that a police presence would be seen as important. But there were as many concerns about poor police attitudes towards the less well-off members of minority groups as there were positive comments about their presence.

In terms of community responses, these were strangely lacking. Unlike the active responses that have occurred in response to Riverdale's other problems, little concerted action to directly address these issues was apparent. Indirectly however, a need for youth services and greater opportunities for youth was expressed and youth agencies act to support youth. But direct linkages to these activities as a crime prevention issue was not made.

Conclusion

Riverdale is a unique North American urban community. It has remarkable strengths as well as its share of problems. It has had notable successes in addressing its challenges. Within Riverdale are the people and structures that can continue to address the needs of this diverse and resilient community. The challenge is to move forward in this task even as local authorities are faced with taking over previously held federal and provincial responsibilities. The role that this project and its findings can play in this future is discussed in the last two chapters of this report.

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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 Being, Belonging, and Becoming. Being reflects "who one is" and has three sub-domains, Physical, Psychological and Spiritual Being. Belonging concerns how a person fits with their environments. 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.

Belonging

Of the three broad areas of life associated with the Quality of Life approach, 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 community quality of life. Some of the major ones ranged from programs offered by CHCs, community centres, and hospitals, to public transportation, to the availability of shopping areas, to services focused on recreation, education, and health promotion. The pressing need for greater access to employment opportunities was emphasized by many participants.

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, one major and recurring message throughout the project was that Riverdale is a caring and neighbourly community. Interdependence with neighbours and the ability of community members to pull together to tackle problems of common concern which were noted by participants exemplify the deep sense of connection with others that enriches community life.

The Physical Belonging dimension includes people's connections with the physical environment of their neighbourhood and community. This dimension also includes the perceived safeness of the environment. One example of this aspect of life was participants' enjoyment of the more natural physical features of the community such as parks, the Don Valley, and the Leslie Street Spit. Some participants also noted that the physical location of their neighbourhood made access to resources and services (see Community Belonging above) easier or harder. Others indicated that the physical appearance of their neighbourhood either added or detracted to enjoyment of community life. A number of individuals and groups who participated emphasized concern with safety and potential threats to it as affecting quality of life in the community.

Being

Generally, themes associated with the other two broad areas of life, 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 number of references to food, access to food and food in keeping with cultural preferences, as well as to the need for adequate nutrition. The notion of physical health was often embedded in discussions of a healthy environment and the need for good health services (see Community Belonging). Themes associated with Psychological Being were expressed in terms of the need for services and resources supportive of mental health and emotional coping. Themes around Spiritual Being were alluded to most often in the context of discussions about the services, programs, and roles of churches and organizations serving immigrants and refugees.

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 and 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 during discussions of services and resources needed to support this dimension of quality (e.g., the need for access to jobs, 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. Growth Becoming was captured in discussions of the needs for services to help people develop new skills (e.g., educational and job-related). For participants who were new Canadians, the importance of

adjusting to their life in Canada was cited as an important foundation for enjoying life in their community. The material on Community Belonging above refers to some of the skills, services, and resources which assist people as they strive for quality in the Becoming area of life within their community.

Other Aspects of Community Quality of 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 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.

Themes Related to the Health Promotion Approach

Health promotion enables people to get more control over and improve their own health. The *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion* (Appendix IV) refers to some important aspects of life that are required if people are to be healthy. Many of these requirements for health which were discussed by project participants. They included the following: employment, access to educational programs, decent and affordable housing, fair treatment for citizens of Riverdale (e.g., by providing good, appropriate resources and services), clean air, and access to sufficient food of good quality. While some of these requirements were seen to be in place, to varying degrees, in Riverdale, 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 project 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 outreach services for refugees, psychiatric services for vulnerable adults home support and counselling services for seniors and people with disabilities, injury prevention programs, parent drop-in programs, daycare programs, and recreational facilities.

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 Riverdale (e.g., church, school, and community health centre) encouraged community action by such means as organizing citizen coalitions, advocacy efforts, and political activity. The issues targeted by such community action included the environment, tobacco use, and cutbacks to community funding and services.

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: computers in several public library branches, ESL classes, youth employment programs, nutrition programs, and educational programs concerning family violence.

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 South Riverdale CHC,

the Woodgreen Community Centre, and the Red Door Shelter for refugees 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 four elected political representatives interviewed. For instance, they noted how much activism by citizen and voluntary groups, as well as community-based agencies, had supported effective attempts to influence government policy and decision-making. They also noted that citizens living in Riverdale tended to vote for politicians who are progressive and would work with the community to deal with issues of local concern.

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Towards the Future

This isn't a community where you go and impose something. It is a community where people care about what's happening, have thought about what the problems are, and thought about what the solutions are. If politicians join that partnership then it's a community where there can be real, and I emphasize real, solutions. - Toronto Mayor Barbara Hall

In this final chapter we present some possible directions for action suggested by this report. Keeping in mind Mayor Hall's admonition, 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 Riverdale for whom many of these basic

conditions are not being met. For some, there are immediate needs for decent housing, access to food, and 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 New Canadians issues of education are essential to their adjustment to life in Canada and to personal well-being. Yet changes in educational policy are directly threatening their access to quality educational services. And the imposition of new educational and municipal structures will have, as of yet undetermined, effects on all the people of Riverdale.

Many of the changes associated with economic globalization are increasing the distance in income levels among Canadians in general and Riverdale 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 Riverdale. 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. Riverdale has a rich tradition of such action. 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 Riverdale appears congruent with these principles. But this community work is threatened by funding costs and policy changes. And many people in Riverdale 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, Riverdale has a reputation for carrying out creative partnerships among diverse sectors. These efforts may 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, Riverdale residents have had close and ongoing access to policy makers at the municipal level. Currently, access to provincial and federal policy makers may not be as strong.

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. Riverdale has a history of such concern. 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 Riverdale there is no 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 the community's 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 Riverdale 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 Riverdale.

Conclusion

In summary, the Riverdale 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 Riverdale. We urge that as much of the community as possible consider its findings and its implications for Riverdale. If the past history of Riverdale is any guide, it should lead to thoughtful and effective action.

Particularly in South Riverdale, but all across the Riverdale area, for whatever reason, and I haven't quite figured it out, it is a very active political community. It has an awful lot of caring folk who get very involved in not just the issues that are of concern to them, but are of concern to the community.

- Member of the Provincial Parliament for Riverdale, Marilyn Churley

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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: Adults

Church Group I
Church Group II
Community Health Centre Members
Literacy Group
Women's Healthy Weight Group

Group Discussions: Seniors

Community Centre Group
Seniors' Residence
Wellness Group

Group Discussions: Youth

Community Centre Male Group
Community Centre Female Group
Young Mothers' Group

Group Discussions: New Canadians

New Canadian Centre Group I
New Canadian Centre Group II
Chinese Women's Group

Interviews with Representatives

Marilyn Churley, Provincial Parliament Member
Barbara Hall, City of Toronto Mayor
Laura Jones, City of Toronto Public School Trustee
Jack Layton, Metropolitan Toronto Councillor
Peter Tabuns, City of Toronto Councillor
Soo Wong, City of Toronto Public School Trustee

Interviews With Service Providers

Community Development Worker: Seniors Residence
Community Health Promoter: Community Health Centre
Community Health Worker: Community Health Centre
Community Minister: United Church
Dietitian: Community Health Centre
Literacy Coordinator: Community Centre
Manager of Community Support Services: Community Centre
Program Director: Community Health Centre
Public Health Nurse: Public Health Department
Teacher: Adult New Canadian Centre
Youth Worker: Community Centre

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
Women's Healthy Weight (3 participants)	female (3)	33, 36, 51	Very Good (1), Good (1), Poor (1)	Same (2), More (1)
Church Dinner #1 (5 participants)	female (3) male (2)	32, 55, 60, 65, 77	Excellent (1), Very Good (1) Good (1), Fair (2)	Same (3), Less (2)
Church Dinner #2 (2 participants)	female (2)	35, 42	Very Good (1), Good (1)	Less (2)
Literacy Group (5 participants)	female (1) male (3)	36, 38, 39, 40	Very Good (1) Fair (2), Poor (1)	Lot More (2), Less (1), Lot Less (1)
CHC Members (6 participants)	female (3) male (3)	30, 34, 46,64	Excellent (1), Very Good (2), Good (1)	Same (2), Less (1), Lot Less (1)
Youth Community Centre (two groups, 6 & 11)	female (6) male (11)	13-18	not collected	not collected
Young Mothers (6 participants)	female (6)	20, 20, 21, 21, 23, 25	Good (5), Fair (1)	Same (4), Less (2)
Seniors Wellness Group (8 participants)	female (8)	61, 65, 75, 76 80, 82, 85, 85	Very Good (4), Good (2), Fair (2)	More (1), Same (5), Less (1), Lot Less (1)
Seniors Activities Group (9 participants)	female (7) male (1)	59, 69, 69, 69, 70, 75, 77, 81	Very Good (2), Good (3), Fair (1), Poor (2)	Lot More (1), More (1), Same (3), Less (1), Lot Less (1)
Seniors Residence Group (11 participants)	female (3) male (6)	58, 64, 64, 65, 68, 71, 76, 77, 89	Excellent (1), Very Good (1), Good (3), Fair (2), Poor (2)	Lot More (3), More (2), Same (1), Less (1), Lot Less (2)
New Canadian Centre #1 (11 participants)	female (6) male (3)	26, 27, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33, 42, 43	Excellent (1), Very Good (2), Good (3), Fair (3)	More (2), Same (5), Less (2)
New Canadian Centre # 2 (11 participants)	female (7) male (4)	25, 26, 29, 29, 29, 30, 31, 36, 39, 39, 40	Excellent (1), Very Good (1), Good (8), Fair (1)	Lot More (1), More (3), Same (4), Less (3)
Chinese Parenting Group (8 participants)	female (8)	27, 28, 29, 29, 36, 39, 39, 40	Good (1), Fair (7)	Lot More (2), More (2), Same (3), 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 aims 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.