
The People, Places, and Priorities of Riverdale: Conclusions from the Community Quality of Life Project

The Riverdale Community Quality of Life Project

The purpose of the Riverdale Project was 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. And we found out 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 try to address these issues. The project began October 1, 1996 and ended December 31, 1997.

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 Fund, a charitable agency based in Jacksonville, Florida.

How We Carried Out the Project

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.

We carried out 14 group discussions involving 102 community members, 11 individual interviews with service providers, and 6 interviews with elected representatives. We also collected data from 63 community residents who were interviewed by other community residents. This particular report is drawn from information contained in the larger document: *The People, Places, and Priorities of Riverdale: Findings from the Community Quality of Life Project*. Another document: *The People, Places, and Priorities of Riverdale: Write-Ups of the Group Discussions and Individual Interviews* provides more details about what we heard as we carried out this project. A *Community Report* is also available.

In this kind of project, the emphasis is on in-depth understanding of the views of our participants. We tried hard to hear from as many different kinds of people and organizations as we could. 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.

Findings from the Riverdale Community Quality of Life Project

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 document is devoted to these issues and to pointing 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 helps 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-gear-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 importance 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 well 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 affect 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.

Summary

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. This project and how its findings can play a role in this future is now discussed.

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. - City of Toronto Mayor Barbara Hall

In this section 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 parts of this section: the conditions necessary for health, the elements of health promotion, and health promotion actions.

The Conditions Necessary for Health

According to the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion and the thinking of many health promoters, 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 and helping 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 and Helping People to Work Towards Health

This 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 Ottawa 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 conclusion, 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. These implications may involve a number of potential actions and initiatives. If the past history of Riverdale is any guide, the findings from the Riverdale Community Quality of Life Project 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