THE RESPONSE OF THE MUNCIPAL PUBLIC SERVICE SECTOR TO THE CHALLENGE OF IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study compares the responses of public service agencies in seven municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) to the challenges of immigrant settlement.[1]

Key challenges identified in the literature and by local public sector workers interviewed in this study include:

- ❑ the pace of change in the region's population and the lack of information needed to plan for new immigrant groups;

- ❑ overcoming language and cultural barriers when communicating with immigrant clients;

- ❑ making municipal councils aware of and sympathetic to the service needs of increasingly diverse populations;

- ❑ a loss of financial support and leadership from the provincial government;

- ❑ adjustments necessitated by provincial downloading;

- ❑ the distractions caused by Toronto's amalgamation in terms of staff time and reduced financial resources; and

- ❑ differences in the capacity and level of awareness of agencies across the GTA that are called on to meett the challenges of immigrant settlement.

Of the municipalities looked at in this study, only the City of Toronto had adopted an overall strategy to provide services to immigrants. The city's Access and Equity Centre administered Toronto's employment equity, human rights, anti-harassment and anti-hate policies and helped city agencies establish training, translation and interpretation programs. Other municipalities had less-developed overall strategies.

Municipalities often worked with community-based agencies to deliver services to newcomers. Relationships with community agencies were sometimes strained because of differences in agency mandates (e.g. public, private and voluntary) and differences in their clienteles, delivery and supervisory structures.

SOCIAL SERVICES like welfare and childcare are critical to immigrants and refugees who do not have a steady job when they arrive in the GTA. These services can become important again if family sponsorships break down in tough economic times and sponsored immigrants have no choice but to seek social services.

- ❑ The key challenge is making better information available in languages other than English.

- ❑ There is no typical immigrant client. Clients may range from poor and unskilled persons with little or no English to very skilled English-speakers who lack Canadian experience.

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[1] The municipalities were Toronto, Brampton, Mississauga, Markham, Vaughan, and the regional municipalities of Peel and York. The agencies were responsible for social services, housing, public transit, education, policing, public health, public recreation, urban planning and libraries.

- Peel and Toronto were most aware of the challenges posed by immigration to social services, and the City of Toronto offered the most extensive range of assistance to immigrants seeking social services. Toronto had the most multicultural staff and the clearest mandate to serve an immigrant population.

- Staff across the GTA noted that community-based organizations also play important roles in the delivery of social services.

HOUSING and housing search services are key to helping immigrants settle successfully in the GTA. A secure place to live allows newcomers to look for work, enroll children in school, and establish connections with the community.

- The key challenge is finding affordable and suitable housing units, especially for immigrants with large households and lower incomes. Immigrants must compete for a limited supply of affordable and available housing with others who have been here longer and know the market better.

- The discrimination some immigrants experience was becoming worse as governments backed away from providing affordable or assisted housing.

- The City of Toronto had developed a range of strategies to deal with homelessness and the declining supply of affordable housing. Other GTA municipalities were less active, although Peel agencies were expanding their efforts. Unless a change in thinking occurs, however, Toronto will continue to be the main provider of rental housing for lower-income residents – immigrant and non-immigrant alike.

PUBLIC TRANSIT is the only way newcomers without a car can travel around the city or region to look for housing and jobs, seek assistance or advice from community and municipal agencies, and socialize with friends and relatives. Thus, it can be just as important as securing housing for those immigrants without the money to buy a car.

- The key challenge is to provide good information about transit services - routes and where to access them, schedules, when transit vehicles do and do not operate, and the easiest, shortest way to get from one part of a city to another, especially when trips entail one or more transfers.

- As the transit agency with the longest experience in working with a diverse community, the Toronto Transit Commission had done more than any other transit operator to recognize and respond to the needs of immigrants. Its hiring policy had created a multicultural staff, and it used interpreters and community newspapers to make information available in several languages. Some local operators in other municipalities had adopted similar practices, but to a lesser degree. All operators claimed that budget constraints severely limited what they could do.

- A serious and unresolved problem was limited or nonexistent transit service between Toronto and other locations within the GTA, or from one suburb to another. This problem was likely to increase because lower-priced rental housing was concentrated in the City of Toronto and job growth was higher in the suburbs.

Attempts to address this problem began in the 1970s, but changes have occurred only slowly and incrementally since that time.

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM is central to settlement, both for immigrant children and for their parents. Schools provide ESL, citizenship training, adult basic education (literacy, numeracy, etc.), and translation and interpretive services. The education system is an important source of community interaction, providing facilities like gyms and auditoriums for educational and social activities.

- ❑ The key challenge is to maintain consistent school board commitment to antiracist education that is independent of changing provincial policy directives.

- ❑ Across the GTA, staff working on these issues were functioning with minimal resources as school boards tried to cope with curriculum changes, declining budget resources, and the reorganization of education funding in Ontario.

- ❑ The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has had a long history of anti-racism programs and policies. As a board serving the traditional centre for new arrivals, the TDSB's response to immigration went beyond, and sometimes preceded, provincial expectations. The Toronto Catholic District School Board has also been a leader in addressing the diversity found in its schools through immigration.

- ❑ The Toronto and Peel District School Boards, together with the Toronto and York Catholic District School Boards, stood out for maintaining, and in some cases expanding, antiracist education in the face of a decline in policy leadership from the province.

POLICE are more likely to have negative contacts with immigrants (i.e., arrests, investigations) than other municipal service providers, despite their many positive contributions to immigrants' settlement experience (e.g. community outreach activities, community policing.) Because of negative contacts and connotations, policing is in a municipal service category all to itself.

- ❑ The key challenge for policing in the GTA is to achieve equitable access and transparent service delivery for immigrants, particularly those from visible minority groups. Community policing models and representative recruitment to balance the mostly white/male police force across the region have been two key ways of addressing this challenge.

- ❑ Even the Toronto Police Service with its nearly thirty-year history of reaching out to visible minority communities fell short of addressing the key challenge effectively. Although there have been celebrated stories of overcoming bias in Toronto policing -- dedicated efforts to attract minority candidates being one example -- tension and conflict still existed between the Toronto police and racial minority (including Aboriginal) communities.

- ❑ York Regional Police was a leader in encouraging cooperative antiracism efforts among GTA police services and beyond.

PUBLIC HEALTH units aim to detect and prevent chronic disease and serious health hazards, promote family health, and prevent the spread of infections. In carrying out these responsibilities, public health workers perform both a community relations and a public education function.

❑ The key challenge is to communicate medical, technical and legal information to a wide variety of clients. In multi-ethnic communities this challenge is made more difficult by the need to communicate with people who have different cultural values and expectations related to public health issues like vaccinations, birth control, sexually-transmitted diseases, and parenting practices.

❑ Toronto Public Health had gone furthest in access and equity programming, in large part because it was able to incorporate and build on programs that had been in place before amalgamation in 1998. Those programs, which had evolved over more than two decades characterized by successive waves of immigration, had given the city a relatively diverse workforce and the ability to draw on the skills and knowledge of a large number of community groups.

❑ Despite having less overall support than Toronto staff, Peel Public Health was active in confronting the challenges of diversity. Initiatives included building alliances with community-based organizations and developing an information database to help staff better understand and respond to Peel's changing population.

PUBLIC RECREATION helps immigrants to settle in their communities, develop support systems, and generally gain an understanding of "how things work" in their new country in a more informal way. Public recreation programs are particularly important in helping immigrant youth deal with the difficulties of transition to a new country. Such difficulties can include isolation, racism, and the effects of previous trauma and poverty.

❑ The key challenge is to address barriers like accessibility (i.e., language) or affordability (i.e., user fees) amidst budget cuts. Provincial government financial support has virtually disappeared, severely limiting the ability of GTA recreation departments to adapt or plan their programs and facilities to accommodate immigrant needs.

❑ Budget cuts and politics had forced many municipal recreation departments -- especially in suburban municipalities -- to adopt more corporate, customer-oriented approaches to service provision. This often meant that recreation departments relied on local demand (as registered by level of use of existing facilities, direct communications from local residents, or information conveyed by local councilors and community organizations) to guide the planning and initiation of new services. This approach did not rule out program changes to accommodate immigrant preferences. It did mean, however, that such changes were likely to occur slowly and only after immigrant groups became well enough established, or acquired enough organizational strength, to make their voices heard.

PLANNING affects all citizens by determining how land is developed and used. When communities and their needs change as a result of immigration, or when there are conflicting ideas and proposals for land use based on cultural differences, the planning process is especially relevant to immigrants because it offers people a place to say how they feel about change in their community.

❑ The key challenge, as perceived by professional planners, is to not make an issue out of immigration and ethnocultural diversity at the expense of the technical merits of a proposal.

❑ Unlike other service providers who recognized that immigration poses unique challenges, planners were noticeably reluctant to focus on differences. Planning is a relatively conservative profession, and both urban and suburban planners across the GTA saw immigration as an interesting and relevant issue for their municipalities, but one that was outside the particular responsibility of planning departments. Their preference was to deliver services in a universal fashion.

LIBRARIES play a vital role in the settlement process, serving as places of information, recreation, and communal interaction for newcomers. Given the role of libraries in promoting community cohesion, the successful library can be described as one that attracts users by reflecting and serving the diversity of its community.

❑ Libraries contain many of the resources, both electronic and print, that immigrants value as they search for jobs, acquire language skills, find out about their new communities and their new country, and retain links to their cultures. While newcomers do not place recreational reading high on their list of priorities, they do rely on libraries to meet a range of immediate needs – community information, access to technology, and English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) services.

❑ Immigration, when combined with budget cuts and the demand for new technology, places significant pressures on the delivery of library services as libraries strive to make themselves relevant to local populations and to attract new users. Librarians in the GTA recognized that a generic approach to meeting immigrant needs was clearly ineffective as they struggled to provide adequate and timely services to their immigrant-rich populations.

CONCLUSION. Immigration not only presents municipal service agencies with severe challenges but it can also prompt municipal staff to change the ways they define and carry out their work. Many municipal agencies in the GTA were finding it difficult to respond to immigrant-related challenges, however, because of reduced financial and legislative provincial government support for services that mattered to immigrants.

At the time of this study, Toronto agencies were often preoccupied with dealing with the stresses produced by the provincially-imposed amalgamation of Metropolitan Toronto with its six member municipalities. Nonetheless several of them were incorporating elements of the city's Access and Equity policy into their work programs. Because suburban councils did not have formal policies in place, their agencies had to decide individually how to deal with clienteles that were becoming increasingly diverse. Agency responses varied greatly, both within and among the suburban regions.

In the long run, municipal governments are likely to be effective and willing participants in the immigrant settlement process only if they have the support of senior governments. Citizenship and Immigration Canada can provide some of that support by:

- recognizing, in its capacity as primary funder of immigrant settlement services, the importance of municipal government agencies to the settlement process;

- encouraging or promoting attempts to achieve cross-boundary collaboration among municipal agencies providing services to immigrants;

- providing municipal agencies with up-to-date information about trends in immigration and immigrant settlement patterns;

- acquiring a better understanding of the relationship between municipal and community-based agencies and the constraints on the development of successful partnerships between the two sectors. While such partnerships can be important to meeting the range of immigrant settlement needs, they are likely to be most effective when they evolve out of shared interests and experience, and when they are based on mutual understanding and respect.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study looks at the ways in which public service agencies in seven municipalities (four cities, one town and two regional municipalities) in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) were responding in the late 1990s to challenges posed by the settlement of large numbers of immigrants. The municipalities were selected as representing central and suburban jurisdictions within this urban region, and because large portions of their populations had been classified as immigrants by Statistics Canada. The suburban municipalities were also components of the fastest growing sectors of the GTA, with immigrants accounting for substantial shares of their growth.

Research discussed in this report built on an earlier study of the ways in which the councils of six municipal governments in the GTA had responded to immigrant settlement and the challenges of growing population diversity (Wallace and Frisken, 2000).[2] This study is also part of an ongoing research project that aims to show that:

❑ municipal governments play an important though usually unrecognized role in making and implementing urban policy in Canada,

❑ their role is increasing as provincial governments give them more administrative and financial responsibility for the provision of local services,

❑ within large urban regions consisting of many local jurisdictions, there are likely to be variations in the way individual local governments and their service agencies respond to the challenges posed by population growth and demographic change. These variations, which relate to inter-municipal differences in a large number of factors that can influence municipal decision making, can be important in determining the type and level of local services available to immigrants, and the ability of immigrants to use them.

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[2] That study looked at the four suburban municipalities included in this research, as well as the core cities of Toronto and York. The latter two became part of the new City of Toronto in 1998 when the Government of Ontario amalgamated the governments of Metropolitan Toronto and its six municipalities into a single unit.

Immigration and government programs targeted at immigrants are not policy areas that are normally identified with municipal governments. They are matters that the Canadian constitution assigns to federal and provincial governments, with the federal government having legal ascendancy. Immigration and immigrant-related policies (e.g. policies to assist immigrant settlement) are nonetheless matters of great importance to the governments of municipalities with large and growing immigrant populations because they are changing their social character and the types of demands made on local service providers. In the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), which receives at least one third of all immigrants coming to Canada every year, foreign immigration was the major contributor to population change in the 1990s, accounting for 75 per cent of population growth during that period, as compared to 25 per cent for natural increase and 0 per cent for net migration within Canada (Bourne, 2000: 2-3). It is reasonable to expect that persistent change in the composition and character of an urban region's population is likely to affect virtually everything its local governments do, involving them in the immigrant settlement process whether they want to be involved or not. Whatever they do will have consequences for the general well-being of immigrants and for the way they are absorbed into society.

Very little is known, however, about the way municipal governments and their agencies are dealing with changes associated with immigration. Indeed, very little is known about the way municipal governments and their agencies deal with any of the challenges they confront in carrying out responsibilities delegated to them by provincial governments, which have constitutional responsibility for municipal institutions in Canada. The characterization of immigrant settlement as a policy area belonging to federal and provincial governments has meant that most research in this area has concentrated on the activities and needs of the many community-based organizations that work in this field. These agencies depend on governments (including municipal governments), private foundations, charitable organizations and private donors for most of their support. To the extent that government donors recognize municipal agencies as performing settlement activities, they tend to perceive them as no different than the community-based organizations, and to expect them to behave in much the same way;

that is, to apply to them for funds to operate specific programs within guidelines specified by the donor governments.

It is true, as this study will show, that the activities of municipal agencies and community organizations often intersect or overlap, resulting in a complex set of relationships ranging from mutual dependency and cooperation to mutual distrust and antagonism. Within this confused tangle of relationships, municipal agencies tend to be grouped with the broadly-based "mainstream" organizations that are often viewed with dislike or suspicion by the typically smaller, more narrowly focused ethno-specific organizations because they possess or have access to more resources, and are thus able to dominate the agendas of inter-group discussions or control the direction taken by ostensibly "collaborative" partnerships. While municipal agencies are more like mainstream than ethno-specific community-based organizations in the scope of their operations, however, they are not the same, for several reasons:

- ❑ Municipal agencies are responsible for providing services to the entire population of the municipality for which they work, not just to its immigrant members. In carrying out their work, therefore, they have to balance the preferences and demands of the Canadian-born population against those of immigrant newcomers. In other words, municipal agencies cannot focus on the needs or concerns of immigrants alone. Moreover, even if immigrants come to comprise a majority of a municipality's population, as seems likely to happen in at least some GTA municipalities, they differ among themselves along many dimensions: time of arrival in Canada, country of and/or ethnic origin, cultural and religious practices, language, and many others. Their differences can give rise to different and sometimes conflicting demands on the local public sector. It falls on municipal service providers to look for ways to maintain harmony among different population groups and defuse tensions wherever they exist.

- ❑ In trying to balance the concerns of immigrant communities against those of the Canadian-born, municipal agencies function in a local context that is not only becoming increasingly complex, in the sense of containing a growing number of groups representing diverse and sometimes conflicting interests, but that also

generates increasingly insistent demands that they be representative of and responsive to this diversity, that they provide opportunities for citizens and groups to participate in the policy process in meaningful ways, and that they treat all clients equitably (Andrew, Graham and Phillips, Forthcoming. Introduction). In the Greater Toronto Area, as in many other urban regions, these demands have been growing while the resources available to municipal agencies have been levelling off or shrinking.

❑ Municipal agencies are accountable to elected municipal councils, on whom they depend not just for funding but for survival, i.e. for the right to go on doing the things they do. As municipal staff know very well, the councillors to whom they look for support seldom lose sight of the two overlapping groups on which their political fortunes depend: local voters and local taxpayers. In order to gain council support for program innovation or expansion, or council recognition of problems emerging in their jurisdictions, municipal staff have to be able to convince a majority of local councillors that the issues they identify are important, and to do so in ways that will help those councillors make new initiatives palatable to their voting and tax-paying constituents.

• The functions of municipal agencies are prescribed in a body of provincial government statutes and regulations that constitute both a set of obligations to which municipal agencies must adhere (and therefore a set of priorities to which they must allocate most of their budgets) and also a set of limitations on their ability to innovate. Although provincial statutes and regulations are often worded vaguely enough to allow municipal officials some latitude to decide how they will deal with new situations, they must always be taken into account. If statutes and regulations fall short of enabling municipal agencies to do the jobs they think are necessary, they must try to persuade provincial authorities to make changes in laws or regulations, or to help bring their funding in line with their responsibilities.

Advocacy for immigrants is made difficult for municipal staff by the political irrelevance of many of the immigrants and refugees who are most in need of government

services.   Those who have arrived in Canada most recently are unable to vote in elections at any level of government, and thus are unlikely to enter into the electoral calculations of political office-seekers. Moreover, they often lack organized means of influencing the political process. At the same time, recent arrivals are likely to be particularly dependent on municipal agencies for help because they have not become familiar with the services provided by community-based organizations, or because there are no organizations specifically devoted to serving or promoting their interests. Moreover, growing and increasingly persistent poverty among some ethno-cultural groups has resulted in greater and more prolonged dependency on municipally-administered support programs. For these reasons, the responses of municipal governments and the work of their service agencies are becoming increasingly important to the immigrant settlement experience in Canada.

2.0 THE STUDY AREA

In this report we compare the way the providers of nine different public services had responded to immigrant clients in five municipalities (four cities and one town) and two regional municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area, or GTA, a large urban complex in southern Ontario, Canada (see Figure 1).   The five municipalities were the new **Toronto**, which came into existence on January 1, 1998 as an amalgamation of the governments of the federated Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto (Metro) and its six member municipalities (the former Toronto, East York, Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough and York). The other four were (and still are) rapidly-growing suburban municipalities outside the Toronto boundary. **Brampton** and **Mississauga** were members of the two-tier Regional Municipality of Peel, to the west of Metro; **Markham** and **Vaughan** were in the Regional Municipality of York, to Metro's north (see Figure 1).[3]

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[3]No cities were chosen in Durham Region or Halton Region because there were far fewer immigrants living in those regions at the time of the study than in the regions we selected.

Figure 1: The Greater Toronto Area

The municipalities selected for this study were similar in having large proportions of their populations classified as immigrants in the 1996 Census of Canada (see Table 1). The decision to look at nine different local services required us to enlarge the study to take in the two regional municipalities. While all nine services were the responsibility of the amalgamated City of Toronto, five of them (education, housing, policing, public health, social services) were administered by regional agencies in the suburban municipalities. Lower tier municipalities provided the other four services (municipal planning, public transit, recreation, and libraries).

Table 1: Immigrant Population as Percentage of Total Population, Selected Municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area, 1996.*			
Municipality	**Total Population**	**Immigrant Population**	
		Total	**Percentage**
Toronto	2,385,421	1,124,410	48
Peel Region	852,526	330.36	40
Brampton	268,251	96,115	36
Mississauga	544,382	234,860	43
York Region	592,445	211,205	36
Markham	173,383	83,130	48
Vaughan	132,549	55,325	42
Durham Region	458,616	85,755	19
Halton Region	339,875	76,290	23
Total GTA	**4,628,883**	**1,837,015**	**40**

*The regional municipalities of Durham and Halton were not included in the study, but we have included data for these jurisdictions in order to provide a complete picture for the Greater Toronto Area.

Source: Statistics Canada (1996).

Although the municipalities were similar in having large numbers of immigrants, they differed from each other in several important ways, both at the upper-tier (regional) and lower tier (area municipality) level. One important difference relates to the fact that

Statistics Canada classifies anyone who was born outside Canada as either an immigrant or a refugee, regardless of how long they have been in the country or whether or not they have become Canadian citizens. Yet it is the more recently-arrived immigrants who are most likely to need help to settle in Canada, and thus to make the greatest demands on municipal and community-based agencies.

Of the municipalities we studied, Toronto was the intended destination of the largest proportion of immigrants and refugees who arrived between 1990 and 1999 (see Table 2). At the other end of the spectrum was the City of Vaughan, which was the intended destination of just .02 per cent of persons arriving in the GTA during the 1990s.

Municipality	Total Population 1996	% GTA Total	Intended destination of immigrants 1991-1995	% Total Immigrants 1991-1995	Intended destination of Immigrants 1990-1999	% Total Immigrants 1990-1999
Toronto	2,385,421	51.5	392,829	79.0	756,726	80.4
Peel Region	852,526	18.4	65,867	13.0	115,651	12.3
Brampton	268,251	5.8	15,497	3.1	28,230	3.0
Mississauga	544,382	11.8	48,223	9.7	84,162	8.9
York Region	592,445	12.8	24,552	4.9	42,748	4.5
Markham	173,383	3.8	9,345	1.9	16566	1.8
Vaughan	132,549	2.9	83	.02	188	.02
Durham Region	458,616	9.9	8,005	1.6	13,506	1.4
Halton Region	339,875	7.3	6,646	1.3	12,258	1.3
Total GTA	4,628,883	100	497,899	100	940,889	100

Table 2: Intended Destinations of Greater Toronto Area Immigrants, 1991-1995 and 1990-1999

*The regional municipalities of Durham and Halton were not included in the study, but we have included data for these jurisdictions in order to provide a complete picture for the Greater Toronto Area.

Source: Based on Citizenship and Immigration Canada data.

On the other hand, Vaughan had the largest proportion of immigrants (just over 50 per cent) who had arrived in Canada before 1970 (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Period of Immigration of Total Immigrant Population,
Selected Municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area, 1996**
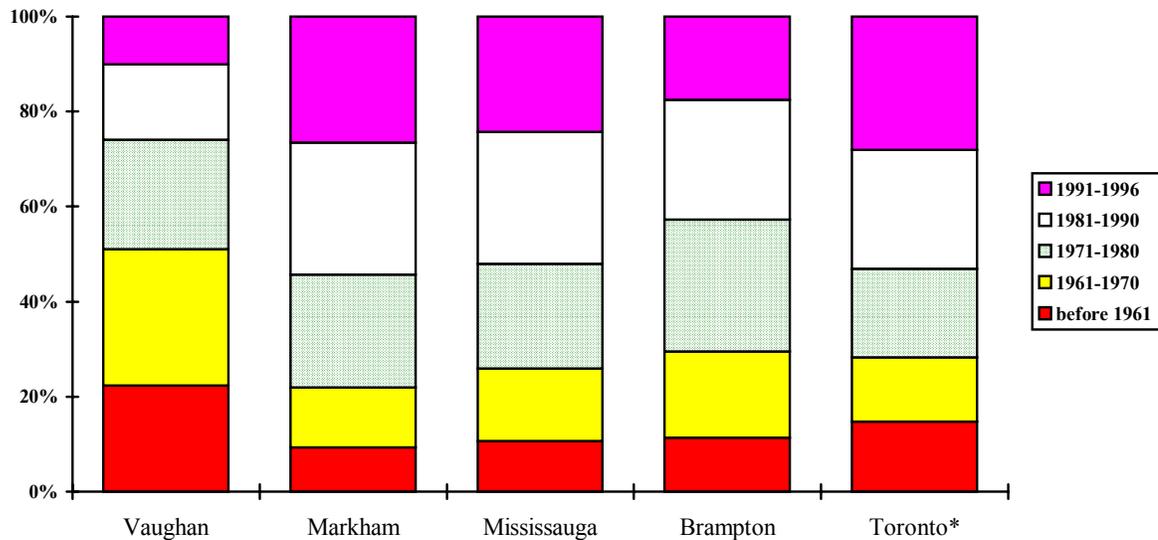
*Toronto as it is used here refers to the newly amalgamated City of Toronto, which has the same boundaries as those of the former Metro Toronto.

Source: Statistics Canada (1996).

The municipalities also differed in the composition of their immigrant populations (see Tables 3 and 4). Markham's sizeable Chinese population gave it the largest percentage of visible minorities in the GTA (Bourne, 2000: Table 5.3)[4], but Toronto had the largest variety of immigrant groups altogether. Toronto residents in 1996 came from 200 countries and spoke a total of 160 different languages (Toronto Public Health, 2000: 1).[5] Nonetheless the populations of all these municipalities were characterized by growing population heterogeneity, and municipal staff members were aware of this fact.

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[4] The 1996 Census shares Canada's *Employment Equity Act* definition of visible minorities: "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race, or non-white in colour." Under this definition the Act places the following groups in the visible minority category: Chinese, South Asians, Blacks, Arabs and West Asians, Filipinos, Southeast Asians, Latin Americans, Japanese, Koreans and Pacific Islanders.
[5] For a more detailed discussion of the characteristics of the immigrant populations of the five municipalities, see Wallace and Frisken, 2000: 7-14.

Table 3: Top Five Countries of Birth among Immigrants, Selected Municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area, 1996.					
	Vaughan	**Markham**	**Mississauga**	**Brampton**	**Toronto***
1.	Italy	Hong Kong	India	India	Italy
2.	India	China	U.K.	U.K.	U.K.
3.	Hong Kong	U.K.	Poland	Portugal	China
4.	U.K.	India	Philippines	Jamaica	Hong Kong
5.	Russian Fed.	Jamaica	Italy	Italy	Jamaica

*Toronto refers to the newly amalgamated City of Toronto, which has the same boundaries as the former Metro Toronto.

Source: Statistics Canada (1996)

Table 4: Most Frequent Claims of Single Ethnic Origin*, Selected Municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area, 1996.		
City	**Ethnic Origin**	**%**
	Italian	50.1 %
Vaughan	Jewish	16.3 %
	Chinese	5.3 %
	Chinese	33.4 %
Markham	East Indian	9.4 %
	Canadian	7.7 %
	East Indian	10.5 %
Mississauga	Canadian	10.2 %
	Italian	8.6 %
	Canadian	15.0 %
Brampton	East Indian	14.3 %
	English	11.4 %
	Chinese	12.2 %
Toronto**	Italian	9.2 %
	Canadian	7.8 %

•The Census documents both single and multiple ethnic origin responses. As the majority of respondents answer the question of ethnicity with a single response, and to ease comparison, figures are for single ethnic origin only and therefore are not a proportion of the total population. Roughly three quarters of the total population in each city claimed a single ethnic origin.

••Toronto refers to the newly amalgamated City of Toronto, which has the same boundaries as the former Metro Toronto.

Other, more general differences among the municipalities helped to form the context in which their municipal agencies operated. Differences in their population growth rates implied differences in the priorities that their local governments were likely to attach to different types of services. The two regional municipalities came into existence in 1971 (York) and 1974 (Peel) and had experienced rapid growth since that time. Toronto, unlike many other North American cities, was still gaining population between 1991 and 1996 but its growth rate had been consistently well below that of the other municipalities (see Table 5).

Table 5: Rates of Population Growth in Selected Municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area, 1976-1996 and 1991-1996					
Municipalities	Population 1976	Population 1991	Population 1996	% change 1976-1996	% change 1991-1996
Toronto	2,124,291	2,275,771	2,38 5,421	12	5
Peel Region	375,910	732,798	852,526	127	16
Brampton	103,459	234,445	268,251	159	14
Mississauga	250,017	463,388	544,382	118	18
York Region	203,915	504,981	592,445	191	17
Markham	56,206	153,811	173,383	208	13
Vaughan	17,782	111,359	132,549	645	19
Durham Region	247,473	409,070	458,616	85	12
Halton Region	228,497	313,136	339,875	49	9
Total GTA	**3,180,086**	**4,235,756**	**4,628,883**	**46**	**9**
Source: Census Canada					

Immigration seemed to be having much more noticeable effects on the population and character of Toronto than of the other municipalities we looked at (see Table 6). The total number of immigrants planning to settle in the city (Metropolitan Toronto at that time) in the years 1990 to 1995 was nearly three times as great as the size of that city's population increase between the 1991 and 1996 censuses. The numbers planning to settle

in other parts of the GTA accounted for less than half of their increases except in Peel Region. In other words, recent immigrants were more than making up for Toronto residents who had moved elsewhere, whereas in other parts of the GTA they were only one component of a suburbanizing trend. Also, the percentage of persons naming Toronto as their destination was slightly higher between 1990 and 1999 than it was between 1991 and 1995, indicating that Toronto's role as the Greater Toronto Area's primary immigrant reception area increased slightly over the decade (see Table 2).

Table 6: Population Increase in Selected Municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area, 1991-1996, and Number of Persons Citing these Municipalities as their Intended Destination, 1990-1995			
Municipalities	**Population Increase, 1991-1996**	**Immigrant citing this as intended destination 1991-1995**	**New Immigrants as % of Population Increase, 1991-1995**
Toronto	109,650	392,829	358
Peel Region	119,728	65,867	55
Brampton	33,806	15,497	46
Mississauga	89,994	48,223	56
York Region	87,464	24,552	28
Markham	19,572	9,345	48
Vaughan	87,464	83	0.4
Durham Region	49,546	8,005	1.6
Halton Region	26,739	6,646	1.3
Total GTA	**393,127**	**497,899**	**100**
Source: Based on Citizenship and Immigration Canada data.			

The municipalities also differed in population wealth. As Figure 3 shows, the suburban municipalities had larger proportions of their populations in the higher income categories; Toronto had higher proportions of its population in the lower categories. Differences in poverty rates, both among municipal populations as a whole and among their immigrant components, were also likely to affect the kinds of demands made on

local service agencies, particularly the regional agencies responsible for education, housing, policing, public health, and social services, in different parts of the GTA. Poverty rates in Toronto were much higher than they were in the suburban regions, and poverty rates for immigrants compared to non-immigrants were also higher in Peel, York and Halton Regions (Table 7).

FIGURE 3: Population by Household Income (Private Households), Selected Municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area, 1996.
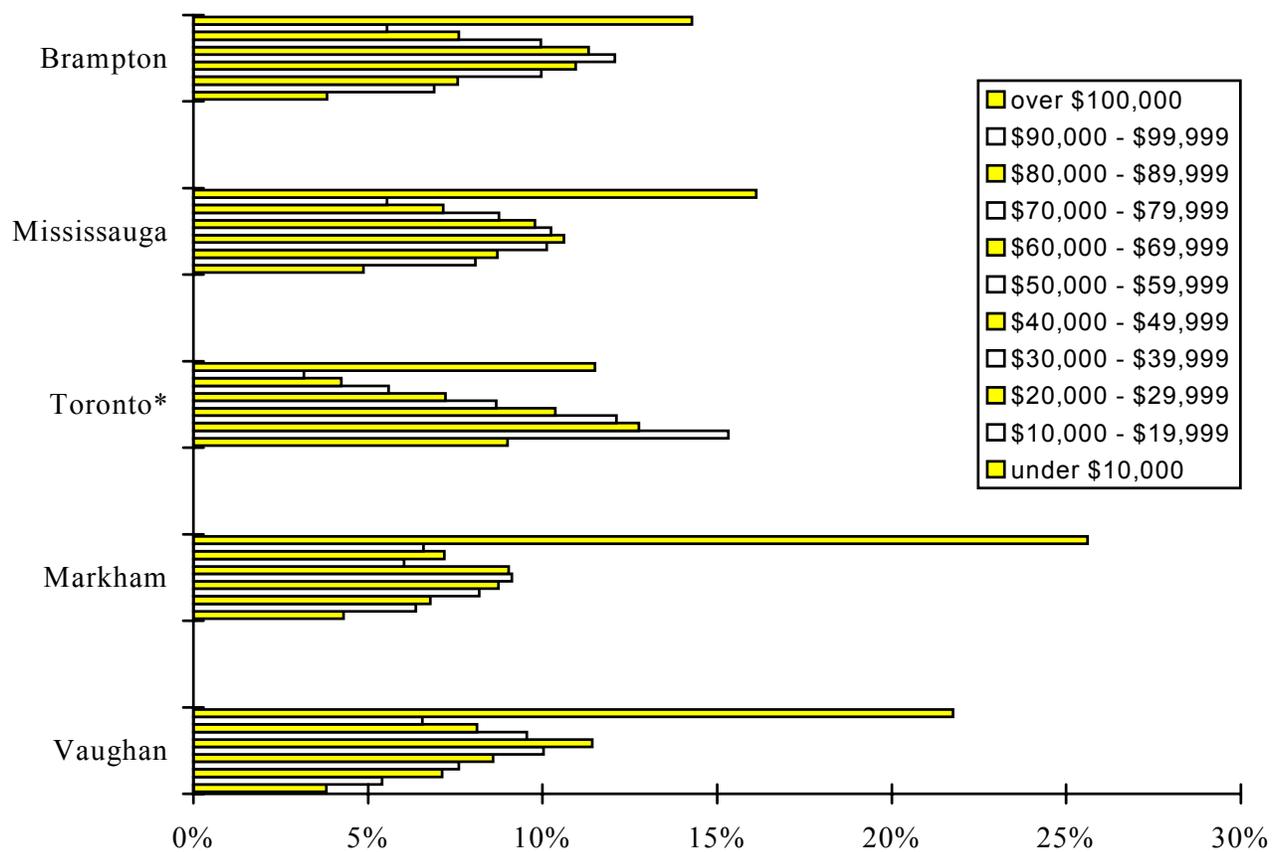
Source: Statistics Canada (1996).Toronto refers to the newly amalgamated City of Toronto, which has the same boundaries as the former Metro Toronto. Source: Statistics Canada (1996).

Table 7: Poverty Rates among Immigrants, Selected Municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area, 1996		
Municipality	**Poverty Rate 1996[1]**	**Poverty Rates among Immigrants, 1996[2]**
Toronto	27.6	33.0
Peel Region	11.1	19.0
York Region	12.9	18.0
Durham Region	11.1	11.0
Halton Region	9.3	12.0
Total GTA	**20.2**	**n/a**
n/a = not available Sources: [1]Bourne (2000: Table 6.5), [2]Lee (1999).		

Despite their differences, all the municipalities were experiencing population changes related to immigration. To varying degrees, therefore, service providers in all of them faced the challenges most commonly identified with immigrant settlement - difficulties of communication stemming from language and cultural differences, and a need to combat discrimination or racism among their own staffs and within the public at large. In responding (or not responding) to these challenges, municipal staff members are the front line workers in a complex network of governmental agencies and programs that make and implement immigrant settlement policy. They are the "street-level bureaucrats" who "in their face-to-face encounters with citizens [and non-citizens], 'represent' government to the people" (Lipsky, 1976: 196).

3.0 THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK: MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS WITHIN THE CANADIAN FEDERAL SYSTEM

Local governments in Canada are constituents of a federal system of government in which powers are divided between a national (federal) government and ten provincial governments. Responsibility for municipal institutions is only one of a number of important functions that the Canadian Constitution assigns to provincial governments, an

arrangement that gives municipal governments no authority to make policies on any matters that arise within their jurisdictional boundaries without having or securing provincial government approval. This constitutional reality has persuaded many analysts of Canadian policy-making either to ignore municipal governments altogether or to depict what they do as expressions of provincial government policy at the local level.

Whether provincial governments tell them to or not, however, municipal governments and their various departments have to find ways to perform their legally assigned responsibilities in new and unfamiliar situations, though always within the constraints imposed on their freedom to act both by provincial laws and by budgets that are subject to close surveillance both by provincial officials and by local taxpayers. Complicating their task is the fact that immigration is one of the functions for which the federal government has concurrent powers with the provinces, with the proviso that federal laws should prevail in the event of dispute (Smiley, 1976: 5). At the time of this study, the federal government was trying to resolve or avoid such disputes by devolving its responsibility for immigrant settlement services to provincial governments, a process called Settlement Renewal.   It had been unable to reach such an agreement with Ontario, however (Mwarigha, 1998: 92; Maytree Foundation, 1999). Thus the GTA's municipal governments were caught in a situation where the federal government made immigration policy (which included determining how many immigrants came into the country every year) and provincial governments made policies that determined what they could do for the new arrivals. Provincial government policies related to immigration, like provincial government policies in many other fields, had recently changed in ways that made it more difficult for municipalities to initiate new programs in this or any other area of local concern.

3.1 Ontario Government responses

Ontario government responses to the demands of a changing population began in 1977 with the adoption of a Multicultural Policy, which acknowledged the diverse nature of Ontario society and the rights and responsibilities of citizens of diverse backgrounds. That policy became the basis for programs sponsored by the Ministry of Citizenship,

Culture and Recreation to support multicultural policies in all parts of the province. The pace of change accelerated in the early 1990s under a New Democratic Party (NDP) government (elected in 1990) with a stated commitment to promoting social equity. Its activities included the creation of an Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat and the 1993 passage of an *Employment Equity Act* aimed at preventing workplace discrimination and harassment of vulnerable minorities.

Most Ontario government programs were terminated after the 1995 election won by the Ontario Progressive Conservatives. Among the more significant casualties of government cutbacks were Ontario Welcome Houses, of which there were three in Toronto, which provided such settlement services as translation, interpretation, and the publication of information brochures in various languages; a Multilingual Access to Social Assistance Program (MASAP); the Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat; a Community and Neighbourhood Support Services Program (CNSSP); and the *Employment Equity Act*. The government also stopped funding Newcomer Language Orientation Classes (NLOC). These had allowed community agencies to provide language training for individuals who were not eligible for federally-funded language programs (e.g. parent and preschool programs, language and citizenship classes) (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, 1997).

At the time of this study the provincial government still operated a Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP), a successor to the Ontario Settlement and Integration Program (OSIP) that it terminated in 1995, but at a reduced level of funding. At the same time it had shifted from a practice of helping to finance agencies that provided services to supporting specific projects. In the employment area, the government had ended the Jobs Ontario program, which provided job opportunities for immigrants within community economic development initiatives. It also replaced an Ontario Training and Adjustment Board (OTAB), which had funded agencies providing employment-related services to immigrants, with a Job Connect Program that focused on employment preparation and planning services, on-the-job training, and summer placement services.

These changes at the provincial level had had their most noticeable impacts on the community-based sector, from which some agencies had disappeared while others

continued to function in a state of chronic uncertainty and instability. The survival and effectiveness of these agencies depended on their ability to compete successfully for project grants, many of which did not pay administrative costs. The changes also implied a radical transformation of the context in which municipal governments and their agencies were trying to respond to needs and demands associated with immigrant settlement. To many of the people interviewed for this study, the provincial government had detached itself from immigrant-related activities to the point where it appeared unsympathetic or indifferent to this policy realm, or simply irrelevant to what they were trying to do.

In principle, lack of provincial concern or directives would seem to have increased the ability of municipal governments to respond to the particular needs of their communities, including needs associated with immigrants. The provincial government had injected elements of instability and uncertainty into the workings of municipal government as well, however, thereby making such initiatives more difficult or less likely. The largest upheavals had been experienced by the new City of Toronto, which had had to consolidate and harmonize the organizational structures and work programs of the various departments and boards that comprised the former governments of Metropolitan Toronto and its six member municipalities. It was carrying out this task in the face of severe budget constraints resulting both from cuts in provincial government grants and from a freeze on property taxes maintained by the city council. In addition, both Toronto and the governments of the suburban municipalities and regions had had to adjust to the most massive restructuring of provincial-municipal relations in Ontario since the 1960s. While this process had had much more severe impacts on some municipal service providers than on others, it had left none of them untouched.

The most far-reaching change entailed full provincial government takeover of administrative and financial responsibility for public education in all of Ontario. The government had begun to assemble the entire education budget from provincial revenues and municipal property taxes, to distribute funds to local school boards according to a formula that took account of the characteristics of the districts served, and to prescribe what would be taught in the schools. This change was a major departure from the situation that existed before 1996, when locally-elected boards had considerable

autonomy to determine curricula and raise money from local taxes to supplement provincial grants. It made it legitimate to question whether education could still be considered a municipal government function at all, and therefore whether it belonged in a study like this one. Elected municipal school boards continued to operate the schools, however, and bore the brunt of day-to-day reactions to their efforts to administer provincial policies relating to class sizes, staffing, and curriculum content. The services they provided were vitally important to the quality of the immigrant settlement experience. Local school boards were also likely to be the first governmental units to learn how well or how poorly provincial education policy was meeting the needs of their communities. They also spoke for those communities to provincial officials. For all these reasons, we decided they belonged in this study.

In other municipal service areas, provincial restructuring had often meant increased financial responsibility for municipal governments. In the case of at least two services (housing and public transit) it had allowed them to decide whether or at what level to provide services that formerly received substantial provincial support. The changes are described in more detail in each of the chapters dealing with specific services, but in brief they gave municipalities increased financial responsibility for social services and public health, full responsibility for public transit, including the inter-regional Greater Toronto (GT) commuter transit system, and social housing.[6] They also brought an end to most provincial unconditional and conditional grants to municipal governments and municipal programs. Like community-based organizations, therefore, municipal agencies that wanted to expand programs or add new ones were having to look for new funding sources or new ways to organize their activities.

3.2 The Federal Government

In the absence of significant provincial government interest in or support for municipal government activities directed at immigrant communities, the government whose activities are of greatest interest to the municipal sector is the federal government.

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[6] As is pointed out in later chapters, the provincial government reintroduced financial support for social housing and public transit in 2001.

This government has traditionally tried to avoid becoming directly involved with municipal governments because of the political pitfalls inherent in intruding into an area of provincial jurisdiction. Despite this hands-off approach, however, federal government activities connected to immigration are of critical and ongoing importance to the governments of municipalities that experience their effects. Four federal programs lodged in three different departments are particularly important: immigration and immigrant settlement programs, multiculturalism, and employment programs.

Immigration and Immigrant settlement programs are the responsibility of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). Immigration policy and its outcomes for cities have undergone considerable changes since the 1960s, when the government removed from *The Immigration Act* provisions giving preference to immigrants from the British Isles, northern Europe and the United States. Under the revised rules, eligibility to immigrate to Canada became dependent on an applicant's ability to satisfy criteria attached to a number of different categories grouped under three broad "classes" of immigrants: family, economic and refugee. As defined at the time of this study, the "family class" included persons who were being reunited with, and sponsored by, family members already in Canada. The "economic class" included persons with demonstrated potential to be self-supporting, assessed on a points system for criteria including (among others) education, experience, arranged employment and language ability. This class also included persons with money to invest in a business, or the ability to start a business in Canada. The final class was "refugees", used by persons admitted to Canada for humanitarian reasons. There were three categories of refugees: government assisted, privately sponsored, and landed refugees, or refugee claimants. The latter group consisted of persons who came to Canada and applied for refugee status after they got here.

While family class immigrants had traditionally exceeded those in other categories, the balance was shifting. Business immigration was introduced as a category began to place more emphasis on attracting immigrants in the economic class (including business immigrants) in the interest of promoting economic growth. By 1999, 29 per cent of new arrivals were in the Family Class, 56 per cent were economic immigrants (but only 12 per cent of these were in the business class; that is, had money to invest), and 12

per cent were refugees.   Almost half the refugees were refugee claimants (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1999: 3).

Citizenship and Immigration Canada provided direct support to indigent immigrants (primarily refugees) for up to one year (or until they found employment within that first year).   It also operated three different programs that funded agencies providing different immigrant settlement services (Mwarigha, 1998). These were: the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), which funded general orientation, settlement counseling, translation and interpretation, information and referral, and employment-related services; the Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) program, which provided language training to adult immigrants; and the HOST program, a volunteer befriending program to help newcomers learn about available services and participate in the community.   Funds for these programs, most of which went to community agencies, had begun to increase after a period of cutbacks. CIC was also operating a Job Search Workshops (JSW) pilot project in Ontario to provide one-time-only funding to projects that provided culturally sensitive training to help newcomers develop the skills they needed to secure jobs.

Federal programs to assist immigrant settlement adhered to *the philosophy that Canada is a "multicultural" country* in which the cultures of its diverse ethnic groups are respected and protected. Canada's multicultural policy was "designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural and political life of Canada" (Tator and Henry, 1991: 38). This concept grew out of federally-initiated efforts in the late 1960s to define and build on the bilingual and bicultural (French and English) character of the Canadian state (Smiley, 1976: 180-81). Those efforts drew attention to the increasing ethnic diversity of Canada's population, and prompted the government to proclaim multiculturalism as government policy in 1971.   Multiculturalism was guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, and in 1988 the government adopted the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* as a way to convert abstract principles into concrete practices.

The status of multiculturalism declined within the federal bureaucracy after the 1980s, when it was administered by a Multiculturalism Directorate. It was moved to Heritage Canada, where it was only one element of a Canadian Identity component that also included Official Languages Support, Sport, Canadian Studies, Youth Participation, Ceremonial and Canadian Symbols Promotion, Human Rights, Native Citizens' Programs, and Community Partnerships (Heritage Canada, 2000). Its funding declined from $25.1 million in 1993/94 to $16.8 million in 1998/99. Declines in status and funding probably reflected the ambivalence about or even antagonism toward the concept found among some members of the Canadian public, and even within some immigrant communities. They also attested to the ongoing difficulty of reconciling the concept of Canada as a bilingual, bicultural country with attempts to promote and celebrate its increasingly multicultural character.

Employment programs administered by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) constituted another area of federal policy of critical importance to immigrants. HRDC had ended all language, skills training and labour market training programs targeted directly at immigrants, however. Its emphasis was on supporting job search assistance programs open to all Canadians.

In brief, while the federal government actively supported or even encouraged immigration, and while its programs remained an important source of government support for agencies providing services to immigrants, changes in federal policies implied a number of difficulties for the municipal government and community-based agencies that were dealing with immigrant settlement issues in receiving communities. Most federally-funded language and settlement programs excluded refugees. They also excluded immigrants who had been in Canada longer than three (or five) years, making it difficult for women who had remained at home with children or for older immigrants to improve their language skills. The abandonment of job training programs in favour of job search assistance benefitted those immigrants who had the Canadian work experience and the language skills needed to qualify for available jobs, but disadvantaged those who lacked one or both of these assets. The priority given to immigrants in the "Economic" category, the majority of whom were being admitted because they had job skills or professional qualifications, had not made the settlement experience easier for many

newcomers because they lacked Canadian experience or because they encountered difficulties in getting their qualifications recognized in Canada. At the same time, changes in the federal Employment (formerly Unemployment) Insurance (EI) program had severely restricted newcomers' access to federally-funded employment training programs by requiring that applicants must either be receiving or have received EI in the past three years in order to qualify.

The virtual disappearance of provincial government programs and the narrowing of federal government programs to assist immigrant settlement helped to account for a surprising trend toward increased and more persistent poverty among immigrants living in Toronto. Despite a selection policy that aimed to bring in newcomers who were better equipped than in the past to find well-paying or professional jobs, the gap between the annual earnings of new immigrants and Canadian-born workers was widening, from $4,900 in 1989 to almost $10,000 in 1994 (Langlois and Dougherty, 1997). In the Toronto area, 53 per cent of immigrants who arrived between 1990 and 1995 were living in poverty (Lee, 1999).

The problems created for immigrants by changes in government policies were also problems with which municipal government agencies and community-based organizations had to deal. It was these agencies that interacted with immigrants on a regular basis over extended periods of time, and who were being called on to resolve difficulties stemming from an inability to communicate in English, failure to find appropriate employment, low income, mental stress, family conflict, cultural misunderstandings, and antagonistic interactions both between immigrants and the Canadian-born and between different immigrant groups.

3.3 Local Government in the Toronto Area

An important reason for the creation of Metropolitan Toronto in 1953 and of the regional governments in the early 1970s was to divide local government responsibilities among the upper and lower tiers in such a way that municipalities within each two-tier system would share the costs of services deemed to be of more than local significance. As was the case in Metropolitan Toronto before 1998, the regional councils became

responsible for physical infrastructure (major roads, trunk sewage and water facilities, waste disposal) and for producing regional plans. Regional school boards both financed and operated the schools until the province took over this function in 1998. Regional agencies administered and paid the local costs of social welfare, public health, policing and social housing. Within the regions, lower tier municipal councils were responsible for local planning, parks and recreation, garbage collection, water supply, libraries, and public transit.

There were a few differences between Metro and the regional municipalities before amalgamation. Within Metro, public transit was delivered by a metropolitan agency (the Toronto Transit Commission). Public health was a local responsibility, however, and responsibility for education was divided between metropolitan and local school boards.

Of the nine services selected for this post-amalgamation study, only four (municipal planning, public transit, recreation, and libraries) were being provided by lower-tier municipal governments outside Toronto; the other five were provided by regional agencies. The two levels of government were closely coupled at the regional council level, however, because members of regional councils were either elected to serve on both local and regional councils, or were selected by local councils as their regional representatives. In either case regional councillors brought the preferences of their local councils into discussions of regional issues.

4.0 HOW MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL COUNCILS HAD RESPONDED TO IMMIGRANTS

Municipal responses to immigrant settlers can take two forms: corporate responses, or the means chosen by municipal or regional councils to address needs or problems associated with immigrant settlement, and departmental responses. Corporate responses are the formal positions taken by councils on behalf of the municipalities or regions they represent; departmental responses are usually much less formal, and are made up of the many ways in which the staff of departments or agencies delivering

specific local services respond to the challenges posed by immigrant clients in the regular conduct of their duties.

Corporate responses can be directed either outward, at the governments responsible for making immigration and immigrant settlement policy, or inward, at the immigrant settlement process and agencies (both municipal and community-based) involved in it. Outwardly-directed responses typically take the form of motions by city or regional councils, or public statements by elected officials, criticizing aspects of federal immigration policy and pointing out the extra costs it places on municipal budgets, with particular reference to higher social service and health costs (Dexter, 1997; Funston, 1997; Wallace, 1997). There was general agreement on this issue among the municipal governments we looked at, with officials from several municipalities sometimes joining forces to strengthen their case with federal officials. There were also repeated requests that senior governments include municipal representatives in discussions about immigration policies and prospective policy changes.

Inwardly-directed responses are much more varied, both in type and in the degree to which they occur at all. One study that compared the responses to immigrant settlement adopted by the former City of Toronto and the City of Montreal concluded that Toronto had been much more "proactive" than Montreal in the way it had responded to immigrant settlement (Tate and Quesnel, 1995). The authors defined a proactive approach to include institutionalized efforts to identify and address immigrant needs before problems arose. Such efforts might entail research, the collection and mapping of demographic information, and consultations with community groups and city departments. A reactive approach entailed setting up a unit of city government (an advisory committee, a local ombudsman) to hear demands and complaints coming from the community, and to pass these on to the appropriate municipal departments.

Drawing on these definitions and leaving open the possibility of a third mode of response—inaction, or failure to respond to immigrant settlement at all—we compared the immigrant-related responses of six municipal councils in the Greater Toronto Area, serving the former central cities of Toronto and York, and the suburban municipalities of Markham, Vaughan, Brampton and Mississauga (Wallace and Frisken, 2000). We found

a surprising amount of variation in the responses of the councils of these six municipalities, given the facts that their populations all contained large percentages of persons classified as immigrants, operated in the same urban region, and were subject to the same package of provincial laws, regulations and financial arrangements.

Toronto and Metropolitan Toronto were the only municipal governments in the area that had clearly been proactive in adopting policies and initiating programs to assist the process of immigrant settlement, often in advance of initiatives by the provincial government.[7] The responses of the other municipalities were much more limited. The more specific measures (e.g. employment equity policies) tended to occur in response to provincial legislation rather than to local stimuli. Otherwise the most common municipal government response was to set up a special committee, task force or advisory group to deal with issues of race relations. All municipalities except Mississauga had such a committee. In Mississauga, the only corporate acknowledgment of the city's increasing diversity was an annual multicultural breakfast hosted by the mayor.

The most comprehensive municipal initiatives were those taken in Metropolitan Toronto to improve access to metropolitan services by all groups confronting a variety of barriers to such access. Metro Council adopted the principle of Ethno-Racial Access to Metropolitan Services in a 1990 policy statement that required each of its departments to develop an Access Action Plan. In 1990-91, it produced a Social Development Strategy using resources of the Community Services Department's Social Development and Administration Division (Canadian Urban Institute, 1991; Metropolitan Toronto Social Development Strategy Task Force, 1991). In 1995 it set up an Access and Equity Centre in the office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to administer its policies, and consolidated it with a Multicultural and Race Relations Division already housed in that office.

The new Toronto Council allowed the Access and Equity Centre to continue to operate after taking office in January 1998, but it also set up a task force to recommend how the new city should deal with access and equity issues. Over the next year the task force held meetings with community groups and prepared several draft reports. The

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[7] For a summary of the responses of the six municipalities, see Wallace and Frisken, 2000: 20-21.

process yielded a Vision Statement that committed the city to, among other objectives, "create an environment of equality in the government and in the community for all people regardless of their race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, marital status, receipt of public assistance, political affiliation, disability, level of literacy, language and/or socioeconomic status (Toronto Task Force on Community Access and Equity, 1999: 3).

The process was politically contentious and took longer than anticipated because of the difficulties of harmonizing Metro and City of Toronto policies with the much less comprehensive policies of the old, within-Metro suburbs. Community-based organizations in Toronto feared that applying access and equity principles to the whole city would mean that some agencies would lose funds, the more so because the city council was not prepared to increase its support for this function. There were also differences of opinion about how far the city should go in promoting employment equity and in providing opportunities for "human rights protected groups" to participate in decision making. Council adopted the Task Force report with some amendments in December 1999, however, and in May began to appoint five Community Advisory Committees, one to deal with Race and Ethnic Relations, to "advise City Council on issues of access, equity and human rights" as they pertained to the communities represented on the committees (Toronto Public Health, 2000). It did not adopt a recommendation to set up a committee on Immigration and Refugee Issues, but it did create a working group made up of representatives of community agencies to deal with them.

On an operational level, Toronto's Access and Equity initiatives included lobbying the federal government for policy changes that would reduce the financial hardships and barriers to employment experienced by immigrants and refugees, as well as the costs these groups imposed on municipal governments (City of Toronto Advisory Committee on Immigration and Refugee Issues, 1999: 1-2). The city council broadened criteria for city residents seeking appointment to city agencies, boards and commissions to allow landed immigrants to apply, unless provincial law restricted membership to Canadian citizens. The council also adopted human rights and anti-harassment policies that were applicable to members of council, and a policy to counter hate activities.

Beyond these measures, the city council restated commitments to employment equity made by Metro, the former City of Toronto, and some of the former suburbs. It continued to support sensitivity and awareness training for municipal staff and had a multilingual information unit that did written translations in several languages, although it cut funds for these programs. It also reduced funds that had formerly allowed city staff to contract with community-based agencies for assistance with translation and interpretation. But city departments were able to call on members of the city's large, multilingual staff to act as interpreters. Some departments also used a service operated by AT&T that could provide interpretations in 140 languages.

One city staff member summed up the development of the new city's Access and Equity Policy as "a slow process. There are always compromises." Looked at from a GTA-wide perspective, however, the new city had moved much further than any other municipality in addressing the issues that arise most frequently in reports and discussions about the relationship between immigrants and the local public service sector, and in providing city staff with a corporate philosophy and institutional supports for addressing those issues.[8]

The only other municipality in the GTA to have taken a significant initiative at the corporate level was the Regional Municipality of York, which in March 1999 launched a planning process to develop a Human Services Strategy with funding help from Human Resources Development Canada. The council decided to proceed with this initiative, which it had been discussing for some time, after public forums organized to evaluate York's first regional plan (approved in 1995) identified human services as an area of significant public concern (Waller, 1999). Ethnic diversity was one of five key indicators used by regional staff to explain the Human Services Strategy to the public. Material about the Strategy was available in Chinese and Italian as well as English.

The Strategy's Steering Committee included representatives from all local government agencies except public transit. Background papers prepared as part of its work program dealt with issues ranging from community collaboration to the availability and cost of services in the region. The committee also held extensive consultations with

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[8] These issues are discussed in relation to particular services in the chapters that follow.

community-based service providers and sponsored a number of public forums. The aim was to produce recommendations 1) for policies to help the region achieve the principles of a healthy community and 2) policies relating to specific issues (like homelessness and youth violence).

Efforts to initiate and then to conduct the Strategy had to compete for council attention with persistent concerns about providing new infrastructure to accommodate the region's rapid growth—concerns that became more intense after the provincial government restructured its financial relationship with municipalities in 1997. Adding to the difficulties of sustaining council support were large differences in population characteristics and priorities between the northern, more rural parts of the region and the urbanized districts in the south (where most immigrants were settling). Nonetheless, the regional council approved the Strategy Team's recommendation to set up a Human Services Planning Coalition to "serve as a permanent advisory, resource and planning forum for human service providers in York Region" and to "provide leadership in coordinating cross-sectoral initiatives that enhance the capacity of the human services sector in York Region to communicate, share information, share resources and develop long-term integrated planning tools" (York Region 2000, 13). The immigrant/settlement services sector was one of 14 different service sectors represented on the Coalition's 22-member board.

This study was carried out, therefore, at a time when only one of the seven GTA jurisdictions we looked at had taken a corporate position on issues of ethno-cultural diversity and how they should be addressed by municipal staff. Other municipal initiatives tended to focus primarily on race relations and on providing some means of communication between municipal councils and ethno-cultural organizations. The activities of municipal governments do not end with municipal councils, however; in fact, that is where they begin. For immigrants living in these communities, what local councils said or did about their situation was likely to be of less importance than the way staff members of the various municipal departments and agencies interacted with immigrant clients on a day-to-day basis. These staff members dealt with the realities of immigration at the operational level, and had to decide how far they could go, given the constraints under which they operated, to provide services that were appropriate for and

accessible to immigrants. How they performed this task would not only have impacts on immigrant well-being but was also likely to be important to the way immigrants both adapted to and perceived Canadian society and its institutions. It was for these reasons that we focused our research on municipal staff responses to immigrant settlement.

5.0 THE CONDUCT OF THE STUDY AND THE STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

Research for this study grew out of a conviction that it is important to seek better understanding 1) of the impacts of immigration on those local governments and their agencies that serve large segments of Canada's immigrant population, and 2) of the way municipal agencies cope with changing constituencies within a constitutional and legal framework that seems to allow them little room for innovation. It did not try to assess the impacts of municipal service providers on immigrant communities, or how immigrants perceive municipal agencies and their activities.

The ways in which immigrant communities experience municipal services and interact with service providers appear in this work only to the extent that they were mentioned in secondary sources: principally literature dealing with service-related issues identified with or by immigrant communities, and media accounts. We addressed those issues after completing this research, however, by arranging focus group meetings with members and clients of community-based organizations providing immigrant settlement services in Toronto and all four suburban regions. Group participants were asked to comment on this study's findings in particular and to describe some of their own experiences with municipal services. Results of those meetings are reported in Frisken and Wallace, 2001.

This study began with the following questions: How were immigrants affecting the work of local government service providing agencies? What challenges did these agencies face in trying to provide services to immigrant clients, and how were they responding to those challenges? In this report, we devote a separate chapter to nine different municipal services in the following order: social services, housing, public

transit, education, policing, public health, recreation, municipal planning, and libraries. Each chapter contains five sections, as follows:

❑ An introduction to the service area covered in the chapter, and how it relates to immigrants or immigrant settlement.

❑ A discussion of the main issues that can confront agencies responsible for the service. This information comes mainly from a review of material on the topic found in the academic literature and media accounts.

❑ A discussion of the political and policy contexts that had helped to shape or influence the work of municipal agencies providing the service. This section begins with a description of how that context evolved and how it had changed in recent years. It then moves to a discussion of what policy changes implied for the ability of municipal agencies to deal with immigrant-related needs and issues. Material used in this section came mainly from historical and contemporary accounts of the way federal, provincial and municipal policies had affected and were affecting the service area in question.

❑ A discussion of the immigrant-related challenges faced by the various municipal agencies included in the study, and how they were responding to them. This section also looks at relationships between municipal service providers and community-based organizations, other municipal agencies, and other levels of government. It is based both on written materials (government documents, media accounts) and on interviews with municipal staff. In keeping with assurances given to persons we interviewed, we do not cite individuals by name, but we often quote them directly.

❑ A concluding section that summarizes the findings for the particular service area under consideration.

The final chapter consolidates the findings of the various chapters into general observations about the role that municipal governments and their agencies are playing or can play in the immigrant settlement process in Canada. It also discusses the types of stresses affecting the municipal service sector in cities that are absorbing a

disproportionately large number of newcomers from a wide range of countries. It then recommends ways in which senior government agencies (particularly Citizenship and Immigration Canada) might try to relieve some of those stresses in the interest both of improving services to immigrants or the way those services are delivered, and of reducing the possibility of a strong anti-immigrant backlash in municipalities that serve as Canada's most important sites for immigrant settlement.

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CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL SERVICES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Social services are readily associated with immigrant settlement. Just over half of all immigrants to Canada enter as self-sufficient economic immigrants, yet Canada's role as a refugee-sponsoring nation, together with the challenges of maintaining family sponsorship relationships in tough economic times, make welfare for immigrants a key area of interest. Moreover, a range of services beyond income assistance (e.g. childcare, homes for the aged) are required by many newcomers across the three entrance categories—economic immigrants, family immigrants and refugees—as they become part of the Canadian population.

Unlike some other municipal services, social services are an area of municipal responsibility where links to the community sector are often very pronounced. By using purchase-of-service agreements or grant programs, municipal governments are able to enlist community-based organizations in providing some of the services that municipalities are provincially mandated to deliver. Where cultural considerations have to be taken into account in addressing the service needs of particular immigrant groups, municipalities have joined other levels of government in taking an arm's-length approach to service delivery, preferring to fund the community sector rather than deliver such services themselves. Community-based organizations have been active, however, in pointing out gaps or insufficiencies in the delivery of social services to immigrants. Their arguments are often framed in terms of "ethno-racial access" to services, although they also criticize municipalities for not delivering enough services to meet the specific needs of immigrants.

Across the Greater Toronto Area, community-based organizations have repeatedly raised concerns about the unavailability of social services for ethnocultural and racial communities. Beyond asking for more money for services aimed specifically at immigrants, they have called on governments to address key barriers faced by immigrants and refugees in need of social services: an inability to speak English, lack of information about where to find services, and the targeting of funds to mainstream

immigrant settlement organizations instead of ethno-specific organizations[9], to name a few. A Toronto Star editorial summarized the situation after the release of yet another critical report from the community sector:

> It shouldn't be harder for these communities to get counseling for wife abuse, marriage breakdown, conflicts with children and abuse of the elderly than it is for English-speakers of European decent. Unfortunately… it is. And in some cases, the services simply don't exist ("A lack of services…," 1991).

Concerns about inadequate or inappropriate service delivery, however, have consistently been eclipsed in the media, among politicians, and within the public by concerns about perceived immigrant over-use or abuse of welfare and other social services.

2.0 KEY ISSUES

In Canada, discussions of social welfare have been characterized as a debate between two extremes. On the one hand, there is the view that people should rely on the market (income, loans, etc.) and family to address their social needs, and that being unable to do so is a clear sign of personal failure. On the other hand is the view that social security is a collective responsibility of the whole society - a cost of progress - and thus should be addressed by government. Guest (1985:1) refers to these extremes as the "residual" and the "institutional" concepts of welfare respectively. He assigns the former, residual welfare, to Canada's prewar history:

> If a situation occurred which interrupted the income of an individual or a family, the appropriate course of action was to seek alternate sources of income another job, borrowing, seeking credit – or, where these measures failed, to ask the help of a relative. If for some reason these two avenues of help were closed, then and only then would a social welfare agency step into the breach to offer aid on a temporary and emergency basis…

With conservative political agendas gaining popular favour in many Canadian provinces including Ontario, just as they have in other industrialized countries, defenders

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[9] There is considerable debate as to whether or not mainstream or ethnocultural groups are best suited to providing social services to immigrants and refugees. Funders decide how their money will be distributed within the community sector, and they often prefer to work with mainstream organizations. Nonetheless, small, ethnocultural community-based groups continue to be created "…because they believe the service is either missing in the mainstream organizations or they can deliver it better because they have the cultural sensitivity and the language skills" (Reid, 1991).

of the "institutional" view of social welfare have had to lobby for the protection of those less fortunate in our society. The provision of social welfare remains a legislated obligation of government, yet the way services are delivered is molded by policy and politics. Those who work most closely with immigrants, the community-based organizations, have lobbied for special efforts to address the barriers faced by immigrants trying to access the services that are available.

2.1 Barriers to Service Delivery for Immigrants

The literature dealing with the provision of social services to immigrants reveals that fears about immigrant misuse and overuse of such services are apparently unfounded. A review of nearly 400 publications from Canada, the U.S., Britain, and Australia stated that there were:

> …large numbers of studies supporting the conclusion that very often, recent immigrant groups experience low rates of utilization of many important social and health services despite evidence of significant need. The barriers most often identified include those related to language, lack of information about services, cultural patterns of help seeking, lack of cultural sensitivity by service providers, financial barriers, and lack of service availability (Reitz, 1995: 35-36).

There has been remarkable consistency in the types of barriers that many studies have identified over the last twenty years. One landmark study that explored minority access to human services in Toronto listed the following barriers that had been identified by service providers working directly with immigrants:

- ❑ lack of knowledge of services available

- ❑ lack of knowledge of English and French in minority communities (and lack of interpretation services in the mainstream organizations)

- ❑ the location of services remote from consumers

- ❑ lack of culturally appropriate services

- ❑ administrative barriers such as waiting lists and forms in English only, and

- ❑ costs related to daycare and transportation (Doyle and Visano, 1987).

Although it identifies barriers to service access for immigrants, the existing literature is deficient in empirical research involving immigrants directly. In fact, the need for population-based studies was a key recommendation of Reitz's comprehensive survey of research:

> Many of the studies of barriers to social service utilization, particularly in Canada, are based on information from service providers, or clients of these service providers. This is a very different type of information than what is available from studies such as those in the rather large American literature on barriers to mental health care services. The latter is much more often based on population surveys of the catchment areas of agencies (Reitz, 1995: 31).

Because there is general agreement in the literature about the barriers faced by immigrants trying to access adequate social services, the remedies seem clear: making better information available in languages other than English; hiring and training multilingual and culturally-sensitive staff; including representatives of ethno-cultural minorities in decision-making bodies. All of these remedies were identified for the Toronto area more than a decade ago (Doyle and Visano, 1987). How have municipalities responded to these challenges? To answer this question, we begin by looking at the historical and institutional context for social service delivery in the Greater Toronto Area and how it has been evolving.

3.0 HISTORICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The delivery of social services in Ontario is achieved through a three-way relationship between the province, upper-tier municipalities and community-based organizations. The provincial government sets the context - by legislating municipal responsibilities for social service delivery, providing the bulk of funding to municipalities to meet these responsibilities, and establishing a legislative and policy framework within which municipalities must operate. The federal government is involved only indirectly through its transfers to provincial governments.

Upper-tier regional municipalities are responsible for delivering social services. There is some variability, however, in services delivered in different regions because social service programs fall into three categories: *provincially-mandated and co-funded*

programs (e.g. social assistance, homes for the aged); *optional and co-funded* programs
(e.g. subsidized daycare); and discretionary *municipally-funded* programs (e.g.
community sector grants). The manner in which services are delivered can also vary, as
municipalities are able to choose among direct service delivery, purchase-for-service
arrangements with community-based organizations, and awarding grants to community
sector initiatives.

At the local level, community-based organizations have long been major
providers of many social services. Community-based organizations rely both on
government funding[10] and on a variety of other sources. Despite the insecurity many of
them face in their funding arrangements, they provide government-mandated services,
and often reach needy populations that governments alone cannot reach. Positioned on
the "front line of change" these community organizations function with sometimes
amazing amounts of volunteer labour (Stein, 1998).

While the stability of particular organizations may be precarious, the number of
programs offered has remained relatively constant. For example, a survey of community
agencies providing social services in the former Metropolitan Toronto showed that the
number of new programs added to the system in 1996 slightly exceeded the number of
programs cut during that year (Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, City of Toronto,
and Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, 1997: 36-37). This was because
funding arrangements focussed on programs rather than on the organizations or agencies
providing the services.

Community-based organizations are not as prominent in social service delivery in
the suburban regions as they are in Toronto mainly because there are far fewer of them,
especially in York Region. York not only lacked a Social Planning Council but had only
one community organization (Catholic Community Services) offering immigrant

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[2] The following figures give a sense of the community-based organizations' reliance on government
funding: In 1996, community-based social service organizations participating in a Metropolitan Toronto
survey received 68 per cent ($296 million) of their funding from government sources. The $18 million
contribution from the municipal level ($13 million from Metro, $5 million from the lower tier municipal
governments) exceeded the $16 million in direct contributions from the federal government (Municipality
of Metropolitan Toronto, City of Toronto, and Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, 1997: 18).
While municipal contributions had not increased over the previous year, they constituted a slightly higher

settlement services on a region-wide basis.   The situation was slowly changing, as new organizations appeared in response to the demographic changes occurring in those regions. In general, however, immigrants living in the suburbs were more likely to have to rely on municipal agencies for social assistance or look to agencies in Toronto for help, thereby putting additional but hidden demands on Toronto's social service system. Thus the history and characteristics of that system are important to an understanding of the way social services are delivered to immigrants not only in Toronto but in the GTA as a whole.

3.1   The Delivery of Social Services in Metropolitan Toronto and the Regional Municipalities

Existing local government arrangements for income support and other forms of social assistance in the Greater Toronto Area date back to the late 1960s. In 1966, the province transferred responsibility for welfare from Metropolitan Toronto's lower-tier municipal governments to the upper-tier Metropolitan Toronto Council. The shift was part of a large-scale reorganization of Metropolitan Toronto, and was coupled with a reduction in the number of lower-tier municipal governments from 13 to 6. It meant that at least in principle residents living anywhere in Metropolitan Toronto were entitled to the same level and quality of services, and that the local (20 per cent) share of the costs of those services would be paid out of the Metropolitan Toronto budget, which was funded out of an assessment-based levy on Metro municipalities. The provincial government applied the same principle to the regional governments that it created in the Greater Toronto Area and other parts of Ontario between 1969 and 1974. Thus by 1974 there were five upper-tier units of welfare administration operating in the one metropolitan municipality (Toronto) and four regional municipalities (Durham, York, Peel and Halton) that would later be defined collectively as the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

The reasons for assigning welfare to the metropolitan or regional levels were to improve welfare administration, distribute welfare costs over a wider tax base, and provide more uniform services within the service areas. The policy was also part of a

percentage of the total because of cutbacks by several other donors, including both the provincial and

strategy to achieve economies of scale in the delivery of welfare and other municipal services that the provincial government has adopted at various times since the 1960s. This policy had resurfaced just before this study began in provincial decisions to amalgamate the municipalities of Metropolitan Toronto into a single city and to amalgamate municipalities in other parts of the province into larger units.[11]

3.1.1 Influence of the federal-provincial relationship

The first provincial legislation to promote a shift of responsibility for welfare away from municipalities to larger units of administration was the *General Welfare Assistance Act* (1958)*.* This *Act* was the province's response to a federal-provincial agreement to split the costs of welfare equally between the two levels of government. The provincial legislation passed on 20 per cent of the total costs of welfare to municipalities while committing the province to pay the other 80 per cent out of its own revenues and funds received from the federal government.

These administrative changes were an early example of a characteristic of the welfare system that has persisted to this day - the strong influence exerted on its evolution by adjustments in the federal-provincial relationship. That relationship has had much more to do with the evolution of the national and provincial economies, the state of federal and provincial finances, and ongoing efforts to reconcile the interests and demands of different provincial governments than it has with the characteristics or needs of constituencies served by social service agencies. It has taken little account, for example, of the way immigration has affected those constituencies, especially in the larger cities. Thus while municipal social service departments operate within a framework of laws and regulations laid down by federal and provincial governments, and rely on those governments for a large share of their funding, they must decide on their own how to apply those laws and regulations in circumstances pertaining to their own communities.

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federal governments.

[11] Whether in fact amalgamations actually achieve cost savings is a matter of ongoing debate. What they have done, however, is make it easier for the Ontario government to require municipal governments to pay

For 30 years the basis of the federal-provincial system of social assistance was the 1966 *Canada Assistance Plan* (CAP), which united a number of federal-provincial shared-cost agreements into one program. Under this plan, the federal government agreed to pay half the costs of social assistance and child welfare programs administered by the provinces as long as provincial governments adhered to agreed-upon criteria: they had to base benefits on need, not make residence a condition of benefit, and provide an avenue of appeal (Armitage, 1975: 133). The *Canada Assistance Plan* not only incorporated existing federal-provincial programs but also added new ones, thereby ushering in a period of expansion in the social welfare system. The Ontario government also added new programs, with particular emphasis on programs to assist the elderly (Ontario, Special Program Review, 1975: 168). While increases in provincial contributions to municipal welfare costs were smaller than increases in contributions to other types of social services, the government did strengthen and extend the capacity of municipal welfare offices to include more community-based services ("A Discussion…," 1991: 3).

The Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services participated directly in the delivery of social assistance by administering and fully funding a Family Benefits program, which provided a monthly allowance to families and individuals in need of long-term assistance (Royal Commission on Metropolitan Toronto, 1975: 138). This program supported people considered unable to work—primarily single mothers with young children and persons with disabilities. It complemented the municipally administered General Welfare Assistance program, which supported single people and heads of families whose financial needs were expected to be of short duration.

Expansion of the Canadian welfare state was relatively short-lived. In the mid-1970s, faced with a rapidly-rising deficit during a period of high inflation, the Ontario government began to look for ways to control its spending (Ontario, Special Program Review, 1975). In the late 1970s the federal government sought to reduce its direct involvement in the delivery of cost-shared programs by moving away from grants tied to specific functions to a system of unconditional (block) grants that provincial governments

a share of social service costs. Ontario is one of only two provinces (the other being Manitoba) that still

could spend as they wished. It would take more than 15 years to put such arrangements fully into place. During that time, federal-provincial agreements that entitled provincial governments to larger shares of the income tax brought a reduction in federal government revenues and thus in that government's ability to fund new programs. In Ontario, governments led by all three political parties (Progressive Conservative, Liberal and New Democratic Party) explored ways to reform and rationalize the social welfare system. While these efforts were going on, the social service system in Metropolitan Toronto was expanding and becoming more complex.

3.2 The Evolution of Social Services in Metropolitan Toronto

A feature of the social service system that evolved within **Metropolitan Toronto** during this period of expansion was a large and growing number of "agencies and groups offering an immense variety of services under a broad range of auspices" (Royal Commission on Metropolitan Toronto, 1975: 143). According to a Directory of Community Services published in 1974, Metro already had as many as 500 established agencies, as well as "several thousand other services under widely-varying sponsorships—from church organizations to ethnic organizations to neighbourhood based groups" (Royal Commission on Metropolitan Toronto, 1975: 143). Such organizations have remained an important component of the social service delivery system since that time.

Services provided by community-based organizations depended on the ability of those organizations to raise money from various sources, including the provincial, federal and municipal governments. The services provided by the metropolitan and regional governments were largely determined by provincial legislation and the availability of provincial grants. Regulations governing some programs, like General Welfare Assistance, gave municipalities little or no discretion as to how or at what level they would provide these services. There were other programs, however, that municipal governments could provide at their own discretion, and that the provincial government would sometimes support up to a certain level. While Metro had the power to spend

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require municipal governments to share the costs of welfare (Slack, 2000: 4).

whatever it wanted to help its resident poor, its policy was not to expand services unless the government was willing to increase its own contributions to them (Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, 1980: 73-79). Nonetheless Metro's contributions to social services grew from l7.4 per cent to 21.2 per cent of the Metro budget between 1970 and 1980 as Metro added programs that were eligible for supplementary funding from the province (Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, 1980: 78-79). By 1990 they had risen to 27.6 per cent of the Metro budget after a decade of changes in Metro's system of social service delivery brought about partly by responses to Metro's growing ethno-cultural diversity.

A major catalyst for changes in Metro's social service system were two reports published in 1979 and 1980 by the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto (SPC) that documented a transformation taking place in the spatial and social characteristics of the Metropolitan Toronto population (Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, 1979; 1980). The SPC drew on a large body of data to demonstrate that Metro's post-war suburbs were no longer composed primarily of traditional two-parent families with young children, living in single family homes. Suburban populations were aging, which meant there were more couples without children and more persons living alone. The large amount of lower-priced housing built in the suburbs in the previous two decades (most of it in the form of apartments; some of it as public housing) had also meant an increase in households not normally associated with suburban living: single parent, usually mother-led families; newly-arrived immigrants; unemployed adults. Even among intact families there was a growing number of mothers in the labour force. Thus, there was a growing number of children with special learning needs or in need of care.

These changes, the SPC emphasized, represented a fundamental shift away from common perceptions of the nature of suburban life. While each of the exceptions to the expected pattern might constitute a minority within the suburban context "... the social minorities taken as a whole now constitute *the new social majority* in Metro's post-war suburbs" (Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, 1979: 236, Italics in original). As a result, traditional city-suburban distinctions were becoming blurred. *"There is as much social and cultural diversity within existing suburban municipalities*

as there might have been between these municipalities and the central area in earlier years" (Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, 1979: 238. Emphasis in original). Consequently, the SPC argued, there was as much need for policies to address social needs in the suburbs as there was in the city. For example, it said, while the outer, "rapid growth suburbs" (Etobicoke, North York, and Scarborough) had become major reception areas for new immigrants, they and their governments were unprepared to provide the services and supports needed by this population (Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, 1979: 177-89).

Soon after these reports were published Metro Council and the Metro Community Services Department began to make changes in social welfare administration that would improve the delivery and increase the availability of Metro-administered social services in the outer parts of Metro. The changes included the decentralization to suburban or "regional district" offices of some social service functions, including welfare, housing and child care; the appointment of community development officers to identify the service needs and to work with local agencies (e.g. social planning councils, neighbourhood groups, the police, Children's Aid, etc.) in the outer suburbs; and the initiation of Community Development Grants (1984) and Neighbourhood Support Grants (1985). These policy changes gave community organizations a larger and more recognized role in Metro's social service system.

3.2.1 Responding to Immigrant Communities

Competition for government grants produced tensions between mainstream and ethnospecific organizations that have persisted and even intensified in Toronto, with ethnospecific organizations often accusing government granting agencies of showing preference for the mainstream organizations. Nonetheless, rising demands from ethnospecific groups, together with increasing support, incentives or requirements for multicultural and anti-racist initiatives coming from all three levels of government, stimulated Metro's Community Services Department to develop policies to make services more accessible and more responsive to its multicultural communities, and to address some of the concerns raised by the ethnospecific organizations. There were policies for

the department as a whole and also policies that evolved separately in three divisions with responsibility for three different types of social and community services: the Social Services Division, which administered short-term income maintenance and related programs; the Homes for the Aged Division, and the Children's Services Division.

Research conducted during the period leading up to Metro's adoption of an Access Action Plan and a Social Development Strategy in 1990 and 1991 (see Chapter 1) revealed common social service access concerns among ethno-racial minorities, including language barriers, a lack of culturally appropriate services, and lack of community participation in the development of programs (Canadian Urban Institute, 1991; Metropolitan Toronto Social Development Strategy Task Force, 1991). The Community Services Department responded even before the Metro strategies were in place by establishing a Multicultural Access Fund within its grants program. It phased it out, however, after a 1992 review identified severe problems with the fund's operation, including the small amount of money given out and its short duration. There was also a perception that the fund's existence had ghettoized ethno-racial access instead of making it a priority in all community sector funding (Metropolitan Toronto Community Services Department, 1992). In its place the department developed a series of guidelines that made attention to ethno-racial access a criterion for awarding funds to any community organization. In addition it gradually increased the proportion of all grants going to ethnospecific organizations to about 20 per cent of the total, and began to involve representatives of ethno-racial groups in the grant allocation process through a Community Grants Advisory Panel (Metropolitan Toronto Community Services Department, 1995). After amalgamation, the new Toronto decided to maintain this program at the same level of funding.

In 1992, Metro's Community Services Department adopted its own Access Action Plan, which required the department to develop an Ethno-Racial Access to Services Policy, to move forward on ethno-racial participation in program design and delivery, and to develop research capacity, staff training, and communication with ethno-racial minorities (Metropolitan Toronto Chief Administrator's Office, 1994). By that time, the department's various divisions already had initiatives underway.

Within the *Social Assistance Division*, efforts to deal with ethno-racial access issues began in the early 1980s. Initially they focused primarily on language initiatives, but gradually expanded to include the publication of brochures in 10 languages, multilingual signs in all offices, a staff language resource list, phone information lines in several languages, use of AT&T's 140-language interpretation service, and guidelines for interpreters (Metropolitan Toronto Community Services Department, 1995). In the early 1990s, the division established Community Advisory Groups to identify access issues and initiated information sessions with ethnospecific community organizations. It also relocated front-line staff with appropriate language capabilities within 225 ethno-specific CBO offices. In 1994-95 these staff members took 32 per cent of all social assistance applications (Metropolitan Toronto Community Services Department, 1995).

Initiatives in the department's *Homes for the Aged Division* also began in the 1980s with the development of a staff language inventory and the recruitment of ethno-racial minority representatives to volunteer advisory boards in individual homes (Metropolitan Toronto Multicultural and Race Relations Division, 1990). The Division also established Multifaith Committees in individual homes, tailored food menus to ethnospecific requirements, and revised the Division's Mission Statement to include ethnocultural access issues. In partnership with ethnospecific organizations, it also began to establish ethnospecific units in individual homes. Five such units existed in 1998.

The *Children's Services Division* was publishing multilingual brochures by 1990, as well as providing some staff support for the development of "multicultural" curricula in daycare agencies. Its activities in this area intensified after a Race Relations Working Group, established in 1991, held a conference and published reports that identified problems faced by childcare programs, including lack of appropriate curricula and training for staff, lack of race relations policies, and lack of mechanisms for reporting racial incidents, as well as language barriers between parents and staff. The Division began to involve representatives of ethno-racial groups in advisory bodies (Metropolitan Toronto Community Services Department, 1995). It developed an Anti-Racism Policy and Guidelines for Handling Racial Incidents in Childcare, which it included in the operating criteria for all programs under contract with the municipality. It also established its own Access and Equity Committee and held an anti-racism and

organizational change seminar, as well as organizing an annual anti-racism/anti-bias fair (Paterson, 1998).

Such initiatives not only made access issues and co-operation with ethnospecific organizations and ethnic communities increasingly important to the work of the Community Services Department (Metropolitan Toronto Community Services Department, 1995), but they also made Metro a leader in this field. A former Commissioner of Community Services described Metro as being "at the cutting edge in the world on dealing with a multicultural society where demands are based on a concept of 'rights'" ("A Discussion…," 1991: 5). For its efforts, Metro received an award at the United Nations' Habitat II conference in 1996 for developing innovative social services for a diverse population.[12]

It is relevant to note, however, that Metropolitan Toronto achieved this success in the early 1990s within the broader context of provincial government support for anti-racist and ethnocultural activities. At the municipal level, there were also productive interactions between political and bureaucratic initiatives. Moreover, there had been an increase in organizations demanding better services for Metro's ethnocultural minorities, and severely criticizing the municipality's inability to address immigrant social service needs.[13] These criticisms appeared between 1987 and 1994 in a series of community sector reports that documented such problems as a lack of ethno-racial sensitivity, appropriate programs, and language skills among mainstream community organizations, and the chronic under-funding of ethno-specific organizations (Doyle and Visano, 1987; Medeiros, 1991; Coalition of Agencies Serving South Asians, 1994).

3.3   Social services in the regional municipalities

While Metropolitan Toronto was attempting to develop services for a diverse population in the 1980s and 1990s, surrounding regional social service departments were

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[12] Metropolitan Toronto won the award for developing social services for its culturally and linguistically diverse community, as outlined in its submission (Metropolitan Toronto Community Services Department, 1995).

[13] Various media reports document the community sector's frustration with municipal funding cuts and the inability of immigrants and refugees to access needed social services (Small, 1995; Stein, 1997).

having to function in political contexts where demands for public infrastructure to support new development outweighed concerns for enhancing social welfare.

In **Peel Region** the emphasis in social services was on promoting cost-effectiveness in the delivery of mandatory programs by applying strict guidelines to first-time applicants for social assistance. Case workers provided unsuccessful applicants with information about how to appeal negative decisions, as legislation required them to do, but they also presented applicants with other options, gave advice on ways to find employment or secure employment training, and warned able-bodied welfare recipients that they would lose benefits if they did not try to find work (Department of Social Services, Regional Municipality of Peel, 1982; Webb-Proctor, 1986). This so-called "Hands Up" approach was a forerunner of the provincially-mandated workfare program instituted throughout Ontario in 1998. The Department claimed at the time that this approach would free up departmental resources for other social programs (Department of Social Services, Regional Municipality of Peel, 1982: 11).

The development of the social services sector in **York Region** followed a more traditional path, with its Community Services and Housing Department (formerly Social Services Department) concentrating mainly on the provision of mandatory services. A problem for the department was that people moving into the region from Metropolitan Toronto expected to find services and community support organizations that existed in Metro but were not available in the region (McInnes, 1992). Such people included both low income families settling in Georgina Township, a community of old, converted cottages that attracted low income households from Metro to the northernmost part of the region (Kashmeri, 1982), and more affluent members of ethnic or religious minorities (mainly Italian and Jewish) who were settling in the south. In general, though, the populations of these southern, more urbanized districts were middle-class, single family home buyers who did not seem to be seriously in need of social services.

York's limited supply of social services and of community-based organizations began to attract attention in the early 1990s. In 1990 a Multicultural Advisory Committee issued a report calling for more immigrant-specific social services (Dexter, 1990). Newspaper articles pointed to a critical need in the region for children's and youth

programs, subsidized day care, programs to counter substance abuse, and language training for new immigrants (McInnes, 1992). In 1995 the region began work on a Human Services plan, to be linked with the Region's newly completed (and first) land use plan. Serious work on a Human Services Strategy (discussed in Chapter 1) did not begin, however, until after a series of public forums about planning issues had identified the absence of human services as a concern for people living in the region (Waller, 1999).

3.4 The impact of provincial spending constraints on immigrant services

While Metro's Community Services Department was adopting measures to make services more accessible to immigrants, and pressures were building for better social services in the suburban regions, the provincial government was looking for ways to control its spending in this area.   In 1991 the NDP government reduced the number of social programs with "mandatory" status and withdrew its support from some supplementary programs, leaving municipal governments to decide whether to fund them on their own (Richmond, 1997). Metro responded by either cutting out or severely curtailing discretionary programs (Philp, 1997).

The aim of the government's funding reductions was to control a sector whose spending had increased by 9 per cent per year in the five-six years before 1991. During that same period, social assistance payments in Metro had tripled (Richmond, 1991: 19). A recession that began in 1989 helped to account for rising welfare costs. The province's NDP government also contributed, however, by deciding to increase the size of welfare payments soon after its 1990 election.

Characterizing this period of recession and cuts in government programs were increasingly negative depictions of the interface between immigrants and municipal social services. In an unusual show of unity, Metro Toronto Council joined with the councils of Peel and Ottawa to complain to the federal government about the costs imposed on local welfare services by the failure of some individual or organizational sponsors of immigrants and refugees to fulfill their obligations of support (Funston, 1994). Peel was especially vigorous in its attempts to link immigration to rising social

service costs.[14] It not only asked the federal government to help control perceived problems of immigrant over-use and abuse of the welfare system (Funston, 1992), but in 1995 it also became the site of a pilot project to crack down on sponsorship breakdowns by interviewing sponsors who reneged on their commitments (Sarick, 1995).

3.4.1 Restructuring social services

In 1990 the federal government announced that its transfers to provinces under the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) would grow by no more than five percent a year in three of the ten provinces (Alberta, B.C. and Ontario). If any of those provinces spent above the amount allowed by the grant ceiling, it would not be reimbursed (Baker, Payne and Smart, 1998: 56). The ceiling remained in effect for these three provinces until 1994-95, by which time the federal payments covered only about 28 per cent of Ontario's welfare costs (Philp, 1995).[15] In 1996 the federal government replaced CAP with the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) - a single (block) payment that provincial governments could apply to welfare, postsecondary education and health as they saw fit. This block funding approach made the federal government less publicly accountable for cuts, while increasing provincial flexibility to spend money. The only national standards that continued to apply to the CHST were the five principles of the *Canada Health Act* and the requirement that provincial social programs could not discriminate against new residents.

Welfare reform with a view to cost reductions was a key element of the election platform of the Progressive Conservative party that came to office in Ontario in 1995 (Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, 1994: 9). The new government wasted little time in putting it into effect. It began its mandate with a 21.5 per cent cut in social assistance benefits for both shelter and basic needs, justified on the ground that it brought

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[14] Peel argued that it had an unfair share of the region's refugees outside of Toronto because of its proximity to the Pearson International Airport. Refugees often settle close to the airport until their claims are dealt with.

[15] This ceiling was extended to all provinces in 1995-96, when there was no increase in the CHST over the previous year.

Ontario within 10 per cent of the national average.[16] It reduced the number of subsidized day care spaces and reduced its grants to municipal governments. It also said it was increasing the municipal share of welfare costs from 20 per cent to 50 per cent as part of the provincial-municipal exchange of financial responsibilities (often referred to as "downloading") announced in 1996 (see Chapter 1). It restored the pre-existing funding formula (80 per cent provincial, 20 percent municipal), however, in the face of strong objections from Metro Toronto and other large municipalities. Nonetheless it added to municipal social service costs by consolidating Family Benefits with General Welfare Assistance into a new program, *Ontario Works*, and by making municipal governments responsible for the operating costs of social housing. The government had previously paid the entire costs of Family Benefits and social housing itself.

Ontario Works required people to work at paying jobs, perform community service or enrol in a job training program to qualify for social assistance (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2000). Responsibility for administering these requirements fell to the staff of municipal social service agencies.

The government made one other important change in the funding of social services in the GTA. In response to claims that the city's higher level of social need meant that restructuring had imposed disproportionately high costs on the new City of Toronto relative to the rest of the GTA, it instituted GTA-wide pooling of property taxes for social assistance and social housing across the area.

4.0 FINDINGS

Apart from the fact that they all delivered provincially-mandated services, the social service agencies we looked at differed from each other in their administrative structures, in their relations with the community-based sector, and in the types of supplementary programs they funded.

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[16] This was hotly debated. Many argue that this was an unfair comparison because the cost of living in Ontario is much higher than the national average.

4.1 Administrative Structures for Service Delivery

The **City of Toronto** inherited its structure for social service administration from the old Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto. Social assistance, homes for the aged and childcare, together with housing and hostel services, were grouped within a large Community and Neighborhood Services Department (formerly Community Services Department). This Department had a Social Development and Administration Division that administered community grants and carried out research and policy analysis. This granting structure was unique to Toronto; it did not exist in the suburban regions. **Peel Region** similarly grouped social assistance, homes for the aged and childcare under the rubric of a Social Services Department, but had a separate structure for housing. **York Region** grouped social assistance and childcare in its Social Services Department, with homes for the aged located in the Health Department, and a separate structure for housing. In January 2001, however, the region incorporated all social housing within a new Community Services and Housing Department in anticipation of the province's announced intention to download responsibility for social housing to regional or city governments. (See Chapter 3.)

The issues of unmet immigrant social service needs were not new for **Toronto** or **Peel**, and had been widely documented (Doyle and Visano, 1987; Freeman, 1990). Staff working in these regions had struggled with these issues for years as the multicultural character of their communities evolved. They maintained that the need for multilingual services remained by far the greatest challenge. Institutionally they had attempted to deal with immigration with programs to train staff about equity issues. As one staff member pointed out, however, there was little extra time for skills development in this area when they were struggling with institutional level changes like legislative reform (Ontario Works) or Y2K preparation. Toronto social services staff in particular had gone beyond staff training efforts to meet the needs of immigrants, supported by corporate policies such as employment equity, access initiatives (see Chapter 1), and a longer history of multicultural awareness and program development.

In **York Region**, the Social Services Department began in 1997 to advise its staff on the need for sensitivity to other cultures, to make materials about its services available

in several languages (particularly Italian and Chinese, the two languages most commonly spoken by immigrants in York Region), to retain members of community agencies as interpreters, and to reach out to multicultural communities "to ensure that they receive appropriate and sensitive services" (Christiensen 2001). Staff members described the decision to develop a Human Services Strategy (see Chapter 1) as "crossing a threshold around the immigration issue." For social services one outcome of this process was an "explicit acknowledgement of the changing composition of York's population," as well as efforts to make information available in Chinese and Italian, the two dominant linguistic groups in York.

4.2 Are Immigrants a Burden?

A predominant focus of political and public attention, as well as media coverage, is the perceived problem of immigrant over-use and abuse of the welfare system. The key concerns are with the welfare costs associated with sponsorship breakdowns and refugees. Despite popular fears about the burden immigrants place on the system, however, there is no single stereotypical immigrant on welfare. As one front-line staff member observed:

> Originally immigrants were blue collar, and we could hook them up with a temp agency. Now we have technical, computer-literate, university graduates. They are well-educated, white-collar refugees. They are very angry at the Canadian government. There is hostility over unrealistic expectations the government gave them. How they spent the money they were required to bring with them is always an issue. Language is a problem. Equivalency of education. Problem of no Canadian experience is a HUGE one for them… [all] very demanding but in different ways.

Although York social service staff admit that they have only begun to identify the segments of immigrant communities and their particular needs, staff in Peel and Toronto are very aware of the challenge immigration poses for the delivery of their services. Staff admitted that "it takes longer to help immigrants than others seeking services", and said that learning the specific needs of diverse communities as one of the biggest challenges they face in their work. They also lament long waiting lists, and the time it takes to

provide the services that immigrants need. As one staff member aptly described the challenge:

> I wouldn't say there's a serious problem but sometimes I would just like to be more receptive. In terms of determining eligibility, within five to seven business days of the date of the application we set up an appointment with a cultural interpreter. But we provide same-day service if you can speak English. If you're fluent in English and you're eligible, you'll have the money in the bank within three days. There's a problem of coordinating the cultural interpreter, the right agency, the right language, and the client.

Social service department staff faced a serious contradiction in their work. On the one hand, they recognized the barriers immigrants, especially newcomers, faced. Many conveyed a very protective attitude –they were concerned, for example, about how to tell their councils about the need for additional funding to help immigrants ("people are afraid to be too blunt… they want to protect the communities they work with") or about spending extra time with an ethnospecific agency to find out if there was any community work that would satisfy Ontario Works eligibility requirements for a client with limited English ("even if they work in the lunchroom at their kid's school, that can count"). Social service staff at all levels appeared acutely aware of the perceptions among the Greater Toronto Area public of system abuse by immigrants, and struggled to find ways to meet the needs of immigrants without appearing to be applying a double-standard. As staff in Peel explained, the key is to work at the level of the individual rather than to try to formulate a policy or an approach for all immigrants:

> It's a no-win situation. If our expectations for newcomers were more lenient than for long-term residents, we would get a public backlash. You need to individualize, but still meet the expectations of the legislation. How it may play out, for example, is that if we have a lifelong resident of Mississauga we push more for employment as a first priority in the participation agreement. If the person is a newcomer, we may try to link them into a community placement to give them Canadian experience, before pushing the employment. So we would treat them differently within the legislation but the way we do it is on a case-by-case basis.

Social service staff complained, however, about the stresses in trying to meet immigrant needs amidst legislative changes and pressures to reduce spending. One staff member spoke of health fears: "we see clients before they get health clearance, that puts case workers at risk. Kids can't even go to school yet, but we see them here." Added to

these pressures is the first-hand recognition among front-line workers that some of their clients are putting forward fraudulent claims. As one worker explained:

> It is very frustrating… There is a lot of abuse. You might have three rip offs, and then see a person in real need. But the early ones make you wonder about the one in need too. Case workers are very professional and try not to make assumptions, but it is hard. And there are cultural attitudes to contend with in dealing with certain groups. We had a bunch of Russian Mafia and their strippers come through here a while back. You see a lot of things. In a case worker's day you lurch from one cultural group to another, and it is a challenge to respond to each. There is constant learning.

At a senior level, the same internal struggle exists. But as one senior staff member explained, staff need to put a human face on immigration. "What makes you so different from them? That is what I always ask our workers."

4.2.1 Overcoming the language barrier

Without fail, language was identified as the key challenge facing social service staff in meeting the needs of immigrants. In 1993 under the provincial NDP government, a language grant program known as MASSI - Multilingual Access to Social Services Initiative - provided funding to community-based organizations for the provision of translation/interpreter services for social service clients. The provincial Tories substantially cut back funding for MASSI in 1995 and, according to social service workers, effectively ended funding for interpreters. Social service departments in the Greater Toronto Area recognized the tremendous need for these services, however, and so found ways to continue them. In **Peel** and **York**, this had meant relying entirely on a contract/tender system for services. In **Toronto**, with its ethnoculturally diverse workforce, it had meant trying to provide core services using the language skills of their own staff where possible. Toronto has also set up hotlines for clients across the city to take advantage of the unique language skills of their staff. This approach was considered to be both positive and negative—positive in that it improved the department's connections with a larger number of linguistic groups than could be covered by staff in a single district office, but also negative because, as one staff member explained,

if they were available divisionally, to run a hotline say, then they did that on the side, and locally we had cases left uncovered. We try hard to accommodate, but there are limits to what we can do."

With reliance on interpreters so crucial to the delivery of social services, many staff members raised issues regarding the quality and consistency.

"…you have no control over what is being said!" one staff member asserted. "Case workers have to be tough. Interpreters take no legal responsibility but they are translating legal documents. I've been very straight with interpreters, telling them to either translate exactly what I've said or to leave. But there are big issues. Do you send a woman with three kids home again because there is no translator, or do you let her underage 12 year old translate? There is frustration for the worker and the client."

Staff members at other municipalities questioned the ability of ethnospecific agencies to deliver interpreter services without bringing "their own biases with them to the table." All social service staff contacted in this study, however, stressed that community-based organizations were vital to their ability to deliver services to immigrants.

4.3 The Role of Community-based Organizations

Staff at all the municipalities in this study identified an array of multicultural and ethnospecific agencies – together with their contacts with immigrant communities and their translation and interpreter skills – as resources they relied on heavily in delivering their services. The relationships between social service departments and community-based organizations were not static, however. With the community service component of Ontario Works, these relationships had become especially important, both in finding welfare clients placements and in getting information about the range of a client's daily volunteer activities that could count towards the service requirement for eligibility. Funding cuts to community-based organizations from all levels of government had, in the words of one social service staff member, "decimated" their capacity to provide the services they once did. A staff member in another municipality said they were unable to refer people at all to agencies that might help their clients as the end of the fiscal year approached.

Cuts to other targeted funds, such as provincial MASSI funding, have challenged the ability of municipalities to enlist community organizations where needed. The **City of Toronto's** Community and Neighbourhood Services Department continued to fund ethnospecific and multicultural groups through a modest grant program, while **Peel's** Social Services Department had moved away from grants and embraced purchase-of-service bids. As one Peel staff member explained:

> Over the last couple of years we've had ongoing discussions with a number of the agencies that provide advocacy and cultural and language interpretation services. And it mainly concerns resources. They want to work with us, they like being able to provide the support to our mutual clients – but they want to get paid for it, directly, on a case-by-case basis.

Toronto staff identified a similarly positive relationship with community-based organizations - what one staff member described as a "real partnership." They explained that if they did not want to face complaints later on, it was important to work with multicultural and ethnospecific agencies and use them as a resource in developing policy and procedures. For example, a municipality might refer clients to training courses designed to help a particular subgroup of the immigrant population find work. Without input from those working most closely with immigrants, however, they might not realize that something was inappropriate because it was offered at the wrong time of day or at the wrong location. **York Region** had only a handful of community organizations active in immigrant settlement, but there too staff characterized the relationship as a positive one:

> The fact that there are fewer community groups makes cooperation somewhat easier, in the sense that there aren't so many turf battles being fought. Also, there's never going to be the money around that there was when the Toronto system was getting established. We have to look at ways to do things more creatively. So people here work reasonably well together.

Those working on the front line with immigrant clients were also cautious about the potential for "partnering" with community organizations. As one staff member explained:

> Ethno-specific organizations work as free interpreters for immigrants and that is good because there are a lot of rip-off places, like immigration consultants. Community organizations will advocate for clients, provide legal clinics for

landlord issues, that kind of thing. We want to be supportive, but we have a different mandate than they do. We have to determine eligibility.

4.4   The Issue of Coordination across Regional Boundaries

Regional municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area had made some attempts to coordinate their services, but with little success. Staff could easily agree about the benefits of coordination, but their support for it was tempered by an interest in remaining self-sufficient as a region. As one senior staff member explained:

> We know that people have to go outside regional boundaries to get some of their needs met—for example, specialized health care or university education. We also know that people don't necessarily live all parts of their lives within regional boundaries. But for most needs, there is a capacity in the region... we need to build that capacity for the future.

Still, staff members described layers of inter-regional committees concerned mostly with specific issue areas (like immigrant settlement, the distribution of pooled funds, and service levels). As in the case of other municipal service areas, however, they described coordination as being most effective when based on individually established relationships and personal friendships that facilitated the sharing of information on a case-by-case basis, rather than on committee level discussions. Describing a committee that dealt with immigration and social service delivery, one senior Toronto staff member explained that it no longer functions because "we used to talk about joint issues – there was Peel, York, Toronto, the Province, Immigration Canada. But there were big problems that no one could solve so it didn't help and we stopped going."

4.5 The Role of Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Social services was the only municipal service looked at in this study where the role of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) was directly mentioned in any great detail. This was not surprising, given that staff members in Peel Region and the City of Toronto said that very high levels (two thirds to three quarters) of their caseloads involved sponsorship breakdowns, landed immigrants, or refugees.

In general, social service staff at both senior and front-line levels in all parts of the GTA expressed extreme frustration with their relationship with CIC. Some staff complained that CIC was "unresponsive to immigrant needs," referring to the slow pace in qualifying applicants for necessary documentation to access social and health services. They also noted an apparent lack of accountability for sponsorships.

Persons interviewed for the study also mentioned the difficulties experienced both by immigrants and social service staff in getting information from CIC, even though information sharing agreements were in place. As one staff member complained:

> My dominant concern is the lack of access to Immigration [Canada]. I can't get an officer on the phone, and when you do talk to someone they don't know the stuff… I'm not a bleeding-heart. But I've been in this business for 23 years and the way the system works now it takes away the humanity of good people…. They don't care, they can't care. I think they'd just prefer to do everything possible by mail. So people get off the plane, and they are given a bunch of information and forms to take to places (like how to get a health card, etc.) and that's it. No thought as to whether they have a place to go next.

A staff member in another municipality pointed out that:

> Information about a client's background is not always easily obtained – so sometimes we have difficulty making a case plan or even determining residency. Sometimes we get the information, sometimes not… Often what we get leaves many gaps and questions. I would hope they do have the information, but just don't have the resources to get it to us.

4.6 Funding for Social Services

Social service delivery in Ontario has undergone significant restructuring in recent years, and staff members in all the municipalities we looked at indicated that they were still struggling with the transition – regardless of the municipality's political stance on the direction of changes. Said one senior staff member: "Municipalities are still trying to sort out their role. There's been a lot of flip-flopping in health and welfare, etc. It's difficult to sort out the kinds of tools municipalities have for delivering services." Social service departments faced with funding cutbacks were finding their own ways to address the extra challenges of dealing with immigrant clients.

The City of Toronto had the greatest diversity in its client base, and had taken the most sympathetic approach to immigrant needs. In many cases it preferred to provide services even if doing so meant increasing the city's share of costs. The city's more generous approach helped to feed opposition to regional tax pooling among suburban officials, many of whom insisted that they should not have to contribute to the costs of Toronto's services when they had no say in what those services were or how they were delivered. Peel Region has been particularly vocal in its opposition, publishing several anti-pooling bulletins on its Internet Web Site.

Also in Peel Region, a lengthy list of organizations and agencies (including community-based organizations, hospitals, school boards, Peel Regional Police and the regional municipality itself) had come together with the help of the Social Planning Council of Peel and the United Way of Peel Region under the banner of *Fair Share for Peel.*[17] These organizations and agencies were united in their claim that there was a $94 million funding shortfall in social services for Peel residents because the region was funded at below the average provincial rate (Fair Share for Peel Task Force, 1999: 12).

One thing that staff from both Peel and Toronto emphasized was that the funding for immigrant welfare needs should be a federal responsibility. As one senior staff member bluntly put it: "Why should the City of Toronto suffer because immigrants like to come here?" Staff in Peel Region agreed, arguing that: "the federal government should be picking up the full cost of all services relating to both refugee claimants and sponsorship cases, since they control the program. We are quite happy to deliver under Ontario legislation, but we don't believe it should be funded locally."

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

The delivery of social services is done within a complex web of relationships between federal granting agencies, the provincial government, upper-tier municipalities, and community-based organizations. At the time of our study, municipal social service

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[17] Fair Share for Peel began in March 1989 as a joint project of the Social Planning Council of Peel and the United Way of Peel Region. It was joined by a handful of organizations and agencies in 1990 and has greatly expanded its membership since 1993 (Fair Share for Peel Task Force, 1999: 16).

staff were working through transitions brought on by the introduction of Ontario Works, a period of cutbacks and reorganization in the community sector, and in the case of the City of Toronto, efforts to harmonize upper and lower tier municipal policies, procedures and programs.

Within this challenging context, the provision of social services to immigrants was a controversial issue for municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area. Especially in Peel Region and the City of Toronto, landed immigrants, sponsorships breakdowns and refugees accounted for the majority of the client base, and starkly illustrated the unique pressures municipalities may face in aiding the settlement of immigrants attracted to urban regions. Among the general public, as well as some regional and city councilors, the costs associated with providing social services were becoming a lightning rod for negative perceptions of immigration. Even among those who held more moderate views, the perceived unfair financial burden that immigrant needs placed upon municipalities was being hotly debated.

Both senior level and front-line staff across the Greater Toronto Area shared a protective attitude toward the immigrant clients they served. They recognized the diverse set of barriers some immigrants face in settling into Canadian society. At the same time, however, social service staff deplored the personal stress and institutional challenges involved in trying to respond to the needs of immigrants.

Of the municipalities examined in this study, **Toronto** offered the most extensive range of assistance to immigrants seeking social services. The city was aided by (and also contributed to) the largest network of community-based organizations in the Greater Toronto Area. It also had the most multicultural staff. Time had played a role in bringing this about. The former Metropolitan Toronto had developed and expanded the boundaries of its social service mandate and strengthened its institutional capacity over several decades (Metropolitan Toronto Community Services Department, 1997). Despite having this record to build on, however, **Toronto** was still struggling to satisfy the diverse and intense needs of its client base.

York Region and **Peel Region** are high growth regions in the Greater Toronto Area, with immigrants accounting for only some of their incoming residents. Social

service staff in these regions complained about provincial underfunding of social services per capita (Freeman, 1990; Taylor, 1995). Their focus was on providing a basic social service minimum, rather than on developing innovative responses to unique client groups. York's adoption of a Human Services Strategy implied that its council was becoming more aware of the region's growing social complexity. Nonetheless, both York and Peel relied heavily on Toronto's social service system, especially the resources available in the community-based sector, to deal with specialized needs.

In some respects the situation in the two suburban regions was similar to that found in the suburban parts of Metropolitan Toronto in the late 1970s. These regions were becoming more socially heterogeneous, and were beginning to experience some of the social needs and pressures that had characterized Toronto for some time. In other words, they were diverging from the stereotypical depiction of North American suburbs as places reserved almost exclusively for white, middle class homeowners. There was still a higher level of social need in the city than in the suburban regions, however, and much of it was related to the city's larger proportion of recent immigrants and refugees. The extent to which the suburbs continue to become more like the city in their socioeconomic characteristics, and thus the extent to which they contribute to the absorption of immigrants into Canadian society, will depend on the extent to which the governments of both city and suburbs develop common policies to deal with the changes and challenges resulting from immigration.

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CHAPTER 3: HOUSING

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Of all the services provided by municipal governments, those that make housing directly available to immigrants or that help immigrants to find housing are the most critical to the outcome of the settlement process. A secure place to live is a base from which newcomers can look for a job, enroll children in school, and begin to establish connections with the community and its institutions.

Finding suitable accommodation can be a challenging task, however, both for immigrants themselves and for the municipal and community organizations that try to help them, in a housing market like Greater Toronto's where housing costs are high and residential districts are scattered over a wide area. The division of that area into a number of municipal jurisdictions, each with its own set of municipal and community agencies, complicates the process still further. This chapter explores the complexity of the housing situation for immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area, focusing mainly on the situation faced by immigrants with limited financial means who seek a unit to rent.

2.0 KEY ISSUES

The literature dealing with immigrant housing needs and housing patterns is large, and covers a broad range of topics. What it indicates is that immigrants constitute a very diverse population, and that their differences are often important to the way they participate in and experience the workings of urban housing markets.

2.1 Characteristics Influencing the Housing Search

Immigrants differ by ethnic origin, skin colour, and period of arrival in Canada, all of which can affect their economic circumstances (Lo, Preston, Wang, Reil, Harvey, and Siu, 2000: 35-49). They differ in their ability to speak the official language of their host communities (English in the case of the Greater Toronto Area), in the number and comprehensiveness of community supports available to them, in the skills they possess,

in their ability to translate their skills into paying jobs, and in many other characteristics. Finally, they differ in the immigrant category (family, independent or refugee) assigned to them when they applied to come to Canada. For this study, we have taken into account only those characteristics that are most likely to influence the housing search of less affluent immigrants looking for an affordable place to rent.

Differences between types of immigrants and length of residence are important to understanding the housing patterns of immigrants, although they are not absolute predictors of immigrant housing needs and preferences. Immigrants with the skills needed to qualify for independent status may be underemployed or even unemployed during their early years in Canada. Less-skilled immigrants may move in and out of the labour force, thereby failing to accumulate enough money to buy a home even after living in Canada for some time. Nonetheless, length of stay in Canada does influence the likelihood that an immigrant household will be looking for rental housing. Home ownership rates for recent arrivals are much lower than they are for non-immigrants, and it takes 10 to 15 years for the rates of the two groups to converge. Also, households headed by immigrants (especially recent immigrants and immigrants from Asia) tend to be larger on average than households headed by non-immigrants, and are more likely to consist of two-parent families with children, extended families, or more than one family (Clayton Research, 1994). These characteristics indicate that many immigrants not only look for housing to rent, but that they must either find units that are relatively large by Canadian standards, or choose units they can afford even if those units are too small (again by Canadian standards) to accommodate all household members comfortably.

2.2 Barriers to a Successful Housing Search

The characteristics that distinguish immigrant households that have been in Canada for less than ten years from other households are important to an understanding of the barriers confronted by immigrants seeking rental housing in rapidly-growing city regions. They also contribute to the challenges posed to governmental and non-governmental housing providers with which immigrants come in contact. The following sections examine the most common barriers to a successful housing search.

2.2.1 Problems of affordability

An inability to find affordable units heads the list of problems cited by organizations that have studied or have been directly involved in the efforts of immigrants to find adequate housing (Ekos Research Associates, 1995). [18] Fundamentally, the problem attests to a declining number of lower-priced units to meet a growing demand (Toronto Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force, 1999: 135). This problem is particularly acute for those recent immigrants who seek housing in the rental market if their incomes are lower and their households are larger than those of other households searching in the same market.

Finding affordable housing is a problem that affects native born Canadians as well as immigrants with low incomes. It is a problem that affects a larger proportion of the immigrant than the native born population, however, because immigrants, especially non-European immigrants, have higher rates of poverty than most native born Canadians except Aboriginals, whose rate of family poverty is similar to that of several disadvantaged immigrant groups (Ornstein 2000). Moreover, the incidence of poverty among families headed by immigrants increased much more rapidly in the 1990s than did the incidence of poverty among families headed by persons born in Canada.   By 1996, it had reached 21.2 per cent, as compared to 13.2 per cent for families with a Canadian born head (Mendelson and Mitchell, 1998: 17-18). The more recently the family head had immigrated, the more likely the family was to be in poverty. While this finding was consistent with earlier studies indicating that immigrants start out with lower incomes but catch up with Canadian born residents over time, the poverty gap between immigrants and non-immigrants continued to grow after economic recovery began in 1994. Moreover, the gap between recent immigrants and all others seemed to be widening for both families and unattached individuals. Thus, immigrant households are likely to look for or remain in lower-priced housing for longer than in the past.

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[18] The term "affordable housing" can be problematic because of the different meanings that can be attached to it. All housing, no matter how highly priced, is likely to be affordable to some households. Nonetheless, the term is widely used to mean housing that is affordable to low and moderate income*)* households, and costing no more than a specified percentage (usually 30%) of their gross annual income.   That is the sense in which it is used in this paper.

Not all recent immigrants experience serious affordability problems, nor do all recent immigrants seek lower cost rental housing. Among the categories of persons who qualify to enter Canada under Canadian immigration rules, those classified either as "independents" or as "business immigrants" are more likely to be able to buy a house or to afford to pay a higher rent on arrival than those sponsored by family members or community groups, or those admitted as refugees.

Refugee claimants are the most disadvantaged of any group. Often arriving with few or no resources and eligible for fewer of the settlement services available to government-sponsored and privately-sponsored refugees, refugee claimants have been identified as the newcomers who are most at risk of becoming homeless (Toronto Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force, 1999: 72). Many of them rely on emergency shelter.

2.2.2 Difficulty in getting information

According to a survey of governmental and non-governmental organizations conducted for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), two thirds of all respondents and three quarters of the multicultural organizations said that their clients did not have access to the information they needed to function effectively in the rental housing market (Ekos Research Associates, 1995: 73). Specifically, it concluded that immigrants needed information about:

- housing regulations and standards

- landlord rights and responsibilities

- tenant rights and responsibilities

- housing services available

- housing options available

- the existence of local housing service providers

In general, these needs pertained predominantly to the rental housing market, where the most acute housing needs are likely to emerge. Canada Mortgage and Housing

Corporation (CMHC) has addressed some of those needs in a booklet entitled *Immigrants' Guide to Canadian Housing* (1999). The guide provides information only in English, however, so leaves it up to ethno-specific community organizations to translate it for their own clients.

Recently arrived immigrants who want to become homeowners also need information about where to look for suitable housing and how the real estate market operates. They often meet such needs by consulting with people, organizations, and real estate interests within their own ethno-cultural communities, and are thus less likely to make demands on local government and community agencies (Teixeira, 1997).

2.2.3 Language barriers

Lack of knowledge of English or French (depending on the community of settlement) can be a serious barrier to acquiring information about the way the housing market operates in Canada, and about the rules and regulations that govern the relationship between prospective tenants or home buyers and housing providers. It leaves immigrants vulnerable to being victimized by misunderstandings or illegal treatment. Once again refugee claimants are the most disadvantaged because, unlike sponsored refugees, they are not provided with information in their own language at the time of their arrival (City of Toronto Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force, 1999: 6). They are also less likely to be able to enter an established community of persons of their own ethnic background, and thus to take advantage of established community supports.

Language differences also pose serious challenges to local agencies called on to advise immigrants about housing and supportive services. The growing number of immigrant groups admitted to Canada implies a need for agencies to be able to respond to queries and complaints in an increasing number of languages, either by purchasing translation or interpreter services or by hiring multilingual staff. Such responses imply additional costs for local agencies (public, private, and non-profit) at a time when funding cutbacks are forcing them to reduce spending.

2.2.4 Discrimination

The effects of discrimination based on race have been studied extensively in the United States, where the main focus has been on the way discrimination has restricted the housing and employment choices of African Americans, and on its role in the formation of segregated housing markets. In the American context, high concentrations of visible minorities in city neighbourhoods, combined with low income, have had negative consequences both for cities and for people who live in such neighbourhoods. Among those consequences are higher than average rates of crime, drug abuse, and communicable diseases; lower than average levels of educational attainment; higher levels of unemployment; and higher levels of single parenthood (Altshuler, Morrill, Wolman, and Mitchell, 1999: 52-59).

Spatial clustering of ethnic communities is not necessarily a negative phenomenon. Much depends on whether it is voluntary or involuntary (Balakrishnan and Kralt, 1987; Moghaddam, 1994). If it simply reflects people's desire to live among those with whom they share language, religion, and cultural background, or to have better access to community-based support networks, it may help to smooth the process of immigrant settlement. If, on the other hand, it occurs because discrimination in employment and housing markets limit access to jobs and restrict housing choices for some groups (often visible minorities), it can result in the harmful effects associated with concentrated poverty and neighbourhood isolation. Existing evidence (mainly anecdotal) suggests that discrimination is a factor in employment and housing markets in Canada, and that there is a risk that it could have similar effects to those found in U.S. cities (Ekos Research Associates, 1995: 70; Murdie, 1998: 90).

Discrimination based on factors other than race can also add to the housing barriers encountered by immigrants. Difficulties with the language, large family size, household type (e.g. single parent), the presence of young children, receiving social assistance, inability to provide the last month's rent or to pay a key deposit (an illegal requirement if the deposit is greater than the amount specified for each rental payment, but one that some landlords still impose), refugee claimant status and lack of references have all been identified as reasons why landlords may refuse to rent to prospective tenants (Murdie, Chambon, Hulchanski, and Teixeira, 1996).

Some of these barriers (e.g. lack of ability to communicate in the language of the receiving community) are unique to ethno-cultural, ethno-racial minorities, and are more likely to be found among recent immigrants. Others are shared by the general population of under-housed people in Canada (Ekos Research Associates, 1995). Nonetheless, the characteristics that set recent immigrant households apart from the rest of the population also help to intensify the barriers they encounter in their housing search.

2.3 Overview

The types of immigrant households that are most likely to seek assistance from local government agencies are households seeking lower cost rental accommodation, particularly if they are of relatively large size (extended families, and families with several children), of relatively low income, have recently arrived in Canada, and perhaps fall into a "visible minority" category. Among recent arrivals, those belonging to groups that are not well-represented in the host community and thus lack institutional supports are also likely to pose greater challenges to local governments than are immigrant households with access to an established network of community organizations.

To provide a context for looking at the ways in which municipal governments in the GTA were responding to immigrant housing demands at the time of our study, we briefly examine the role of governments (federal, provincial, and municipal) in the provision of "affordable" rental housing in Ontario and in the Toronto area over the past half century. After reviewing the ways in which the actions of these governments have affected the supply of such housing we consider the implications of recent changes in federal and provincial policies both for rental housing supply and for the housing activities of municipal governments.

3.0 HISTORICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

3.1 Primary Role of the Private Sector

Canadian governments have traditionally relied on the private sector to meet most of the nation's housing needs. Governments have used a variety of measures to support or encourage the production of housing for sale to private owners, either in the interest of

stimulating the economy or of accommodating sudden surges in demand for housing. Such measures have included help with land acquisition, reduced rate mortgages, exemption from capital gains for primary residence, and the right to apply tax-sheltered Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) deposits to the purchase of a home. Public policies have thus been among the reasons why the production of ownership units has typically far exceeded the production of rental units in the GTA, especially outside Toronto, with assisted rental units comprising an even smaller share of housing production. The federal or provincial governments have also used various forms of mortgage assistance to stimulate private production of new rental housing, most of which is available only at market rents (i.e., is not eligible for government rent supplements.)

Exclusive reliance on private suppliers to satisfy housing demand implies an expectation that older housing will "filter down" to households at the lower end of the income scale. "Filtering" theory holds that a community's lower-priced, less desirable housing will become available to households entering the local housing market if owners decide to rent rather than sell units that have lost value, or if existing tenants are able to move to better accommodation (Solomon, 1974: 34-35). Filtering only works, however, in an active housing market characterized by steadily rising incomes, a rate of new housing production that keeps up with or outpaces demand, and a readiness on the part of city dwellers to abandon older city neighbourhoods. These conditions have seldom existed in the GTA and most other Canadian cities. Consequently, housing advocates have always looked to governments to address the housing needs of those individuals and households who cannot afford to purchase housing at prevailing market prices and still meet other basic needs.

While all three levels of government have played a role in developing and administering programs to provide low rental housing in Canada, the federal and provincial governments became preeminent in this field after World War II, and remained so for nearly 50 years. During the 1990s, however, their involvement declined to the point where municipal governments assumed primary responsibility for deciding how to respond to demands for affordable housing coming from different parts of their communities. Nonetheless, the legacies of past federal and provincial programs were

elements of the contexts in which municipal governments assess and act on their new responsibilities.

3.2 Alternative forms of government housing support

Low rental housing built with government assistance falls into a number of categories, each with somewhat different characteristics: privately-built limited dividend housing financed largely by low interest government loans; public housing built from the late 1940s until the early 1970s and reserved entirely for tenants who qualify for rental assistance; non-profit and cooperative housing built between the early 1970s and the mid-1990s for both moderate and low-income (including subsidized) tenants; rent supplement units in privately-owned and operated buildings, for which governments pay the difference between market rents and what tenants can afford; and hostels and shelters – temporary or "emergency" housing intended for short-term use. The last category accounts for virtually all the government-assisted units added to the housing stock in the late 1990s.

Although governments have tried to make up for deficiencies in the supply of low rental units in a variety of ways, their efforts have never kept up with demand. The list of applicants for public housing administered by the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority (MTHA) rose from 4944 to 25,566 between 1985 and 1995, for example, even though the production of social housing was increasing in Metro during this period (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department, Research and Information Division 1996, Appendix A, 40).   The federal and then the provincial government had ended their financial support for the construction of new low rental units by the mid-1990s.

3.3 The Role of the Federal Government

The federal government initiated financial support for public housing in the 1949 *National Housing Act,* after which it gradually moved from direct to indirect participation in social housing programs, and then to virtually complete withdrawal from this sector in the early 1990s. In the early years of such programs, it took an active part in the planning and building of public housing. Then its role shifted to that of banker, with its housing

agency (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC) allocating federal funds to the various provincial, municipal, non-profit, and co-operative housing agencies that became the key providers of assisted rental housing from the mid-1960s onward.

The federal government's limited dividend program, initiated in 1938 and ended in 1975, was also responsible for some of Toronto's supply of low rental housing. That program provided low interest loans to private sector apartment builders and municipal housing corporations, which were guaranteed a 5 per cent annual profit if they agreed to charge modest, government-set rents. Over 101,000 limited dividend units were built in Ontario, with just over 14,000 units going into Metropolitan Toronto (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department 1983, 19). A study conducted in the early 1990s described this aging stock of rental housing as home to "a disproportionate number of newly arrived immigrants living at relatively high densities" (Murdie 1992, 43-44).

According to one city official "the most comprehensive and extensive social housing program in Canadian history" was initiated in 1978 (Liston 2001). Section 56.1 of *The National Housing Act* authorized the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) both to insure and to subsidize the interest costs of loans made to public and private non-profit agencies and housing cooperatives for a 35-year period (Fallis 1995, 13). The program's purpose was to keep rents in such buildings below the amounts required to cover mortgage and operating costs, and to reserve a quarter of their units for rent-geared-to-income tenants. The federal government funded this program unilaterally but allowed provincial governments to contribute additional subsidies if they wished.

In 1986, federal legislation combined co-operative and non-profit housing into one program and shifted administrative responsibility for such housing to provincial governments. In 1993, the federal government ended its financial support for the production of assisted rental units altogether. It then handed over control of 200,000 units of social housing formerly administered by CMHC, sometimes in conjunction with the Ontario Housing Corporation (OHC), to the Government of Ontario. The transfer of responsibility also included a fixed sum for maintenance and a contribution of $50 million toward rent supplements for about 10,000 tenants (Mackie and MacKinnon, 1999).

3.4 The Role of the Ontario Government

Not only was the Ontario government a key player in the housing sector before 1996, but its level of activity actually rose between 1985 and 1995 as that of the federal government fell. While many of its programs were designed to stimulate or assist the production of rental housing by private builders (as well as assist the builders and buyers of new homes), it was also closely involved in the assisted rental sector. It participated in a federal-provincial partnership to aid the construction of public housing in the 1950s and then became the principal provider of public housing in Ontario after 1964, when it created an Ontario Housing Corporation (OHC) to act on municipal requests for such housing. The federal-provincial partnership and then OHC added nearly 85,000 units to Ontario's housing stock between 1951 and 1980. One-third of those units were in Metropolitan Toronto. With 25 per cent of the province's population, Metropolitan Toronto acquired almost 60 per cent of assisted rental units built for families. By contrast, nearly 63 per cent of units built with public housing funds in the rest of Ontario were for seniors (Rose, 1980: 175).

When the federal government terminated the public housing program in the late 1970s, OHC transferred administrative responsibility for the existing stock to newly-created municipal or regional housing authorities throughout the province. Three such authorities operated in the city and regions under study: the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority, the York Region Housing Authority, and the Peel Region Housing Authority. The boards of these authorities were appointed by the provincial government, so in reality they were units of provincial rather than municipal administration. These authorities disappeared in 2001 when the province turned all of its social housing units over to municipal governments. Existing or newly-created city or regional agencies assumed responsibility for their housing portfolios.

Increased provincial government contributions to lower-priced housing between 1985 and 1995 included new funding to the non-profit sector and programs to encourage new construction of private rental units or conversion of existing units to rental purposes. In addition, the government adopted two measures to get more affordable rental housing

into the market. One was the *Land Use Policy Statement for Housing*, which specified that 25 per cent of all newly-built housing should be "affordable" according to criteria of affordability specified in an annual "information bulletin" released by the Ministry of Housing (Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 1993: 32). The government also required municipal governments to amend their zoning bylaws to permit accessory apartments within their areas of jurisdiction.

3.5   Putting social housing in perspective

Although government activity in the rental housing field has received a good deal of attention from housing policy analysts, its yield in the form of lower-priced rental units has been small relative to the amount of housing, both ownership and rental, produced for the private market. In Canada as a whole, public sector housing accounted for about four percent of total housing stock by the 1980s (Murdie 1992, 6). Toronto had received a disproportionately large share of this housing. By 1993 Metro (now Toronto) had nearly 126,000 units of social housing, which accounted for 14% of Metro's (now Toronto's) total housing stock in 1993. Of these units, 58% (or about eight percent of the total stock) was available to tenants who qualified for rent supplements (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department 1995, 3.0).

3.6   Changes since 1995

As part of its program to restructure provincial/municipal responsibilities and to reduce its own spending, the Ontario government ended support for the construction of new social housing in 1995. The last provincially-sponsored units were completed in the fall of 1997. The new government also made municipalities responsible for the full costs of financing and administering social housing. It then decided that these costs (together with welfare costs) would be pooled among the City of Toronto and the four regional municipalities that make up the Greater Toronto Area.

City or regional governments began to receive bills for the costs of rent-geared-to-income subsidies in January 1998 and assumed full responsibility for social housing in 2001. ("Ontario: Municipal chaos …," 1999).   The Ontario government continued to

supplement the rent subsidies paid to low income tenants deemed eligible for assistance, although it reduced the size of these supplements by 21.6% - the same percentage reduction applied to welfare payments. It also reduced the number of units that it would subsidize.

The Ontario government assumed full responsibility for homes for persons in need of special care and 80 per cent of the costs of hostels and other emergency shelters (up to a specified ceiling. Nonetheless, its policies seemed likely to add to the difficulties of persons looking for low rental accommodation. For example, a revised *Provincial Policy Statement* issued in 1996 no longer required municipal governments to accommodate a specified amount of affordable housing in new developments or to do away with zoning restrictions on accessory apartments in private homes. It simply asked all planning jurisdictions to provide "for a full range of housing types and densities to meet projected demographic and market requirements of current and future residents of the *housing market area"* (not defined). It also "encouraged" municipalities to accommodate housing forms that were affordable to moderate and lower income households, and to permit residential intensification in areas where there was infrastructure to support it.

Another policy change that added uncertainty to the rental housing market was the 1998 repeal of *The Rental Housing Protection Act* (RHPA) and its replacement by *The Tenant Protection Act* (TPA). The RPHA had allowed municipal governments to regulate the demolition of rental buildings or conversion of rental housing to condominium status if such changes would adversely affect the municipality's supply of rental housing; the TPA did not give municipalities that right (Toronto City Clerk 1998). Five of Metro's six municipalities had inserted measures to regulate condominium conversions into their official plans. The repeal of the RPHA rendered these policies invalid. While the TPA included some protections for tenants living in a building approved for conversion, its general thrust was to make it possible for owners of rental properties to convert their buildings to condominums without seeking city government approval. City of Toronto officials therefore saw it as a new threat to an already dwindling stock of affordable rental units.

A signficant consequence of the withdrawal of federal and provincial government support for the construction of new social housing, together with Ontario government policies that threatened the existing supply of privately-owned rental units, was a greatly enhanced role for municipal governments in deciding how or whether to respond to the housing needs of the region's less affluent individuals and households. This shift of responsibility directs attention to the way municipalities participated in the assisted housing market in the past, and what their past performance had meant for the supply and distribution of low rental housing in the GTA.

3.7 The Growing Importance of Municipal Governments

Although most municipal governments in the Greater Toronto Area have included housing policies in their Official Plans, only a few have initiated or participated in programs to secure low or assisted rental housing. Nonetheless, the housing related decisions of all municipalities have been critical in determining both the supply of lower cost rental housing and the way it is distributed within the Greater Toronto Area. The former City of Toronto was always a leader in the field, having initiated Canada's first public housing development immediately after World War II with $6,000,000 of its own funds (Rose, 1980: 31). Once it had done so, it set about persuading the provincial and federal governments to help support that and all future public housing projects, an effort that bore fruit in the passage of the 1949 *National Housing Act*.

During the post-war period, the city was alone among the area's municipalities in wanting to increase the supply of housing for low- and moderate-income tenants. Most suburban officials opposed the idea. Their opposition prevented the Metropolitan Toronto Council (created in 1953) from assuming responsibility for family public housing from the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority, an agency appointed by the federal and provincial governments (McMahon, 1990: 54-55). Lack of progress in increasing Metro's supply of low rental family housing was one reason for the Ontario government's decision to create the Ontario Housing Corporation (OHC) in 1964.

The reluctance of suburban governments to accommodate public housing prompted the Ontario government to give the former Metro Council (instead of the

councils of Metro's six member municipalities) sole right to negotiate with OHC for public housing for all of Metro. By the time it did so, Metro planners had identified a number of sites, mainly in remote sections of Metro's outer suburbs (Etobicoke, North York, and Scarborough) where public housing could go. In addition to building large, high density projects on those sites, OHC bypassed the need to secure municipal approval for other projects by acquiring land that municipal governments had already zoned for high density uses, or by buying privately-built properties and adding them to the rent-geared-to-income stock. Much of Metro's private rental stock also went into sites that Metro's three outer municipalities had zoned for higher densities. The result of these policies was to scatter lower priced rental housing throughout Metropolitan Toronto, often to sites where tenant households (including immigrants) had access to fewer social and community services than households living close to downtown.

The former City of Toronto's role in assisted rental housing declined after OHC took over the responsibilities and assets of the Toronto Housing Authority in 1968. It revived again in 1974, however, when the city council established a Housing Department and created Cityhome. Cityhome was authorized both to build or buy housing itself and to assist non-profit organizations and housing cooperatives to build units on land assembled by the city, drawing on funds available in federal and provincial programs.

After OHC's creation, **Metropolitan Toronto** remained involved in the production of low rental housing through the activities of the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Company Ltd. (MTHCL), an agency created in 1954 to build low-rental housing for seniors with funding assistance from the federal Limited Dividend program (McMahon, 1990: 20-25). In the 1980s, Metro Council authorized the MTHCL to build housing for singles and families, again drawing on federal and provincial funds. The MTHCL continued to operate until Toronto's amalgamation in 1998, when it was amalgamated with Cityhome to form the Toronto Housing Company (THC). In 2001 the THC's functions were combined with those of the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority and assigned to a newly-established Toronto Community Housing Corporation, which became responsible for all social housing in the amalgamated city except for the relatively few units operated by private non-profit agencies and housing cooperatives.

The only other GTA municipality to set up a non-profit housing corporation before the 1980s was the Regional Municipality of **Peel**, which did so soon after the region's creation in 1974. This corporation, Peel Living, has remained in operation since that time. **York Region** established a non-profit housing corporation, the York Region Housing Corporation (YRHC), in the late 1980s. It opened its first units in 1990.

Apart from these initiatives, the positions taken by municipal governments on low rental housing have tended to be non-supportive or even obstructive. While losing the right to negotiate directly with federal and provincial funders for public housing in 1964, municipalities retained the right both to request OHC to build such housing and to zone land for the higher density forms of housing that available funds allowed OHC to build. Few municipalities did so. In fact, suburban governments were often reluctant to approve multi-unit rental housing in any form, either because of opposition from nearby homeowners or because they claimed it would mean higher service costs.

3.8 Consequences for Rental Housing Supply

Differences in the behaviour of municipal governments and housing providers in the past resulted in large differences in the supply of low rental housing inside and outside the amalgamated City of Toronto (see Tables 8 and 9). Not only did rental units constitute a larger proportion of total housing stock in the City of Toronto than in any of the four suburban regions in 1996, but the City of Toronto also accounted for more than three-quarters of the GTA's total supply of housing available to households eligible for rental assistance.

How municipal governments in this study were responding to a growing demand for low rental housing is the subject of the next chapter. Before moving to that topic, however, we look at recent trends in the rental housing market and what they imply for the ability of new immigrants to find appropriate housing at prices they can afford.

Table 8: Distribution of Housing by Tenure, Selected Municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area, 1996.			
Municipality	**Total Households**	**% Owned**	**% Rented** (all)
Peel Region	265,620	69	31
York Region	176,680	82	18
Toronto	903,565	47	53
Durham Region	152,755	76	24
Halton Region	117,750	75	25
Total GTA	**1,615,530**	**59**	**41**
Source: Statistics Canada (1996); Bourne (2000).			

Table 9: Rent-Geared-to-Income Housing, Selected Municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area, 1996*							
Municipality	**Rent supplement housing**	**Non-profit housing**	**OHC** owned housing**	**Other**	**Total R-G-I units**	**As % of local housing**	**As % of GTA Total**
Peel Region	1,421	6,394	1,016	0	8,831	3.3	9.3
York Region	125	3,270	872	0	4,267	2.4	4.5
Toronto	6,061	25,217	29,403	12,902***	73,583	8.1	77.8
Durham Regn	449	2,947	1,275	0	4,671	3.1	4.9
Halton Region	215	1,549	1,404	8 (native)	3,176	2.8	3.4
Total GTA	**8,271**	**39,377**	**33,970**	**12,910**	**94,528**	**5.9**	**100**

* Table lacks data on market units contained in housing built with government assistance. RGI units made up 58% of the total social housing stock in 1993 (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department, 1995, 3.0).
** Source: Ontario Housing Corporation.
*** With municipal assistance from the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Company Limited.
Source: Province of Ontario, CHUMS Database (1996, August 16).

3.9 Recent Trends in Rental Housing Supply

Data on changes in the housing stock in the Greater Toronto Area indicate that changes in provincial housing policies after 1996, including changes that benefitted landlords, did not stimulate investment in rental housing. The supply of rental housing fell after 1996, in fact, after increasing during the previous decade. According to CMHC figures, average annual production of rental units in **Toronto** was 3360 between 1989 and 1993 (an increase over the average of 1510 between 1984 and 1988), and then dropped to 1351 between 1994 and 1998 ("Where's Home" 8.8, 1999). In 1998, only 114 rental units, all private, were completed in Toronto. In **Peel Region**, production rose from an average of 1147 between 1984 and 1988 to an average of 1625 between 1989 and 1993, and then fell to an annual average of 417 between 1994 and 1998 ("Where's Home" 8.6, 1999). (Comparable figures for **York Region** were not yet available).

The Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department attributed increases before 1996 to several factors: a shift of housing from owner to rental occupancy in response to a booming rental market; a fall in sales prices of ownership properties, particularly condominiums, and thus a switch of some units from ownership to rental; the personal capital gains tax exemption for real estate; an increase in accessory apartments in private homes; the construction of condos intended for rental by individual owner/investors; and the increased production of social housing made possible by an increase in provincial government assistance (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department, Research and Information Services Division, 1996: 10-11).

Not only was little new rental housing being built at the time of our study, however, but the existing stock of low rental housing was declining. There were several reasons for this decline, including: an Ontario government decision to sell off scattered units of public housing; the removal of units in private buildings from the rent supplement category after building owners paid off their mortgages; rent increases that moved privately-owned units out of the "affordable" category; the conversion of apartments in old houses into larger units, or the conversion of such houses back to single family use. The consequences of these trends for renters was a decline in housing quality and/or space, increased threat of eviction, and increased possibility of becoming

homeless.   Waiting lists for social housing were growing, from 1,865 to 3,143 households in **Peel Region** between 1991 and 1998 (Social Planning Council of Peel Region, 1999: O-3); from 49,120 new applications in **Toronto** in September 1998 to 56,215 in July 1999 (Toronto Chief Administrator's Office, 2000: 15). In **York Region**, according to a local housing official, there were 6000 people on waiting lists in 1999.[19]

The situation was not expected to improve. The Toronto Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness estimated a need for at least 2,000 new affordable rental housing units a year (between 1996 and 2001) just to meet new demand, not to ease the existing backlog (Toronto Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force, 1999: 140). Yet CMHC data showed that only 30 rental units were completed in 2000 in the City of Toronto.)

3.10   Overview

For new immigrants with limited means, the search for suitable rental housing in the Toronto area seemed likely to become progressively more competitive and less rewarding unless governments found ways to stimulate increased production of affordable rental housing. The actions of municipal governments had also become critical in determining how immigrant housing needs would be met, not only because those governments had become fully responsible for financing and administering the social housing stock, but also because of their importance as advocates for the needs of their communities, and because their planning decisions determined whether and where low rental housing could be built.

The next section looks at the way municipal governments and their housing agencies in the City of Toronto and the Regions of Peel and York were responding to the growing shortage and rising costs of rental housing, and what their responses implied for immigrant settlement and immigrant adjustment in the Greater Toronto Area.

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[19] There may be some duplication in the lists both within and among jurisdictions. Eligibility criteria require applicants to be residents of Ontario only, not of any particular city in Ontario.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Demand for Low Rental Housing in the Greater Toronto Area

Disparities in the availability of rental housing inside and outside Toronto imply that immigrants with limited means will be more likely to settle or to seek housing in the City of **Toronto,** while immigrants with the means to buy housing have the option of going directly to the suburbs. Statistics support this hypothesis. Only one fifth of new immigrants in Metropolitan Toronto (now the City of Toronto) owned their own home in 1991, while half of new immigrants settling in the outer parts of the GTA were homeowners (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department, Research and Information Services Division, 1996: 76).

Of immigrants who came to the Toronto area between 1990 and 1999, 80% gave Toronto (Metropolitan Toronto before 1998) as their intended destination (see Table 2). Despite the dispersal of immigrants throughout the Greater Toronto Area, therefore, **Toronto** was still the predominant site of first settlement for immigrant arrivals. Suburban households headed by immigrants appeared to be no better off in the aggregate, relative to all households, than their counterparts in the city (averaging 53 per cent of median income for the region as a whole in 1996). Nonetheless, the larger proportion of recent immigrants in the city helped to explain why average and median incomes in the city were lower than in the suburbs (Bourne, 2000: 6.3, 5). This income gap between the new city and its suburbs appeared to be growing.

Symptomatic of the city-suburban income gap was a higher rate of poverty (as defined by Statistics Canada) in the city than in the suburbs. The percentage of the population classified as poor in the 1996 Census was 27.6 per cent in **Toronto**, 15.0 per cent in **Peel Region** and 12.9 per cent in **York Region** (United Way, 1999: 28). These figures had increased from 16.4 per cent for Toronto, 8.1 per cent for Peel, and 6.6 per cent for York Region in 1986 (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department, not dated: 77).

While poverty in the Toronto area was increasing, the supply of affordable housing was declining. The most visible consequence of these two trends was increasing homelessness, which became a major stimulus to city and regional activities in the

housing field in the late 1990s. The City of **Toronto**, the Region of **Peel**, and the Region of **York** all appointed task forces on homelessness that reported in 1999. The reports issued by the Toronto and Peel task forces included discussions of homelessness as an issue for "Immigrants and Refugees," and "Minority Ethnic Communities" respectively. The York study made no special mention of such groups (Peel Regional Task Force on Homelessness 1999, 28-29; Toronto Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force 1999, 71-75; York Region Community Services and Housing Department, 2000).

Homelessness affects immigrants directly to the extent that they fall into the categories of individuals or households most likely to become homeless: substance abusers, the mentally ill, abused women, single-parent families, two-parent families with no or low employment income, and refugee claimants (Peel Regional Task Force on Homelessness, 1999: 12; Toronto Chief Administrator's Office, 2000: 3-9).   Refugees were among three groups (the other two being abused women and the homeless) for which the province asked municipal housing agencies to reserve 10 per cent of all rent-geared-to-income units. Local officials regarded this requirement as essentially meaningless, however, because of the long waiting lists for such units and their low rate of turnover.

In their efforts to find housing in a shrinking market, therefore, low income immigrants and refugees were competing with an increasing number of low income but longer-term residents for a shrinking supply of low rental housing. This situation implied a growing need for emergency shelter. It also highlighted the importance of information sources and other types of assistance to help immigrants find housing they could afford.

Although immigrants may seek help or advice from both community-based organizations and local government agencies, we focus here on the activities of the housing agencies that operated as part of municipal government structures. At the time of this study these agencies included the City of Toronto's Shelter, Housing, and Support Division in the Community Services Department, the Toronto Housing Company, Peel Living (the Peel Non-Profit Housing Corporation), the Housing Policy Division of York Region's Social Services Department, and the York Region Housing Corporation. We did not look at the activities of the three local housing authorities, which still operated as

branch offices of OHC, except where their activities intersected with those of municipal agencies and departments. With the transfer of housing responsibilities to municipalities in 2001, however, these authorities were absorbed into existing housing agencies in the city and the two regional municipalities, or were combined with them into new units.

4.2 The Provision of Housing-Related Information and Other Types of Assistance

With the closing of Ontario Welcome House soon after the 1995 provincial election, new immigrants lost an important central source of information about housing and related services.   They had to look for such information from a variety of scattered community groups providing settlement services, from various municipal offices, and from individual providers of non-profit and cooperative housing. In response to a provincial directive, Toronto merged Cityhome's applicant waiting list with a Housing Registry that had been managed jointly by the MTHA and the MTHCL into Toronto Social Housing Connections, which eliminated duplications between the two lists. Toronto Social Housing Connections began accepting virtually all applications for social housing in June 1998, although a number of federally-funded co-operatives opted not to participate. The city also announced plans to create a Rental Housing Office (which would operate an information web-site) to support a city wide network of legal clinics, housing help centres, and other tenant services (Toronto Chief Administrator's Office, 2000: 31). There seemed to be no plans to make housing information available in languages other than English and French.

At the time of the study, community-based organizations like Malton Neighbourhood Services and Catholic Community Services ran housing registries in **Peel Region**. Other groups referred clients to **Peel Living**, the non-profit housing corporation. They also helped people make applications, which could be dropped off at various places in the region. People seeking assisted rental accommodation in **York Region** had to register with different providers, although work on a common waiting list was in progress. At least some applications were circulated. "We have one-stop shopping in a way," commented one York official, "but there's nothing to shop for."

Some housing agencies also provided assistance to people living in hostels or shelters, or using local drop-in centres. The City of **Toronto's** Shelter, Housing, and Support Division was involved in a variety of programs (some of them supported by the city's Homeless Initiative fund) to address the needs of the Hispanic and Somali communities, to help staff at shelters and drop-in centres deal with language problems and with cultural differences and expectations, and to help refugees access health and other services.

Translation was the only service provided specifically to immigrants by the **Peel and York** housing corporations. They secured this service from community-based agencies when the need arose (for example, when there was a problem with a tenant).

4.3 Strategies to Deal with Homelessness

While rising homelessness was a concern of governments in all three jurisdictions, there were large differences in the scale of the problem they faced. In the **City of Toronto**, the total number of individuals staying in emergency shelters rose from 22,000 in 1988 to over 38,800 in 1998, with the number of children in shelters increasing from 2,700 to 6,000 during the same period (Toronto Chief Administrator's Office, 2000: 6-8). Immigrant and refugee children among them might be doubly disadvantaged by having to cope with periodic disruptions in schooling while also having to adjust to a new school system and perhaps learn a new language.

In **Peel Region,** 300 men sought refuge in the region's only hostel in 1998, while 689 women and children, or couples with children, were lodged in a hotel (Peel Regional Task Force on Homelessness, 1999: 21). According to a member of **York Region's** Social Services Department, there were 500 homeless people in York in 1999, most of them in Vaughan and Markham, the two municipalities that shared a boundary with Toronto.

Differences in the scale of the housing problems confronting the governments of Toronto, Peel, and York partly accounted for differences in their efforts to address them. **Toronto's** Shelter, Housing, and Support Division operated 2000 beds in five hostels in 1998, and provided per diems to other organizations operating 1900 beds in 44

emergency shelters (Dowling, 1998: 6). While a new hostel opened in Toronto about every six weeks, system occupancy had remained at over 95 per cent (Toronto Chief Administrator's Office, 2000: 31). According to the United Way, 14 per cent of the 26,000 people who used the shelter system in 1996 came from outside Canada (United Way of Greater Toronto, 1999: 31). The city received 10 refugee claimants a day, many of whom ended up in shelters. It had designated one hostel (Sojourn House) for recently arrived immigrants, but estimated that there were 400 to 500 refugee claimants spread among the city's shelters at any given time (Toronto Chief Administrator's Office, 2000: 39). Demands for such accommodation could rise suddenly if there were a sudden influx of refugees from a world trouble spot, as happened with the arrival of Tibetan refugees in 1999, placing severe strains on the system.

Peel Region had just begun to provide shelter space at the time of our study. Spurred on by the Peel Coalition for Shelter, a collaboration of community groups providing emergency overnight shelter in Brampton, the Peel Regional Council created a Task Force on Homelessness in 1998. A year later Peel Living oversaw the development and took over the operation of two emergency shelters for single men in Brampton and in Mississauga.   The Social Services Department paid a share of these shelters' capital and operating costs. Peel also used a local hotel as temporary accommodation for families in crisis (Peel Regional Task Force on Homelessness, 1999: 18, 39). It also helped to fund four other shelters operated by community agencies. At the time of the study it was looking into providing multicultural services in its shelters.

York Region left the development and operation of shelters to community-based organizations, which operated a few scattered shelters for women and for single men, as well as a recently-opened family shelter. These received some of their funds from the regional Department of Housing and Community Services and the Department of Health.

The provincial government nominally paid 80 per cent of the costs of hostel accommodation and 50 per cent of the costs of administration, but only up to a specified per diem amount. Municipal governments paid anything over that amount. According to the **Toronto** Mayor's Task Force, the provincial ceiling meant that the city actually paid 27 per cent of the cost of emergency shelters in 1999 because of the high costs of

operating this service in the city (Toronto Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force, 1999: 74). Toronto's total share of emergency shelter costs was expected to reach $95 million in 1999, up from $70 million in 1998. Complete figures on shelter costs in **Peel Region** were not available, but the cost of providing female and family shelter in a local hotel was $143,939 in 1998 (Peel Regional Task Force on Homelessness, 1999: 21).

4.4 Strategies to Increase the Supply of Affordable Rental Housing

If only for financial reasons, reliance on shelters was viewed as a less than satisfactory way to meet critical housing needs. In the words of one Toronto official, "It's very expensive to keep people in the shelter system. It would be cheaper to provide housing." **Toronto** City Council was acting on this observation by adopting policies to promote the production of new affordable rental housing and to protect the existing stock. Its actions included:

- waiving development charges for non-profit development
- exempting non-profit housing from building permit fees, planning application fees and parkland dedication requirements;
- a "housing first" policy for surplus municipal lands
- establishing a revolving fund of $11 million and appointing a housing adviser to encourage non-profit community organizations and private developers to build affordable housing on surplus city-owned lands,
- adopting by-laws to permit second suites as-of-right in single and semi-detached houses in all parts of the city.
- amending the city plan to allow the city to control the conversion of rental housing to condominiums and to seek replacements for rental units that would be lost if a redevelopment proposal were approved. This approach was proving to be difficult to implement. After the Ontario Muncipal board found the amendment to be "illegal and invalid," the city of Toronto, together with the cities of Hamilton and Ottawa, appealed it to the Divisional Court which decided in the cities' favour. The court then sent the by-law back to the OMB to be reconsidered

only on its planning merits. (Toronto Commissioner of Urban Development Services 2002).

Immigrant housing needs were only a small component of the array of severe housing problems encountered by city officials, and the city had only a few programs that dealt with them exclusively. One such program linked city officials to a non-governmental group, Affordability and Choice Today (ACT), that focused particular attention on the housing needs of African newcomers. The program strengthened awareness among city officials that some immigrant groups tended to settle as extended families, and therefore looked for units with more than three bedrooms (often the largest unit size in many social housing buildings). It also highlighted the value of extended families in providing supports to newcomers. A community-based Refugee Housing Task Force, created by the former City of Toronto and retained by the new one, was exploring alternative ways to house sponsored and claimant refugees. A key issue was the difficulty of finding larger accommodation for the families that joined individual refugees already living in Toronto.

Immigrants and their housing needs had not received special attention in the housing policies adopted or being discussed in the suburban regions. Of the two we looked at, **Peel Region** had gone furthest in responding to a growing shortage of low rental housing. As in Toronto, this shortage was closely identified with a growing incidence of homelessness. Within a year after receiving the report of its Task Force on Homelessness, regional staff members were working with officials from Peel's three member municipalities to develop a comprehensive housing strategy. The regional council had also allocated funds to help with the construction of new low rental units, some of them to be eligible for rent supplement tenants. **York Region** had made no specific commitments to provide new housing. It was relying heavily on developing partnerships with community-based organizations to locate available units.

4.5   Barriers to municipal action

A deterrent to municipal government participation in programs to increase the supply of assisted rental housing was the provincial government decision to transfer full

responsibility for social housing administration to municipal governments in 2001. Because of the higher costs involved, it appeared unlikely that municipal governments would look for ways to increase the supply of social housing unless a lack of afforable rental housing began to pose a serious threat to community well being. Even Toronto's housing officials said that they would not recommend strategies for which the hidden costs of administration outweighed the benefits of securing additional units. City housing officials also felt constrained by the need to maintain and improve the existing stock, much of which was aging and deteriorating (Bourne, 2000: 7.2), and by the many other claims being made on the city budget.

A different kind of pressure on municipal governments came from residents in districts chosen to receive new emergency or supportive housing. In the **City of Toronto,** attempts to open new hostels and shelters often met with vigourous community opposition, not only from neighbourhoods that had never had social housing but also from neighbourhoods claiming to have more than their fair share. While champions for the poor characterized such objections as evidence of social elitism or of racism (when immigrants were involved), protesters occasionally won support even from left-leaning city councillors (Ross, 1999). Any city politician wanting to win the votes of middle class homeowners or to keep those homeowners in the city was strongly motivated to take their preferences into account.

In the suburban regions, local councils (with strong backing from local residents) have always defined their communities as places for people who have saved enough money to buy a home, or who have the capital to do so as soon as they arrive in Canada. While residential densities were increasing in some close-in suburbs because land was becoming scarcer, virtually all new housing was for sale, not for rent. There was little indication that municipal governments wanted that situation to change. In fact, the opposite seemed to be the case. For example, the City of **Markham** in **York Region** deleted references to provincial requirements for affordable housing and accessory apartments from its Official Plan after the provincial government removed such requirements from its planning legislation (Markham Planning Department, 1999: 4). Yet regional housing agencies had to secure approvals from these lower-tier governments for any additions they wanted to make to the social housing stock.

Suburban dislike of assisted or lower-cost rental housing spilled over into resentment of the one provincial government policy that forced suburban governments to accept some responsibility for housing the GTA's poorest residents: a requirement that the local share of social housing and social assistance costs be paid out of a GTA-wide pool of property tax revenues. Some suburban politicians argued that local money going into the pool (of which Toronto would receive the largest share) should be available to meet growing housing needs in their own communities (Swainson, 1999). Others argued that local governments should be able to decide for themselves how they wanted to spend local tax revenues.

4.6   Promoting New Roles for the Federal and Provincial Governments

The pooling of funds for social housing on a GTA-wide basis gave suburban governments an incentive to increase their supply of low- and assisted-rental housing in the interest of spending housing funds in their own communities instead of sending them to Toronto. Like Toronto, however, they insisted that they could do little on their own to end homelessness or to solve the rental housing crisis. Pressuring the federal and provincial governments to act was an important element of the housing strategies being followed by all three governments. These efforts had gradually persuaded the two senior government to adopt a series of incremental measures to help individuals and households who were homeless or in danger of becoming so. Then in 2001 these governments signed an agreement to invest in the construction of new low rental housing. The federal government pledged a cash contribution of $25,000 per unit; the provincial government (at least for the time being), agreed only to give participating developers a sales tax refund of up to $2000.00. Municipal governments would have to make up most of the province's financial share.

In the absence of new legislation requiring municipalities to take more responsibility, the only pressure on suburban governments to accommodate more affordable housing is likely to be a severe shortage of entry and low-skilled workers for the industries they all try hard to attract, and for the commercial activities that support those industries. Until a change of thinking occurs, however, the **City of Toronto** will continue to be the main provider of rental housing for the area's lower-income residents --

immigrants and non-immigrants alike. This role will place increasing strains on the city's stock of low rental housing unless ways are found to increase it.

The problems faced by immigrants searching for affordable housing in a tight rental market are similar to the problems faced by other members of the community in similar income circumstances. Immigrants have the added difficulty, however, of conducting their housing search in a social and political environment that sometimes resents their presence, or that at least ranks their needs below those of Canadian-born residents (with the exception of aboriginals) (Funston, 1994). Some local politicians (including the Mayor of Toronto) have insisted that the housing and other social needs of immigrants, and particularly of refugees, should not be a municipal responsibility at all; that they belong to the federal government (Rusk, 1999a).

Such sentiments are likely to become more prevalent if the supply of rental housing continues to decline and poverty among immigrants continues to increase. They emerge largely out of a determination by local councils to resist new demands on the property tax base – a determination heightened in recent years by the provincial transfer of full or greater responsibility for services like social housing and welfare to municipal governments.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

While the housing needs of immigrants and refugees have seldom been the primary focus of municipal housing policies and activities, the growing share of immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area's population, as well as a pattern of decline in immigrant incomes relative to the incomes of Canadian born residents in the 1990s, implied that immigrant housing needs were important elements of the two problems that preoccupied municipal housing officials: increasing homelessness and a declining supply of lower cost rental housing. Efforts to address these problems were more extensive and advanced in the **City of Toronto** than in the suburban regions of **Peel and York**, perhaps because the problems were on a larger scale, received more media attention in the city than in the suburbs, and were evident to anyone who visited downtown Toronto.

Toronto's activities in the housing field, in conjunction with the larger proportion of low rental units in its housing stock, implied that the city would continue to be the GTA's primary reception area for those new immigrants who arrived without enough capital to buy a home. For that reason, it would also provide a disproportionately large share of municipal services to needy immigrants. In trying to respond to the various demands they faced, city officials had to balance the housing and service needs of recent immigrants with those of long-term residents, a task that was becoming more difficult as the supply of affordable rental housing declined, as politicians tried to control spending to avoid raising local taxes, and as neighbourhood opposition to low rental and emergency housing became more entrenched.

It appeared unlikely that the suburbs would be able to accommodate a larger share of immigrant arrivals looking for housing at low- to moderate- rents in future than they had done in the past. While the government of **Peel Region** was actively looking for ways to add to its low rental stock, its efforts were hindered by a lack of suitable sites and by a shortage of funds. **York Region** had recognized homelessness as a growing problem but was relying on the community sector to find ways to address it. Its lower tier municipalities had little or no interest in accommodating lower priced rental housing.

At the time of the study, the federal and provincial governments were just beginning to develop programs to help city and regional governments to address their housing problems. Without substantial help from those governments, the city's housing problems seemed likely to increase, making the city government increasingly unwilling or financially unable to address them. If that should happen, the problems of those seeking low rental housing in the Toronto area could only become worse.

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CHAPTER 4: PUBLIC TRANSIT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

For immigrants who arrive in Canada without the means to buy a car, public transit can be just as important to the settlement process as finding a place to live. If it is the principal or only way the immigrant can travel about the city or region in search of housing and jobs, to go to community-based agencies for assistance or advice, or to socialize with friends and relatives, it is of fundamental importance to her/his ability to function in the new society. As places of contact and interaction between immigrants and other members of the community, including public servants, public transit can also help to shape immigrants' views of their new society and their place within it (as well as test the willingness of long-term residents to accept immigrants). As this chapter tries to show, however, there is much more to the immigrant-transit relationship than the policies that transit operators adopt with respect to immigrant riders and immigrant communities. The ability of transit to serve immigrants also depends on political and planning decisions that affect the way transit operators are able to function and may even determine whether some of the smaller operators survive.

2.0 KEY ISSUES

Neither the research community nor the media have paid much attention to immigrant-related issues in public transit. Media stories involving immigrants and transit typically concern disputes between immigrants, transit company employees (usually bus drivers), and sometimes other passengers, thereby focusing attention on transit operating rules and management practices. Much more than interpersonal relationships are involved, however, in determining the role of public transit in the immigrant settlement process. To understand the full significance of public transit and transit trends for immigrants, it is necessary to look beyond literature dealing specifically with immigrants to literature dealing with the situation of public transit in general, the way that situation is changing as urban regions expand well beyond the boundaries of older core cities, and

what the changes imply for the ability of immigrants and other urban residents without automobiles to function effectively.

2.1 Public Transit in Difficulty

The situation for public transit in the GTA and other large urban regions is often precarious for a number of reasons, which means that travel options for immigrant and other transit users are more likely to decline than increase if present trends continue.

2.1.1   *Political/professional indifference to the importance of transit as a means of transportation*

Counter-intuitive though it may seem, the travel needs of persons who rely on transit are seldom considered in public transit decision-making. Transportation planners and policy-makers typically categorize such persons as "transit dependent", thereby implying that they constitute a reliable pool of transit riders and can safely be ignored. They focus most of their attention on finding ways to persuade persons who are not transit-dependent (because they already own and drive automobiles) to switch to transit, especially during the morning and evening rush hours. The travellers they are most interested in are those who travel regularly between suburban residential districts and heavily built-up employment nodes. Such travellers are held responsible for much of the congestion that clogs urban highways, thereby blocking the movement of goods and impeding economic growth, and contributing heavily to airborne pollutants associated with global warming. Alternatively, some transportation planners have argued for new transit investments as ways to generate or support high density, multi-functional development nodes (city sub-centres) at selected sites throughout cities or regions.

2.1.2 *Severe financial constraints*

Further strengthening this policy-making bias toward making transit improvements that will attract new riders to high capacity, heavily travelled routes, or toward using transit to channel economic development, are the stringent financial constraints under which most transit companies operate. Public transit operators have not

been able to cover their full operating costs out of fare box revenues, let alone invest their own funds in new capital equipment, for at least three decades (Pucher and Lefèvre, 1996: 32-33). To try to do so in today's spread-out cities would mean increasing fares to the point where most people would stop using the service, at which point it would disappear altogether, or limiting services to those few routes that can pay for themselves.

Government subsidies have been necessary, therefore, to allow transit operators not only to remain in business but also to expand their systems and to operate services on less heavily-travelled routes, which are usually located in a city's outer districts and in its suburbs. Because a large portion of such subsidies have been used to pay the capital costs of new rail lines to serve suburban commuters, there is considerable debate as to how much they have benefited people who rely on local buses for most of their daily travel (Wachs and Dill, 1999: 306-9). Nonetheless, few would deny that government subsidies have kept alive transit systems that probably would have disappeared otherwise.

2.1.3 Urban development patterns are not supportive of transit

The development pattern typical of North American urban regions is a major reason for declining transit use and rising transit costs. As such regions have gained population and economic investment, their residents, places of employment and places of entertainment have spread outward from the centre, typically at declining densities. Many activities have located away from major arterial routes, thereby becoming more costly and time-consuming to serve by transit. Moreover, spread-out suburban environments present fewer obstacles to automobile travel than do the heavily built-up, congested districts of urban downtowns. As a result, the cost of providing transit service has increased, the number of riders has declined, and transit operators have tended to curtail services (or refuse to provide new ones) in order to keep down costs.

An outcome of urban dispersal may be a growing "spatial mismatch" between an urban area's jobs, a growing proportion of which are located in the suburbs, and low income workers (or persons who want to work) who tend to become increasingly concentrated in core cities (Altshuler, Morrill, Wolman, and Mitchell, 1999: 51; McLafferty and Preston, 1996). If there is little or no transit service to new employment

sites, those sites become difficult or impossible to access without a car. Transit accessible destinations are likely to decline as a proportion of all destinations as an urban area expands. As a result, employment and other opportunities for persons dependent on transit will also decline.

For Alan Altshuler, a long time investigator of trends in urban transportation in the United States, the decline of transit in urban areas is implicated in the growing disparities between rich and poor in that country.

> It is unusual to come across a situation in which the circumstances of the disadvantaged have deteriorated absolutely over a sustained period of time. For many Americans without cars and/or drivers' license, however, the absolute level of mobility has fallen sharply over the past several decades. Given the dramatic mobility improvements experienced by most Americans in this same period, it follows that the relative deprivation of those left behind has worsened acutely (Altshuler, 1979: 253).

2.1.4 A failure to account for the full costs of not providing public transit

Altshuler's observation challenges the makers of transportation policy to consider the impacts of their decisions on the relative well-being of their various constituencies, not just on the direct costs of providing the service. More than that, however, it implies that the costs associated with maintaining or not maintaining a good public transit option in the expanding metropolis go well beyond the costs borne by transit providers, the governments that contribute to them, and the persons who pay for these services. Hidden costs of not providing transit also include the lower spending power of and lower taxes paid by households whose members are un- or underemployed because of an inability to travel, the costs of providing government and community services to households or neighbourhoods isolated by poor mobility, and the costs to businesses in car-dependent districts of not being able to find workers to fill entry level, lower-paying jobs.

Canadian researchers have given little attention thus far to the implications of urban development patterns for the ability of low income urban residents to travel for work and other purposes. This issue began to attract attention from U.S. researchers more than 30 years ago, however, when transit systems in that country were already undergoing serious decline (Ornati, 1969). During the intervening years there have been

various experiments, sometimes instituted by private employers, to establish bus services to bring core city employees to jobs in the suburbs. A national attack on the problem of spatial mismatch was launched only recently in the U.S. federal government's *Transportation Equity Act (TEA-21)*. Ten million dollars out of a total of $50 million allocated for 1998 was set aside to fund projects to make transit more available to persons needing it (Reichert, 1998). Under this program, local governments and non-profit agencies can apply for grants to support initiatives designed to get welfare and low-income families to work or to connect city residents to suburban employers.

U.S. initiatives to overcome the transportation difficulties of spatial mismatch acknowledge the hidden costs of transit deficiencies, both for the people affected and for the cities they live in. They typically occur, however, in urban settings where it has become virtually impossible to adapt transit services to changing residential and employment patterns because those services have largely disappeared. Large Canadian cities have not yet reached that point. Thus, the mobility of transit-reliant residents in Canadian cities and suburbs still depends on the extent to which transit services now in place allow persons without a car to travel between dispersed destinations, even when those destinations are well removed from the urban core and separated by one or more municipal boundaries.

The literature dealing with the difficulties that beset urban public transit suggest or imply three requirements for making public transit a more important component of urban policy-making and more useful to the residents of today's decentralizing urban regions.

1) *A need to organize transit on a regional scale.* The travel situation of transit-dependent households is likely to be more difficult in an urban region with a fragmented transit system (that is, a system composed of a number of transit operators reporting to different government authorities) than in one with a single system that provides integrated transit service to an entire urban region. Not only is a regional system likely to provide smoother and more convenient connections among different jurisdictions divided by municipal boundaries, but it is also likely to be easier for users to learn about and understand.

While a regional transit system can overcome some of the difficulties of transit travel in the expanding urban region, however, it cannot address the fundamental barrier to maintaining viable transit operations in suburban settings - the incompatibility between suburban land use practices and the requirements for transit viability (however those requirements are defined). Thus, the travel opportunities available to transit-dependent immigrants both now and in the future partly depend on the land use decisions and practices of municipal governments and suburban communities.

2) *A need for transit-supportive land use practices.* It is now widely recognized that the density of development in both residential and employment districts is directly related to the use made of urban transit relative to automobiles (i.e. to the transit modal split) in urban areas (Pucher and Lefèvre, 1996: 21-23). This understanding has provided both a stimulus and a justification for the efforts of suburban municipalities to plan for and promote compact development nodes combining employment, commercial and residential activities, partly as a means of competing with the central city for the types of activities that have traditionally located in downtown cores.

Promoting high density development at selected nodes is only one of several policies that municipal governments can adopt to help make transit more attractive and accessible to their residents and thus more cost-effective (Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 1992). Typically, however, municipal planning preferences, combined with the preferences and practices of suburban land developers, have made it difficult for transit operators to serve newer areas by keeping residential and employment densities low, by favoring convoluted street patterns on which it is difficult and expensive to run buses, and by making it inconvenient, uncomfortable, and even dangerous for residents to walk from their homes to the nearest transit stops.

3) *A need for advocacy.* Municipal governments are critically important, therefore, in determining the extent to which immigrants and other urban residents without cars are able to travel in expanding metropolitan areas, not just because they own, operate, and finance transit systems, but also because they make the land use decisions that determine whether and where transit operators provide service. There is little

evidence, however, that municipal governments give much consideration to the impacts of their decisions on public transit operators or transit users. One reason for this lack of attention is that most transit users are poorly represented in discussions and debates about local policy-making. Not only do they constitute a minority of local residents, even in the largest cities, but they are also an inarticulate and unorganized minority. Typically they lack a voice on municipal councils (members of which usually drive cars) and they seldom come together to pressure municipal governments or transit operators to take their needs into account. Their passivity contrasts sharply with the activism of groups representing persons with various forms of disability. Such groups have been remarkably successful, given the relatively small number of people they represent, in persuading governments in both the United States and Canada to institute special services and to adapt conventional services to accommodate their clients. Their success suggests that the needs and concerns of transit users (including immigrant users) would receive more attention from transit operators and the governments they serve if those needs and concerns were more vigourously expressed in the political arena.

2.2 Immigrants and Transit

The interactions between immigrants and transit operators most often reported in the media typically involve disputes between transit vehicle drivers and passengers. Such disputes may lead to accusations of racism or racial stereotyping against the driver, other transit officials or passengers drawn into the dispute. Nonetheless, they may arise out of genuine misunderstanding of company rules and procedures on the part of passengers, or a driver's misinterpretation of passenger motives. What they indicate, however, is that individual drivers have a lot of discretion to decide how to deal with atypical occurrences. They also highlight the importance of public transit as an environment where immigrants interact with public employees in situations that are witnessed by other members of the community (immigrant and non-immigrant), and in which other members of the community may decide to become actively involved or voice strong opinions - some of them directed at immigrants in general. If the situations are not resolved on the

spot, they may also lead to encounters with representatives of transit management and even the police (Parkes, 1996; Sterle, 1995; Valpy, 1999).[20] Thus, such disputes highlight two aspects of local transit policy-making that are important to the way immigrants experience Canadian society and its governing institutions: the hiring and training of transit personnel; and the way immigrants learn about how the transit system operates.

2.2.1 Hiring and training of personnel

For immigrant users of public transit, the most important elements of personnel hiring and training are the ways the company selects and trains the people who deal with the public on a daily basis - particularly the drivers of transit vehicles but also the persons who sell tickets, give directions, or listen to customer complaints. Ideally, a diverse population requires that such personnel are not only sensitive to the difficulties experienced by people with little knowledge of the language of common discourse, but that they are also able to handle culturally-sensitive situations with tact and diplomacy.

Hiring policy is also important for what it says about the employment possibilities available to immigrants. Big city transit companies are large employers and usually pay relatively high wages for the type of work they offer. Typically, they also have strong unions. There may be resistance to increasing workforce diversity within both management and unions (Gapasin, 1998). Thus, the extent to which a transit company manages to achieve an ethnoculturally diverse workforce not only speaks to the employment opportunities available to immigrants, but also conveys a silent message to immigrant transit users about the extent to which people of different ethno-cultural backgrounds have been accepted into this segment of the civic bureaucracy.

2.2.2 The need for information

The type of information that immigrants lack may be so basic as to be considered obvious and irrelevant by people who give advice and assistance. Because transit

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[20] While large transit operators tend to be government-owned, some smaller ones are privately owned and operate for municipal governments under contract. Thus, the people who manage and operate them are not

systems operate by different rules in different parts of the world, and even in different cities in the same country, newcomers may make mistakes about such things as fare and transfer policies and where and when they can board vehicles. Such mistakes may lead to misunderstandings and even altercations between vehicle drivers and new passengers (Parkes, 1996; Sterle, 1995). In the wrong circumstances, these altercations may deteriorate into negative stereotyping and expressions of anti-immigrant sentiments on the part of both drivers and other passengers.

Of greater importance to the well-being of immigrants who rely on transit, however, is information about the services the transit system provides - routes and where to access them, schedules, when transit vehicles do and do not operate, and the easiest, shortest way to get from one part of a city to another, especially when trips entail one or more transfers. While most transit companies publish at least some information of this type, they are likely to differ not only in the extent to which they try to make it accessible to people who do not speak English, but also in the extent to which they make it accessible at all.

Good information about how a transit system works is of little use, however, if that system does not allow immigrants to meet their daily travel needs. Thus, the way a transit system performs as a mode of transportation is also of critical importance to the way immigrants experience the city or region

The remainder of this chapter uses insights gained from research and media reports as the basis for an examination of the situation of public transit in the Greater Toronto Area, how it is responding to the transportation needs of immigrant transit users and other transit-reliant members of the population, and what present trends imply for the future ability of immigrants and others without automobiles to travel within the GTA.

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technically public employees. In providing what is generally viewed as a local public service, however they represent local government to the public.

3.0 HISTORICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

3.1 Transit in Toronto[21]

The City of Toronto (Metropolitan Toronto before 1998) has had a fully integrated public transit system since 1953, when the provincial government passed legislation that converted the Toronto Transportation Commission, which was owned by the City of Toronto as it was then, into the **Toronto Transit Commission** (TTC) and mandated it to provide transit services to a metropolitan area consisting of the city and its twelve suburbs. That same area was soon to become the federated Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto (Metro). The reconstituted TTC integrated city and suburban services into a single system that it gradually extended into all parts of Metropolitan Toronto.

The spine of the TTC system is a network of subway and rapid transit lines, the first of which opened in 1953, designed primarily to connect suburban districts to downtown Toronto. Lines built more recently have also provided transit support to high-density residential/employment nodes in the former suburbs of North York and Scarborough. So important has the rapid transit system been to the development of transit in Toronto that more than 95 per cent of the TTC's bus and streetcar lines intersect with the subway system. The system's bus, streetcar, and subway lines are not only fully integrated, but since 1972 have provided services at a single fare with unlimited rights of transfer to persons travelling anywhere in Metropolitan Toronto (now the City of Toronto).

The TTC's mode of operation means that people living anywhere in Toronto can get to jobs or attractions in downtown Toronto by public transit, using rapid transit for at least parts of their journeys, and that people living near the core of the city have similar access to workplaces, university campuses, and other destinations in the suburbs. Trips differ a great deal by time and distance, of course. They can be especially onerous for persons located in the city's outermost districts, which contain much of the area's lower-cost housing, especially if those persons use transit to reach locations that are not on or

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[21] This account of the TTC history is based on research published by the Institute of Urban Studies at the University of Winnipeg (Frisken, 1986). Information sources are fully documented in that report.

close to subway lines. Nonetheless, the single fare system means that Toronto's less affluent residents, many of whom live in the outer parts of the city, are not doubly disadvantaged by having to pay twice as much for the right to make long journeys among dispersed locations.

Metro Council persuaded the TTC to move from a dual to a single fare system after the provincial government had agreed to pay up to 50 per cent of the operating deficits of local public transit operators as long as municipal governments paid the other half.[22] This promise of operating assistance culminated a series of provincial government decisions to provide financial assistance to transit in the Toronto area, and then in the province as a whole. These began in the 1960s with contributions to the capital costs of subway construction and then expanded to include the capital costs of buses purchased by local transit operators anywhere in the province. By 1972, the province was paying 75 per cent of all transit capital costs, with municipalities paying the other 25 per cent. It was also paying 50% of operating deficits.

3.2 Transit in the Greater Toronto Area

Provincial subsidies not only allowed the TTC to expand its subway, bus, and streetcar lines, but they also supported or encouraged the development of transit systems in the rapidly-growing suburban municipalities outside Metro Toronto. The province's largest and most influential investment in transit in the Greater Toronto Area, however, was a suburban commuter service, GO Transit, launched in 1967. The GO system began as a rail service between downtown Toronto and growing suburban municipalities outside Metro, and later included commuter buses as well. The provincial government paid 100 per cent of the capital and operating costs of this system.

Despite its substantial financial involvement in the development of the GTA's public transit system, the Ontario government allowed individual municipal governments to determine the configuration of the local bus transit network by leaving this service in

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[22] Under the dual fare system that ended in 1972, bus riders crossing the boundary between the city and its suburbs paid an additional fare. Subway riders paid only one fare even after subway lines penetrated the suburbs in the 1960s.

the hands of municipal councils when it set up regional governments in the early 1970s. It also abandoned an attempt to create an agency to coordinate GO transit operations with those of local transit operators. Instead it created the Toronto Area Transit Operating Authority (TATOA), consisting of a provincial representative and the chairs of the Metro and regional councils, to operate GO Transit and to work out separate agreements with local transit operators.

3.3 A Persistently Fragmented Transit System

By the mid-1980s there were 16 different transit systems operating in the Greater Toronto Area - or 17 when Hamilton-Wentworth was taken into account.[23] Apart from a few special arrangements between local transit operators and GO Transit, or between individual operators in single regions, these various services operated independently of each other, according to their own scheduling patterns, routing arrangements, and fare policies. Agreements between GO Transit and local bus operators were designed to bring suburban commuters to and from GO stations, not to allow Metro residents to use transit to get to jobs and other sites in the outer suburbs.

The provincial government began to look for ways to address the GTA's uncoordinated public transit system in the mid-1980s, first by hiring a private consultant (Paterson Planning and Research, 1983), then by establishing a small Transit Advisory Group of persons knowledgeable about transit (Transit Advisory Group to the Minister of Transportation of Ontario, 1987), and finally by assembling a Transit Integration Task Force composed of provincial and municipal politicians, transit officials, and private individuals (Transit Integration Task Force ,1994). It asked these various advisers to look for and recommend ways to coordinate fares and services within the GTA, in the interest of producing a single, "seamless" regional transit system.

Their efforts were largely unsuccessful. Obstacles to change included the provincial government's reluctance to surrender any control over GO transit or municipal subsidies to a separate GTA organization (like a regional transit federation) and the unwillingness of municipal governments and municipal transit operators to give such an

organization the right to intervene in local transit operations.[24] Apart from resisting the loss of local autonomy implied by such a change, they feared that any move toward expanding transit on a GTA-wide basis would make the service more expensive, and thus demand larger contributions from local taxes.

The failure to achieve transit integration in the GTA means that the transit system not only remained fragmented, but that it also remained highly focussed on bringing suburban commuters to downtown Toronto. Possibilities for city residents to travel by transit to suburban locations outside Toronto were limited or non-existent. Some GO Transit routes operated only in morning and evening rush hours, and thus were of no use to people (like shift workers) travelling at other times. Transit travel was much more expensive for persons using GO and suburban bus services than it was for persons travelling within Metro - disproportionately so for persons making relatively short trips that crossed the Toronto boundary.

3.4 Addressing the Land Use Issue

One outcome of the interest taken in transit issues by the Ontario government in the late 1980s was increased government attention to the linkage between transit and land use planning. After sponsoring a study that discovered that municipal governments took little notice of that linkage in their planning practices and land use decisions, the Ontario Ministries of Transportation and Municipal Affairs joined forces to sponsor a set of guidelines to encourage better transit/land use integration (Frisken and McAree, 1989; Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 1992). While these guidelines served an advisory purpose only, they appeared just before the government began revising its planning legislation and issuing policy statements to support it. Comprehensive policy statements adopted in 1993 required municipalities to provide opportunities "in built-up areas for intensification, and a mix of uses," and to plan new development areas to "have a compact form, a mix of uses, and densities that

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[23] The Ministry of Transportation has tended to include Hamilton-Wentworth as part of the GTA in its transportation policy documents because Hamilton is served by the GO system.
[24] These conclusions are based on personal observations. Frances Frisken was a member of both the Transit Advisory Group and the Transit Integration Task Force.

efficiently use land, infrastructure, and public service facilities." Also, they specified that "where transit systems exist or may be introduced in the future, [communities will be planned to] support the use of public transit" (Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 1995: 6-7).

3.5 Changes in Provincial Policy

Public transit and transit-supportive policies underwent considerable change in the restructuring of provincial/municipal responsibilities that began in 1996. Changes occurring since that time have included:

❑ Transfer of responsibility for both the capital and operating costs of GO transit to municipal governments. These costs were shared between the City of Toronto and the surrounding suburban regions on a 50-50 basis until 2001, when the government once again assumed responsibility for funding and operating GO.

❑ The ending of provincial government contributions to the capital costs of local transit systems, including the costs of Toronto's subway system. The only subway project that continued to receive provincial funding was a short subway line along Sheppard Avenue in the former City of North York. This line has been widely criticized as doing little to improve the ability of Toronto's subway system to serve the city's transportation needs (Immen, 2000).

The government relaxed its funding position on local transit in 2001 by announcing that it would invest provincial money in new transit capital projects and contribute to cross-boundary transit links, provided that there were matching commitments from the federal and municipal governments.)

❑ Reduced emphasis in *The Planning Act,* as revised in 1996, on intensifying existing communities and on developing new areas to have "compact form" and "a mix of uses." Instead, the emphasis shifted to encouraging land use patterns that are "cost effective", and on planning policies that support economic development and help to achieve "long term economic prosperity" (Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 1996).

The changes in provincial policies affecting local transit, like changes in provincial housing policy, meant that municipal governments had greater control of the planning and delivery of a service of considerable importance to immigrant settlement and immigrant well-being.

4.0 FINDINGS

There were large differences both in the size of transit systems inside and outside Toronto and in their importance as means of transportation in their communities. At the time of this study, the **Toronto Transit Commission** (TTC) provided more than 85 per cent of the transit trips in the GTA while serving just over half its population. It also accounted for a much larger proportion of daily local trips (relative to trips by automobile) than did the other operators.[25] The TTC had also been operating in an ethno-culturally diverse community for a much longer time. Consequently, it was more aware of the significance of that environment to its operations. In the words of one TTC official:

> Immigrants have saved the TTC. Without immigration, the recessionary trend probably would have been a lot worse in the 1990s. In the growth period that preceded the recession, a lot of the additional riders were probably immigrants (although the economic situation also played a role in ridership ups and downs).

In recognition of the importance of immigrants to its operations, the TTC was gradually expanding the services it offered to immigrants, as well as seeking ways to attract immigrants into TTC employment. Immigrants were receiving less attention from transit operators in the suburban regions, where transit officials were primarily concerned about their ability to sustain their services over the long term in the absence of provincial funding.

4.1 Personnel Policy

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[25] By 2002 the TTC's share of transit trips in the GTA had fallen to 77% (Toronto Transit Commission 2002).

4.1.1 Toronto Transit Commission

TTC management took pride in its responses to Toronto's changing population, to the point of placing posters in every TTC station to advertise the ethno-cultural diversity of both its staff and its customers. At the time of this study, senior staff were engaged in several efforts to ensure that the TTC's hiring process was not only as effective as possible in identifying suitable candidates, but also that it was fair and equitable. "We're lining ourselves up with the city's Access and Equity policy," said one official. Maintaining or increasing staff diversity was not only desirable in itself, he added, but it was also essential to the TTC's ability to function.

> If there were anything systemic getting in the way of hiring suitable applicants, we'd be out of business (we couldn't get enough staff). We're committed to equal opportunity because it makes sense from a business point of view if nothing else.

A diverse staff did not relieve TTC management of having to deal with passenger-driver disagreements that could carry racial overtones and cast the agency in a negative light. One well-publicized incident involved a young Muslim woman who refused to lift her veil for the bus driver when she showed him her monthly pass. One newspaper columnist reported indignantly that "she was verbally abused by a bus driver and his passengers, refused help by a police officer, ordered by the TTC to tear up her transit pass photo-identify card, and told by commission staff that she did not understand the precepts of her own religion" (Valpy, 1999). The account did not mention either that the TTC had instructed its drivers to check photographs on passes against the faces of the persons using them, or that the local Islamic Co-ordinating Council maintained that Islamic women were not required to cover their faces, only their entire bodies.   After reviewing the situation, however, the TTC told its drivers that henceforth they could accept the image on a transit pass and take its number for later checking if the situation seemed to warrant it.

The incident highlighted at least two difficulties that may beset even those municipal agencies that make efforts to adjust to an ethno-racially diverse environment. One is that it impossible for management to prepare its staff for every eventuality, particularly if staff members are in frequent contact with the publc. In this instance, both

TTC staff and management had to respond on short notice to a situation that was not only unfamiliar but that was also impossible to anticipate (because the woman had chosen a course of action that went beyond the formal requirements of her religion). The second is that staff diversity does not mean that staff members will be either aware of or sympathetic to the individual or cultural preferences of every group with which they come in contact. Even if they try to be, they must still strike a balance between the requirements of their jobs and the incompatible demands made by individual clients.

4.1.2. Suburban transit agencies

Deliberate attempts to increase staff diversity had begun to occur in some but not all of the suburban bus systems. **Brampton Transit**, while claiming to have a diverse staff, had responded to complaints from the Sikh community by adopting a more formalized approach to recruitment, and by sending that community a letter when a vacancy occurred. **Vaughan Transit** looked for employees who could speak and write Italian. **Markham Transit** had just begun to consider changing its hiring policy to take account of diversity. Efforts by **Mississauga Transit** to increase staff diversity had focused primarily on staffing the information booth at the city's new central terminal with people who could speak two or more languages.

4.2 The Provision of Information

In general, transit operators relied on community-based organizations to provide non-English-speaking immigrants with information about the transit system, although the TTC had begun to use icons instead of words to convey information. The **TTC** provided information about its services in three other ways - a six-page information package in the advertising section of the Yellow Pages phone book, an information phone line, and a web site that contained complete information about routes and schedules. These information sites were advertised on posters placed throughout the city. The other four municipal transit systems all operated telephone information lines and maintained web sites.

Phone-in information lines were staffed by English speakers. The TTC also used AT& T translators to respond to telephone queries in other languages, however. Demand for this service had not been heavy - about 20 to 30 calls a month - making the cost of the service (about $20 -$25 a call) considerably less than it would cost the TTC to employ full-time translators. Nonetheless, the TTC was about to launch a multilingual transit information phone line, using its regular information number, that would give basic transit information in nine languages, together with instructions on how to get more detailed information. Beyond this, the TTC used the ethno-specific media to announce changes in fares and services. This approach meant that the Chinese community was particularly well-served with transit information. Not only were there several Chinese newspapers, but those papers were particularly aggressive in their search for stories.

Outside Toronto, there was less information available to immigrant newcomers. **Markham** had published route maps in Chinese in the past but these were no longer available at the time of our study. **Mississauga Transit** claimed that its multilingual staff was able to answer questions when they came up. **Vaughan Transit** had a policy of hiring drivers who could communicate with that city's large Italian population but had not tried to accommodate other, smaller ethno-cultural groups. **Brampton Transit** had so far not responded to growing diversity in that community. "Generally speaking," said one Brampton official, "we are not providing enough information. We need to take a more proactive approach."

The Brampton official's comment echoed a view expressed by many of the transit officials we interviewed: that they would do more, or intended to do more, to accommodate ethno-cultural diversity if or when their budgets allowed them to. The TTC hoped to publish basic information about its services in several languages in its published Ride Guide. Mississauga Transit was exploring the possibility of collaborating with the Peel Board of Education to use signs to convey basic information to non-English speakers. Markham Transit wanted to publish information bulletins and newsletters in several languages.

In general, however, the needs of immigrants were receiving little attention from transit operators in most of the municipalities we studied. There was an expectation that

immigrants who needed transit would obtain the necessary information either from community-based organizations, by talking to other members of their own communities, or simply by trial and error. Some ethnocultural communities received special attention because they complained about perceived neglect or discrimination, or because ethno-cultural institutions (like ethnospecific newspapers) acted on their behalf. If information was available in languages other than English, it usually had to be sought out. Adding to the difficulties of locating sources of information were the difficulties inherent in a growing reliance on the internet as a place to provide information about available services. Obviously, this practice disadvantaged people without Internet access.

Those with access to the Internet were likely to have difficulties sorting out their travel options if they wanted to use transit to get to suburban sites that were not located within walking distance of GO terminals. The Appendix contains information, taken directly from GO Transit's internet site, describing the various agreements that had been worked out between GO and local transit operators in or just outside the GTA (see Appendix 1). In addition to showing that there was little commonality among the different agreements, this site dealt only with fare structures; it provided no information about routes or schedules. For that type of information individuals had to phone the local transit systems individually or check their separate web sites. Persons wanting to travel from one suburb to another had an even more difficult time finding out how or whether different municipal systems connected with each other.

There were ongoing efforts to improve the situation of cross-boundary transit travellers, however. Most internet transit sites had or were going to create links to other transit systems in the area.   The TTC had assumed financial responsibility for a Greater Toronto Transit Area Ride Guide (one of the only tangible outcomes of a Transit Integration Task Force that met in 1993-94), and circulated one million copies a year (Hilborn 2001). It was also about to launch a "seamless" customer information system that would be able to connect phone-in customers to neighbouring properties.

4.3 The Prospects for Regional Transit Integration

The withdrawal of the provincial government from transit funding and transit planning in 1996 left it up to local governments and their transit operators to decide how to make it easier for GTA residents to move among the area's different municipalities. The organization charged with coordinating their efforts was the Greater Toronto Services Board (GTSB), which had a mandate to operate the GO Transit commuter system and to collect the local shares of its costs. The GTSB's Strategic Transportation Plan, released while this study was underway, described transit as "fundamental" to decreasing road congestion in the area, outlined a large number of needed improvements to the GO system, and emphasized the importance of coordinating local services and integrating fares in order to create a system that "is as easy and convenient as automobile travel" (Greater Toronto Services Board, 2000).

The GTSB report made no recommendations, however, because there was no single governmental unit with authority to implement them. Any changes made to the transit system would have to come about through a process of inter-municipal consultation leading to agreements based on what various local governments were willing to do and, more importantly, what they were willing to pay for. The possibility of locally-directed transit coordination disappeared in 2001, however, when the province took back responsibility for GO Transit, dissolved the GTSB, and vested responsibility for operating the GO system in an appointed board of directors.

At the time of this study, there were over 80 inter-regional services operating in the GTA, with 39 bus routes (not including GO services) operating between Toronto and the suburban regions (Hilborn 2001). The TTC operated 17 of those routes, and the governments of the affected municipalities paid their operating losses. Passengers using these services paid supplementary fares to cross the Toronto boundary. There was some coordination between individual municipalities, and transit services within York Region were moving toward developing a common fare and service policy. Various respondents noted, however, that there was unlikely to be much progress toward an integrated GTA-wide transit system unless the provincial government used its legal authority and

financial incentives to make it happen. There were too many political obstacles to its achievement by local consensus.

The TTC had always resisted the idea of a regional transit system, pointing out that it carried the largest share of all transit riders in the GTA, and that it should therefore play the dominant role in any regional organization that was put in place. Other operators regarded the TTC as self-regarding and intransigent when it came to discussing ways to integrate fares and services. There was also distrust of the GTSB and its leadership, which were seen to be too closely tied to Toronto. Finally, there was limited support for transit in local councils. Even the new Toronto council contained many members who represented formerly-suburban constituencies, where car use had always predominated.

Always present and often paramount in discussions about the future of transit in the GTA was a concern about what any decision was likely to cost. There was strong reluctance on the part of local governments to commit to any change that could mean higher spending on transit, either to support their own or the regional system. Municipal councillors were particularly resistant to helping to pay for improvements that they thought would benefit residents of other municipalities more than their own constituents. There was also reluctance in some municipalities to support transit improvements that might make it easier for people to travel to jobs in other parts of the area, particularly in downtown Toronto.

Nonetheless, there were pressures building within the GTA for new investments in transit to help relieve steadily-growing road congestion, which was seen as a threat to the area's economy, and to help reduce the harmful effects of increasing road traffic on the regional and global environment. Local governments were responding to these pressures mainly by insisting that they could not make the large investments needed to improve transit in the area without help from both the federal and the provincial government.[26]

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[26] In 2001 that help began to materialize, with the federal government promising to dedicate a portion of its urban infrastructure budget to transit improvements and the provincial government taking back administrative and financial responsibility for GO Transit. It also said it would pay one-third of the costs of cross-boundary transit improvements, provided the federal and municipal governments matched its contributions.

Because most of the transit options under discussion were aimed at making transit more attractive to people who drive automobiles, they promised to do little to improve the situation of those people who rely on transit to satisfy everyday needs, like finding and holding a job, shopping, and visiting friends and family. Only improvements to local bus systems are going to make travel easier for them. Local transit systems are unlikely to enhance routes and scheduling if their ridership continues to decline, however; in fact some of them may disappear altogether as municipal councils accede to pressures to devote more transportation dollars to road improvements. Integrating services across local boundaries could help to boost ridership by making destinations throughout the GTA more accessible by transit and perhaps by making the system more comprehensible. What would likely do more to increase local transit use, however, are determined efforts by municipal governments to change their land use practices in ways that encourage greater use of transit and make it easier for transit vehicles to operate.

4.4 Planning for Transit

Planners we spoke to recognized that the way communities were laid out and the density of development they contained were likely to affect demand for and use of public transit. Many of them had been trying to persuade local politicians to act on those principles. **Toronto** planners were working on an Official Plan for the new city that argued for the addition of 1,000,000 people to the city's population by 2031 (Toronto Plan, 1999). Such an increase, if it occurs, will likely generate more riders for the TTC if the city also manages to maintain a large share of GTA jobs and other amenities.

From the standpoint of immigrants lacking a car, however, the ability of the transit system to meet their needs will depend on the distribution of jobs, not residents, within the area. Recent figures are encouraging. In 1996, Toronto had 54 per cent of the jobs in the GTA (defined to include Hamilton-Wentworth), but only 47 per cent of the region's population (Miller and Shalaby, 2000: 60, 66). Thus, it seemed well able to provide jobs for all its residents. Only slightly more than 80 per cent of Toronto residents worked in the city, however, while the rest travelled to other parts of the region. Moreover, there had been a slight decrease in job-worker balance within the city over the

previous decade. Miller and Shalaby did not discuss the types of jobs found in the city and its suburbs, or the extent to which there was a spatial mismatch between types of jobs located in the different parts of the GTA. Data collected by Gunter Gad for an earlier study suggested that a mismatch may exist, however (Frisken, Bourne, Gad, and Murdie, 1997: 17-31). Highly-paid office jobs tended to be more concentrated in Toronto, particularly in the downtown core and at subway-based nodes; less skilled, lower paid jobs tended to be more dispersed in the outer parts of the city and the 905 suburbs.

A spatial mismatch between jobs and residents implies not only that some persons living in the suburban regions will travel into Toronto to work,[27] but also that people living in Toronto will have to seek or hold jobs in the suburban regions. About 40 per cent of jobs in the suburban regions were in fact held by persons living outside their regions in 1996 (Miller and Shalaby, 2000: 71). For immigrants and others without cars, these jobs were inaccessible unless they were served by transit. Suburban jobs were likely to become increasingly inaccessible by transit if suburban regions continued to expand and transit service did not improve.

One way that municipal governments could both increase demand for transit and reduce the need for people to work outside their city or region is to achieve a broader range of housing types than are found in most suburban municipalities. This approach would require them to remove obstacles to or actively encourage the production of housing that is affordable to people employed in less-well-paying manufacturing jobs (most of which are now located in the suburbs) and consumer services. For reasons discussed in the last chapter, most suburban governments are unwilling to do this. Municipal governments could also try to make transit more viable simply by promoting more compact development in both employment and residential districts, and by making streets more accommodating of both transit vehicles and transit users.

Metropolitan Toronto (now the City of Toronto) has earned an international reputation as a city that paid attention to and acted on the close linkage between public transit and land use. Per capita ridership on its transit system has been persistently higher than that of most other systems in North America (Raad and Kenworthy, 1998: 16).

What helped Metro to earn its reputation was the TTC's ability to operate its services on a grid network of straight arterial roads laid out in colonial times. Suburban governments within Metro often ignored the lessons of the past, however, by allowing districts between the arterials to be filled in by subdivisions with the curvilinear street patterns that predominated in North America after World War II. On the other hand, they did agree to Metro's adoption of an "apartment density policy" in the 1960s that encouraged the siting of apartment buildings along arterial roads that carried buses. In 1980 they also supported—even encouraged—the adoption of a Metro structure plan that favoured development of high density nodes containing a mix of commercial, institutional, and residential development, close to rapid transit terminals. Suburban governments reduced the likelihood that people would use transit to get to these nodes, however, by making generous provision for parking and by approving plans that required long walks to transit stations (Filion, 1999). Various observers have also concluded that neither local planners in Metro Toronto nor the TTC itself have paid sufficient attention to the transit implications of land use decisions (Urban Land Institute/University of California, 1996). Nonetheless, development in Toronto has been more supportive of its transit system than development in other North American cities simply because it has occurred at considerably higher density, even in the outer parts of the city (the old Metro suburbs).

In working toward a plan that would allow for a population increase of up to 1,000,000 in the new City of Toronto, planners tried to build on that tradition. There are a number of obstacles to be overcome, however, before such an increase can occur. There is always strong local opposition to the rezoning of land along subway corridors for higher density uses, and opponents often convince local councils not to act. From a political standpoint, the easiest land to redevelop is old industrial land that has been largely abandoned by manufacturers who have moved out of the city. Regulations for the clean-up of polluted soil and uncertainties about future liability tended to discourage such development because they implied high costs of site preparation or the possibility of unforeseen liabilities in the future.

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[27] According to Miller and Shalaby (2000), 172,000 jobs in Toronto were filled by people living outside Toronto in 1996 (66).

The former City of Toronto had some success in using land use policy to achieve a small population increase between 1986 and 1996, while the populations of most other North American cities were declining. Transit use declined nonetheless between 1991 and 1997. While it began to rise again in 1997, it was still below the 1991 peak at the end of 2001. (Toronto Economic Development Division, various issues). High unemployment during the recession of the early 1990s was one reason for the loss of ridership. Another, however, was that a growing proportion of people commuting to the central area came from the suburban regions, either by car or by GO Train, and not by TTC (Miller and Shalaby, 2000: 73). The percentage of Toronto residents travelling to jobs outside Toronto was also increasing.

Travel trends in the Toronto area indicated that increasing residential density alone will not be enough to sustain or increase ridership on local transit systems in the interest of keeping them viable. Also needed are efforts to ensure that there are good transit links between places where people live and places where they want to work. Because a growing proportion of GTA residents are both living and working in the suburbs, the future of transit in the area will depend as much or more on what suburban municipalities have done or are doing to encourage transit-supportive land uses than on what happens in the city.

The suburban municipality that had paid most attention to the transit-land use connection was **Mississauga**, which had a city centre designed to accommodate office employment and residential uses at high density. It also housed the city hall and municipal offices. A transit terminal incorporated into that centre provided a focus for buses coming from all parts of the city. District plans prepared for other parts of the city in the 1980s provided for a mixture of residential densities, ranging from multiple-unit condominiums through row houses to single detached dwellings. There had been serious difficulties with achieving the goals implicit in these plans, however. Office development at the city centre had not met the expectations of the Official Plan, and plans for new transit links to the City Centre had been abandoned. Pressure from local residents frequently led the city council to ask developers to remove higher density residential complexes from their proposals. Developers themselves often asked to build at lower densities than those prescribed in district plans, saying that there was no market

for higher density forms of housing (which in the suburbs were typically intended for sale, not for rent).

The situation was similar in the other municipalities we looked at. While their governments might promote transit improvements to support plans for high profile development nodes intended to attract more office-based activities to their communities, they were largely uninterested in promoting higher density forms of residential development, particularly if it included lower-priced housing, in the face of generalized community antipathy and lack of developer interest. While densities had risen slightly in some parts of the suburbs, therefore, and plans for a few subdivisions provided for buses and pedestrians, most plans for subdivisions still assumed a high level of car ownership and car use by persons who lived in them. The result of such assumptions was what one planner termed "an unfriendly environment for transit," typically lacking sidewalks and through streets.

4.5 Lack of Advocates for the Transit Reliant

A serious problem for immigrants, as for all other persons who rely on transit for most of their travel, is that transit users tend to be unorganized and inarticulate. In the first instance, they are divided among those persons who use rapid transit (TTC subways and GO trains) to travel from residential areas in the outer city or suburbs to downtown Toronto and those who rely on bus services to travel among dispersed locations in the city or the GTA. The first group tends to consist of people who can use a car but who find transit a more convenient, faster or more comfortable way to travel. Moreover, transit users tend to be widely scattered throughout the city and are in the minority when it comes to exercising political influence. But being a minority - even a small one - does not necessarily mean ineffectiveness, as evidenced by the success of groups representing people with disabilities in securing special services for their clients. On the other hand it does imply a need for determined advocacy.

Outside Toronto there were only a few individuals and councillors willing to argue for transit before their local councils. For example, when planners and transit officials in Mississauga were asked for names of people who argued the case for transit in

that municipality, they all came up with the same name. Suburban transit advocates faced an uphill battle in trying to make their case to councillors who neither used transit themselves nor represented many people who did (Nelson, 1999). Councillors tended to be more receptive to those who argued against policies that might benefit transit. For example, Mississauga planners recounted how a single but determined individual was able to mobilize enough support to convince Mississauga Council to turn down a proposal for a high density, mixed use residential development on former industrial land by playing on local fears of traffic congestion, low rental non-profit housing, and soil contamination.

There were transit advocacy groups in Toronto, as well as city councillors who were sympathetic to transit, but they tended to focus on the role that transit could play in the pursuit of environmental objectives (by taking people out of their cars), and not on ways to improve transit as a means of transportation in a decentralizing city. Theirs was the focus that dominated the report prepared by a working group assembled by the City of Toronto's Environmental Task Force to recommend ways to make the City of Toronto's transportation system more "sustainable"; that is, better able to promote the environmental, social, and economic health of the city. The only transit users singled out for special attention in that report were those with special needs, meaning physical impediments to mobility (Sustainable Transportation Working Group of the Environmental Task Force, 1999).

The participants in transportation policy debates who are best able to speak for the transportation needs of those who use or are likely to use their services are the operators of local bus systems. It is in their interest to make a strong case for those segments of the population from which they draw most of their customers, and to try to ensure that their services continue to satisfy customer needs. Transit operators are reluctant, however, to emphasize their contributions to the social health of their communities for fear of being perceived as a "social service", and therefore as likely to lose the support of local councils who object to spending local property tax dollars on anything that does not benefit property owners directly or help to strengthen the local economy. Moreover, the transit operators we interviewed were too concerned about the impacts of provincial-

municipal financial restructuring on their ability to maintain existing services to devote much staff time or money to marketing or to planning service improvements.

Since acquiring full responsibility for transit from the province, local councils had been paying the operating subsidies needed to keep their systems running (although subsidies covered only 20 per cent of TTC costs, as compared to 34 per cent when the provincial government was contributing to them). There were large uncertainties, however, about the willingness of local governments to shoulder the costs of replacing or investing in new capital equipment of the sort needed to maintain transit systems in good operating condition, or to expand those systems to accommodate future growth or changes in travel demand. Another threat hanging over suburban systems was the possibility that their councils might decide to privatize this service.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Immigrants who rely on transit are not well-served by local transit operators in the Greater Toronto Area, if they wish to travel to, from or between locations in the suburban regions. While their difficulties are similar to those experienced by transit-reliant persons in general, they are compounded by the difficulties of securing information about services that are fragmented among a regional commuter system and 16 municipal systems, each of them governed by the political and operational decisions of different local governments and transit operators, and by separate agreements among the regional and local operators. It was difficult to get information about this system in languages other than English, although that situation was gradually improving, especially in Toronto.

The **TTC** had done more than any other transit operator we looked at to recognize and respond to the needs of its immigrant users. This was because the agency recognized the growing importance of immigrants to maintaining its ridership. Moreover, immigrants had been a large component of Toronto's population for several decades and had therefore contributed to the growth of an ethno-culturally diverse workforce. While the TTC's efforts fell short of what could be done (and of what TTC officials wanted to do) to make the system more accessible to immigrant users, they were nonetheless in tune

with the demographic changes the city had undergone. Where the system failed immigrants, many of whom lived in districts well-removed from central Toronto, was in not providing means to travel quickly between locations in the outer parts of the city. That failure was the result of a planning tradition that had always defined rapid transit as a means of getting suburban commuters to downtown Toronto, and bus services as a way to bring riders to the rapid transit system. Because of that tradition, the transportation needs of people who lived and worked away from the centre had been neglected.

Nonetheless, Toronto's transit-reliant immigrants who lived and worked away from the centre were able to travel by transit from one part of the city to another, even though it might involve long and time-consuming bus journeys to do so. The more serious problem was for those immigrants who had to travel between Toronto and suburban locations, or from one suburb to another, for work or other purposes. Because lower priced rental housing is concentrated in the City of Toronto, however, and is likely to become increasingly so as the GTA continues to expand, while a growing proportion of the area's jobs (particularly manufacturing and service jobs) are locating in the suburbs, immigrants who live in the city can expect to experience increasingly serious difficulties in getting around by transit.

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Appendix 1

This Appendix contains a sample of information taken directly from GO Transit's internet site describing one of the various agreements that have been worked out between GO and local transit operators in or just outside the GTA.

Many of GO's local transit partners connect with GO Trains in your communities, so why not leave your car at home? You'll find out how easy it is, and how it can save you money. GO passengers can get a discounted or free ride to their GO Train station on many local transit systems by showing their GO ticket or pass to the local bus driver on the way to or from a GO Train station.

Choose the area where you need local transit. You will find contacts, phone numbers, web links, and information about any discounts available to GO passengers.

Ajax	Barrie	Burlington
Markham	Mississauga	Oakville
Oshawa	Richmond Hill	Vaughan
Aurora	Brampton	Guelph
Milton	Newmarket	Orangeville
Pickering	Toronto	Hamilton

Whitby Transit

Tel: 905 668-3544

For passengers travelling to Whitby GO station on Whitby Transit

GO riders who show their GO ticket or pass on Whitby Transit buses pay 50 cents exact cash per ride or $20 per month to and from Whitby GO station. Whitby Transit's special monthly GO passes can be purchased at Whitby GO station.

Additional notes:

Passengers can use Whitby Transit tickets and passes* on certain GO Buses as an extension of the Whitby Transit system. Instead of paying two separate fares, passengers show their Whitby Transit pass, ticket, or transfer on the GO Bus. Depending on where they are travelling, there may be an additional fare upgrade payable to the GO Bus driver.

Passengers using the Hwy. 2 GO Bus service. When travelling only within Whitby, Whitby Transit tickets, passes, or transfers will be accepted with no extra charge.

When travelling westbound from Whitby to Ajax, Whitby Transit tickets, passes, or transfers will be accepted along with an upgrade of $1.

When travelling eastbound from Ajax to Whitby, Whitby Transit tickets or passes (no transfers) are accepted along with an upgrade of $1.

Passengers using the Port Perry GO Bus service:

For passengers using GO Bus service from Myrtle, Myrtle Station, or Brooklin to Whitby, Whitby Transit tickets or passes are accepted along with an upgrade of $2. The same $2 upgrade applies on return trip, with a Whitby Transit pass, ticket, or transfer. When travelling only within Brooklin, Whitby Transit tickets or passes are accepted with no extra charge.

*Please note: Whitby Transit's Student Restricted Pass is not eligible for this special fare arrangement with GO Transit.

For more information about this fare arrangement, contact Whitby Transit.

Send comments to GO Transit

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Source: www.gotransit.com/transit/localtr.htm

CHAPTER 5: EDUCATION

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Schools are among the first contacts that many immigrants have with municipal governments, and an integral part of the settlement experience both for immigrant children and their parents. They are the principal means of introducing immigrant children to their new society and of teaching them the prevalent norms and attitudes (both positive and negative) about the types of behaviour that that society considers appropriate or acceptable. Some schools meet more specific immigrant needs, such as settlement orientation and citizenship training, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, adult basic education (literacy, numeracy, etc.), and translation and interpretive services. Schools are also an important source of community for newcomers, serving as the physical locations of both educational and social activities. In the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), the visible impact of recent immigration can be seen in the diverse faces of the students, and to a lesser degree of the staff, of the area's schools.

2.0 KEY ISSUES

Immigration is discussed in the education literature within a broader context of classroom diversity and the best ways to meet student needs. There is some literature that explicitly examines the transition for immigrants entering a host country's educational system and the particular barriers to success they may face, such as language, culture shock, and their own migration experiences (Coelho, 1998; Glenn and de Jong, 1996).   How that transition is managed by educators has been the subject of much debate:

> For example, an English as a Second Language program for immigrants that is predicated upon substituting English for the original language would be regarded as inconsistent with multiculturalism. If the program was additive, or aimed at adding a language, it would be predicated upon multiculturalism. In a society such as that in Canada which receives many immigrants, the distinction is very important (McLeod, 1992: 221).

A larger body of literature exists, however, that explores the approaches available to educators in addressing not only immigrant needs but also addresses issues of ethnocultural and racial

diversity more generally. Typologies of these approaches are numerous, but all include a core distinction between "multicultural education" and "antiracist education".

2.1 Multicultural Education

Substantial debate exists internationally about the concept of "multicultural education" – what it means in particular contexts, how to accomplish it in practice, and whether or not it is the direction schools should take in education (cf. Moodley, 1992). Especially in the United States, this debate is linked explicitly to the social, political, economic, and historical context of ethnic and racial diversity. This context is relevant to the content and structure of public education, it is argued, because schools are situated within society:

> …blaming poor people and people from dominated racial or cultural groups for their educational problems is not the answer to solving societal inequities. Teachers can do nothing to change the conditions in which their students may live, but they can work to change their own biases as well as the institutional structures that act as obstacles to student learning (Nieto, 2000: 49).

Although less vocal, there are dissenting voices. Some argue that "race" as an issue does not belong in the classroom; that students should be seen and treated equally. For example, among those wanting an explicitly Christian education for their children, racism is judged to be morally wrong but so too is multicultural education—being seen as a political agenda of difference that should not dominate (Shearer and Shearer, 1997). Rebuttals to these viewpoints have been both empirical (studies showing that teachers do treat students differently, along gender or racial lines for example) and conceptual (for example, the argument that "race" is a social construction, and that poor academic performance of minorities has structural causes within society and within the school system). In the United States, multicultural education is a response to racism and discrimination directed at African American, Latino, and American Indian students, particularly in poorer communities. In Canada, multicultural education is inextricably linked to the debate over federal multicultural policy and legislation as a response to diverse immigration.

For those who support the position that ethnicity, "race", culture, etc. should be addressed in the classroom, there remains the challenge of defining exactly what multicultural education is and how to achieve it. For some, multicultural education means acknowledging the contribution

of diverse groups and the strength of cultural diversity in the classroom and society. In practice, this could involve celebrating a wide range of festivals and religious days, or widening the canon of what is relevant in history, science, literature, etc. to include the contributions of women, ethnocultural, racial and other groups.

This approach has been described as a "liberal" approach to multiculturalism, and is characterized by programs such as ESL and Heritage Languages that became widespread in the 1970s and 1980s. Multicultural education supporters:

> ...stressed the need to have anglophone teachers and students become more sensitive to minority students so that equality of educational opportunity could be attained by everyone regardless of race, gender, religion, or ethnicity. They also called for reforms in school curricula and celebrated cultural diversity through mainly government-sponsored events, in order to break the ethnocentric bias of the educational system and of Canadian society at large (Rezai-Rashti, 1995: 4).

In recent years, however, this approach has been severely criticized, as educators called attention to its inability to effect social change. What emerged was "antiracist education", or in some cases the recreation of the concept "multicultural education" to include an antiracist core.

2.2 Antiracist Education

Antiracist education as an approach to addressing diversity in the classroom is rooted in the struggles of racial minorities. Unlike multicultural education's central assumption that "sensitization and celebration of difference can counteract biased and prejudiced attitudes among Canadians, anti-racist education concentrates on examining the histories and the practices that prejudice supports" (Rezai-Rashti, 1995: 6). It assumes that proactive, systematic change (not just acknowledging diversity), requires addressing racism in institutions, conventional ideas (point of view from which facts/knowledge are taught), and individual behaviours and attitudes. Describing anti-racist education within a Canadian context, Dei explains:

> Anti-racism calls for putting power relations at the centre of the discourse on race and social difference… Race, class, and gender and their intersections are explored as both sites and sources of difference and identity as well as sites of relations of domination, exploitation and oppression… The first principle of anti-racism education recognizes the social effects of "race"… There are powerful social meanings to race which are anchored, particularly, in the lived experiences of minority groups in White-dominated societies (1996: 26-27).

The term "antiracist" is problematic for some educators, however, especially when the emphasis is on the victimization and oppression of one group by another. Advocates for a less polarized position emphasize the need to move beyond feelings of guilt and to embrace antiracist/multicultural education as good pedagogy. In an area of confusing terminology, some have chosen to recreate and aggressively redefine multiculturalism to include an acknowledgment of the institutional barriers that minority groups face:

> Multicultural education is a transformative process that goes far beyond cultural and linguistic maintenance. In the final analysis, multicultural education needs to confront issues of power and privilege in society. This means challenging racism and other biases as well as the structures, policies, and practices of schools (Nieto, 2000: 4).

Redefining multicultural education (rather than using "antiracist education") is attractive for some not only because it is less oppositional, but also because it can be expanded to include a consideration of other "oppressions" along lines of gender, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, ability, etc.

The complexity around terminology is best understood by examining the evolution of concepts and how educators embraced them within particular, historical contexts. For example, according to Harper, Ontario's education system moved through stages of suppressing difference (assimilation of newcomers), then insisting on difference (separation/segregation in school system for women, disabled, blacks), then denying difference (using employment equity programs and destreaming to promote equal treatment for all and to minimize differences) then inviting difference (the celebration of diversity as with Canada's multicultural policy), and finally critiquing difference (by interrogating power and identity with an antiracist agenda) (Harper, 1997).

While Harper assigns historical periods to each of these "approaches to difference," it would be inaccurate to assume that all educators and those within the bureaucracy have moved through these periods collectively or are currently at the "critiquing difference" stage. Several of these approaches continue to have supporters. Thus they are perhaps better seen as belonging to a continuum of activity than as periods in an evolutionary scale. Local school boards, encouraged by a range of internal and external factors, have entered this debate with policy and program initiatives that attempt to apply multicultural education and in some cases antiracist

education principles. In the next section the context of education policy and practice in Ontario is examined, and the approaches of various parties to issues of immigration and diversity are identified.

3.0 HISTORICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

No service provided to local communities in Ontario has been subject to more comprehensive or continuous change over the past quarter century than public education. The most recent round of changes included the Ontario government's 1998 assumption of full responsibility for raising and distributing property tax revenues to local school boards and for deciding what will be taught in board administered schools. These changes have made it legitimate to ask whether education is still a local government service at all. Nonetheless, locally elected school boards continue to exist, and thus remain the governmental units to which communities are most likely to turn for help with school-related problems.

Another significant change has been the amalgamation of some school boards, making boards now much larger and thus answerable to larger and more diverse populations. Of those in this study, only the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has been recently amalgamated (the others were already regional units). The Ontario government created the TDSB in 1997 by consolidating the seven public school boards that had been operating in the former Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto and its six member municipalities. Before that time, the Metropolitan Toronto School Board had paid most of the costs of public education in Metropolitan Toronto out of a pool of local tax revenues collected from the six local municipalities on the basis of their assessments. Six local boards had operated the schools.

In addition to the TDSB, the five school boards serving the municipalities looked at in this study are: the Toronto Separate School Board (renamed from the Metropolitan Toronto Separate School Board after the City of Toronto's amalgamation); the Peel Board of Education; the Dufferin-Peel Roman Catholic School Board; the York Region Board of Education; and the York Region Roman Catholic School Board. All of these urban boards were facing ongoing challenges in carrying out the tasks assigned to them by the Province while also addressing the extra education settlement needs of immigrants.

3.1 Changes to Education in Ontario: An Effort to Redistribute?

One reason for the Ontario government's 1996 decision to reorganize public education was the growing gap in financial capacity between the province's rich and poor boards—the former being predominantly public boards in the large urban areas, and the latter being predominantly public boards in the less urbanized parts of the province and separate (Roman Catholic) school boards, both urban and rural. What the changes implied, therefore, was that some of the revenues collected from the residential and commercial/ industrial property tax bases of the wealthier districts would help to fund boards that had been disadvantaged in the past. The extent of redistribution would depend on the formulae used by the Ministry of Education to determine school board entitlements. These formulae were still evolving at the time of this study. Nonetheless, the changes implied that public boards in high-assessment districts, which included Toronto and the Regional Municipalities of Peel and York, were likely to have smaller budgets than in the past. Such boards had also lost the right to raise supplementary funds from property taxes to support new initiatives.

The government had already made important changes in its financial treatment of Ontario school boards in 1984, when it decided to make separate (Roman Catholic) schools eligible for provincial funding up to the end of high school, and in 1989, when it gave the separate boards entitlement to a larger share of the commercial-industrial taxes raised within the school districts they served. Those two decisions ended disputes about separate school entitlements that dated back to 1867, when the British North America Act required the Ontario government to accommodate separate school boards and to guarantee their funding up to the end of primary school. The government had not only allowed taxpayers to choose where they wanted their taxes to go, a policy that meant that most taxes raised on commercial properties went to the public system, but had also refused to support high schools operated by the separate boards. Immigration played a role in government decisions to change its position in the 1980s. Because a larger proportion of immigrants chose to send their children to separate than to public schools, enrollment in the separate system increased faster than it did in the public one, thereby adding political strength and effectiveness to that system's financial demands (Hoy, 1985: 274-75; Whitaker, 1985: 6). Another contributing factor was federal policy-making, in particular the

political and legal recognition of Canada's diversity expressed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) and the Multiculturalism Act (1988).

Changes in federal immigration policy and in Ontario's system of educational governance, both initiated in the late 1960s, were also important to the emergence of provincial and municipal policies targeted at immigrant children between the 1970s and the 1990s. Changes in immigration policy meant an increase in the proportion of the school population coming from immigrant communities categorized as "visible minorities." They prompted affected school boards to look for ways to deal with or avoid racially-motivated incidents and to promote inter-ethnic tolerance. Because new immigrants tended to gravitate to the larger metropolitan areas, boards serving older core cities were the first to respond because those cities tended to serve as the principal immigrant reception areas for their regions. That role expanded beyond the former City of Toronto in the 1970s, however, as recent immigrants began to gravitate to suburban locations, first inside and then outside Metropolitan Toronto, putting pressure on suburban boards to devise programs of their own.

Pressures on local school boards in high-immigrant areas to adapt their programs to changing enrollment occurred during a period of rising discontent with the way the provincial government and local school boards were managing public education in Ontario. Some of that discontent focused on relations between the Ministry of Education and the local boards. While the Ontario government had always had constitutional responsibility for education, it had given local boards greater freedom in the late 1960s and early 1970s to operate the schools, to decide what would be taught within broad provincial guidelines, and to hire and evaluate teachers (Fisher, 1972; Gidney, 1999: 51). It turned out to be difficult or impossible, however, for the Ministry of Education not to intervene in the activities of local boards in the face of parental pressures and of changes in federal government policies. Thus, government interventions often took the form of requirements that all school boards adopt programs that large urban boards had initiated, including programs developed in response to immigration. While the government usually instituted special grants to help local boards cover the costs of satisfying new requirements, the new programs also imposed costs on local school boards and local taxpayers.

While the government was making these changes, it was allowing its contributions to school board budgets to decline as a proportion of total school board spending, from 61 per cent

in 1975 to 44 per cent in 1995 (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1995a: 36). As government support declined as a proportion of school spending, inequalities in the fiscal capacity of local boards increased (Ontario School Board Reduction Task Force, 1996: 14-15). This issue not only divided large urban boards from boards in many rural areas and small communities, but it also highlighted differences in the per-pupil assessment base of the public and separate school boards—differences that were only partly overcome by changes in provincial policies for funding separate schools.

In addition to grumbling among people working within the public education system, there were also complaints from parents, colleges and universities, and employers (nurtured by the media) that the schools were wasting resources on unnecessary programs while failing to prepare students to perform adequately in post-secondary institutions or to succeed in the new economy. All these currents of dissatisfaction prompted Ontario's Liberal government to begin a search in the late 1980s for ways to reform the educational system. The NDP government that succeeded it soon agreed that reform was needed, and in 1993 appointed a Royal Commission "to set new directions in education" (Royal Commission on Learning, 1994: vii). Two years later, just before losing an election to the Progressive Conservative party, that government also appointed a Task Force "to advise the Minister of Education and Training on how to reduce the number of school boards and trustees in Ontario" (Ontario School Board Reduction Task Force, 1996: 9).

Moves to overhaul public education in Ontario were well underway, therefore, before the Progressive Conservatives took office in mid-1995. Thus the reforms made by the Ontario government not only rested on a consensus among the province's three political parties that change was necessary, but also drew on research carried out for or initiated by earlier governments. There were important differences, however, in the changes brought in by the new government as they related to the immigrant community and those initiated or anticipated by its predecessors. Soon after coming to office the government repealed an Employment Equity Act passed by the former NDP government and in 1997 the Ministry of Education and Training closed its Antiracism, Access and Equity Division. It also replaced a Common Curriculum prepared by the Ministry under the NDP government with a standardized Ontario Curriculum that emphasized the teaching of traditional subject matter, to the virtual exclusion of everything else. In the process it did away with multicultural education principles contained in Common Curriculum guidelines, such as the following:

All students are entitled to have their personal experiences and their racial and
ethnocultural heritage valued within the context of a society that upholds the rights of
each person and requires each person to respect the rights of others. All students
must, therefore, see themselves reflected in a curriculum that acknowledges both the
diversity and common aspirations of the various peoples that make up our pluralistic
society. (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1993: 8).

All Ontario school boards must now devote most of their energy to administering their

provincially-assigned responsibilities in ways that comply with new curriculum and spending

guidelines issued by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

3.2 Local Initiative in the Provision of Immigrant Services

The political and economic context for the delivery of education that the Ontario

government established in 1997 has shifted responsibility for developing immigrant-sensitive

programs back to local school boards, many of which have also had their budgets reduced. The

shift is significant because of the role that local initiative had played in the development of

school programs in the past. In a number of education areas relevant to meeting the needs of

Ontario's diverse population, such as helping immigrant children learn English, retaining native

or "heritage" languages, promoting multicultural awareness, countering bias or racism, fostering

good race relations in schools, and promoting equitable employment policies, it was a local

school board (usually though not always that of the former City of Toronto) that took the lead in

putting programs in place. Not only did the Ministry of Education not initiate such programs

without prompting from one or more local boards (often backed by organized interest groups),

but it sometimes resisted pressures for program support because of the new costs it would mean

for the province. Two policy/program areas that were cornerstones of the province's response to

the education settlement needs of immigrants were based on earlier local initiatives: English as a

Second Language and Heritage Languages.

3.2.1 English as a Second Language (ESL)

English as a Second Language (ESL) is informally taught within communities, and is also

provided by the voluntary sector as a settlement service funded by the national government. In

addition, it became part of the Ontario education system in response to post-war immigration.

The City of Toronto Board of Education introduced ESL classes in the 1950s, although it was not until the early 1960s that the province of Ontario took on some responsibility for ESL. By the late 1960s, the government was making grants to boards with schools that provided such classes, and in 1977, it issued guidelines for ESL teaching. These English as a Second Language/Dialect guidelines were for intermediate and senior divisions and were intended to integrate students into the regular school program once they had acquired sufficient ability in English (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1977a). When the focus of provincial education policy shifted toward the need for academic preparation, these guidelines were replaced in 1988 with new ones that emphasized general skills development (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1988). There was continuing emphasis on the ultimate integration of immigrant students, however, and the Ministry outlined various models that school boards could follow in addressing diverse language needs.

3.2.2 Heritage languages

Heritage Languages refers to a program intended for elementary and intermediate students so they may learn one (or more) of a variety of languages not offered within the regular school system. Arising out of a federal interest in promoting multiculturalism in the 1970s, heritage language programs are found in Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, although the vast majority are in Ontario. These programs are structured in one of three ways: bilingual instruction in a heritage language and an official language (the least common); ethnocultural community programs (funded by any level of government, and usually supported by the school board in the way of providing classroom space outside of the regular school day); and provincially funded, school board operated heritage language programs.

The Metropolitan Toronto Separate School Board initiated a program of Italian-language instruction as early as the mid-1960s, with substantial financial help from the Government of Italy (Gidney, 1999: 150). By 1973, the Toronto Board of Education had begun to operate a few experimental programs to teach children in their "heritage" languages in response to the argument that teaching children to conform to Anglo-Canadian culture implied cultural losses both to the children and to Canadian society (Masemann, 1978-79: 34). Two years later there

were already 19 languages (in addition to English and French) being taught in Toronto schools ("19 languages…," 1975).

Although the Metro Toronto School Board was a leader in heritage language instruction, the program was controversial from the beginning, both between the Toronto Board of Education, the Metropolitan Toronto School Board and the provincial government, and within the Toronto Board itself. Inter-board and intergovernmental disagreements focused on the Toronto board's insistence that money to fund the program should come out of the Metro budget and provincial grants, and not out of a special levy on local taxpayers. The issues that divided the Toronto Board reflected a debate that is still going on about how to define the parameters of a multicultural society and the requirements for building and maintaining it. While a committee established by the city identified a range of opinions on the matter, it gave most of its attention to two competing viewpoints (Masemann, 1978-79: 36-39). One, which was supported by a majority of elected school trustees and administrative staff, favoured adoption of a comprehensive set of programs that would commit the school system to maintaining immigrant language and culture as part of the regular school day curriculum. Opponents of this approach, who included a majority of superintendents, principals and teachers, said that it would mean cutting immigrants off from the rest of their communities (Carey, 1976; Masemann, 1978-79: 39). Immigrant groups were divided on the issue.

The approach favoured by the second group involved adopting only limited measures to help immigrant children maintain links with their heritage cultures while emphasizing the need to improve programs (like ESL teaching) that would help them assimilate into Canadian society. This was the approach implicitly endorsed by the provincial government when it agreed in 1977 to make heritage language courses eligible for provincial government assistance if there were enough evidence of parental demand. Such courses could only be taught outside normal school hours, however, and for no more than 2.5 hours per week. In 1989, the government amended the Education Act to require all boards in Ontario to have a heritage language program when the parents of 25 or more students requested it, and to maintain that program even if enrollment fell. In 1990, high school Modern Language programs were greatly extended with the introduction of guidelines for International Languages, to be offered for credit at the intermediate and senior level (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1990a). At the same time, the Province allowed boards to

extend the school day to accommodate heritage language teaching (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1990b).

3.3 Broadening the Agenda: Ethnocultural Policy-making

By the time the heritage language program had won Ontario government endorsement in 1977, the Toronto Board of Education had begun to look more broadly at ways to incorporate multiculturalism into the school curriculum and to promote equitable employment policies.   In 1979, it responded to racially-motivated incidents in some city schools by adopting a race relations policy—the first school board in Canada to do so. That policy delineated 119 aspects of educational management needing attention (including curriculum, assessment and placement of students, ways to deal with racial incidents in schools, extra-curricular activities, in-service training for teachers, and criteria for employment and promotion).   It also hired an equal opportunities adviser (Mock and Masemann, 1990: 3; Tator and Henry, 1991: 66-67).

In 1979, the Government of Ontario set up an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action unit focused primarily on enhancing employment opportunities for women. By 1985, the province had developed a Race Relations Policy that identified the principles of race and ethnocultural equity. This was echoed in the Ministry of Education, which also co-sponsored a race relations conference (with the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture) in the following year. Around the same time, the Provincial Advisory Committee on Race Relations issued a document calling for a provincial policy on race and ethnocultural equity (Provincial Advisory Committee on Race Relations, 1987).

It was after the 1990 election of an NDP government, however, that the issue of ethnocultural diversity gained ascendancy in provincial policy-making, both within and outside the Ontario Ministry of Education. Notable initiatives include the appointment of Stephen Lewis as the government's Advisor on Race Relations to undertake consultations about racism and develop recommendations in response to several racially-motivated incidents in the province (Lewis, 1992), and the passing of the Employment Equity Act in 1993 with the objective of "increasing the proportion of women, non-whites, aboriginals, and disabled people" in the provincial workforce (Walkom, 1997: 404).

It was within this context that the Ministry of Education began to require school boards to develop and put in place policies and programs to increase the representation of women in leadership positions to 50 per cent by the year 2000 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1990c). A major overhaul of the province's education bureaucracy undertaken in 1992 included the creation of an Anti-racism, Equity and Access Division headed by an Assistant Deputy Minister. During the same year, the Ministry of Education released a resource guide for anti-racism and ethnocultural equity education with the aim of enabling students to feel that their multicultural identities were affirmed by the education system, to develop a positive self image (which included pride in their racial/ethnocultural identity and heritage), and to accept and appreciate diversity and reject discriminatory behaviour (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1992).

After receiving a report from Race Relations Advisor Stephen Lewis (1992), the government authorized the newly reorganized and renamed Ministry of Education and Training (MET) to require all boards to develop and implement ethnocultural equity and anti-racism policies. In 1993, the Ministry of Education and Training launched a comprehensive initiative (known as Memorandum 119) requiring all school boards in Ontario to develop policy on anti-racism and ethnocultural equity by March 1995 and to plan for implementation within a five year timetable (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1993). The accompanying policy document, *Anti-racism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation*, outlined 10 areas to be addressed in school board policies (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1993). Those areas were:

- ❑ board policies, guidelines, and practices
- ❑ leadership
- ❑ school - community partnerships
- ❑ curriculum
- ❑ student languages
- ❑ student evaluations, assessment, and placement
- ❑ guidance and counseling
- ❑ racial and ethnocultural harassment

❑ employment practices

❑ staff development

In retrospect, the Ministry was likely using Memorandum 119 to prepare school boards for the "inclusive curriculum" requirement of its education reform initiative that would arrive in 1995. The new "Common Curriculum" for grades 1-9 included six key features, one of which specifically addressed ethnocultural diversity (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1995b).

By the time the Ministry of Education began to require school boards to adopt race relations and ethnocultural equity policies, several school boards in the Greater Toronto Area, in addition to Toronto, either had policies in place or had begun to prepare them.   In general, however, Ontario boards typically did not act on this issue until after it became clear that the province would require them to do so. In fact, local failure to act had sometimes stimulated the government to move from a permissive to a mandatory approach. It had made the heritage language program mandatory, for example, after the Scarborough Board of Education refused to institute such a program (Gidney, 1999: 213).

3.3.1 *The status of immigrant-sensitive programs under the new arrangements*

After the provincial government took over the education system in 1997, Ministry of Education formulae for allocating funds to local school boards continued to support the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL) and the teaching of International (or Heritage) languages outside the normal school day.   Boards that wished to introduce other programs, either to help immigrant children adapt to their new situation or to ease tensions related within their school populations, had to find ways to do so without financial support or legal backing from the province.

Provincialization also brought an end to legislative pressures on local boards to address issues of race relations and ethnocultural equity. Soon after coming to power, the Progressive Conservative government repealed the Employment Equity Act (Job Quotas Repeal Act, 1995), and closed the Ontario Anti-racism Secretariat. The Ministry of Education and Training did not rescind Memorandum 119, which meant that local boards were still officially expected to

maintain antiracism and ethnocultural equity policies, but it gave its directives much lower priority.   In May 1997, it closed its Antiracism, Access and Equity Division. As a result, the implementation of school boards' antiracism and ethnocultural equity policies was not monitored, as Memorandum 119 had indicated it would be. Ministry of Education district offices and the administrators of school boards were left to decide whether to uphold the spirit of the policies in practice. At the Ministry of Education there was no longer any staff devoted to these issues. Many of the original members of the Antiracism, Access and Equity Division retired or left the Ministry.

Educational restructuring in Ontario implied that local boards would become more variable in their ways of dealing with issues and challenges associated with immigrant settlement. The next section looks at the ways the six local boards included in our study were responding to the challenges of immigration in the face of funding and policy changes, restructuring, and (in the case of Toronto) amalgamation.

4.0 FINDINGS

All of the six boards examined in this study faced concrete challenges related to immigration, and had begun to respond to these challenges prior to the Ministry of Education and Training's Memorandum 119 in 1995. The pace and scope of their activity varied greatly, however. In this section, there are three points of comparison: the architecture of policy, staff and resources assigned to policy implementation, and the priorities of the various boards at the time this study was carried out.

4.1 Implementing Policy: Committees and Advisory Boards

In many respects, the former Toronto Board of Education was a leader among school boards in Canada, and most certainly in Ontario, in addressing ethnocultural diversity through its policies and programs. In the late 1970s, the Board created a Work Group on Multiculturalism that brought together parents, teachers, and trustees. This forum encouraged dialogue among these diverse interests about issues surrounding multiculturalism. Out of this initial interest, a sub-committee was formed to comprehensively address diversity at the Board (Toronto Board of

Education, 1977). In 1979, the Board approved the Final Report of the Sub Committee on Race Relations—a report two years in the making, and containing 119 recommendations for a detailed program to eliminate racism in Toronto's school system (Toronto Board of Education, 1979). This report spawned many changes at the Board, and became a blueprint for other school boards looking to develop similar policies. The Race Relations Committee, responsible for the ground-breaking race relations report, continued to function until the 1998 amalgamation. The Committee was proactive, and according to Toronto Board staff contributed to a healthy relationship between board staff and the community over many years.

The York Board of Education and the North York Board of Education were less active, although they too developed policies in the late 1970s and early 1980s to address racial and ethnic diversity in their schools. They were followed by the East York Board of Education, the Etobicoke Board of Education, and the Scarborough Board of Education in 1987, though for these boards pressure came from above, in the form of a report by the Provincial Advisory Committee on Race Relations (1987) calling for a province-wide policy on race and ethnocultural equity.

The Metropolitan Toronto Separate School Board (now the **Toronto Separate School Board**) was the first Catholic board in Ontario to address ethnocultural diversity in its schools. The board was providing for the ESL needs of new Canadians as early as the late 1960s. Its leadership role among Catholic school boards in race relations/ethnocultural equity policy began in 1984 with a Race and Ethnic Relations and Multicultural Policy (Metropolitan Toronto Separate School Board, 1984). This policy was developed and supported by a Race, Ethnic and Multicultural Advisory Board.

Outside Metropolitan Toronto, policies and programs aimed at addressing diversity in the school population arrived much later and were less intensive than they were in the urban core (though they typically covered curriculum, staff development and employment issues). Ethnocultural diversity was first addressed in York Region by the **York Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board** in the late 1980s with the Multiculturalism and Race Relations Policy and Procedures (1985). In 1988, the **York Region Board of Education** created a Race Relations Advisory Committee to establish a policy on race relations. It approved a Race Relations Policy two years later (1990). Similar policy developments were taking place in the

late 1980s and early 1990s in Peel Region. The **Peel Board of Education** came out with a Multiculturalism and Race Relations Policy (1989) and then the **Dufferin-Peel Roman Catholic Separate School Board** approved a Multicultural Race Relations Policy (1990). These policies were developed out of and supported by advisory boards.

4.1.1 Ontario Ministry of Education and Training: Memorandum 119

Although the (former) Toronto Board of Education was a pioneer in addressing diversity through its policies and programs, it did not respond directly to the Ministry's Memorandum 119. According to Toronto board staff working in this area at the time, it was generally felt that in practice the Toronto Board of Education had already met or exceeded the directive; that in fact it had been the engine behind it. Instead, the board used the provincial initiative as an opportunity to assess how far the it had come in this area, and to come up with future directions. This policy review was abandoned with the provincial government's new mandate, as staff shifted their emphasis toward successful programs like anti-racism training in hope of completing as much work as possible while the board still had resources to devote to it.

After the municipal public school boards in Metro Toronto were amalgamated into the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) in 1998, the new board created an Antiracist Education and Ethnocultural Equity Task Group, with a mandate to develop a consolidated Antiracist Education and Ethnocultural Equity Policy for the board. What emerged was a foundation statement on equity in education in 1999, which used Memorandum 119 as a template but went beyond areas of race, culture, and ethnicity to include matters like gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. Implementation documents were subsequently developed, along with a companion Human Rights, Discrimination, and Harassment Policy in December 1999. The committee structure dissolved after producing these documents. At the time of this study, the TDSB lacked an advisory committee or similar structure of the type found in the other boards. In contrast to the old Toronto Board of Education's emphasis on collaboration among trustees, parents, teachers, and staff, the new **Toronto District School Board** appeared to be relying more heavily on staff to steer policy.

It should be noted that the transition to an amalgamated equity policy was not an easy one for the TDSB. Characterized by TDSB staff as a debate over "antiracist education" vs. a less

critically oriented "equity for all" approach, it resulted in a policy that managed to be both broad in scope and critical in content—embracing what one board staff member described as an "anti-oppression" approach to dealing with all socially-constructed identities. The board's Equity Foundation statement identified race, colour, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, as well as socio-economic status, disability, gender, and sexual orientation (among others) as deserving of human rights protection. It also instructed the board to ensure that this principle was integrated into all policies, programs, operations and practices, including curriculum, hiring and promotion, and financial and human resources allocations (Toronto District School Board, 1999). Purposefully crafted as an awareness-raising document, the TDSB's foundation statement went further than those of other school boards, and once again highlighted the Toronto board's history of leadership in this area.

For the other boards in this study, the Ministry of Education and Training's Memorandum 119 meant updating old policies, or in some cases expanding the scope of existing policies. In 1995, each Board came out with an Antiracism and Ethnocultural Policy, as per the MET requirements. The documents outlined both a plan of action to deal with these issues, and specific details of how each board was going to implement it. These policies were guided by advisory committees composed of both board staff and members of the community. They often represented a broader range of perspectives (in terms of institutional hierarchy and race/ethnicity/culture) than had previously existed at the boards because of Memorandum 119 requirements. With the change in provincial government, however, commitment to the implementation of an antiracism and ethnocultural agenda waned within the Ministry, some school boards, and individual schools. This was frustrating for those interested in pursuing antiracist education. As one school board staff member explained:

> Implementation is outlined so that if you refuse to follow it then you can be called to task. But the policy itself is subject to interpretation, and I gather people really go by the policy. I can't say statistically who does and who doesn't but I suspect many people don't [follow the implementation plan].

4.2 Designated Staff and Resources

All the boards examined in this study had committed staff and financial support to their antiracism/ethnocultural policy initiatives of the late 1980s or early 1990s. Boards typically

coordinated and implemented aspects of their policy by creating a designated office, though they differed among themselves in the names they chose for these offices. With the exception of the **Toronto District School Board**, these offices functioned with minimal resources. The TDSB continued to have a highly developed infrastructure that traced its origins back to 1979, when the former Toronto Board of Education created an Equal Opportunity Office and hired Equal Opportunity Officers to deal with both race relations and gender issues. That office designated an Advisor of Race Relations and an Advisor of Affirmative Action in 1984. These efforts culminated in the addition of an Equity Studies Centre in 1991. The Centre had coordinator positions to deal with gender and multicultural/race relations issues, as well as a small staff to assist in program development and curriculum. With the transition into the **Toronto District School Board**, the framework of the Equity Centre remained, though it became dedicated to curriculum issues and staffed by an Equity Coordinator, equity consultants, and administrative support. Though at a far smaller scale, the **York Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board** also had an Equity Office. The office was staffed by a single Equity Consultant (formerly named the Equity Supervisor), who was responsible for addressing both gender and race/ethnicity issues at the board.

In the **Toronto Separate School Board** there was a Race and Ethnic Relations, Multiculturalism Department staffed by a single Program Coordinator with secretarial support. Like the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Separate School Board had established a department and developed policy by the early 1980s, though not to the same extent or with the same resource support. In both the **Dufferin-Peel Roman Catholic Separate School Board** and the **Peel Board of Education**, equity issues became the domain of a Multicultural/Race Relations Officer in 1989. By 1992, the Peel Board cut resources for this office, and staff assistance was lost. The officer position remained (thought relatively unsupported) but was renamed the Equity Officer, Race Relations, and then the Human Rights Officer, encompassing employment as well as curriculum issues. The Dufferin-Peel Board went through a similar shift in labels. At the time of this study, the position was named the Ethnocultural Equity and Race Relations Officer. The **York Region Board of Education** created a Race Relations Coordinator position in 1991. This office was later expanded to include two additional full-time staff assigned to African heritage and Chinese student issues respectively.

In all the variously named positions and offices maintained by the different boards, the substance of the work was remarkably consistent. Staff spent their time split between problem solving and program development (though the weighting of that split varied among boards). Problem solving could involve dealing with a "crisis", such as a conflict involving students and/or staff, a community incident (e.g. hate crimes), or media coverage of immigration or refugee issues in the surrounding community. It could also involve answering requests for information from teachers, principals, or community members. It was the job of the board staff member(s) to educate, inform, mediate, accommodate, advise, and defuse tensions in such instances and this is work without a set time line. As one staff member explained:

> You have to be multi-task oriented. When the need arises you have to be there. For example, a principal calls and needs to resolve a conflict among two students, seeks advice. You never know what the problem is until you get there and there is no time limit on how long it will take. I am one person overseeing many, many schools.

Program development might include initiatives related to staff development (conferences, leadership courses for principals/vice-principals, in-house training of teachers) or curriculum (developing classroom kits for teachers, responding to proposed curriculum). What was possible was naturally related to the amount of staff and other resources that a Board allocated to addressing issues of diversity. Everything had to be done within the context of significant provincial changes to education and efforts to decrease expenditures across school boards.

4.3 Shifting Priorities

In the absence of provincial leadership in addressing the challenges of immigration settlement in education, school boards were directing their energy and resources according to local priorities. As one staff member put it, "We put resources where there is fire. We look at the numbers."

There were some initiatives that seemed to be priorities for boards in the Greater Toronto Area. Shifting beyond ESL to first language assessment (where the abilities of students to function in their own language are assessed independently from their ability in English) was being recognized as an effective tool in integrating newcomers. Staff development continued to be a priority, but with decreased resources and tremendous pressure on teacher time, school

boards were increasingly focusing on training administrators rather than teachers. The hope was that principals and vice-principals would then go back to their schools, take leadership roles, and share what they had learned.

With recent curriculum changes, there were no longer explicit places in the curriculum for issues of multiculturalism and equity to be addressed.   While staff from most of the school boards in this study considered this absence of guidelines to be a significant challenge for their work, some did suggest that a door remained open to do this work if the case could be made that antiracist education was just "better" education.

A widespread recognition of diversity within all boards was an accomplishment identified by most staff members interviewed in this study, though it was less clear how much political and institutional support there was for implementing any type of antiracist education agenda. Board staff members acknowledged the gains made over the previous twenty years (e.g. issue awareness, diverse hiring practices), but also remarked on the distance yet to be travelled before real equity in the classroom and in the administration could be achieved.

In terms of policy, GTA boards seemed to fall along a continuum.[28] Unlike boards across Ontario, none of the GTA school boards had lost positions or had closed offices dedicated to race relations or antiracist education. The decreased funding for implementation of the policy, as well as variable local commitment, was making it difficult, however, for the staff of the **York Region Board of Education** to maintain the initiatives brought in with the Ministry's Memorandum 119, despite the Director's commitment to this issue and the comparatively better allocation of staff resources. The **Toronto Separate School Board**, the **Peel Board of Education** and the **York Region Roman Catholic Board** had all managed to maintain the initiatives taken in response to Memorandum 119.

Given the significant pressures on the boards to adapt to changes in education, as well as a decrease in leadership in this policy area, their ability to hold their existing course was a significant achievement. It was still uncertain, however, as to whether or not these boards would continue to do so. The **Toronto District School Board** was the only GTA board that had developed new policy or actively pushed an antiracist agenda by recruiting staff. Its

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[28] The **Dufferin-Peel Roman Catholic School Board** is not included in this discussion because staff declined to respond to repeated attempts to arrange an interview or discuss this research project.

achievements could be linked to past efforts, but were also related to the institutional shake-up brought on by amalgamation. The fact that the newly-configured board continued to give priority to this issue was significant, but whether it could sustain the momentum was uncertain. It was clear, however, that all staff working on antiracist education initiatives were searching for ways to achieve their goals with little political leadership and despite significant pressures on financial and human resources. As one staff member explained:

> We would like to say the priority is the same, but it's not because of other things—strikes, cutbacks, curriculum changes... [we are] fast-growing and seriously underfunded, and the priority is to build schools. We are challenged in all 10 areas of the original Memorandum 119.

The continuation of equity work in this climate can be attributed in large part to the tremendous personal commitment of the staff involved.

4.4 Meeting the Challenges of Diversity

The provincial government's Memorandum 119 ensured that all Boards across Ontario would have an ethnocultural equity and race relations policy. As representatives of many of the boards in this study pointed out, however, implementation plans had to recognize the tremendous differences among schools. In general, schools in Toronto or closest to Toronto had the greatest diversity and were most likely to see this issue as a priority. Across the Greater Toronto Area, staff recognizd that implementing antiracist education was significantly influenced by differences in race or ethnic group concentrations, family income, or transportation access. These factors were especially relevant as schools tried to persuade parents to become involved. As one Board staff member explained, the issue was really about which groups would have their concerns heard:

> It is a challenge for some groups. Parents need to be able to take time off to be involved. Knowing politicians and the structure of organizations also helps. Because most [newcomers], especially visible minorities, do not know the system, they are afraid to come close to it. Language is another barrier to participation. There are interpreters but sometimes they are accepted; other times not. And economics play a role. Parents are more concerned with putting food on the table.

In addressing these particularities, staff members of all the school boards included in this study advocated strong community links, with staff often crediting such links with their success

in meeting the needs of immigrant students and diverse student populations. In some cases these links were regional, as when a board partners with other organizations and agencies interested in pursuing a cooperative agenda:

> ... police services' awareness programs on different ethnic groups, Toronto Raptors' anti-violence program to encourage youth to stay in school, businesses cooperating to get students in work programs, the Children's Aid Society.

In meeting the settlement needs of immigrant students in particular, school boards also reached out to ethno-specific organizations in the community, most commonly by giving them seats on the Board's advisory committees. These initiatives were not always successful in the suburban school boards, however, a fact attributed by staff to their comparatively short experience with diversity, and to the tendency of ethno-specific organizations to focus their energies on Toronto.

Facilitating access to the education system was especially important for immigrant parents. Staff at many boards identified both provincially- and federally-imposed difficulties, including the lack of a voice or an advocate for parents in securing ESL programs in schools, frustrations in reaching immigration officers, the pace of immigrant processing, and the conflict between provincial education legislation and federal immigration legislation over the rights to education of newcomers, and especially refugees. The experience of immigrant and minority groups in obtaining what they required from the education system, however, was not static. Those groups that were well organized, informed about school board structures, and in sufficient numbers to have their concerns recognized had been most successful in articulating and demanding that their needs be met.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

School boards across the Greater Toronto Area are front line service providers for the many immigrants who establish their children in Canadian schools. The challenges of settling immigrant students into the school system are coupled with the challenges of providing education in a manner that respects human rights, given the diversity that previous waves of immigration have brought to the Canadian-born population. For the most part, school boards meet these challenges with limited financial resources and the work of exceptionally dedicated staff.

The education improvement agenda of Ontario's Conservative government created additional pressures for those school board staff members who believe strongly in the concepts of equity and antiracist education. At one level, with a lack of leadership from the Ministry of Education on these issues, there was room for boards across Ontario to eliminate positions and abandon the implementation of race relations and ethnocultural policies that the government outlined in Memorandum 119 in 1995. Beyond highlighting the impacts of the policies of one political party over those of another, however, this study points more generally to the importance of senior government leadership in motivating change in education. Though boards had the ability to create their own policies, several staff members mentioned the difficulty they faced in implementing any policy that did not have broad support from the province. As one staff member put it, "When there is no leadership it limits how far you can push staff to change."

5.1 Implementing Antiracist Education

Staff at all of the boards looked at in this study described their work as requiring them to do more than acquire a liberal understanding of multicultural education or incorporate some element of "antiracist education" into school programs. In some cases, gender, ability, etc. were incorporated into the policy framework alongside race and ethnicity, as in the case of the Toronto District School Board, the York Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board and the Peel Board of Education. This focus on equity, diversity, or "oppressions" had resulted from a combination of factors, such as support for a conceptual model of antiracist education within the school boards and reductions or limits on resources, which had forced staff to take on additional issues.

It is important to note, however, that there was a difference between having an antiracist approach and implementing antiracist education. Even the Toronto Board of Education had been strongly criticized, despite its proactive history in this field. Speaking of the period just prior to amalgamation, Rahim argues:

> The Toronto Board of Education for the last decade has been juggling with the concept of "Multiculturalism", but, to date, it has hardly lived up to its word... [A] paternalistic or benevolent multiculturalism approach has been the prevalent mode of education for the New Canadian students (1990: 43-44).

Just prior to the release of the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training's Memorandum 119, those boards with race relations policies (all of the GTA boards) had, in the eyes of some, still failed to meet the challenges of antiracist education:

> ... the work by race relations advisors has become an addendum if not a marginal aspect of the overall educational functions of the various boards. Schooling was not reorganized in order to facilitate the changes that a policy on race relations has implied; it has remained fundamentally the same... It can be surmised that the development of race relations policies is a political response that is not aimed at changing teaching practices (Rezai-Rashti, 1995: 11).

Memorandum 119 did go a long way toward forcing not only policy development but also comprehensive implementation of antiracist education by requiring boards to address 10 separate areas of education. How far various boards went in implementing the directive was never formally evaluated because of the change in provincial government. After that change occurred, boards had little incentive to continue in the direction of antiracist education.

For those interested in antiracist education, the most serious challenge was the serious reprogramming of teachers required to implement it (Rezai-Rashti, 1995: 14), given the ups and downs in provincial policy. For any education policy to make a real difference for students in GTA schools, it must be disassociated from the particular political ideology of one government or another. The expectation that interest in antiracist education will disappear with the next election prevents it from becoming a basic approach to education. What is required, then, is board commitment that is independent of the current provincial policy direction. In this study it became clear that the level of commitment varied greatly among boards, with the **Toronto District School Board** having demonstrated greatest willingness to act independently.

5.2 Creatures of the province by coercion or by choice?

Though all the school boards in this study had remained officially committed to their ethnocultural and race relations policies, support from school trustees, administrators, principals, and teachers was less consistent across the region. In some cases, time and resources at the local level were being redirected into adapting to provincial changes to education. As a staff member from one board remarked:

I'm not sure of our achievements, but we are trying to bring change under difficult circumstances. We are working with a government that has a group within it that has hardened toward immigrant issues. Policies have changed. What we are doing is making communities more aware of the best way to access the system.

School boards were undergoing extensive reorganization in Ontario under the Conservative government. As mentioned earlier, the resulting level of provincial control over education raised some questions as to the degree to which education was still a municipal service like the others in this study. Within this transitional period, meeting the particular needs of immigrant children or creating inclusive school environments with increasing ethnocultural and racial diversity had difficulty competing for stretched resources against such things as infrastructure requirements. Moreover, the challenges brought with immigration and diversity were localized in the province's largest cities, and most especially in the Greater Toronto Area. Consequently, interest in making antiracist education a priority was extremely uneven.

Examining school board responses to their immigrant populations provided insights into the relationship between the province and school boards, indicating in particular where the initiative for action originates. During the 1990s, the NDP and Progressive Conservative governments took strikingly different approaches to issues of ethnocultural diversity. School boards in the Greater Toronto Area responded to these different approaches in different ways.

Many school boards appeared willing to do only what they thought the province wanted them to do. Despite significant commitment from a handful of dedicated staff at the boards, the **Peel Board of Education**, the **Dufferin-Peel Roman Catholic Separate School Board**, the **York Region Board of Education** and the **York Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board** were slow to address the challenges of diverse student populations. The provincial mandate of anti-racist and ethnocultural equity in the NDP government's Memorandum 119 was a significant push for these boards, and helped staff working on these issues to obtain resources and support for their efforts. With the sharp decline of provincial interest in antiracist and ethnocultural policies after the Progressive Conservative government was elected, however, the will to devote resources and make these issues a priority became less secure. This is not to suggest that policies were abandoned, or that official commitment waned, but it does mean that boards no longer felt the same pressure to give priority to these issues. Other pressures, such as changes in curriculum and funding arrangements, moved to the foreground.

The **Toronto District School Board** has a long history (especially in the Toronto Board of Education) of initiating programs and policies in response to local needs, regardless of what current provincial policy encourages or allows. As a board serving the traditional centre for new arrivals, the TDSB's response to immigration went beyond, and sometimes preceded, provincial expectations. The **Toronto Separate School Board** had also been a leader, especially among Catholic Boards, in addressing the ethnic diversity found in its schools.

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CHAPTER 6: POLICING

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The intersection of immigration and policing is an extremely political one, most typically articulated on the basis of race relations rather than immigration settlement.[29] Police interactions with immigrants can be positive, such as speaking to English as a Second Language (ESL) orientation classes, or community outreach. Given the nature of their work, however, police are just as likely to have contact with immigrants in negative situations (arrests, investigations), and this puts policing in a unique category when compared with other municipal services.

Issues of race relations typically come up as a result of the death or injury of a minority person during a confrontation with police. Described in the literature as the urbanization theory of criminal activity, there is an argument made by some that "crime will be most dramatic in the large metropolitan centres that received large waves of immigrants" because the heterogeneous population will have few common understandings (Ungerleider and McGregor, 1991: 557; Normandeau and Leighton, 1990). In interviews, some police officers do tend to identify practical issues arising from traditional conflicts rooted in immigrants' country of origin but fought out on Canadian soil as a challenge stemming from immigration. Others, however, tend to highlight the existence of discriminatory attitudes and practices on the part of police, and in particular the way these combine with the power and authority vested in police, as the real cause of poor minority-police relations (Chan, 1996; Davis, 1993; Ungerleider and McGregor, 1991).

In an effort to combat racism within policing, police services in the Greater Toronto Area have tried various race relations initiatives since the 1970s, particularly in the (Metro) **Toronto Police Service**. Indeed, some police services have been actively responding to complaints and task force recommendations with outreach efforts in the form of committees, citizen group liaisons, and advisory groups. Despite this activity, there is still much that separates the largely white/male force from immigrants and in particular from visible minority groups, in terms of both transparency and accessibility. For example, the issue of representative hiring by police services is clearly at the forefront in race relations and policing discourse today.

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[29] In fact, "visible minorities" and "immigrants" are used almost interchangeably in the literature, police documents, and media. This does not do justice to the distinctions between first-generation immigrants (who may be either recent or established), and people belonging to visible minority groups because of ethnicity or race.

Although police in this region have reacted to public criticism and scrutiny and have even pursued some possible solutions, a perception of police services as a closed, racist institution persists. This perception is in large part due to media coverage of police services, which tends to be very critical. Toronto Chief David Boothby made this point in response to a critical Toronto Star article (Toronto Police Service, 1999c), arguing that the media continue to de-emphasize the positive work they do. Police services have tried to counter the reporting of negative incidents with news releases about the many positive things done by local police forces in the Greater Toronto Area (particularly Toronto's), arguing that the media conveniently neglect these activities in favour of more sensational negative ones.

While perhaps infuriating for the police, the media's critical perspective[30] has been a useful mechanism for drawing attention to the issues and ultimately generating a police response. For example, a steady and growing barrage of negative coverage about biased policing has prompted police services to establish task forces that have made sweeping recommendations about the changes required to address these concerns. They have also responded to public pressure by creating general committees to deal with race relations and specialized bodies to deal with particular minority group concerns.

The media are also powerful tools in forming and shifting public perceptions about these issues within minority communities and society at large. In such a politicized context, public reactions to an issue can be influenced by whether the media cover an incident as a social crisis (e.g. as evidence of racism or of inequalities between groups) or as a reason for condemning institutions and the "system" that perpetuates inequalities (Wortley, Hagan, and Macmillan, 1997).

Leaders within police services have acknowledged the existence of bias within policing, although they maintain that police services are not inherently racist. Yet the degree to which bias has been truly understood and challenged internally is unclear. Because several groups, committees and task forces have been created to address these issues, visible minority and immigrant groups are understandably cynical when change does not occur. A recurring theme is that simple solutions do exist: greater police/community interaction, a detailed understanding on the part of police of the varied opinions and relationships different minority groups have with

police, and greater transparency (increased accountability) of police services. Some argue that the same complaints continue to be leveled at the police because efforts made to address racism and inequality seem to be relatively ineffectual at eliciting the "change at the core" necessary to eliminate the existing bias in police services:

> Much of the Force activity in respect to race relations has been in programs in employment equity, in community involvement, and in other areas in which the Force interacts with racial minorities… Consequently, effort has been directed towards changes around the fringes of the operation or accommodation of differences in the community, without recognizing the fact that the institution, its culture and its values need to change (Andrew, 1992: 1).

2.0 KEY ISSUES

While there may be considerable dispute about the degree or the causes of tensions between minority groups and the police, there is little argument about its existence in policing around the globe.   In Canada, various task force reviews and internal audits have identified racism in policing as a critical concern (Andrews, 1992); academic literature has explored the systemic causes of inequality, discrimination, and bias in policing (Cryderman, O'Toole, and Fleras, 1998; Davis, 1993); and vocal leaders within police ranks have raised ethnocultural and racial diversity as important issues for modern policing. As the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police explains:

> Policing activities and recruiting practices must also reflect the strong multicultural element of society... If we are to operate proactively in the community we serve, then we must be equipped with the ability to communicate with all cultural groups and respond effectively to their concerns (Inkster, 1993: 241).

Beyond the need to "communicate," however, are serious allegations of racism in policing: bias and assumptions on the part of police about minority communities and crime; failure to use (or the inappropriate use of) interpreters with immigrants and others whose first language is not English; over-policing and the harassment and targeting of minorities; and police abuse of power (excessive use of force). [31]

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[30] It should be noted that there are also complaints about racism in the media, and about how the media portray minorities (Miller, 1994).

[31] This list was consolidated in Chan (1996), although the same issues are raised in almost all literature and reports/studies of the issue of racism and policing.

It is generally held that the changes in policing needed to address these concerns must be structural. That is, surface-level alterations to the way policing is done, or the manner in which police relate to the communities they serve, are not thought to be enough to change the behaviour and attitudes of police or to change the perception of the police within the public and especially within minority groups. To this end, three reform initiatives have been explored and debated by academics, police, and the public: access and equity policies, training and recruitment, and community policing.

2.1 Access and Equity Policies

Policy is the first level of change in large organizations. Within policing, access and equity policies have often been motivated by a combination of public demand, political pressure, and leadership. These changes from above are designed to make it clear to those in the organization that discriminatory behaviour will not be tolerated, and are sometimes used in conjunction with advisory or community consultation committee structures. Such policies encourage links with minority groups in the community at a senior level, and can create a supportive climate for other initiatives such as sensitivity/cross-cultural training.

Access and equity policies, however, do not ensure widespread change and their effectiveness must be judged by the degree to which they influence general policing. As Chan argues: "...broad statements of policy do not provide adequate guidance in terms of everyday police work and, unless gross levels of discrimination against ethnic minorities can be proved, such statements will have minimal effect on police practices" (Chan, 1996: 167). Thus, most effective policies include practical implementation strategies that relate to the "street cop" experience.

2.2 Training and Recruitment

Growing concern over the "white maleness" of policing has made the issue of training and recruitment an important one for many police services. Perhaps related to the argument that policy alone will not create the kind of changes necessary, there is a strong argument that police

services are biased in their delivery of service, and that this bias may be best redressed through employment equity measures. Adding to the priority given to addressing issues of racism in enforcement (where solutions might include sensitivity training, and links with minority groups) has been a call for employment equity, and the building of a representative police force.

In this regard, policing is not unique. How representative public and private organizations are of the communities in which they function is an important concern in society generally. Moreover, the degree to which employment inequality exists varies among police departments across Canada, although most observers agree that it is a serious challenge:

> The clean-up processes required within police human resource management are a result of the historical exclusion of segments of the population and a lack of vision in human resource planning that neglects the demographic realities of communities that police serve (Samuel and Suriya, 1993: 284-85).

The lack of representation is especially relevant for those groups that are stigmatized by the dominant society generally. As Ungerleider argues, police are most likely to mistreat those individuals stigmatized by society at large, leading in part to "'over-policing' and 'under-protection' of minorities, if not blaming the victimized for their own victimization" (1993: 3).

Given that police services are typically not very representative of the communities they serve, training remains a primary race relations strategy. Identified as a priority in task force reviews as well as academic literature, cross-cultural awareness is generally described as a positive and necessary aspect of police training, both at the recruitment level and in providing services to existing employees. Beyond commitment to the idea, however,

> The field of race relations training remains largely unexplored … [N]ot only is there no universally recognized body of literature or of experts in the techniques of race relations training... [but] little thought has been given to what the objects of such training should be... there have been no systematic attempts to integrate research about the effects of race relations training for police officers (Ungerleider and McGregor, 1995: 80).

The result is that there is considerable variety among police services as to how they address police training, and whether the focus is on race relations (addressing racism), multicultural/intercultural awareness, or whether it is part of a wider "diversity" approach.

2.3 Community Policing

Community policing is a significant ideological shift that has gained widespread popularity in the United States and Canada since the 1980s.[32] The United States has a longer history with community policing, but Ontario was the first jurisdiction in either country to legally enshrine community policing as a guiding philosophy (Fleras, 1998: 90). This is reflective of the significant degree to which the community policing model has been embraced by police services across the country (Leighton, 1994; 1991; Cryderman, O'Toole, and Fleras, 1998).

Community policing encompasses much more than relations between police and minority groups, although it has typically been instituted in response to a crisis (often involving police use of force and a non-white person) and/or a long history of complaints by minority groups about unresponsive police and inequitable treatment (Eck and Rosenbaum, 1994: 11). Some argue not only that allegations of racism in policing have acted as a catalyst for community policing initiatives, but also that addressing bias is sometimes its primary goal: "[M]ost of the efforts [at community policing] are directed at reducing the distance between ethnic minorities and the police, instilling confidence and building support among ethnic minorities" (Chan, 1996: 168).

Community policing has been described as a movement away from a primarily reactive, legalistic and bureaucratic model of policing to a preventive, balanced, community-based style of policing (Nancoo, 1995: 90). It is often associated with foot patrols in zones/beats, storefronts or mini-stations, community consultative committees, and decentralized organizational structure, yet there is considerable variability in the types of policing carried out under the community policing banner.[33] Nevertheless, there appear to be some defining characteristics of the community policing model:

- the mission of police officers as peace officers;

- community consultation;

- a proactive approach to policing;

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[32] Literature about community policing began to be published in the 1980s, but it is generally agreed that Greene and Mastrofski's (1988) book, *Community Policing: Rhetoric or Reality,* is an important marker for community policing as a serious option.
[33] In part because of this variability, there are repeated calls for the evaluation of community policing within the literature (Leighton, 1994; Chacko and Nancoo, 1993a).

- a problem-oriented strategy;

- crime prevention activities;

- inter-agency co-operation;

- interactive policing;

- reducing the fear of victimization;

- development of police officers as generalists;

- decentralized police management; and

- development of flatter organizational structures and accountability to the community (Chacko and Nancoo, 1993b: 10).

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2.3.1 *New indicators for effectiveness, efficiency and equity*

Community policing is a critique of traditional policing and therefore is often described in terms of how it is different from traditional policing (Fleras, 1998: 105). One concise means of comparison is to evaluate what the terms "effective", "efficient" and "equitable" have come to mean under the community policing perspective.

Community policing is problem-oriented policing, aimed at addressing fear of crime and quality of life problems in communities. This focus can be contrasted with the focus of traditional policing on an incident or a victim, on providing emergency aid, and on crime control and the administration of justice. Under a community policing model, then, effectiveness is not judged by arrest and prosecution statistics or by response times, as it is with traditional policing, but rather by whether or not police are able to detect the problems most important to communities, and by whether they are able to reduce the harmful effects of those problems (Eck and Rosenbaum, 1994: 10).

Traditionally the resources available to police have been seen to be self-contained within the organization (available infrastructure, number of officers, etc.). Community policing, on the other hand, recognizes the reliance police already place on the public (to report events, provide information) and the immense challenge of providing a "free" service to citizens that is as accessible as the telephone (Eck and Rosenbaum, 1994: 13-14). Beyond increasing police

capacity through increased budgets, community policing offers opportunities to use the resources of other groups by establishing links to community groups, private organizations and other government departments. Efficiency is thus judged in terms of the ability of a police service to use resources outside its direct control (Eck and Rosenbaum, 1994: 17).

Equity is typically judged in legal terms (the police are universally enforcing existing laws and procedures), or by the distribution of resources (amount per capita, or per incidence of crime in a neighbourhood). The re-evaluation of what equity means in community policing has been the change that most directly relates to the intersection between policing and minority groups. As Eck and Rosenbaum explain:

> These [traditional] approaches to equity may be acceptable if the local population is homogeneous or no group feels excluded from local politics. If, however, a sizeable group feels that the local political system and its government bureaucracies are unresponsive, the appeals to procedure or statistics will not address claims of inequitable treatment... Though steeped in euphemistic rhetoric, the "community" in community policing often, but not always, refers to groups who have not traditionally been in the mainstream of society (1994: 11).

Equity in outcomes becomes crucial within the community policing model, and public perception becomes an important indicator in judging equity.

2.3.2 Good P.R. or ideological shift

If public perception is considered relevant to good policing, then there is the potential for community policing to be a marginal initiative, or a public relations effort. Expectations for community policing are high, however. The aim is effective, efficient and equitable policing, understood in terms that are relevant to the conditions police find themselves in today. For example, decentralized management, with decision-making and routine police operations at the neighbourhood level, can be good for the morale and functioning of the police as well as for improving community-police interaction (Eck and Rosenbaum, 1994).

Community policing is also motivated, at least in part, by harsh criticism of racism in policing and poor relations between police and minority groups. Accomplishing such sweeping changes in police practice requires more than agreement with the critique of what doesn't work with traditional policing. As Nancoo explains: "community policing is primarily a philosophy of

policing... To accommodate the changes envisaged by the community policing philosophy, the structures and institutions of policing must be changed" (1995: 88-89). Structural change of this magnitude can face pressures from several fronts: fiscal pressures that might make backsliding into the traditional crime fighting model easier; a resistant institutional culture and resistant attitudes within the ranks; criticism of a locally-driven "sandbox" policing agenda (Leighton, 1994: 221) at the expense of other regional, national or international problems. Critics argue that although community policing has become the "official morality" of modern policing in Canada, the United States and Britain, "implementation... has been quite limited and impact has been modest... basically leaving a residue of more community involvement with officers specializing in crime prevention" (Clairmont, 1991: 482).

Community policing is a "plastic concept"—it can mean different things to different people (Eck and Rosenbaum, 1994: 5). This poses a challenge for those who see community policing as the appropriate reform initiative to address problems of bias, inequality and racism in policing in general. While in some jurisdictions community policing might be rooted in a desire to improve minority-police relations, in others it could be more of a staff reorganization exercise. The hopes vested in community policing, however, come from the very popularity it has garnered:

> …the public—as consumers of police services—together with the media have responded to the appeal of community policing by affirming it as a progressive step in the language of public discourse. Through elected officials, political institutions and the governing bodies of policing, it is now politically fashionable if not expedient to champion community policing at the local level. But, having 'gone public' as the conventional wisdom, there are raised expectations over what can be delivered and there is less room to renege on promises made (Leighton, 1994: 210).

In the next section we explore the particular expectations and promises made in the Greater Toronto Area, with attention to the political climate that gave rise to them and the degree to which they have been met.

3.0 HISTORICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

There are tremendous variations in how far police services in Ontario have gone in addressing race relations through policies, programs, or changes to institutional structures.

Those serving populations in the Greater Toronto Area have been some of the more active in this regard, and the **Toronto Police Service** (formerly the Metropolitan Toronto Police Service)[34] in particular has been a leader.

As Toronto's population diversified with immigration in the 1970s, the issues of discrimination, race relations and immigrant settlement emerged from various sources. Debate over immigration was fuelled in the mid-1970s by a federal government discussion paper that precipitated significant changes designed to make immigration policy less restrictive and racist. In Ontario, the Human Rights Commission released a report in 1977 on discrimination against Blacks in Metro Toronto (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 1977). That same year the province's Task Force on Human Relations released a report on the relationship between violence and racism in Ontario after a series of beatings of South Asians in Toronto's subway system (Pitman, 1977). It was within this context that the Metro Toronto Police Service began to address the challenges of diversity in the Greater Toronto Area, becoming the first police service in Ontario to incorporate issues of diversity into the structure of policing.

By the 1980s, race and ethnicity were being addressed head-on both within policing and within Ontario generally. In 1980, a Task Force on the Racial and Ethnic Implications of Police Hiring, Training, Promotion and Career Development released a report that suggested that the police needed to be more culturally and racially sensitive in the delivery of their services. Ten years later the political climate was such that diversity had been affirmed and protected with historic legislation such as the *Ontario Human Rights Code* (1981), the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982), the Government of Canada's *Employment Equity Act* (1986), and the *Multiculturalism Act* (1988). Another evaluation of policing in Ontario in 1989, however, did not provide evidence that a climate of sensitivity had evolved within police services (Ontario, 1989). Outcry over the perceived use of excessive force in the shooting deaths of two black men, one from Metro Toronto and the other from Peel, provided the incentive for a review of race relations and policing. The Race Relations and Policing Task Force report (1989) made a number of suggestions, including police training that was sensitive to visible minorities, changing hiring practices (employment equity), inducing greater interaction between police and minority communities (race relations, liaison officers etc.), establishing monitoring systems, and

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[34] The Metropolitan Toronto Police Service became the Toronto Police Service after the amalgamation of Metropolitan Toronto and its five component cities in January 1998.

evaluating the use of force. The report also noted the community cynicism that existed because of the lack in implementation of previous recommendations.

3.1 Addressing the Challenges of Diversity in Policing

For its part, the province acted on the 1989 Task Force's recommendations by amending the *Police Services Act* in 1990. Revisions to the *Act* were an attempt to ensure the protection of all the rights legislatively guaranteed, and also encouraged police services to put in place community policing practices. This approach to policing was enshrined in the six principles laid out in the *Police Services Act*:

❑ the need to ensure safety and security of all persons and property in Ontario;

❑ the importance of safeguarding the fundamental rights guaranteed by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Human Rights Code*, 1981;

❑ the need for cooperation between the providers of police services and the communities they serve;

❑ the importance of respect for victims of crime and understanding their needs;

❑ the need for sensitivity to the pluralistic, multiracial and multicultural character of Ontario society; and

❑ the need to ensure that police forces are representative of the communities they serve (in Nancoo, 1995: 81).

At the same time, the Solicitor General of Canada released "A Vision of the Future of Policing in Canada: Police Challenge 2000" (Normandeau and Leighton, 1990) to stimulate public debate about the future of policing in Canada. Although not exclusively focused on race relations, the report's important contribution was a call to increase police professionalism and to develop a mission statement and set of core values based strongly on the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* as the foundation for police work (Ungerleider and McGregor, 1991: 555).

In 1991, the Ontario Solicitor General introduced the Employment Equity Regulation for Police Services, whereby Ontario police services were expected to have employment equity and workplace race relations policies. That same year, an Ontario-wide Race Relations Policy for Police Services was unveiled, designed as a framework of principles and objectives within which police services could pursue a range of initiatives. The policy also articulated key principles such as racial equality and fairness, community service and community policing, and

accountability. Coinciding with these policy initiatives, the Race Relations and Policing Task Force was reconvened at the request of Stephen Lewis, Special Advisor on Race Relations to the Premier. Lewis felt there was a strong public perception that implementation of the 1989 Task Force's recommendations had slowed and that renewing the Task Force would renew the commitment.

In 1992, this second Race Relations and Policing Task Force released a report, echoing much of the earlier report's recommendations. Another 42 recommendations were made for the improvement of police services. Though not new, they were seen to be necessary because police forces "had not responded with a great deal of enthusiasm" to the original Task Force report (Ontario, 1992). The 1992 report did, however, put a new emphasis on government responsibility for managing community policing. The Task Force cited several places where government needed to take a more proactive role to overcome legislative inertia, institutional lethargy, lack of the necessary infrastructure to nurture a long-term anti-racism commitment (and particularly to foster greater cooperation between visible minority communities and police services), and inequities in police hiring practices (Ontario, 1992).

The problems associated with policing and race relations were highlighted again in 1995 in a report on systemic racism in the Ontario criminal justice system. The Commission documented racial inequality in "police stops" and criticized the systemic lack of response to police shootings of African Canadian men between 1978-1994 (Ontario, 1995). By 1997 the provincial government had amended the *Police Services Act* once again, strengthening the commitment to community policing by making it a requirement for police services in Ontario.

Most recently, the self-named Community Coalition Concerned about Civilian Oversight of Police[35] released a report that documented police killings and challenged the degree to which recommendations from earlier studies and reports had been met (1999). The report included 46 recommendations, concerned with improving mechanisms for civilian oversight of policing and enabling meaningful input by concerned community groups. It asked for community involvement on the basis of the abuse and misuse of police power faced by racial minorities and other marginalized groups, such as Native people, immigrants, refugees, homeless people, gays and lesbians, etc. (Community Coalition Concerned about Civilian Oversight of Police, 1999).

3.1.1 Leadership in the Metropolitan Toronto Police Service

The Metropolitan Toronto Police Service was considered a leader across Canada for its race relations initiatives, and had an enviable record when compared to most, if not all, police forces in major urban centres in North America (Ontario, 1992). It was the first police service in Ontario to incorporate issues of diversity into the structures of policing with the establishment of an Ethnic Relations section as part of the Community Programs Unit in 1973. Ethnic Relations began as an outreach effort to the Italian community but steadily evolved to include other groups: Black and East Indian/South Asian in the 1970s, Spanish/Portuguese, Jewish, Chinese/Korean, and Greek in the 1980s, and Francophone and Filipino in the 1990s.[36]

By the 1990s, however, the Metropolitan Toronto Police Service was looking beyond community outreach. In 1991 the Police Services Board requested an internal audit of race relations practices. The auditor was instructed to look at the internal workings of the Force (structure, strategies, procedures and processes) with "virtually unrestricted access" (Metropolitan Audit Department, 1991). The report argued that although a number of studies, reports, recommendations and suggestions had been made since the 1970s, changes that had occurred were aimed at accommodating differences in the community (employment equity, community involvement, police-minority relations) and were not the necessary core changes (to the institution, its culture, its values). It concluded with numerous specific suggestions concerned with improving race relations training, developing standards of conduct, facilitating recruitment among new immigrants, and removing barriers between police and the community. The aim, the report argued, was to create a longer-term approach to issues of access to police services, rather than complete reliance on specialized units and programs (Metropolitan Audit Department, 1991). The challenges facing policing were starkly emphasized that same year with the Los Angeles riot (sparked by a videotape of four white officers' use of excessive force in the arrest of an African American, Rodney King), and its reverberations in a "Toronto riot" on Yonge Street in downtown Toronto, an event that was further fuelled by the police shooting of

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[35] The Coalition was formed in 1996 in response to the perceived systemic exclusion of citizens from civilian oversight of the police. It officially included 25 community organizations as members, but claimed to represent many more.
[36] These are the labels the Metropolitan Toronto Police Service used in assigning responsibility to various officers in the Ethnic Relations unit.

Raymond Constantine Lawrence, an illegal immigrant, casual labourer and alleged crack dealer from Jamaica).

Within this politically charged environment, the Metropolitan Toronto Police Services Board commissioned two reports—one focusing on racial minorities (Equal Opportunity Consultants, 1992) and the other examining policing and Toronto's Aboriginal community (Mukwa Ode First Nations Consulting, 1992) -- to identify possible strategies police could employ to develop a more positive profile, enhance police-minority relations, and improve recruitment efforts. The result was numerous suggestions as to how the police could pursue a comprehensive strategy to work for, and in cooperation with, the minority groups they served. One innovative outcome of the reports was the creation of an Aboriginal Peacekeeping Unit, the first of its kind for any major urban Police Service in Canada, which was staffed by aboriginal officers and combined traditional peacekeeping and community policing to respond to the needs of Toronto's aboriginal people.[37]

On the basis of these studies, along with other consultations, the Metropolitan Toronto Police Services Board requested a Race Relations Action Plan. The plan, as outlined in the document "Moving Forward Together", gave priority to addressing the 174 recommendations made in various recent reports (Metropolitan Toronto Police, 1995). To this end, the report inventoried current and proposed action in the area of race relations within all aspects of policing and suggested points of coordination and a strategy to implement as yet unaddressed recommendations.

Use of force re-emerged as a key issue for policing in Toronto in the late 1990s, inflamed by the shooting of Edmond Yu, a paranoid schizophrenic who wielded a hammer on a TTC bus in 1997. Concerns over excessive force and discriminatory language used by police officers in describing the incident afterward were addressed by an internal committee that suggested better training for officers in use of pepper spray, batons and other weapons in high-risk situations. In general the committee found that officers needed to be trained to find ways to minimize the use of excessive force, and to use better judgment to evaluate when greater force was required (Toronto Police Service, 1997).

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[37] Toronto has the largest concentration of aboriginal people of any Canadian city. According to Doucet (1995:5), "Toronto is officially home to almost 40,000 Canadians of aboriginal background, though some street workers place the number closer to 65,000.". They are rather invisible however, in a city of 2.4 million.

3.2 An Encouraging or Frustrating Track Record?

A review of the history of reports, task force recommendations and structures created to address issues of ethnocultural and racial diversity for policing in Ontario is both encouraging and frustrating. On the one hand, these issues have gained attention from the provincial Solicitor General's office and senior management in police services. The **Toronto Police Service** in particular has had significant achievements with the community policing model, reaching out to minority groups and incorporating police-community interactions into policing practice. On the other hand, concerns about the use of force, the low level of ethnic and racial representation on police forces, and the need for sensitivity and race relations training continue to be issues despite repeated calls for change over the last 30 years. The challenge appears to be to make respect for diversity and an anti-racist agenda more than a marginalized area of special interest supported by a dedicated few. In the next section we identify how police services in the Greater Toronto Area address immigration and diversity in the communities they serve.

4.0 FINDINGS

Within all three police services examined in this study - the **Peel Regional Police**, the **York Regional Police** and the **Toronto Police Service** – the diversity of the local populations served by police has been formally acknowledged by senior management with the creation of some sort of administrative support structure. However, the degree to which resources are dedicated to these structures and the scope and type of activities engaged in do differ among them. We explore some of these differences in this section. Our findings also show that training and recruitment are useful locations for exploring policing and diversity issues in the Greater Toronto Area, as the literature suggested they would be. In addition to discussing structural support and training/recruitment, we describe the collaborative efforts of police services in the GTA to deal with the shared challenges of immigration and diversity.

4.1 Administrative Support Structures

4.1.1 Internal support structures

Officially race relations and addressing diversity were the responsibilities of everyone – civilian and officer – in all three of the police services studied. Dedicated resources, however, were directed toward facilitating the link between the community and police. Like school boards across the Greater Toronto Area, police services in this region tended to have some sort of administrative structure dedicated to issues of race relations and ethnocultural diversity. Organizationally, these units were the responsibility of a community police support branch alongside other proactive "policy" areas of policing (e.g. safety village, youth education, victim assault, family violence, labour) (see Figure 4).

The function of these units varied, but they were primarily a liaison between police and the community. As one officer put it: "The biggest challenge is being accepted as a partner, to gain trust of the community. Many groups support the police, but some still don't. Contacting and connecting is a challenge." Contacts were made at a grassroots level, through networking with social service agencies, community representatives and ethnocultural or minority organizations within the community; representing the police at community organized cultural events (parades, festivals, banquets, ceremonies, etc.) and on committees, councils and at conferences; and assisting in or delivering multicultural training to police and civilian staff. When and where these units were large enough, responsibilities such as investigating and resolving incidents of discrimination and racism were also part of the mandate, although all police services in this study now provide more of a support than a leading role in such investigations. As one police service representative explained, in the past the unit "…was more service oriented. We took reports when the community was less comfortable with a uniformed

Figure 4: Locating Race Relations and Diversity in the Policing Organization, Selected Municipalities of the Greater Toronto Area

TORONTO POLICE SERVICE:

Operational Support Command

⬇   ⬇

Community Policing Support

(other branches incl. Marine, Emergency Task
Force, Traffic Services, Public Safety, Parking
Enforcement, Video Services, Communication
Services, etc.)

➜ Community Programs (Crime Stoppers, Crime Prevention, Family Services, Youth Programs, School Crossings, Victim Services)

➜ Volunteer Resources (Auxiliary Resources, Volunteer Programs, Youth Corp)

➜ Community Relations (**Community Liaison**, Museum, Special Events, French Services, Aboriginal Peacekeeping Unit)

PEEL REGIONAL POLICE:

Field Support Services

⬇   ⬇

Community Support   (other branches incl. Explosives Disposal Unit, Traffic Services, Tactical & Rescue, Street Crime)

➜Labour Liaison

➜**Race and Ethnic Relations**

➜Family Violence

➜Youth Education

➜Safety Village
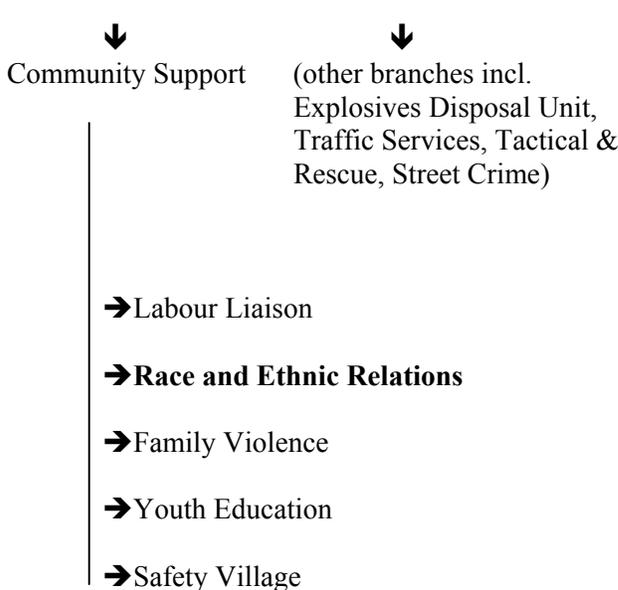
YORK REGIONAL POLICE:

Deputy Chief Administration

⬇   ⬇

Community Services   (other branches incl. Information Services, Financial Services, Human Resources, Professional Development)

➜Crime Prevention

➜**Inter-Community Relations**

➜Safety Village

➜School Programs

➜Victim Assistance
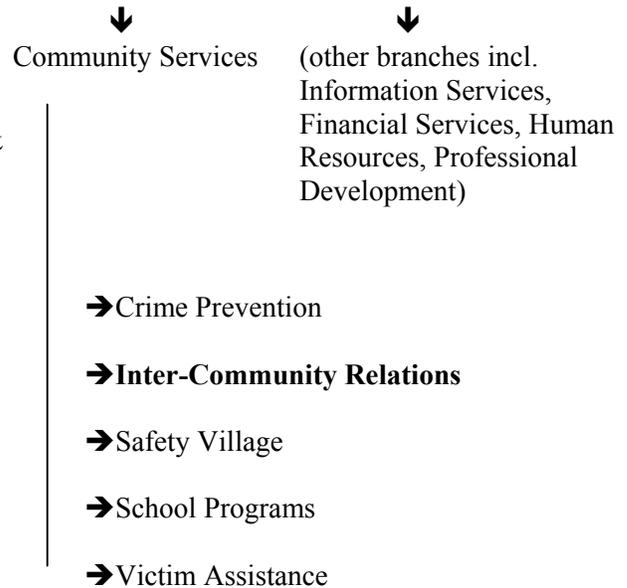
Source: Corporate organizational charts, interviews.

The **Toronto Police Service** had the most involved organizational structure to respond to issues of diversity and race relations. Policing in Toronto had contained a section with an evolving mandate in the race relations field since the early 1970s, though known by different names over the years. This section acted relatively independently of other police services and was largely operational (Metropolitan Toronto Police, 1995). By 1993 community efforts on several fronts were consolidated into a central unit

providing organizational support, training and material resources. The Community Police Support Unit, as it was known at the time of this study, included three parts: Community Programs (an extensive group of programs ranging from crime stoppers to family and youth services), Volunteer Resources (responsible for the auxiliary police), and Community Relations. Community Relations supported the Community Liaison Section,[38] as well as two special population units: French Services, serving the francophone community; and the innovative Aboriginal Peacekeeping Unit, which was run by a sergeant and three (aboriginal) constables.

The mandate of Toronto's Community Liaison Section (part of Community Relations) was to support front-line officers by monitoring key community and race relations issues that had a city-wide application (Toronto Police Services, 1999a). This section was divided into five subgroups (South & West Asian/Arabic; South & East Asian; Chinese; Italian/Greek; and French/Portuguese/Spanish) that were originally grouped on the basis of workload. With continued immigration some of these portfolios are stretched, with "one person in charge of everything from Bangladesh to Afghanistan" as one Toronto police officer explained. The section consisted of a culturally representative group of Community Relations Officers. These officers served as a liaison between the community and the police. They collected and distributed resource materials internally, such as a language list that identified individuals within the police service with language skills, including themselves; multilingual translations of police service publications; up-to-date information on race relations initiatives from all levels of government; and Community Profiles (information files) compiled with community assistance. They also distributed public education materials about policing to community groups and the media serving ethnocultural communities. The Community Liaison section shrank from a maximum of 30 people to only six in 1994/95 because of pressures to downsize non-uniformed personnel. Before 1994, Toronto's ten largest minority groups were internally represented among the officers in the Liaison Section.

The **Peel Regional Police** and **York Regional Police** had significantly smaller administrative support structures for community outreach. Peel was the first to follow

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[38] Community relations was largely focused on issues of diversity and race relations but was also responsible for the police museum and special events**.**

Toronto's lead, and created a Race and Ethnic Relations Bureau in 1976. This initiative was still in place, with largely the same mandate, as part of Peel's Community Support Branch (see Figure 4). In the past, the Bureau's two staff members were responsible for the investigation of cases, but at the time of this study the Bureau provided a police support and community outreach function. To assist in this work, one officer in each Division was being trained internally to act as a hate crime coordinator. The objective was to have these local officers link with the Bureau to implement Peel's hate crime procedure.

A formal recognition of changing demographics came to policing in York in 1987 with the creation of the Inter-Community Relations Unit. "Inter-Community" was a purposeful choice of words, and was meant to signal the inclusion of many diversities, including but not limited to race and ethnicity. As in Peel, this unit continued to operate as part of the Community Services Branch, providing outreach and support. Resources to the unit had been reduced, however, causing the unit to shrink from three officers at its start to two by 1995 and then to one officer after 1996. Support resources had been redirected to the Division level, where a CORE (community oriented response unit) program operated. According to York's Deputy Chief, the CORE unit was staffed by officers who targeted symptoms rather than causes (traditional response calls). One part of CORE included ethnic diversity, and had specialists in the groups that were present in significant numbers in particular districts of the region. They provided translated police materials and liaised with community groups.

4.1.2 External support: Committees

Citizen or community committees were another means used by police to address race relations and diversity issues at both a region/city wide level (Chief/Deputy Chief committees) and at the local division level (part of a community policing strategy). Committee structures typically received logistical support staff from the administrative support unit in place (discussed above), but community participants were expected to set their agendas. While police across the GTA cautioned that these committees were not a panacea for community concerns, they did provide a valuable and direct link between

community leaders and those in positions of power within the police. And from the police perspective, as one officer put it: "It gives the chief legitimate access to community leaders in a crisis. Don't have to wait for the extremists to come forward and say they represent the community. The chief has contacts that have been built up over time that he can go to."

The **Peel Regional Police** had a Peel Community – Police Race and Ethnic Relations Committee, with a mandate "to create a climate of respect, acceptance and understanding between the Peel Regional Police and the ethnocultural communities of Peel" (Peel Regional Police, 1998). The Race and Ethnic Relations Bureau provided logistical support and was represented on the committee. In the York Regional Police there was a Chief's Community Council (formerly the Community Liaison Committee) which had a nearly identical mandate and was also supported by and had representation from the Inter-Community Relations Unit. As a way to address racism in policing, both the Peel and York Committees had established cross-cultural workshops to introduce cultural groups to officers and reduce stereotypes.

The **Toronto Police Service** had a more extensive committee structure than either Peel or York, with three levels of consultative mechanisms. At the grassroots level there were Community Police Liaison Committees (CPLCs), which drew membership from a variety of local interests such as community groups, ratepayers, businesses, respected community leaders, and Division police officers. Every Division has at least one CPLC[39] within which local policing issues (e.g. crack house in the neighbourhood, traffic problems, etc.) were identified and strategies or solutions could be developed. Ideally, these committees were more than a pressure valve for community concerns; they were the implementation of a community policing model as working groups for specific neighbourhood concerns. To this end, CPLCs had been formally incorporated into the way policing was structured in Toronto (Metropolitan Toronto Police, 1995). The success of these committees varied with local leadership, however. As a Toronto police officer explained: "It works sometimes, but there are 17 different ways unit commanders

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[39] Where a Division had more than one C.P.L.C. it was because it wished to emphasize the uniqueness of neighbourhoods.

can run their operation. In practice it ranges from no more than info sharing to active community issue response planning – which is what it should be."

Committees to address race relations and policing across the city as a whole existed at the Deputy Chief level, in the form of five ethnospecific Consultative Committees: South/West Asian, Chinese, Black, French and Aboriginal.[40] These committees were independent from one another, and their main purpose was to bring issues of concern to their broad communities to the attention of the service. Community Relations Officers (from the Community Liaison Section of Community Policing Support) sat on these committees and functioned as logistical support and as a link between police and community organizations.

Finally, at the chief's level there were two advisory committees: the Chief's Advisory Council and the Chief's Youth Advisory Council. The advisory councils met periodically throughout the year, and included the chairs of the five consultative committees as well as representatives from Toronto's many other ethnocultural communities. Membership on the Youth Advisory Council was similarly diverse. Both committees had logistical support from the Community Police Liaison Section.

4.2 Police Training and Recruitment

Training and recruitment have long been seen as avenues to eradicate racism in policing, and are receiving more emphasis as organizational restructuring fails to bring about the core changes that many deem necessary. The argument is simple: the most equitable policing will come from a police service that is representative of the population it serves. To this end, even the **Toronto Police Service** with its nearly thirty year history of reaching out to visible minority communities fails to meet the mark. Although there were celebrated stories of overcoming bias in Toronto policing—increased minority recruitment and dedicated efforts to attract minority candidates were examples ("Police take major," 1997) -- tension and conflict still existed between the Toronto police and racial minority (and aboriginal) communities.

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[40] Efforts were underway to add an additional consultative committee for gay/lesbian issues.

Despite better minority hiring rates than other police services in Ontario, only 10 per cent of Toronto's total police force was of a racial minority (Duncanson, 1999). Debate also existed about the complexity of providing "equal access", given that comparatively fewer people from minority groups even applied to become police officers (Keung, 1998). Other issues contributing to a perception of poor race-relations in the **Toronto Police Service** included the inequitable treatment of and the use of force (particularly deadly force) against members of minority groups (Andrews, 1992: 13). Training and recruitment, then, are two related initiatives engaged in by police services throughout the Greater Toronto Region in order to lessen the distance between police and the communities they serve.

4.2.1 Police training

Race Relations training initiatives were used both at the new recruit level and to sensitize and retrain existing staff. Typically they were mandatory for both civilian staff and police. The goal was to have everyone associated with the police service overcome and recognize racist attitudes and behaviours. As one officer observed: "it is a challenge for officers, to overcome stereotypes or at very least not to *act* on them. In the race relations training I say I can't change people's opinions, but that is not part of the 'job'."

There was a wide range of programs under the "race relations banner". Cultural sensitivity training was less popular than it once was, but remained an approach used by police services in the Greater Toronto Area. This training took the form of a voluntary workshop, with someone from a minority group telling his/her story. It allowed participants to address assumptions and stereotypes about minority groups with which police may have little first hand experience outside their work situation. Such cultural workshops were often spearheaded by the citizen committee in place (e.g. a cultural workshop series), but were also used when a particular issue arose (e.g. a rash of hate crimes against one group). Although this type of training was voluntary, the biggest incentive for officers was career advancement. As one officer explained:

> Officers would sign up, and hear the individual story of someone from a
> visible minority community talk... You have to be careful not to present new

stereotypes about the communities though. We want to personalize things, and get away from the stereotypes officers have—Vietnamese are criminals, gangs; Tamils are terrorists, Tamil Tigers—I don't expect the officers to jump at it, but I do expect support from senior management, and it will go on the personnel files. They are always pushing for increased education, community work, and this would serve that goal. That is how we are going to sell it anyway.

Police services also had in-service race relations training that was mandatory for all civilian staff and police—although the scope varied among police services. In the **Peel Regional Police**, a four hour session on "Managing Diversity" was required for all new recruits within two weeks of hiring and introduced the dynamics of racism alongside existing police policies. According to the Race and Ethnic Relations Bureau staff who delivered the program, it was constructed as a "code of conduct" for new recruits. Likewise, **York Regional Police** had a mandatory four and a half hour diversity program that had to be completed by new recruits and by officers up for their yearly requalification. Originally the program focused on race relations, but in the late 1990s it was expanded to cover "human relations"—youth, age, gay/lesbian, income, hate crimes, etc.

The **Toronto Police Service** had a more extensive four-day Diversity Course,[41] to sensitize participants to a range of diversity elements including race relations, aboriginal and gay/lesbian issues. Training emphasized moral and ethical decision-making within policing, and was delivered to new recruits and existing police. Toronto had its own police college (C.O. Bick College) with the specialization, physical space and resources to provide more extensive training. While it was relatively easy to implement mandatory race relations training programs as a part of recruitment, it was logistically more difficult to reach existing police officers. Ironically, it was a problem both for small and large police forces. In a large force, officers in training were not "missed" in regular patrol work but the length of time required to get small groups through was overwhelming; in a small one, it was more difficult to find the financial and human resources to dedicate to such training. The removal of officers from their work was a more obvious problem.

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[41] The length and content of Toronto's Diversity Course had fluctuated since its beginning in the mid 1990s, starting with four days and moving at its peak up to 11 days of training.

In addition to the various race relations training programs officers received internally, all new recruits underwent some provincial training in race relations during their time in Basic Constable Training at the Ontario Police College. Here too, however, there were variations in the scope of training. Under the NDP government, race relations training was a mandatory component; under the Conservative government it was no longer mandated and had been scaled back. The policy discretion over race relations and policing was frustrating for some, who lamented that race relations training was not provided alongside and with the same emphasis as other police essentials such as use of force training. The Ontario Police College (OPC) also had a Race Relations and Adult Education Unit "…which ensures integration of race relations content into all OPC courses and provides support to other OPC programs in the areas of race relations and adult education theory and methodologies" (Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General, 1999). Formally, race relations was part of a basic training section on "contemporary issues", which included ethics, anti-racism, violence against women and community policing.[42] The College also provided senior and advanced training courses, although none focussed on race relations.

This absence of senior level race relations training was a problem for those officers who took positions in police race relations units (or the equivalent) around the Greater Toronto Area. Although police services throughout Ontario could look to the Toronto area for expertise, and officers from York and Peel regions could rely on the more extensive race relations training in Toronto, there was no training for mid-career officers who wanted to learn more about these issues—what one officer referred to as "train the trainer" courses. As a result, committed officers looked to workshops with race relations content outside of policing or to university correspondence courses to improve their skills.

Not only did the provincial government not provide leadership in the area of race relations training, but recent cutbacks at the federal level had also been disheartening for local police services concerned with this issue. The Canadian Centre for Police Race Relations in Ottawa, which had been a resource for race relations police officers across

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[42] Police constable training at the College included: federal and provincial law; evidence; traffic; use of force; communications; protocol; officer safety; and contemporary issues.

Canada, closed in April, 2000. The Centre had researchers on staff and functioned as an information source that collected and redistributed best practice examples, manuals, etc. on race relations policing.

4.2.2 Recruitment

While race relations training was considered essential to the education of existing and new police officers, many were concerned about the fact that few minority group members become police officers despite the great diversity found in the Greater Toronto Area. Recruitment was thus a political issue that was a focus for media attention and community concern. As one officer explained: "The question is why are you not attracting qualified candidates… I go to speak before new recruits and the vast majority are still white males." This lack of diversity in recruitment is especially critical in communities where minority groups comprised the majority.

The answer to "why" is complex. Some identied the barriers immigrants and minority groups face. First there were economic barriers. While a university education was not required, it was preferred for recruits and some couldn't afford it. Language barriers existed among those whose first language was not English. As one officer remarked, "Case law and legislation is dense enough if you have a solid grasp of English!" Social barriers were less measurable, but some suggested that parents' expectations for their children (to be doctors, lawyers, etc.) and the fact that some groups did not consider policing to be a laudable profession might also be factors in disproportionate recruitment results.

Finding a way to address this problem was equally complex. Officers involved in race relations described the constant recruitment that took place on a micro level with every community contact they made. Attracting local people to police in their own communities was considered especially important. Echoing police across the region, one officer said: "…when I go into the community, I always mention that police are hiring, and that if they are interested, or know of qualified candidates they should apply immediately… We are always hiring." Recruitment was also advertised within community media. Because traditional recruitment strategies had not been able to

redress the ethno-cultural imbalance in policing, the Toronto Police Service had targeted resources at attracting minorities. This approach had proven modestly successful, although some minority officers criticized it as creating the appearance "that you need special help to get in if you are a minority." The appearance of equality was crucial, as police struggled to balance the need to maintain standards with the need for representation. As one officer explained:

> We are told we need to be 'reflective of the community' but what is that? If we do become that, will it be better? Where do you draw the line? Does the census and the police service have to match? …How do you do this without changing the standards? We are vigilant with the standards. Selection is a process that is provincially standardized, so we couldn't change it if we wanted to. We bend over backward for people who apply… the idea being the more applications the better the chance of finding people that will fit.

Larger police services also saw auxiliary (civilian) policing as a way to attract individuals from minority groups. Auxiliary officers might not [yet] meet the qualifications for officer training, but they could wear a uniform (unarmed) and participate in large events such as parades, fairs, etc. The hope was that if minority recruits to the auxiliary stayed interested in policing they would make good candidates for the service later.

The problems might arise from a combination of the conservative nature of police as an organization and the structural barriers created by decades of white male dominated policing. Officers working in police race relations pointed to the gradual successes in attracting women officers in the last ten to fifteen years through legislative changes, changes in societal attitudes, and new hiring. They added that change also had to occur within policing and within society generally if minority officers were to join the ranks in significant numbers, but that it would take place slowly. As one senior officer stated:

> We strive to be more representative, more reflective of that diversity but it is still a problem. There are communities where policing is not accepted, and it is a struggle to recruit – as all GTA [police] services do. It will take a long time, generations, for that to change. But we are working on it. We do recruitment drives but the numbers just are not there. If we were more reflective of the community it would make problems easier to address so we see it as important.

4.3 Collaborations Among Greater Toronto Area Police Services

4.3.1 Council of Police Against Racism (COPAR)

Just as immigration was having an impact across the Greater Toronto Area, so too did policing and race relations issues extend across the region. In the absence of resources and support from provincial or federal levels of government, police officers working on race relations and diversity issues formed a regional support group of their own in 1998 called the Council of Police Against Racism, or COPAR for short. The idea was to encourage coordination and information sharing across the GTA, build race relations leadership and link resources through meetings and periodic membership conferences. Members of COPAR came from units with mandates of varying size and scope representing the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), the Ontario Police College, the Canadian Centre for Police Race Relations (until it closed), and the Hamilton-Wentworth, Halton, Peel, Toronto, York, Guelph, and Waterloo police services.   The impetus for the group came from Toronto, Peel and York race relations officers, who tried to bring together the current core group (above) as well as members from Durham, Niagara, South Simcoe, Barrie and Peterborough police services.[43]

COPAR's public launch event – police in full dress giving pins and flags to welcome international flights at Pearson Airport on the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21st) – was symbolic and garnered press coverage. After that, however, some of its members saw the group as floundering without the resources or focus to be anything more than a personal network. As one officer explained:

> COPAR is not effective – yet. It had a lot of energy at the beginning. But it is
> *another* thing we are doing, lost in the other jobs that need to be done since
> downsizing. I am not complaining, it is what is happening throughout
> governments everywhere. But we could be more effective, offer more
> support, be more proactive… the committee members are dedicated though.

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[43] Durham and Niagara participated in the first conference but had not been involved since then. Though there had been little interest from these police services, the original goal was to include the wider Toronto region so that problems could be addressed proactively, before race relations became a dominant issue.

Obtaining standing on diversity/multicultural committees at the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police was one on-going attempt to increase COPAR's influence – although as members of COPAR pointed out, the inactivity of these committees spoke to the limited amount of interest in race relations that existed beyond the Greater Toronto Area, where communities were more homogeneous. Other COPAR initiatives included a member conference planned for fall, 2000, and the lobbying of the Ontario Solicitor General to standardize race relations training in the province.

4.3.2 Combining efforts to tackle Asian organized crime

On an investigation level, police throughout the Greater Toronto Area also worked collectively. This was often necessary, as criminal activity did not respect municipal or regional boundaries. In 1977 police responded to requests from the Chinese community that police deal with crimes committed by Triad Society members (Toronto Police Service, 1999b). The initiative was originally known as the *Chinese Joint Force Operation*, and included the Toronto Police Service, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP). This was expanded in 1990 to include five police agencies: The Toronto Police Service, the RCMP, the OPP, York Regional Police and Peel Regional Police. At the time of this expansion the name was also changed to the *Combined Forces Asian Investigative Unit* (CFAIU).

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Policing is a unique municipal service. Given the nature of their work, police are invested with power and authority, and often interact with citizens in stressful and negative circumstances. Given the well-documented public concern over discriminatory attitudes and practices by police toward minority groups, the issue of delivery of service to immigrants is a politically charged one.

As this chapter has outlined, there has been a long history of studies, task forces, and reports from various levels of government examining issues of racism, race relations

and diversity in policing in the Greater Toronto Area, particularly in Toronto. Literature suggests that policies, training and recruitment are key areas where police have recognized issues of diversity. Yet despite widespread recognition of a problem and repeated organizational initiatives (as in the case of the **Toronto Police Service**), police continued to be criticized for not achieving the "changes at the core" necessary to make a difference. At one level there were concerns about poor communication between police and minority groups. At another more serious level, there were allegations of racism, which could take the form of negative bias and assumptions, harassment, and excessive use of force toward people from minority groups. Police services in the Greater Toronto Area were attempting to tackle these complex issues with race relations units that had been downsized. Their dedicated but thinly-spread officers provided a link between the community and the police. Moreover, these units functioned with very little leadership from the provincial or federal governments. As a result, they had formed local and regional structures of mutual support, such as the Council of Police Against Racism (COPAR). Race relations officers were quick to point out, however, that meeting the needs of diverse groups and tackling race relations issues were not the responsibilities of their units alone; they were the responsibilities of all officers on the street and of senior management.

Many considered community policing to be an effective way to bring about the core changes necessary. Because it was expected to increase community contact and raise the profile of diversity and race relations issues at the grassroots, some hoped that community policing would mean change that went beyond senior level policy directives that had little impact on the daily work of police officers. Others cautioned, however, that very little evaluation of community policing had been done, and thus that there was no convincing evidence as to whether or not community policing achieved more than good public relations on race relations issues. Efforts to include the community in some form of consultative mechanism that went beyond the Chief or Deputy Chief level, such as the **Toronto Police Services'** five ethnospecific consultation committees or their Community Police Liaison Committees at the Division level, are good examples of what might be possible in this area.

Training and recruitment were other significant ways to address race relations and diversity issues in policing. With no provincially standardized approach to race relations training, the scope and level of such training is at the discretion of individual police services. The **Toronto Police Service** was the largest police force in the Greater Toronto Area, so it is not surprising that it had managed to invest more resources into training than had other services. It shared its knowledge through collaborations across the region for the training of race relations officers. The large size of the Toronto unit made re-training/upgrading a daunting task, however. By contrast, race relations training was by necessity of much more limited scope in the smaller **York Regional Police** and **Peel Regional Police**.

Recruitment remained the most substantial obstacle for policing in the Greater Toronto Area. There was a substantial lack of ethnocultural and racial representation among police officers in the region, and officers interviewed for this study expected that it would take "generations" to redress the situation. Understanding the causes and possible solutions for these recruitment problems calls for a separate study. It is important to note, however, that for the communities adversely affected by discrimination, bias and racism at the hands of police, as well as a slow pace of change in training and recruitment, are by no means acceptable. As one officer reflected:

> Keeping the lines of communication open is important, but we need to walk the walk. We need to listen, be prepared to make organizational changes if necessary. We will get the police service people we want one way or another—political pressure, community pressure will ensure that.

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CHAPTER 7: PUBLIC HEALTH

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Public health has been less studied for its impacts on the immigrant settlement process than have some other municipal services. Nonetheless, the types of programs provided by public health units makes it a service of considerable importance to individual immigrants and the communities in which they live. Ontario legislation assigns these programs to three broad categories: 1) the early detection of cancer and the prevention of chronic diseases, injuries and substance abuse; 2) the promotion of family health (including sexual health, reproductive health and child health); and 3) the detection, control and/or prevention of infectious diseases (a responsibility that includes monitoring food and water safety).

Public health differs from primary health care in being concerned principally with the well-being of whole communities rather than of particular individuals, and with preventing rather than curing disease. It originated as a municipal service in the nineteenth century, both in England and in Canada, in response to the numerous epidemics of infectious diseases that afflicted the densely populated cities of the time (Hancock, Pouliot and Duplessis, 1990: 190). Toronto got its first Board of Health in 1834 to deal with an outbreak of cholera (Royal Commission on Metropolitan Toronto, 1975: 73), and its first permanent Board of Health in 1884. Under successive Medical Officers of Health it expanded its activities to include the pasteurization of milk, immunization against infectious diseases, and studies of conditions (like housing, poverty and working conditions) that contributed to the spread of disease or posed other threats to health in the city (Hancock, Pouliot and Duplessis, 1990: 193).

The importance of public health units declined as community sanitation, housing conditions and work safety standards improved and as clinical medicine became increasingly successful at combating disease. It grew again in the 1970s, however, as these units (with Toronto's taking the lead) began to place increased emphasis on research, health education and promotion, community development, and advocacy directed toward the social and political determinants of health. The new paradigm sought

"to create physical and social environments supportive of health and aim[ed] to strengthen communities, as well as help people to develop their personal health skills and reorient health services toward prevention and community-based care" (Hancock, Pouliot and Duplessis, 1990: 193, 201).   Such activities are likely to become even more important as governments seek ways to reduce pressures on and cut costs in the primary health care system. For example, an Ontario government document observes that:

> Studies have repeatedly shown that the broad determinants of health such as level of income, social status, education, employment opportunities, work place environment, physical environment and family/friend supports have as much or more to do about influencing health than does the presence of health care practitioners and facilities (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, 2000a).

In carrying out their many responsibilities, public health workers perform both a community relations and a public education function. They must first gain the understanding and trust of members of the public with whom they deal if they are to do their jobs effectively, and they must be able to convey information (some of it technical or legal) in ways that are easily grasped by those most likely to benefit from it. They must also convince community leaders (elected officials, staff of other municipal agencies) how the work they do contributes to community well being. These tasks become more challenging as the community becomes more ethnically diverse "because of differences in concepts of disease and illness, practices and rituals in treatment of health problems, dietary habits, and attitudes toward health care agencies and providers" (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 1988: 18).

2.0 KEY ISSUES

Discussions of immigrants and health in the literature and in the media tend to focus on four concerns: the health status of new immigrants and refugees, the impacts of immigration on the Canadian health care system, mental health, and family health. While these concerns tend to focus on the relationship between immigrants and the primary health care system (hospitals and medical practitioners), they also challenge municipal public health agencies to adopt new programs or adapt existing ones both to address

health problems that arise in immigrant communities, and to find ways to address or allay public fears about health problems that the media associate with immigrants in general or with some immigrant groups in particular.

2.1 The Health Status of New Immigrants and Refugees

There is a discrepancy between what is known about immigrant health and the way immigrant health issues are depicted in the media. According to a 1996 Statistic Canada report, there are fewer chronic health problems (e.g. sore joints, allergies, hypertension) among recent immigrants than there are among people born in Canada, although immigrants tend to become more like the Canadian-born in this respect the longer they stay in Canada ("Immigrants healthier…," 1996).   Another study has found that immigrants, particularly those from non-European countries, have longer life expectancies and fewer disability problems than Canadian-born individuals (Chen, Wilkins and Ng, 1996).   Immigration officials attributed these differences to 1) the likelihood that people would be more inclined to immigrate if they were in good health and 2) the medical screening that immigrants have to undergo before they enter Canada.

Such evidence suggests that immigrants may be in better health on average than the Canadian-born, at least in their earlier years of settlement. Nonetheless, media reports often convey the impression that immigrants pose a threat to the health of Canadians, or to the communities in which they live. One reason for the discrepancy is that studies like those cited above look at chronic diseases and long term health patterns of immigrants whereas media reports tend to associate newcomers with an increase in or the reappearance of serious infectious diseases - principally tuberculosis but also AIDS, the bubonic plague, and Hepatitis B (Francis, 1999b; Harper, 1999; Crawford, 1994; Papp, 1996; Monsebraaten, 1998).

The occurrence of infectious diseases is most frequently identified with refugees, who may not undergo medical screening either before coming to Canada or after they arrive.   It clearly presents a challenge to public health units, for which the prevention or control of such diseases has been a long-standing responsibility. These units must decide not only how to approach immigrant communities that may be at risk, but also how to

deal with the fears and negative stereotyping that health concerns may arouse among local politicians or the public at large.

2.2 The Impacts of Immigration on Canada's Health Care System

Concerns about the health hazards associated with immigrant arrivals sometimes help to fuel accusations that immigrants and refugees impose additional burdens on Canada's health care system, and therefore on Canadian taxpayers. One journalist who has frequently attacked Canada's immigration and refugee policies has prescribed better screening procedures and public health measures (like inspection of food handling facilities) by both federal and local authorities (Francis, 1999a; 1999c; 1999d). Her contention is that immigration has added to the health-care costs borne not only by the federal and provincial governments, but also by municipal public health departments.

As is the case with research on the health status of immigrants, research on the health care costs arising from immigration fails to support the more alarmist views found in the media. According to a 1996 study based on Ontario Health Survey data, the percentage of immigrants and aboriginals who had visited a general practitioner's office during the twelve months preceding the survey was slightly higher than the percentage of people in these categories, but the rates of visits to specialists' offices were quite similar and the rates of hospital emergency department visits were often lower among immigrants than rates for the Canadian-born[44] (Wen, Goel and Williams, 1996). Differences remained unchanged after controlling for health status (as measured by self-reported health problems), although many of the differences were not statistically significant because of small sample size.

An alternative perspective on the immigrant/health care relationship is that immigrants may make too little use of available health services, either because other concerns (like securing the basic necessities of life) take priority or because (in the case of illegal immigrants) they fear that contact with health care providers will expose them or family members to investigation or deportation (American Academy of Pediatrics,

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[44] The rates were higher for aboriginals, for reasons not discussed in the article.

1997). Lack of information about or awareness of serious health issues may also be a factor. For example, one study of 513 adults over 55, of whom 68 per cent had been born outside Canada, found that individuals whose native language was not English were less knowledgeable about cancer than their English-speaking counterparts (Fitch et al., 1997). Whatever the reason, failure to seek treatment for potentially serious illness not only poses a risk to personal well-being but also (in the case of some illnesses) may endanger other family members or the general public.   Municipal public health units can help to reduce these problems by providing immigrants with information about potential threats to health and where to seek treatment.

2.3 Mental Health

Discussions of mental health issues arising in immigrant communities are usually more sympathetic to the immigrant experience than are discussions of the impacts of immigrants on the health of Canadian society or the costs of health care delivery. They focus attention both on the residual effects on mental health of traumatic events (torture and rape, killings, forced marches, separation from family and friends, etc.) experienced in countries of origin, and on the stressors that immigrants experience in trying to adjust to their new country (Green, 1999; "Specialized counsellors...," 1995). Such stresses may arise from having to adapt to a different language and culture, from unemployment, or from low income.

Stress may also attend the process of obtaining help with mental health problems. For example, some immigrants may be reluctant to use mental health services because of the shame attached to mental illness in their own communities or in the community-at-large, because they are afraid it will stigmatize them in the eyes of Canadians, or because (as is the case with the Chinese population) they consider hospitals to be places only for the very ill and the dying (Green, 1999; MacKinnon, 1997; Williams, 1999). There may be additional stress associated with having to interact in Canadian settings with health professionals who are members of other ethno-cultural communities that have recently been looked on as "the enemy," and who may be associated with the murderers of family members or friends (Green, 1999; Murray, 1997; Pollanen, 1996). Inter-group tensions,

characterized by one writer as "'the dark side of multiculturalism'" (Pollanen, 1996), may even lead individuals to refuse counselling from professional mental health workers whose origins link them to an enemy camp (Green, 1999).   Public health workers who can speak the language of or trace their origins to the same country as their clients may thus encounter difficulties in trying to work with individuals who regard them with hostility or suspicion because of their backgrounds.

2.4 Family Health

Many of the stresses associated with immigration are likely to be experienced most acutely in family settings, where they often take the form of conflicts or tensions between spouses and between generations. Immigrant women present a special challenge to mainstream and public health workers because they are often isolated in their homes and tied down by family responsibilities. If they work they are likely to earn significantly less than immigrant men, to put in long hours, and to have to juggle work with child-care responsibilities (Anderson, 1998; Tang, 1999). Thus it is often difficult for them to find the time to take language courses. According to Anderson (1998), women suffer from more chronic and disabling diseases than men, and tend to be responsible not only for looking after their own health but for monitoring the health needs of their families. Nonetheless, they are often constrained by cultural and linguistic barriers from seeking outside help or advice.

A study conducted in Gloucester, Ont., found that immigrant women will express a variety of health-related concerns when given the opportunity to do so (Murty-Mano, 1998). Some of their concerns are directly related to family responsibilities (i.e. vaccination, nutrition, medication and emergency services, poison control, the role of physicians and of the police in the community); others are more personal (family planning, the nature of various illnesses, contraception, screening for breast and cervical cancer). Many of these concerns fall within the scope of work done by public health agencies.

The impact of immigration on the physical and mental health of immigrant children has also received a good deal of attention. There are practical issues that can be

addressed by public health units in a straightforward way. For example, some foreign-born children have not been immunized adequately or have received little or no dental care in their home countries. Immigrant adolescents living in North York, Ontario, for example, were found to have poorer oral health than their Canadian-born counterparts, and made less use of dental services (Locker, Clarke and Murray, 1998). Their oral health improved with length of stay in Canada, however, a change attributed to public health dental programs delivered to students between the ages of 4 and 14 in that municipality.

Assessments of the type and severity of other kinds of health problems experienced by immigrant children have yielded mixed results.   According to one survey of the literature, data from treatment settings or from small community-based samples have suggested that immigrant and refugee children experience greater risk of alcohol abuse, drug addiction, delinquency, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and higher levels of psychopathology than their host country counterparts (Beiser, Shik and Curyk, 1999). On the other hand, according to these same authors, a larger-scale community survey conducted in Ontario found the rate of psychiatric disorder among immigrant children to be no higher than among native-born Canadians. "Inconsistent results are not necessarily invalid results," write these authors (1999: 3). "They do, however, challenge conventional wisdom about resettlement such as *'the stress of resettlement creates distress that inevitably results in maladaptation.'"* Even poverty in immigrant families seems to pose a less serious threat to the mental health of children in those families than to the children of Canadian-born parents in the same socio-economic group, as indicated by their lower rates of emotional and behavioral disorders (Beiser, Shik and Curyk, 1999).

There are some indications that direct participation in the immigration process may affect the way children develop. A U.S. study found that adolescents born in the U.S. to immigrant parents suffered poorer health and engaged in riskier behaviors than children who had been born in other countries and moved to the U.S. with their parents (Carolina Population Center, 1998). The longer the time since arrival in the U.S., however, the poorer was the adolescents' physical health and the greater the likelihood of their engaging in risky behaviors. The study took account of such measures as general

health, missed school due to health or emotional problems, learning difficulties, obesity, asthma and health risk behaviors involving sexual intercourse, unprotected sex, delinquency, violence and substance use.

Such findings suggest that it is not necessarily the period leading up to and immediately following the act of immigrating that poses the greatest challenges to the physical and emotional health of members of immigrant families. Stresses may arise or persist over a considerable period of time because of the complex adjustments involved in the process of settling into communities and because of the tensions that the new situation creates for intra-family relationships. Anything that local agencies (both municipal government and community-based) do to relieve those stresses may help to reduce the costs of dealing with the consequences of physical or emotional health problems later on.

2.5 The Multi-dimensional Challenge to Improve Communications

A review of available information about immigrants and health leads to the conclusion that the overriding challenge facing public health agencies is to find ways to communicate with a variety of publics about the work they do and about the importance of that work both to the immigrant settlement process and to the communities in which settlement occurs. At the forefront of this challenge is the need to communicate with immigrants themselves about a large range of health-related issues. Public health (and other) agencies can address this challenge in several ways: by translating written materials into the different languages spoken in their communities, by employing interpreters to help increase understanding between public health workers and their clients, and by engaging staff or using volunteers who can talk to clients in their own languages.

Improving communication between immigrant communities and public health workers is not just a matter of breaking down language barriers, however. Cultural habits and practices influence immigrant attitudes toward health issues and the ways in which immigrants are likely to respond, at least initially, to contacts with public health workers. Cultural misunderstandings can easily arise between immigrant clients and even the most

sympathetic service providers (Maharaj, 1997; Murray, 1999). Beiser, Shik and Curyk, (1999:4) observe, for example, that "Compared to majority culture populations, Latino women tend to resist family planning, Mexican-Americans are more dilatory about immunizing children, foreign-born Black women are less likely to make ante- or post-natal visits, and many immigrant groups use fewer health services in general". Adherence to the beliefs and practices of traditional medicine may make clients resistant to or skeptical of the practices that public health workers are trying to promote. Public health units must decide whether to try to overcome culturally-based constraints or accept and work within them, depending on how they view their impacts on public health objectives.

Social attitudes held by both workers and clients may also influence the ability to achieve a successful relationship. In addition to the obvious barriers to communication caused by racial prejudice or discrimination (on the part of either the worker or the client, depending on the ethnic composition of the workforce) there may be barriers raised by differences in age, gender, social class and professional status (Tang, 1999).

In addition to finding effective ways to communicate with immigrant communities, public health workers have to convey the challenges they face to the political bodies on which they depend for financial support. As the municipal employees who are most likely to meet immigrants in their homes and hear about their day-to-day problems, public health nurses and volunteers are well-placed to help build links between immigrant families and other community agencies, and to promote community understanding of the needs and problems that exist in immigrant communities. Undertaking this task may involve efforts to counteract negative media reports or political pronouncements about immigration.

Finally, public health agencies have to prepare their own staff members to function effectively in an ethnoculturally diverse environment by helping them to overcome prejudices or misconceptions that could interfere with their ability to work sympathetically with clients. Even staff members who are well-disposed toward working with a diverse population are likely to have only partial understanding of the different value systems and cultural practices they may encounter in trying to do their jobs. In the

next section we turn to the historical and institutional context for municipal public health provision in Ontario, taking into account the extent to which it has provided public health workers with the preparation and support they need to function effectively in ethnoculturally diverse settings.

3.0 HISTORICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The public health units looked at in this study - **York Region Health Services**, **Peel Health** and **Toronto Public Health** - were three of the 37 district health boards operating throughout Ontario at the time of this study. These boards were of two types. Some (like Toronto's) consisted of elected city councillors and council-appointed community representatives; others were made up entirely of persons elected to municipal councils in the districts they served. A Medical Officer of Health, who acted as the board's executive officer and reported both to the Board of Health and to the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, heads each type of board. Boards of Health receive half their funds from local property taxes. In the case of the three boards looked at here, these local funds came from City of Toronto Council, the governmental body to which **Toronto Health** reported, and from the regional councils of Peel and York, (which acted as the Boards of Health in those regions).

Also operating at the municipal level in Ontario were District Health Councils, organizations described by the provincial government as providing "the local voice in health planning" (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, 1999a). While these councils includes representatives of local health departments, as well as people who delivered health and health-related social services, elected local officials, and community representatives, they were appointed and fully funded by the provincial government. They advised mainly on issues related to the provision of mainstream medical care. From the standpoint of public health departments, perhaps their most important role was in providing a way to channel emerging community health issues to mainstream health providers. Both the Toronto District Health Council and the Halton-Peel District Health Council had identified challenges posed by rapidly growing immigrant populations in

their reports on the state of primary health care in their communities (Toronto District Health Council, 1999; Halton-Peel District Health Council, 1999).

Public health was one of the services for which the Government of Ontario said it was making municipal governments fully responsible in its early announcements about municipal restructuring in 1996. Before that time the government had paid 75 per cent of the costs of all Ontario public health boards except for the six that served the municipalities of Metropolitan Toronto. These had successfully resisted efforts by the provincial government, begun in the 1960s, to convince them to amalgamate health services into a single, metropolitan-wide unit (Ontario Ministry of Treasury, Economics and Intergovernmental Affairs, 1978: 46-49). Because the boards refused to amalgamate, the government said that it would pay only 25 per cent of approved costs. By the time it announced its plans for restructuring, however, it was paying 60 per cent of provincially-approved costs incurred by the Metro boards.

In keeping with its restructuring program, the province provided virtually no support to local boards of health in 1997. In 1998, however, it decided to pay 50 per cent of the costs of all municipal health units. Municipal staff suggested two reasons for the government's change of heart: government finances had improved, and the government had realized that its lack of financial involvement weakened its ability to insist that boards of health adhere to the detailed standards for service delivery prescribed in provincial legislation. The government introduced those standards in 1983 when it replaced the 1883 *Public Health Act* with a *Health Protection and Promotion Act* that required all municipal health units to provide a broad set of core programs at a specified level of service (Hancock, Pouliot and Duplessis, 1990: 193). It strengthened them in a new set of Mandatory Health Programs and Service Guidelines issued in 1998. The revised standards were of two types: *General Standards*, which included Equal Access, Health Hazard Investigation, and Program Planning and Evaluation; and *Program Standards*, which itemized and described the specific programs that public health boards were expected to provide (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Public Health Branch, 2000b).

The discussion of the "equal access" standard said little about how boards should aim to fulfill it, in contrast to the more detailed discussions of ways in which boards were expected to carry out "Health Hazard Investigation" and "Program Planning and Evaluation." It required only that Boards of Health ensured 1) that the programs and services they provided were, "whenever practical and appropriate", accessible to people in special groups for whom barriers exist (with barriers defined to include "literacy level, language, culture, geography, social factors, education, economic circumstance, and mental and physical ability"), 2) planned facilities and selected sites for mandatory programs that were barrier free and 3) engaged in ongoing community processes to identify needs, recommend approaches and monitor progress toward achieving access to mandatory programs (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Public Health Branch, 2000b). These requirements left local boards of health with a large degree of discretion to decide how they would try to satisfy them.

Complicating the difficulties that local health units faced in deciding what to do about the "equal access" standard was a Ministry of Health statement that:

> Public health delivers its programs and services on a population health approach. This means that programs are targeted at either the public as a whole e.g. physical activity, dangers of second-hand smoke, or targeted sub-groups of the population such as expectant mothers (pre-natal health), high school students (drinking and driving) or women between ages of 50-70 (breast cancer screening) (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, 2000a).

This statement seemed to preclude, or at least discourage, the development of specialized programs to address issues, like language barriers and cultural differences, that were not directly related to specific health concerns. Thus it was inconsistent with a statement included in the Ministry's "Requirements and Standards" for Equal Access that "Broadening access may require adjusting existing programs, promoting accessibility and developing special programs including special educational materials, tailored service delivery and active outreach" (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, 2000a). At the very least, it increased the uncertainty as to how much or how little public health units had to do to satisfy the Ministry in this regard.

The Ministry's Program Standards specified a large number of programs that public health units were "required to provide" (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Public Health Branch, 2000b). They included programs aimed at the prevention, early detection and treatment of chronic diseases, family-related programs that embraced sexual health, reproductive health and child health; and a broad range of measures to respond to outbreaks and control the transmission of infectious diseases. The Ministry document also left open the possibility that "boards of health will deliver additional programs and services in response to local needs."

Missing from the Ministry requirements was any reference to mental health, an issue that has not only received considerable attention in the literature on immigrants but that has also been identified as an important reason for homelessness and dependency on social supports. There was nothing there to prevent public health units from addressing this issue, however, either by setting up a specific program to deal with it or in the process of carrying out their regular duties.

One provincial program that was particularly likely to bring public health workers into contact with a large number and variety of immigrant households was the *Healthy Babies, Healthy Children (HBHC)* program introduced in 1998. It was based on the philosophy that "Early childhood experiences make a critical and longer-term difference in children's early development and in their health and well-being during childhood and as adults" (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, 1999b). While fully funded by the province, the program used municipal public health nurses and other service agencies to monitor the health and progress of children from the prenatal stage to 6 years of age (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, 1998). Its aim was to detect problems in their early stages, and to provide additional supports (information, home visitors, referral to appropriate agencies) to families with special needs. Given the ethnocultural diversity of the Greater Toronto Area, the objectives of this program added to the pressures on public health units to find ways to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers to communication.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Variations in Organizational Structure and Local Political Context

While boards of health were expected to maintain standards and follow guidelines established by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, differences in the way the three GTA boards in this study had defined and organized their responsibilities attested to their having some latitude to decide how to fulfill their mandate.   The organizational structure adopted by the new City of Toronto was unique in the province. The city council chose to appoint a 13-member Board of Health consisting of six city councillors, six citizen representatives (one from each of the former municipalities) and a representative of the Toronto District School Board. This board reported to city council, which hired its staff, who functioned collectively as a department of the city government. In Peel and York regions, on the other hand, the regional councils managed health services themselves; there was no mechanism for involving citizens. The three units even had different names: **Toronto Public Health**; **Peel Health**; and **York Region Health Services**.

Of the three units studied, **Toronto Public Health** had the most comprehensive program, which contained services that clearly went beyond the requirements for compliance with Ministry of Health guidelines. For example, it described its Environmental Protection office as "the only one of its kind in Canada as part of a municipality" (Toronto Public Health, 1998).   It also operated a needle exchange program, in collaboration with community agencies, to reduce HIV and other diseases among injection drug users. **Peel Health** also operated a needle exchange program, and was closely involved in the region's attempts to address problems of homelessness.

Our ability to describe and compare the workings of these three health units was hampered by the refusal of **York Region Health Services** staff, claiming a heavy workload, to participate in the study. As far as we could determine, however, the elected councils of the three jurisdictions were similar in not giving high priority to immigrant needs and issues in their statements about and attitudes toward public health. A theme sometimes expressed by politicians in all three districts was that the federal government should assume all or a larger share of the costs of all social services provided to

immigrants and refugees; that municipal governments should not have to pay these costs ("Immigration reform …," 1998; "Misplaced anger," 1999).   There were also demands from local politicians that the federal government should impose tougher health checks on immigrants and refugees entering Canada both to guard against tuberculosis and to shift the costs away from local public health units (Dexter, 1997).

There were differences nonetheless in the extent to which the three governments and their public health units had acknowledged that ethno-cultural diversity presented unique challenges to public health workers. **Toronto Public Health** had institutionalized a commitment to the goal of equal access by appointing a Multicultural Health Consultant. That individual hoped to put the city on the national and international maps for its efforts to promote access and equity in program delivery.   These efforts built on a policy of the former city's Board of Health, introduced in the late 1970s, to emphasize community development approaches to health problems. By 1990 the former City of Toronto already had ten full-time community health workers, one of them responsible for multicultural health issues, and had helped to establish "a multicultural health coalition that … swiftly attained provincial and even national prominence as a leader and resource for many different cultural groups as they deal with health and sick-care system problems" (Hancock, Pouliot and Duplessis 1990, 197).

Staff members at **Peel Health** worked with six community development workers and two community development officers, one of whom was responsible for Equal Access. One of their responsibilities was to a) promote understanding of the issues in ethno-cultural communities; b) help those communities identify their own issues; and c) develop strategies to resolve them. *Peel Health's Community Development Strategy – The Next Ten Years,* approved in 1999, reaffirmed community development as an important aspect of the planning, development and delivery of all programs and services. There was some question, however, as to how far the regional council was willing to go to support the agency's efforts to improve its services to ethno-cultural communities. The council did not provide its departments with translation services, for example; individual departments had to contract for these on their own.

As far as we could determine, the **York Health Services Department** had not yet begun to address issues of equal access or community development.

The Access and Equity Program outlined in **Toronto Public Health's** business plan for 2000 had two explicit goals: 1) "to make **Toronto Public Health** programs, services and resources … equitable and accessible for all populations/communities in Toronto, and 2) "in collaboration with partners, [to] work to ensure access to 'determinants of health' for all populations/communities in Toronto" (Toronto Public Health, 2000a). The statement later described "the conditions that determine health and prevent illness" to include "safe and stable environments, safe and nutritious foods, adequate income, education, shelter, peace, equity and social justice." It also identified the larger determinants of health that impact disproportionately [and, by implication, negatively] on some ethno-racial communities to be "racism, poverty, low education and unemployment" (Toronto Public Health, 2000a).

In trying to fulfill access and equity objectives, public health staff members could draw support from Toronto City Council's formal commitment to promoting access and equity (see Chapter One). Nonetheless, some staff members complained about a lack of support from city politicians. According to one, "Issues having to do with immigrants and refugees are still being marginalized. People find it difficult to accept that immigration is a positive thing; in general they see it as negative." A front line worker put it more bluntly: "They need to come to see the issues first hand. They make decisions based on their budgeting concerns. They don't have to see the impacts of those decisions on families and children."

In York Region there was hope that the effort to develop a Human Services Strategy (discussed in Chapter One) would result in some form of council commitment to make regional services, including those delivered by **York Region Health Services**, more accessible. At the time of our study, however, most of the political pressure for immigrant-sensitive policies in health and other social services came from a member of regional council who was trying to impress on fellow council members that they should not wait until problems arose before deciding how to respond to the region's growing diversity. He maintained that councillors and staff (especially staff) were generally

supportive of his efforts. "The only problem is the concern with money. Downloading has cost York tens of millions of dollars. It's difficult to launch new initiatives."

Interviews pointed to a discrepancy between local politicians and public health staff in the way they viewed immigrant-related health issues, or at least in the priority they assigned to them. While politicians were more likely to focus on highly visible (i.e. media-publicized) issues, such as the health threats attributed to some immigrant groups, health workers tended to emphasize issues affecting a broader spectrum of the immigrant population (such as the isolation of immigrant women), or to stress the factors that either cause illness or help it to spread within the population. Thus while **Toronto Public Health** had carried out special studies of the incidence of TB in some ethnic communities, its staff tried to put the issue in a broader context. In the words of one staff member:

> Decision-makers often have little understanding of the complexity of the issues we deal with. It's not just a matter of dealing with TB. Health is related to housing, to employment, etc.

Supporting this observation was a 1994 newspaper account pointing out that only half of Toronto's cases of TB in 1994 were immigrants; the rest were Canadian born people who lived on the street (Crawford, 1994).

The provincial government's municipal restructuring program was often given as a reason why public health units had not done more to meet the challenge of diversity, or why the city or regional councils were not more supportive of programs that would help them to be so. At the time of our study, **Toronto Public Health**, like other city agencies and departments, was preoccupied with the tasks of integrating the management structures of six disparate local health boards into a single unit and extending or harmonizing programs across the city. As a result of amalgamation, **Toronto Public Health** was the fifth largest public health unit in North America, with over 1400 employees. Its 1999 budget of $78.3 (down from $83.5 million in 1998) constituted 1.4 per cent of the total city budget.[45]

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[45] Policing, by contrast, absorbed 9.3 per cent, and was the only service operated by an appointed board whose funding had increased over the previous year.

A document outlining the Board of Health's programs and priorities for 2000 suggested that Toronto was falling short of meeting the government's "equal access" requirement because of the difficulties of reconciling the different practices of the former municipalities (Toronto Public Health, 2000a). It also pointed out that the restructured **Toronto Public Health** served a population coming from 200 countries and speaking 160 languages and dialects. Moreover, 30 per cent of that population spoke neither English nor French at home, an increase of 22 per cent since 1991.

Such figures highlighted the challenges the department faced in trying to fulfill its access and equity objectives. Nonetheless, some staff members suggested that amalgamation had had some benefits for the delivery of public health to the Toronto population. It had brought staff from the former municipalities together at one table, for example, and it had meant that people in some of the former suburbs were now receiving services (like home visitors) they had not had before.

Despite the constraints that amalgamation and weak council support has placed on the ability of **Toronto Public Health** to implement access and equity initiatives, that unit's relatively large budget, ability to build on existing programs, a diverse staff, and longer experience with operating in an ethnically-diverse community has given it advantages over the suburban regions.   Toronto's suburban neighbours were at different and earlier stages in their efforts to develop access and equity policies. **Peel Health** was more active and more advanced in its efforts to do so; **York Region Health Services** had barely begun to look at the issues.

4.1.1 The role of the province

Despite the importance of provincial standards in determining the work programs of public health units, persons interviewed for this study typically perceived the provincial government as a remote and sometimes negative influence on their efforts to make public health more accessible to immigrants. They viewed the province's withdrawal of support from or lack of interest in multicultural and race relations policies as hindrances to efforts to make a case for such programs with local councils. Cuts in provincial government support to community-based organizations meant increased

demands on public health agencies from those organizations or from their clients. Cuts in support for municipal and regional programs had resulted in staff reductions or constraints on new hirings, which not only meant increased workloads for existing staff but also made it more difficult to hire new staff, including persons with the varied backgrounds or experience that would help them deal with linguistic and cultural differences. Moreover, restructuring had given municipal governments increased responsibility for basic infrastructure (roads, water, sewers, hospitals), to which they tended to give higher priority than they did to social and community services. These problems seemed to be particularly acute in the rapidly-growing suburban regions.

4.2 Overcoming Linguistic and Cultural Barriers

One provincial program that did command approval from public health workers, even though it added to their workload, was the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children (HBHC) program initiated in 1998. By requiring public health units to monitor the well-being of all children from 0 to 6, this program implied the need for frequent interactions between public health workers and all local families with small children. Thus it challenged such units to find ways to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers to effective communication between public health workers and parents who met the program criteria.

Toronto Public Health was best prepared to meet this challenge because it already had a team of paid home visitors, all parents themselves, who had provided family support services in some (though not all) of Metro's six municipalities before amalgamation. This team included persons from at least 34 language groups. Lacking this type of infrastructure, **Peel Health** had to recruit family visitors and attract volunteers to work specifically in the HBHC program.[46] It also worked with community based organizations to prepare a compendium of information for service workers about the larger ethno-cultural groups living in Peel region. The aim of this document was "to capture many of the common or historical traditions that staff may need to be sensitive to

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[46] Unlike Peel, Toronto Health could not use volunteers for this purpose because of an existing union contract.

when working with newcomer families." It also sought "to raise awareness [among Public Health Nurses, Family Visitors, Hospital Staff and Physicians] around the need for cultural sensitivity and responsiveness with the newcomer population." It emphasized, however, that there could be large variations within as well as among groups (Peel Health Department, 1998).

The document included a general discussion of the kinds of settlement-related issues that public health workers might come across, or that might affect their clients' thinking about and attitudes toward the HBHC program. It also contained brief discussions of the cultural values held by various ethnic groups toward pregnancy and parenting, issues related to language, religious faith, and family relationships, and the best ways to market HBHC within the various ethno-cultural communities. Appendices provided the names of contacts in settlement agencies; brief explanations of a variety of religious beliefs and practices; languages spoken by countries of origin; the names of physicians speaking languages other than English at the region's various hospitals; the names of public health workers able to speak languages other than English; and the names of persons working in other Peel departments and agencies who could help with translations.

Peel Health was also part of a team of persons representing agencies providing services in Peel to families of children aged 0 to 6. This team, "The Success by Six Committee" sponsored a conference in February 2000 on "Children's Services and Cultural Diversity." Speakers and workshops discussed ways to market services to and work effectively with cultural minority communities, evaluate the cultural sensitivity of service delivery approaches, and form partnerships with community-based agencies serving newcomers.

4.3 Addressing the Complex Challenges of Communication

Finding ways to convey more general information about public health services, not just to immigrants but to the public at large, was an ongoing challenge for all three units. All of them operated web sites. While that of **Toronto Public Health** provided more detailed information about available services than those of the regions, it like the

others provided information only in English. **Toronto Public Health** used the AT&T
telephone link, public health staff or interpreters to provide information in languages
other than English. According to one person we interviewed, it also translated "a lot of
material" into eight to ten languages. Both the Peel and York departments had also
translated some materials, but members of **Peel Health** staff pointed out that it was
becoming increasingly difficult to do so as the number of ethnic groups, and therefore the
number of languages spoken, increased. Moreover, she said, translation had proved to be
a more complicated undertaking than they had assumed initially:

> We have found that even for the same language groups there may be different
> dialects that give different meanings to the same words. Words that are okay
> for one sub-group may be offensive to another one. Even translating
> something as simple as a bookmark listing our services turned out to be a very
> complex task. We would like a really credible translation service.

She added that ongoing collaboration with the community sector had resulted in
assistance with translation in the past, and that **Peel Health** was working to improve its
internal capacity to provide translation and communicate information to diverse groups.
York Region Health Services, according to one spokesman, translated some materials
and expected to do more as the region became more diverse.

4.3.1 Restaurant inspection as a communications challenge

A York Region source identified restaurant inspection as a public health function
that required special efforts to communicate with immigrant communities because of the
large and growing involvement of immigrants in the restaurant sector. Two problems
could come up, he said. Immigrant owners might not know what the rules and
regulations were in Ontario, or they might assume, on the basis of experience elsewhere,
that enforcement would be less stringent than it actually is.

> It's not a major problem; 99 per cent of restaurants do comply. But because
> immigrant owners represent a large proportion of those affected by
> inspections and charges for violations, we should help them with a public
> education program. We have to impress on them that rules will be enforced.

His comments came at a time of stepped-up inspection activity and the closing
down of restaurants in the GTA by public health units in response to public complaints

and a series of critical articles in a local newspaper. **Toronto Public Health** had been especially active in this regard, particularly in the city's downtown core. In addition to ordering the closure of or issuing tickets to non-complying restaurants, the department took the added step of publicizing their names both in weekly news releases and on its web site.

The issue was important to immigrant communities because it touched on the way many immigrants - both restaurant owners and restaurant employees - make a living. Thus, educational programs in this field would do more than improve food safety; they would help to maintain the flow of income to restaurant owners and workers and to reduce inspection-related costs, including the costs of taking non-compliant owners to court, borne by pubic health units. In the view of Toronto's Medical Officer of Health, "one of the most important methods of ensuring safe food for the public is mandatory food handler training" (Toronto, 2000).

The City of Toronto offered several food handling workshops in which people working with food could enroll voluntarily.   As with other programs provided by public health units, the decision to offer such programs in an ethnoculturally diverse community implied a need to decide on the language or languages in which information would be provided. According to a **Toronto Public Health** staff member, the city's Board of Health had specifically asked staff to provide food handler training in more than one language. At the time of our study, the department had made a six-hour Food Handler Certificate program available in Chinese and Italian (Toronto Public Health, 2000b), and planned to offer the program in other languages on request. **Toronto Public Health** also made food safety educational materials (pamphlets, signs etc.) available in different languages, and employed inspectors who spoke more than one language. It was also planning to provide restaurant operators with a clear set of inspection standards and enforcement actions before implementing a new public disclosure system. **Peel Health** had offered a food handling program in Punjabi in the past but had decided to give it up, opting instead for English-only courses.   "We have such a diverse set of languages," explained one staff member, "that just offering one or two does not deal with the needs."

4.4 Staffing

The principal alternative to translating public health information and advice into a large number of different languages is to employ a diverse workforce that can either provide services directly to different language groups or provide assistance to persons working in the field. **Toronto Public Health** asserted the city's formal commitment to employment equity when it advertised for public health nurses by encouraging applications from aboriginal people, people with disabilities, racial minorities and women (Toronto Public Health, 1998). While the 34 language groups represented in its home visitor program were far fewer than the 160 languages and dialects spoken in the city in 1996, they did enable the department to respond to a large number of clients in a language they understood. **Peel Health** tried to recruit community development workers and family visitors from different ethnic groups, although a staff member observed that "It is difficult to recruit from some ethnic communities because of professional qualification requirements." It had also involved more than 400 volunteers (for more than 50,000 hours of time) in all aspects of program planning.

Peel staff pointed out that different recruitment outcomes could have consequences for the way services were provided to different groups:

> We have several Vietnamese and South Asians on our staff, so have built up a lot of initiatives directed at those communities. We haven't done much with communities that aren't represented on our staff.

> We not only subscribe to the principle of employment equity, but we also see it as a necessity for us. We need people from ethnic communities so that we can do our job in those communities.

> The equity officer hired in 1999 was expected to help the agency move forward in that direction.

4.5 Partnerships with Community Organizations

In addition to translating some written materials into languages other than English and French, providing interpreters, and using available staff resources or recruiting new staff members and volunteers to improve communications with different ethno-cultural

minorities, the three public health units relied to varying degrees on consultations or on forming partnerships with community organizations that provided immigrant settlement services.   Such organizations served as sources of advice and information about the groups they represented, and acted as translaters or cultural interpreters for public health staff and their clients. They were also places to which public health units referred clients for services that the units did not provide themselves. Said one **Toronto Public Health** nurse:

> We try to link women and children to the Immigrant Women's Centre. We also refer people to East Toronto Legal Services, COSTI, Housing Connections.

> These agencies have had a lot of influence on our work. They're the ones who are most updated; most knowledgeable. They also make referrals to Public Health. They're really well-provided with staff. If you can link a client with these organizations, they get a lot of help.

Peel Health staff members reported that they used the region's settlement agencies as sources of help in recruiting family visitors, as places to refer people for services their unit did not provide, and as means of communicating with ethnic communities.   Such contacts, they said, could bring benefits to the whole community. "Because we had formed partnerships, we got information about the meningitis outbreak out to the whole population very quickly." **Peel Health** turned to these agencies for help in compiling information for the "Community Outreach" document it prepared for people working in the HBHC program. It also headed the coalition of agencies that sponsored the conference on Cultural Diversity and Children's Services. A member of **Peel Health** was one of three members of a subcommittee that explored ways to make data compiled by the Peel Information Systems Group accessible to diverse groups in Peel (Peel Information Systems Group, Multicultural Access Subcommittee, 1999). Finally, **Peel Health** had partnered with mainstream and ethno-specific agencies to access funds for special programs.

While the need for funding might promote cooperation in some instances, funding issues could also give rise to tensions between public health units and community agencies, especially during periods of fiscal constraint.   Small organizations that served specific ethno-cultural groups tended to equate public health units with the larger, better-

funded "mainstream" organizations, which they perceived as receiving the lion's share of attention and financial support from major funders. Their inclination was to compete rather than to cooperate both with mainstream organizations and with each other, or to distrust the motives of the better staffed and therefore more bureaucratic mainstream units. Moreover, it was difficult for municipal public health units, especially in fast growing or high demand urban areas, to give these small organizations the type of support they most needed. One Peel staff member observed:

> Partnerships can work when there's a mutual need, a similar target population and a similar issue we want to explore. But many of these groups have few staff members. They want to use our staff, and we can't always spare very much staff time. There's also a problem with some of the smaller community-based organizations - they don't always treat their staff well. That creates tensions.

Reliance on community organizations for advice and assistance also meant that the type and quality of local services that public health units provided to immigrants depended partly on the type, number and size of organizations working in the community, and on how well they reflected the diversity that existed. According to a **Peel Health** staff member, "there's a lower intensity of community organizations in Peel than in Toronto. Because agencies are thinner on the ground, settlement workers are very stressed." Overworked settlement workers, they implied, had less time to consult and collaborate with other agencies. Even in Toronto, with its high density of both mainstream and ethno-specific organizations serving immigrants, ethnic groups were likely to differ in their ability to secure outside support because of differences in the number and political strength of the organizations that represented them. Larger and longer-established organizations were more likely to have the experience and the staff needed to attract attention from public service providers and funding organizations. They were also likely to speak for the larger and longer-established ethnic groups.

While public health units might make contact with newer communities by initiating activities (like testing for tuberculosis) that were part of their mandated responsibilities, therefore, they might not be aware of other health issues that existed in those communities. According to one Peel Health staff member:

There are many other needs [in addition to TB] in newer communities but they aren't as well recognized because often these communities don't have specific organizations to represent them. It's important in working with a community that there be somebody there to connect with. We try to encourage communities to become more organized.

The sheer number of organizations working in Toronto presented its problems as well, not only because of intense inter-agency competition for funding and other types of recognition, but also because agencies could get in each other's way, duplicate each other's efforts, or assume that problems would be taken care of by someone else. **Toronto Public Health** had tried to circumvent these problems by adopting a case management approach, but with only partial success. In the words of one staff member:

Ideally, one person or agency takes the lead; assigns tasks to different agencies. This lead person/agency knows about one case. But it's hard to do. People fall through the cracks. Clients are left to do it on their own. It's another source of stress.

4.6 Advocacy within the Community

Because their responsibilities bring staff members into frequent contact with immigrants in their homes or workplaces, and with the organizations that represent them, public health units are likely to develop a better awareness of the conditions in which immigrants live and the problems they face than are municipal units that are more detached from the publics they serve. Such awareness may lead these units to become advocates for immigrants (and other clients) with other agencies. In efforts to find housing for needy clients, for example, **Toronto Public Health** staff worked with staff members of city shelters, who might also refer clients to them, and with Housing Contact, an organization of landlords in communities outside the GTA who were willing to accept referrals from social agencies. They also informed clients about the regulations that applied to the housing search and housing occupancy, and advocated for the homeless with the Toronto mayor's office. Community development personnel worked with local hospitals, doctors and clinics to develop better ways to provide services. Public health nurses advocated for needy clients with social assistance workers, who no longer made home visits.

Staff members at **Peel Health** engaged in similar activities. Through consultations with multicultural communities and focus groups, they identified problems of homelessness in the nine largest multicultural communities in that region - i.e. Punjabi, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Tamil, former Yugoslavian (i.e. Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian), Spanish and Caribbean. They found that the subgroups to which these problems were linked were similar to the subgroups associated with homelessness in the general population: seniors, people with substance abuse problems, people with mental health problems; mothers leaving abusive situations; under- and unemployed individuals. To this list they added refugees and illegal immigrants. **Peel Health** was a member of Partners for Appropriate Community Therapy (PAACT), an organization with a multicultural component that assisted primary care providers to identify the optimal ways to manage infections. It had also collaborated with the Board of Education to develop a program to provide free immunization to the children of recent immigrants (who don't receive a health card for at least three months after arrival), so they could go to school.

4.7 Persistent Challenges

While public health units in the GTA were trying to varying degrees to make their services more accessible to immigrants and to enhance cultural awareness and responsiveness among service providers, persons consulted for this study felt that much more needed to be done to make settlement easier and less stressful for immigrants. The task of determining the health needs of recent immigrants was an ongoing challenge, they said, because new and unfamiliar groups were always arriving, and information was often difficult to get. Finding ways to overcome language and cultural barriers to communication was also a persistent challenge, not just for health workers trying to carry out their mandated responsibilities, but also for workers trying to advise immigrants about where to seek help with legal, housing, and other settlement-related problems. Said one Toronto public health nurse:

> The immigration process is so complicated, a maze for people caught up in it.
> They need someone to guide them through it.

> We see people who are very anxious, very stressed, very isolated. They may
> not have the most accurate information because they get it from people in the
> community [i.e. people who have already gone through the experience] and

rules can change. So often they have false hopes, thinking something's available when it isn't. They are very needy. They need to be able to talk to people who understand how it works, but often there are no interpreters.

Moreover, she pointed out, too few opportunities for ESL training meant that some people, particularly refugees, could wait for a long time before getting an opportunity to learn English. She added, however, that immigrants in Toronto were better off than immigrants in many other municipalities because they had access to interpreters, which many other municipalities did not provide.

The three public health units we looked at made use of translation and interpreter services, but they were all still concerned with improving their capacity to communicate in a multi-lingual, multicultural environment as the number of languages spoken by clients steadily increased. The felt need to overcome language and cultural barriers pointed to the more fundamental challenge of convincing the city and regional councils to provide the supports that would make it easier for them to work more effectively with immigrant communities.

Lack of time and money were other constraints that were frequently cited as reasons why the units we studied had not done more to accommodate diversity. In Toronto's case, amalgamation had diverted a large amount of staff time to the tasks of harmonizing the programs of seven municipal units and developing a new program for a single city. In Peel and York, provincial-municipal financial restructuring had given the regional councils new responsibilities and prompted a realignment of spending priorities. Moreover, rapid population growth in these two suburban regions had left staff with little time or money for new initiatives. Said one Peel staff member,

You get a lot more work done if you take the easier route. There are a number of programs we are required to deliver; other programs we're not required to deliver. Most of our energy goes into required programs.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Municipal public health units have the potential to make substantial contributions to the immigrant settlement process in carrying out their responsibilities to detect and prevent chronic disease and serious health hazards, promote family health, and prevent

the spread of infections. To the extent that they are able to perform these functions effectively, their work may reduce pressures and costs in the primary health care system and other public service areas, including education, social and community services, and policing. To be effective, however, public health units have to develop sophisticated means of communicating a large amount of information (some of it technical or legal) to clients in a large number and variety of settings. In multi-ethnic communities this communication challenge is made more difficult by the need to communicate with people who speak different languages and have different cultural values and expectations related to the issues being addressed.   The more diverse a community becomes, the greater the challenge.

The three public health units looked at in this study, each of which served a community of considerable diversity, were at different stages in their efforts to build relationships with ethno-cultural communities and enhance their capacities to serve diverse populations. **Toronto Public Health** had gone furthest in institutionalizing a commitment to an access and equity program, in large part because it was able to incorporate and build on programs that had been in place before amalgamation in 1998, especially in the former City of Toronto and in Metropolitan Toronto. Those programs had evolved over a period of twenty or more years as the city government and its agencies sought to accommodate successive waves of immigration.   Because many of its immigrant communities were already well-established, Toronto had also assembled a relatively diverse workforce, and was able to draw on the skills and knowledge of a large number of community groups. **Peel Health** had recognized the growing diversity of its client population more recently. It was acting on that recognition primarily by building alliances with community-based organizations and developing an information base to help its staff better understand and respond to Peel's changing population. **York Region Health Services** had just begun to acknowledge the challenges that came with diversity and had not yet begun to develop programs to deal with them.

A provincial government requirement that public health services be "accessible to people in special groups for whom barriers exist" provided public health units with a legal mandate to pursue access and equity initiatives. Because the province provided no guidelines against which to measure progress, however, municipal units had to define

standards for themselves. In general, municipal staff felt they were not meeting their self-imposed standards. Ironically, they attributed their shortcomings, at least in part, to the effects of other provincial policies, particularly the loss of provincial support for multicultural and anti-racism policies, the disruptions and reorganizations resulting from amalgamation (in Toronto) and the need for regional budgets to accommodate responsibilities devolved by the province to municipalities and regions. Making the process of adaptation more difficult were the regions' rapid rates of population growth, which brought demands for large investments in basic infrastructure to support new residential and commercial investment. Both city and regional councils not only gave these demands higher priority than they gave to demands for new investments in social services, but they also regarded them as more legitimate claims on local tax bases.

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CHAPTER 8: PUBLIC RECREATION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Public recreation for many is a source of community activity and social interaction. In multicultural communities, recreation can both highlight conflicts between ethnocultural groups and demonstrate the degree to which those communities try to meet new preferences as the population diversifies through immigration. Although recreation is not an immediate, basic need for newcomers the same way education, social services or housing might be, it can be critically important to immigrant settlement over the longer term.

Public recreation is also ideally suited to an examination of the way local governments respond to demographic change. It is a service that is quintessentially "local" in nature and purpose, being provided largely on a neighbourhood basis in parks and community centres scattered throughout municipalities. Unlike municipal planning and public transit, two other municipally administered services looked at in this study, it is seldom depicted as having a regional dimension or as needing to be planned and delivered in a regional context. Nor does the Ontario government tightly regulate it as it does most of the other services we have looked at. Provincial legislation allows municipalities to establish community centres and to run public recreation programs but it does not specify the types of facilities or programs that they have to provide.

Because of their inherently local character and their relative freedom from legislative control, municipal recreation programs vary both in the degree to which they take the character and needs of local residents into account, and in the amount and type of provincial government influence over their content.   Three models emerge from the literature that recognize the way recreation programs may evolve in different contexts and circumstances and the different objectives they may try or may be expected to fulfill: (1) paternalistic; (2) interventionist; and (3) corporatist (Andrew, Harvey and Dawson, 1994).[47]

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[47] Andrew, Harvey and Dawson based these three models on a historical evaluation of the City of Toronto's experience with public recreation. They ascribed the first model to a period extending from the early

In the first model, programs may be conceived as a form of charity provided to deserving categories of the population, with a particular emphasis on teaching good work and play habits to children. This philosophy casts recreation providers primarily in a paternalistic, regulatory role charged with the responsibility of delivering services that will bring benefits to the community (like lower rates of juvenile delinquency and more productive citizens).

In the second model, recreation is placed alongside other local services that should be available to all members of the community as a matter of right. This philosophy is marked by "a desire to equalize social conditions and to use the state to offer services more equal in character than those that would be available by private market forces alone" (Andrew, Harvey and Dawson, 1994: 5). This model is characterized by staff professionalism and by recreation programs that encompass a smaller number of activities. Programs that address a range of social needs (health, social welfare and education, moral betterment), found in the paternalistic model, are largely replaced by programs that focus more narrowly on providing recreational opportunities (Andrew, Harvey and Dawson, 1994: 9-12). Other branches of the municipal bureaucracy are expected to assume ownership of other objectives. Professional recreation staff are expected to balance the community's differing demands in the interest of maintaining overall equality in service provision and upholding professional standards, and to mediate among groups with different views about how urban open space and other recreational resources should be used. Tailoring programs to the desires of local constituencies may involve consultations (meetings, surveys, etc.) with individuals and groups representing various segments of the local population, with ethnicity, for example, providing "a base for organizing and for making demands on the city's recreation budget" (Andrew, Harvey and Dawson, 1994: 11).

The third model depicts local government as only one among several types of organization - public, private and non-profit - with services to market to individuals. Recreation programs are therefore subject to "consumer choice rather than citizen participation" (Andrew, Harvey and Dawson, 1994: 13). When municipal governments

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nineteenth century until the 1930s, the second model to the first three decades after World War II, and the

trim their budgets to avoid raising local taxes, this approach implies that recreation providers must look for ways either to reduce costs or to raise extra money to keep programs in place. To maintain or secure the financial support needed to operate, recreation providers must try to provide services that "sell", either to those willing to pay a fee for their use or to those most likely to exercise influence with local councils. They may also have to engage in fund-raising activities or develop partnerships with private sector or community organizations as ways to supplement their budgets or maintain program offerings. Such activities are likely to take time away from efforts to understand and adapt to changes taking place in local populations, even when staff members are inclined to do so. Thus, the ascendancy of this corporatist philosophy of local government implies a local political environment that is less willing or less able to discover and cater to immigrants' recreational needs than the political environment fostered by the more egalitarian and consultative approach of the interventionist model.

Andrew, Harvey and Dawson (1994) suggest that the third philosophy, the corporatist model, is the one that is prevalent today. Yet to identify the dominance of one approach to municipal administration over others is not to say that other philosophies have disappeared altogether. Local policy discussions and decisions about how to respond to immigrant communities in the provision of recreation are likely to contain elements of all three views of the purpose of this service - to promote socialization and help build responsible citizens, to ensure equal treatment of segments of the population with different needs, and to secure consumer satisfaction - in different settings or circumstances. Philosophical differences about the purposes of recreation and other community services are likely to be particularly pronounced in communities with large immigrant populations because of increasing demands for policies that cater to a large range of tastes and interests. Such communities are also likely to experience the full range of complex issues that various writers have discovered in looking at the role of recreation in the lives of immigrants and the immigrant settlement process. Thus the provision of municipal recreation is a far more challenging and complex activity in large and diverse communities than it might appear to be to the casual observer.

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third model to the period from the mid 1970s to the present.

2.0 KEY ISSUES

Much of the literature dealing with issues of ethnicity in recreation assumes that it is the role of municipal service providers to recognize ethnicity as a significant factor in the design and provision of recreation programs. Thus it diverges from the expectation that municipal recreation staff are primarily salespersons and fund raisers. There are differences of opinion, however, about the importance of ethnicity relative to other factors to the leisure preferences and behaviour of urban residents, and about the appropriate responses of municipal service providers to local diversity.

2.1 The Role of Ethnicity in Recreation

Three different theoretical positions on the role of ethnicity in recreation emerge from academic research: 1) that the cultural practices and values associated with different ethnic identities influence recreational preferences and choices; 2) that ethnic identity is of little or no importance in comparison to other socio-demographic factors (like age, education, income, social class, or gender) that influence recreation behaviour in the general population; and 3) that the recreation preferences and behaviour of ethnic groups express a combination of culture-related and socioeconomic factors (Hall, 1993; Husbands and Idahosa, 1995).

Research findings tend to support the third position. There is accumulating evidence that ethnic groups differ from each other in their recreation preferences and choices. Even when ethnic groups participate in the same activities, according to Husbands and Idahosa (1995), "they are likely to differ in the context and style of participation and, perhaps, even in their level of satisfaction with leisure" (93). There is also evidence that other factors - age, gender, social class - tend to influence recreational choices, attitudes, and behaviour of the members of different ethnic groups as much as or more than factors related to ethnicity alone (Floyd, 1998; Hall, 1993; Husbands and Idahosa, 1995; Phillipp, 1998; Tirone and Shaw, 1997).

These findings leave many uncertainties about the linkages between ethnicity and recreation. Comprehensive reviews of the literature show that different writers have arrived at a number of contradictory conclusions about the nature of those linkages (Floyd, 1998; Husbands and Idahosa, 1995). For example, some maintain that recreation activities help either to build or to reinforce a sense of ethnic distinctiveness and cultural identity, while others argue that they serve as a means of acculturating and assimilating ethnic groups to the ways of the dominant culture, or that recreational activities are a means by which dominant elites impose a society's behavioural norms and preferred social arrangements on oppressed minorities. It has also been suggested that recreational activities provide members of disadvantaged ethnic groups with a channel for social mobility, or even (especially among groups subject to a large amount of discrimination) that they serve as a venue in which disadvantaged groups can organize to challenge the existing social order.

Such divergent opinions highlight the difficulty of evaluating the significance of municipal recreation policies for the immigrant settlement experience and immigrant-related social change. They also suggest a variety of roles that recreation providers may attempt or be called on to play, either by the governments that employ them or by immigrant communities: as protectors or enhancers of ethnic identity, as purveyors of the norms and expectations of the dominant culture, as monitors and regulators of behaviour, as discoverers and promoters of excellence in individual members of ethnic groups, and as guardians of social order.

2.2 Constraints on Participation

Looked at from the perspective of persons engaged in running recreation programs on a day to day basis, research findings tell us that ethnically-based differences in recreation preferences and in the use of recreation facilities are likely to translate into different pressures and demands on service providers. Those pressures and demands are likely both to increase and to become more difficult to mediate as the number of ethnic groups in a community increases. Research also shows that factors related to ethnicity

are likely to act as constraints on the willingness or the ability of immigrants to participate in the programs that are available.

Much of the research on this subject has dealt with racial differences in recreation behaviour. The experiences of African Americans as a highly visible and historically disadvantaged minority group have had an important influence on thinking about the interface between ethnicity and recreation in both the United States and Canada. In pointing out that "total absorption to the 'mainstream' is virtually impossible for visible minorities" (Husbands and Idahosa, 1995: 87), some writers suggest that issues arising from observable racial differences are likely to have a disproportionately large impact on the way recreation providers perceive the challenges of serving a diverse population.

2.2.1 Discrimination

An emphasis on the role of race or racial attitudes places *discrimination, perceived discrimination* or even *fear of discrimination* (or *fear of venturing into mainstream society*) high on the list of constraints on the ability or willingness of immigrants to participate in community recreation programs (Floyd, 1998: 3-5). As the proportion of immigrants in a municipality increases, these constraints are likely to challenge recreation departments and their staffs not only to confront and try to overcome their own biases and those of the communities for which they work, but also to find ways to accommodate different immigrant minorities who continue to nurture traditional antagonisms toward each other.

2.2.2 Language barriers

The other constraint that relates most clearly to differences between immigrants and their host communities is lack of facility in the community's dominant language, which may severely limit the ability of newcomers to acquire information about what programs are available, or to communicate their preferences to recreation providers.

2.2.3 Socioeconomic constraints

Socioeconomic constraints on participation can include either lack of discretionary funds to pay for services for which there is a fee, or a lack of leisure time because of long hours spent at low-paying jobs. In the latter case, the constraint may arise from the need perceived by the immigrant to get established and to save for the future in a relatively short time (Stodolska, 1998: 545). While financial constraints operate on non-immigrants as well as immigrants, the lower average incomes of many recent immigrants and of some longer-established immigrant groups suggest that financial constraints may contribute to a lower level of participation in community recreation programs by immigrants than by other members of the community. The impact of financial constraints on participation rates is likely to vary among different municipalities, however, according to the economic status of immigrants who live there and to the size of fees that recreation providers charge for their services.

2.2.4 Constraints arising within immigrant cultures

Constraints on immigrant participation tend to decline over time as immigrants become more assimilated into their host communities, a process that for most immigrants not only means acquiring greater facility with the dominant language and familiarity with cultural expectations but also improved economic status (Stodolska, 1998: 543). There are aspects of the cultures of immigrants themselves, however, that may inhibit participation by at least some members of their communities. Women are more likely to be affected than men by cultural taboos and expectations that prevent their engaging freely in activities outside the family circle. Cultural attitudes may even determine whether members of some ethnic groups ascribe any value to recreational activities at all. One study of Indo Canadian women, for example, found that the subjects derived most of their satisfaction with life from their family circles. They attached little or no value to private time, which is often associated with the opportunity for leisure activities (Tirone and Shaw, 1997).

2.2.5 Institutional arrangements, bureaucratic practices

A final set of constraints on immigrant participation in municipal recreation programs are those imposed by the service providers themselves. The way municipalities organize and operate their programs may reinforce or even add to constraints arising from the immigration experience (lack of facility with the language of the host community; perception or fear of discrimination), even when that is not their intention. Constraints may appear at any or every stage in the process of program delivery – in the type of programs provided, in the means chosen to inform members of the community about them, in scheduling arrangements, in procedures for registering participants, in the rules of engagement to which participants are expected to conform, and in the way programs are funded.   Exclusive use of English for conveying information about programs and registration procedures is likely to deter participation by community residents with little facility in that language. The more complex the registration procedure, the less accessible it is likely to be for people with limited education or who lack the necessary language skills. Wide divergence between the expectations of or rules established by service providers and the behavioural norms of one or more of a community's ethnic groups may either deter participation or produce tensions within the community. And, as one study observes, "movement by leisure service agencies toward higher fees and privatization may have an adverse impact on minorities faced with discriminatory barriers in other economic sectors" (Floyd, 1998: 12-13).

2.3 Implications for Service Providers

What the literature makes clear is that agencies and individuals responsible for providing municipal recreation services to ethnically-diverse communities are subject to sharply conflicting pressures from inside and outside those communities. There are those who assume or maintain that it is the responsibility of recreation providers not only to ensure that their programs are equally available and accessible to all members of the community, but also to seek out and cater to the preferences of different ethno-cultural groups. Others take a more limited view, either in recognition of intra-group variations in recreational preferences or in recognition of the financial constraints under which

municipal agencies operate. They argue for service strategies that target segments of immigrant communities (e.g. older adults, persons with lower-than average education, females) whose needs have tended to be overlooked in the past (Hall, 1993). Finally there remain those (particularly among media commentators) who expect municipal recreation programs to play a socializing role and even discourage negative behaviour in the lives of immigrant newcomers. According to this perspective, recreation plays a vital role in helping immigrant communities to settle in Canada, to develop a support system, and to gain an understanding of "how things work" in their new country (Moloney and DeMara, 1998). They can also help young people deal with the difficulties of the transition period, isolation, racism and the effects of previous trauma and poverty. Others argue that recreation activities provide a good way to reach immigrant youth who do not respond well to other forms of learning or control, and who might otherwise become involved in gang-related violence or delinquent activity (Gerard, 1996; Krivel, 1996).

Perceptions of municipal recreation programs as socializing or equalizing forces in urban communities remain part of the context in which municipal recreation providers decide how they will respond to the challenge of serving a diverse population. For those providers, however, the reality at the time of this study was a political context that severely constrained their ability to innovate, or that made the possibility for innovation dependent on their success as marketers and fund raisers, not as recreation professionals.

3.0 HISTORICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The post-war development of the Canadian welfare state was characterized by a gradual increase in federal and provincial government involvement in the funding, design and delivery of municipal recreation. While the federal government often took the initiative in establishing new programs, it gave grants to provincial governments rather than directly to municipalities, leaving the former to decide how money would be allocated. The Ontario government established a Physical Fitness and Recreation Programme in 1945 to administer money for which it had become eligible under a National Physical Fitness Act (Andrew, Harvey and Dawson, 1994: 6). In 1948 the province established a Community Programmes Branch within the Ministry of Education,

and in 1951 that branch initiated a certification course to develop and improve training in recreation. It also began to set up or approve recreational training courses in colleges and universities. The years 1958 to 1970 saw the development of professional associations with close links to and often financial support from the provincial government.

The development of provincial programs and the availability of provincial funding helped to make provincial government activity "the norm around which municipal activity was organized" during this post-war period (Andrew, Harvey and Dawson, 1994: 6). By the late 1980s the Community Programs/Sports and Recreation Division of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation was overseeing and helping to fund a large number of programs in all aspects of sports and recreation. Among them were programs to train recreational workers, help maintain and manage municipal recreation facilities, recruit and make more effective use of volunteers, and promote the dissemination and exchange of information (Bell and Pascoe, 1988: 165).

As has been the case with other municipal services, however, provincial government support for municipal recreation declined as federal government transfers declined. It disappeared almost entirely after the election of the Tory government in 1995. At time of writing, the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation offered financial support only for programs targetted at children and youth, and only up to the level that could be matched by community foundations (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, 2000). The Ministry also assisted a few municipalities to fund special events. For example, a Youth at Risk program sponsored workshops and provided information, advice and help with recruiting volunteers to organizations wanting to establish youth-oriented services in local communities. The federal government had also reduced its financial support for programs that directly or indirectly benefitted municipal recreation programs.

At the time of our study, the Ontario government's stated intention was for community sports and recreation organizations to become more self-sufficient. The vision statement included in the Ministry's Business Plan for 2000-2001 depicted "Ontario communities where self-reliance and the volunteer spirit go hand in hand" (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, 2000). While it also called for

communities where "human rights are respected and [where] together we work towards the elimination of discrimination and the celebration of diversity," the plan offered neither policy guidance nor financial incentives to further these objectives.

Municipal governments and their recreation providers were not only largely on their own in deciding how to deliver this type of service, therefore, but they were also expected to make up for lost provincial government support by raising funds and recruiting volunteers from within the community. It is within this context that the needs of increasingly diverse communities were being addressed in the Greater Toronto Area.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 How Municipal Governments Organized and Operated their Recreation Services

As in other areas of municipal service delivery, the five municipalities included in this study differed in the ways they had chosen to organize and manage recreation services. The newly-amalgamated **City of Toronto** had a Parks and Recreation Division within the Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Department (one of six city departments, each headed by a Commissioner); **Mississauga** a Recreation and Parks Department, **Brampton** a Recreation Facilities Division within its Community Services Department; **Vaughan** had a Department of Recreation and Culture and **Markham** had assigned Parks and Recreation to separate departments within its Community Services Commission.

As the largest of the five municipalities, the **City of Toronto** had the largest and most complex administrative arrangements for providing recreation services and facilities. Its recreation staff was also grappling with some of the more complex issues involving the provision of recreation services in general and dealing with diversity in particular. Many of these issues were the result of amalgamation, and related to the difficulties of harmonizing the programs of six separate municipal departments into a policy for the whole city. The most contentious issue to emerge during this process was that of user fees, which the former suburban municipalities had charged for their services and the City of Toronto had not. City budget cuts and a shift in budget priorities resulting

from financial restructuring had meant a loss of 340 front line staff workers from Toronto's Parks and Recreation Division. At the time we conducted interviews with staff members, the Division was also having to adjust to a recent provincial government decision to change the city's ward boundaries and reduce the number of city councillors from 57 to 44. Recreation staff members maintained that the change (to be implemented with the November 2000 municipal election) not only implied a readjustment of the boundaries of the various districts served by the Division but would also make it more difficult to attract the attention of councillors preoccupied with boundary issues and electoral concerns.

The large size of the new city as well as the difficulties of adjusting to budget restraints and changes in the electoral map raised concerns among city staff members about the ability of the city's Parks and Recreation Division to respond sensitively and appropriately to the different needs of immigrant communities scattered about the city. On the other hand, persons who had worked in the former suburbs said that amalgamation and service harmonization had made it easier to serve immigrants living outside the old city boundaries because municipal staff now had access to language and translation services, which the former suburbs had not provided.

In the four suburban municipalities of interest in this study, but particularly in **Vaughan and Markham**, rapid population growth was a more pressing concern than were changes resulting from immigrant settlement. In fact, several staff members said that they or their councils did not regard their foreign-born residents as "immigrants" – whom they perceived as being poor and living in the city. Rather, they saw their suburban municipalities as home to former immigrants who had become established – i.e. had been absorbed into the home-owning mainstream – or as affluent newcomers who did not require special attention. Nonetheless, most respondents acknowledged that increasing ethnic diversity was having an impact on their work.

Respondents were generally positive about their relationship with their city councils, although one suburban official complained that senior staff members were expected to devote much of their time to fundraising, while city council allocated funds to other priorities. Having to raise their own funds, he said, left staff less time to create

and implement programs and reach out to the community.   Respondents were much more critical of the provincial government than they were of their local councils, however, giving specific examples of the negative impacts of provincial funding cuts on programs for seniors, immigrant women, and summer employment for young people. They had little to say about the federal government except to note that reductions in federal support for such things as summer camps and sports activities had also added to the financial pressures they were under.

4.2 Program Planning and the Accommodation of Diversity

"We're the frontline; we provide the customer service," one recreation staff member stated, and this summarized the way most municipal staff members defined their responsibility to the public. Recreation providers seldom tried to identify unmet needs in their communities. They did not plan programs with immigrants in mind but they also did not try to exclude immigrants from the programs they offered. Their approach was to wait for requests from local council members, other municipal departments and organized community groups, and then try to accommodate them. One staff member pointed out, however, that in order to do so it was often necessary to find out about the characteristics of an unfamiliar sport or activity. "It's been a learning curve for us," he said. The area in which recreation providers were most likely to be proactive was in designing or promoting programs for youth. They viewed such programs as a way to reduce the risk of anti-social behaviour among young people, and thus as a contribution to the health of their communities.

There were examples nonetheless of municipal efforts to take a more comprehensive and longer term look at their recreation needs. One was a plan outlining "Future Directions for Recreation and Parks" approved by **Mississauga** City Council in June 1999 (Mississauga, City of, 1999). Billed as a planning document that would "guide the development of existing and future recreation services and facilities for the next 10 to 20 years," the plan 1) identified what services and facilities should be provided and generally where they should be located and 2) offered more detailed directions as to

their timing and location. It also provided for periodic reviews as a way to incorporate trends in facility usage, market demand and demographic change.

Mississauga's planning exercise contained features that could work against the incorporation of immigrant concerns, or at least the concerns of recent immigrants, into program development. Their emphasis on a market-driven approach to service delivery based on supply and demand considerations and the reliance on focus group sessions with community organizations and public meetings to find out what residents wanted implied that the plan would give higher priority to existing than to untried forms of recreational activity, and that it would reflect the views of the more articulate and better organized segments of the community.

Mississauga's planning exercise also included a market survey, a technique that has the potential to identify a broad range of community interests provided that administrators of the survey were able to overcome language barriers. While there was no evidence of this happening in Mississauga, **Markham** did tackle the language issue in a telephone survey of recreational needs in 1998 by using a local Language Registry to reach people who did not speak English. This Registry, organized by the Human Resources Department and made up of community volunteers, provided translation assistance in Chinese, Dutch, Philipino, Russian, Romanian, Serbian and Polish.

4.2.1 The role of community-based organizations

An approach to service provision based on demands coming from the community highlights the importance of community-based organizations to the way municipal departments address immigrant recreation needs. Ethno-specific organizations help to break down communication barriers by acting as interpreters and translators and by disseminating program information within their own communities. Toronto respondents suggested that community groups had replaced elected councillors as sources of information in that city because of the disruptions and uncertainties associated with amalgamation. In some instances, municipal staff had formed partnerships with community groups wanting to develop specific programs, partly in the interest of conserving scarce resources. Said one Toronto staff member, "Right now we're trying to

maintain what we have. A shortage of funds limits our ability to fund new initiatives. So we're doing more and more work with community agencies—sharing resources. That takes a lot of time."

Suburban respondents seemed to rely on community groups mainly as a source of information about the needs of the communities they spoke for. They also looked to these groups for volunteers—an increasingly important resource for municipal agencies trying to expand programs in a time of budget constraints. They sometimes assisted such groups to set up programs themselves. For example, **Mississauga** had a corporate grant program designed to help community organizations (both mainstream and ethno-specific) to develop new programs, but always with the expectation that these organizations would raise most of their funds themselves. On the longer term, staff members encouraged groups to become self sufficient, although they would help with fund raising and give advice about possible funding sources. They did so in part because there were funding sources open to community groups that municipal agencies could not tap into.

The interviews suggested, therefore, that the type and quality of municipal recreation services provided to immigrant communities depended a great deal on the density of groups operating in the municipality and the characteristics of their clientele. Immigrant communities with good group representation were more likely to be heard than immigrants who lacked an organized voice. Because it is likely to take time for ethno-specific groups to become established enough and large enough to generate group activity, or even to find organizations that will help them, reliance on community groups as an important source of information and as alternative providers of recreational services implied that recent arrivals and members of small ethnic groups were likely to be poorly served.

4.3 Challenges

Although municipal recreation providers had typically adopted a "wait until they come" approach to providing services to immigrant residents, persons we talked to identified a number of challenges that they encountered in trying to make their services more available to immigrants.

4.3.1 Barriers to accessibility

As was the case with other municipal services, municipal recreation staff often mentioned language as a deterrent to finding out about and acting on immigrants' recreation preferences. All respondents claimed that their units had multicultural staff who could act as translators and interact with community groups, but only Toronto provided its staff with formal translation and interpreter services at a corporate level. In the suburban municipalities staff had to rely on colleagues and on volunteers. Even Toronto staff found language a persistent challenge, however, because of the steady arrival of new immigrants speaking different languages. Staff reductions and heavy reliance on part-time staff had also limited their ability to develop ties with ethno-specific organizations.

All five municipal governments published bulletins describing their programs, but only in English. All operated web sites, although these varied a great deal in the amount of information they provided about community services. Toronto's web site not only contained the largest amount of information but also advertised its translation and interpreter services in several languages. Vaughan's web site seemed to promise information in several languages, but on closer examination it did so only to aid that municipality's push for economic development. Its web site was particularly uninformative about the types of services available to community residents.

4.3.2 Affordability

The market-driven approach to providing recreation services supports the argument that users should pay for the services they receive. Only in Toronto has this been a major political issue. There, service harmonization meant resolving differences among politicians from the former City of Toronto, which did not charge fees for its programs and use of its facilities, and the former suburbs, which operated with a variety of fee schedules. Debates around this issue pitted councillors and community groups (many from the old City of Toronto) against councillors (many of them from the former suburbs) who argued for the introduction or retention of fees for services. Budget constraints helped to intensify this debate, with user fee proponents pointing out that free

recreational services across the city would equal $7 million to $8 million in lost revenue (James, 1998).

In a compromise decision reached in July 1999, Council decided that children, youth and seniors would not have to pay for basic services, but that they would pay fees for private and semi-private lessons. Adults would pay for services at a harmonized rate across the new city. The council designated 24 community centres as being in needy areas, however, and declared that all programs in these centres would be free for everyone (James, 1999). The decision incorporated a compromise within a compromise, for it allowed individuals living outside the designated districts to apply for and receive the free services available in those districts (James, 1999). As a result, demand for these free programs increased and waiting lists grew. Budget restrictions prevented the Division from enlarging sections or adding new ones to meet the higher demand. The result, as some saw it, was that some of the persons who would benefit most from free programs were unable to get into them.

The fee policy also raised the problem of distinguishing "public" from "private" functions in a city made up of diverse communities who defined those terms differently. It was the city's policy to permit groups to use public facilities at no charge if they were hosting a public event; that is, an event open to the whole community. Persons using facilities for private events had to pay a fee. In some cultures, however, some events (like weddings and funerals) are considered public, whereas Canadian-born residents regard them as private.

Because of these unresolved issues, user fees were likely to remain an issue in Toronto for some time. In the suburban municipalities, on the other hand, charging user fees had always been standard practice. (Some suburban respondents said that the former Toronto's policy of not charging user fees caused them difficulties because it created expectations among new residents that they could not fulfill.) Even in the suburbs, however, there were exceptions to the user fee policy. Vaughan, for example, did not charge fees for youth and senior programs. It also provided facilities and support to services offered by community organizations at subsidized rates, as long as those services were for Vaughan residents only.

Most suburban respondents perceived local residents to be well able to pay fees for the services they used. One Mississauga staff member commented, however, that both accessibility and affordability were becoming more difficult for the growing numbers of immigrants living in rental apartment districts. Moreover, newer groups settling in these districts lacked political organization and community group spokespersons, and so tended not to become involved in community activities. Because of their lack of participation, the department had withdrawn some programs altogether. The absence of programs for children in such districts, he said, could mean problems for the municipality in future.

For most suburban staff members, the solution to problems related to service costs or inadequacies rested with the ethnic communities themselves. If they organized and tried to initiate their own programs, the department would help them find resources. A Vaughan staff member pointed out, for example, that Vaughan, with the largest Italian community in the world outside Italy, also had the largest number of Bocci ball courts outside Italy.

4.3.3 Managing space

Assigning existing space or finding new space were among the primary tasks performed by recreation staff in their efforts to accommodate requests from their communities. Space allocation could be both difficult and contentious, especially in areas where there was relatively little space available and conflicting demands for its use. This situation was particularly likely to occur in the City of Toronto, where there was little unoccupied space and many conflicting expectations. One district characterized by severe constraints on and high demands for recreational space was St. James Town, a cluster of high rise apartment buildings on the edge of downtown Toronto. St. James Town had a population of more than 15,000 and a population density of 75,000 persons per square kilometre in 1996 (Black, 1999). Originally designed and built for downtown office workers, this residential complex had become home to low income families, many of them immigrants. It had only one expanse of land (a schoolyard) large enough for team sports, and experienced conflicts among groups wanting to use it for different

sports.   It also lacked a library, an indoor recreation facility, and sufficient space for child-care services, classrooms, parenting programs, ESL classes, art classes, and so on. Nonetheless, when a local councillor spearheaded a campaign for a new community centre to house such activities, she ran into opposition from nearby residents, who wanted the city council to use the money to buy up surrounding parcels of land from a developer intending to build even more apartment buildings. (The developer had offered to help pay for the community center).

In this case, a need for space to provide more opportunities for recreation had become embroiled in a broader political conflict about local zoning and residential density standards in a heavily built-up area. In the suburbs, the principal space issues were likely to involve finding enough room in existing facilities to accommodate programs for a growing population, adapting facilities to unfamiliar demands coming from newly-arrived groups (for cricket or soccer or bocci, for example), or mediating among groups with different leisure preferences competing for the same space. There was also the question of how to provide enough flexibility in subdivision plans to meet new and unforeseen demands. Brampton's staff took particular pride in having persuaded the city council to hold land in reserve for future recreation use where development had yet to occur.

4.3.4 Socio-cultural adaptation

Recreation staff members tended to see their work as part of the process by which immigrants were absorbed and integrated into Canadian society. "Sport has always been about integration," said one, while noting that it was difficult to give the same amount of attention to every sport. He also pointed out that the adjustment process worked both ways. For staff to be able to respond to requests for unfamiliar activities, they first had to learn to understand those activities and the type of support they called for. He also observed that the recreational interests of immigrants changed the longer they stayed in Canada. "Bocci ball and soccer players tend to entertain baseball and hockey over time." The younger generation in particular wanted to be brought into some of the North American sports like skating and hockey. "We need to make sure our minor sports

associations have grass roots programs in place to help people learn to play these sports in a safe environment, and to give them the skills they need. A lot tends to be taken for granted."

Two staff members also stressed the importance of recreation programs for immigrant women. Team sports were especially valuable, they said, because they helped women become more socially active and encourgaged them to become involved in other group activities outside the home.

Some suburban staff members saw recreation not just as one of the ways by which immigrants became integrated into Canadian society but also as a way to promote integration. "We don't isolate; we integrate," said a Vaughan respondent, adding that the large number of general and special interest camps operated by Vaughan every summer were attended by a cross section of Vaughan residents. Mississauga had a policy of not allowing the formation of soccer teams based on ethnicity so as to reduce the possibility of soccer-related violence.   Instead it based team membership on neighbourhood boundaries.

The potential for violence in some immigrant communities went beyond team rivalry.   Said one Toronto staff member:

> Some of the groups are essentially coming from war zones, where people were on different sides of very nasty situations. Because of the language barrier, because of a lack of understanding of the cultures, and of where people came from, we have to look closely at the groups that we're accommodating in our centers. Situations can be very complex. How do you deal with conflicts that are brought to this society?

Inter-group antagonisms occasionally resulted in unpleasant situations, as happened when recreation centre staff members in Etobicoke (a former city within Toronto) had unwittingly assigned two groups of Sikhs with antagonistic histories to adjacent rooms in the same building.

There were special circumstances, often involving religious belief, where suburban staff did recognize and respect a group's demand for separate and segregated facilities. Staff interviewed in **Vaughan, Mississauga and Brampton**, for example,

said that they had adapted swimming space or set aside special swimming times to accommodate Muslim women.

Respondents seldom mentioned being called on to resolve conflicts between immigrant newcomers and Canadian born residents, or to deal with overt discrimination against an immigrant group. The one example that came up involved a seniors' organization in Brampton that had refused to open up membership to seniors of South Asian origin. In that case the South Asian group was able to form its own organization with financial help from the Sikh business community. According to a staff member, cuts in government support for seniors' programs were making it more difficult for recreation departments to respond to situations like these, or indeed to meet a growing demand for seniors' programs at all.

Different behavioural norms held by immigrant groups and their host communities could cause problems for recreation providers. One example involved a group that had used a large, privately-owned parking lot for a picnic and ignored municipal regulations having to do with food preparation, use of washrooms, consumption of alcohol in public places, and parking. After nearby residents complained, the parking lot's owners refused to let the group use the space again. The person telling this story was making the point that municipal staff were sometimes called on to educate newcomers about the norms of behaviour prescribed by law or custom in their communities, but that they were not always successful in their efforts to do so.

The City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Division supported at least one program explicitly designed to teach people about acceptable behaviours in Canada – for example, how to treat children and women, how to manage anger and cultural conflict that can lead to abuse, and Canadian laws related to such matters (Krivel, 1996). The Division had also initiated programs aimed at reducing violence among youth gangs and helping children learn English. Said one staff member:

> A consequence of downloading is that we're moving beyond recreation. More and more we're providing a social service because of the issues people are bringing to our attention. We encounter problems with hungry children; we're under pressure to keep delinquents off the streets, etc.

Suburban staff seemed to feel less pressure to address social needs within their communities, although **Vaughan** had started a Youth at Risk program. Its staff anticipated, however, that the department's role would change as the community absorbed more new immigrants. "We'll be getting into specialized services, e.g. advocacy services. We'll become more like the city [Toronto]." At the time, however, they referred cases of social need to the regional Department of Social Services and Housing.

Staff members of several suburban parks and recreation departments expressed concern about a lack of government recognition for the contribution made by recreation programs to the health of their communities, and about their lack of preparation for dealing with demographic change. They wanted more information both about the type of people coming to their communities and about where they could go for funds for programs to accommodate the needs of their municipalities' growing and changing populations.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Locally-imposed budget constraints and the virtual disappearance of provincial and federal government financial supports had severely curtailed the ability of municipal recreation departments in the Greater Toronto Area to adapt or plan their programs and facilities to accommodate immigrant-induced changes in their communities. Changes in the political context had instead prompted municipal recreation departments, especially in suburban municipalities, to adopt a corporate, customer-oriented approach to service provision, in which they relied on local demand (as registered by level of use of existing facilities, direct communications from local residents, or information conveyed by local councillors and community organizations) to guide the planning and initiation of new services. This approach did not rule out program changes to accommodate immigrant preferences but it did mean that such changes were likely to occur slowly, and only after immigrant groups became well enough established, or acquired enough organizational strength, to make their voices heard. They were also likely to depend on the ability of

municipal staff either to persuade municipal councillors to support new initiatives or to supplement their budgets by raising funds from non-governmental sources.

Municipal recreation providers were nonetheless aware that immigrant settlement has brought changes in the demands and expectations impinging on their work. It had also challenged them to rethink the way they did their jobs. Recreation staff had to learn about the nature of and requirements for unfamiliar activities, and they often needed to find space for new activities. Moreover, immigration was changing how recreation staff defined their jobs. A perceived increase in social problems, as a result both of immigration and of cutbacks in social programs, had led some recreation providers, particularly in the City of Toronto, to design programs that were aimed primarily at social rather than recreational objectives. Community pressures on recreation providers to address youth-related problems (gang violence, delinquency, hard-to-reach youth, family problems) were contributing to this trend. Ironically, therefore, the ascendancy of a corporate model of municipal government was forcing municipal recreation providers back into a role that they largely abandoned during the period when governments operated according to more inclusive and egalitarian principles - that of helping to identify and deal with the social ills that accompany growth and change in large urban settlements.

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CHAPTER 9: URBAN PLANNING

1.0 INTRODUCTION

At the most basic level, urban planning is a technically oriented activity, focused on identifying the appropriate land uses for an area of study. Determining what the appropriate use might be within a given municipality, however, - be it commercial, industrial, institutional, residential, etc. - is a highly politicized process (Forester, 1989). Depending on your perspective, the most "appropriate" use for a given site might be intensified urban development, low density suburban development, rural agriculture, or even returning the land to a state that is compatible with ecological goals. Land use decisions are made under the fluctuating influence of negotiation among parties, political will and technical expertise.

Urban planning is more than a technical activity then. It is not just about the physical structure of the city; it is also about how people use and are served by the physical structure. It addresses this challenge at a "master planning" level, as planners determine the location of various land uses and how they will best work for the city as a whole (Hodge, 1998: 201-16). Examples of such uses might be affordable housing, or an integrated transit network, as have been described in earlier chapters of this report. In Ontario, the priorities for such "master planning" are set by Official Plans for municipalities about every five years, as dictated by provincial planning legislation.

Planning, however, is also a municipal service involving the regulation and processing of development applications. Urban planners consider a range of factors (physical, social, economic, environmental…) in determining what is appropriate land use for a given site. It is a municipal service, then, that has a daily impact on urban life.

1.1 The Importance of Immigration for Urban Planning

Planners regularly engage in demographic population projections as a tool for monitoring neighbourhood and regional changes, as well as anticipating and charting future growth. In the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) immigration is an obvious, though

unequally experienced, source of municipal economic growth and demographic change. In fact, immigration can be described not only as the engine of economic and residential growth in the GTA, but also as a necessity if current population levels are to be maintained, given the low birth rate of the Canadian-born (Bourne, 2000).

Beyond sheer numbers, it is the population diversity resulting from immigration that presents the greatest challenge for planners. Urban and suburban planning is facing challenges to its traditional tools and assumptions as multiculturalism enters the context of planning decisions and planning practice. Whether it involves changing house numbers to be sensitive to Asian cultural practices, addressing neighbourhood disputes over in-fill housing in older areas (sometimes called monster homes), or adjusting parking requirements for places of worship with a regional catchment area and a capacity not defined by pew seats (to name a few examples), multiculturalism is colliding with established assumptions in the everyday practice of planning.

One example of this collision is in the realm of public participation. The *Ontario Planning Act* mandates a public process making for land use changes. Yet social norms, language barriers, and a mistrust of the process on the part of newcomers can conspire to make the traditional forum of the public meeting an ineffective planning tool. Translation services and multilingual documentation are a first step toward accommodating an ethnoculturally diverse community.

The most unavoidable connection between immigration and planning in urban and suburban communities occurs when issues of multiculturalism and planning attract media attention (as has happened with mosques or so called Asian malls, for example). These conflicts are usually debated in terms of traditional, technical planning concerns like parking, traffic, appropriate planned use, etc. although some ask if these concerns camouflage fears about demographic change and discriminatory attitudes. Given the legislated public participation component of the process, planning issues become a place for people to come forward to say how they feel about change in their community. As a result, the planning process can potentially become a venue that exposes tensions, conflict and racism in a community.

2.0 KEY ISSUES

There is a historical relationship between North American urban development and immigration. Seen in the influential work in sociology of the Chicago School in the early to mid 1900s (e.g. Park, Burgess, Wirth), the study of cities was at one time largely the study of immigration (Waldinger, 1989). This interest in immigration faded after World War II, however, as immigration became more of a sociological preoccupation than an urban one among academic researchers. Yet in the latter part of the twentieth century the growing numbers and (in some countries) growing diversity of immigrants settling in cities sparked renewed interest. More recently, the Metropolis Project—an international partnership of countries searching for ways to address the challenges of urban immigration—has revived research in this area (Metropolis, 1997). In Canada, this research initiative aims to encourage research that moves away from the traditional preoccupation with immigration as a national issue and recognizes the urban reality of Canadian immigration. Of the research projects Metropolis has funded, however, very few have addressed the link between ethnocultural diversity and urban planning.

This neglect reflects a trend within planning literature, where immigration is rarely a topic for planning debates despite the link between immigration and cities. This "failure to grasp and explore the difference that cultural diversity makes to the landscape of planning theory and practice" (Sandercock and Kliger, 1998: 127) has been noted by researchers in several immigrant receiving countries such as Australia, Britain, the United States and Canada (Sandercock and Kliger, 1998; Thomas and Krishnarayan, 1994; Laws, 1994; Thomas and Ritzdorf, 1997; Wallace and Moore Milroy, 1999; Wallace, 1997). Thus, the prevailing idea that ethnocultural diversity and immigration are outside the confines of planning practice is not a matter of national or local politics as much as it is part of the tradition of planning as a profession.

Where immigration or ethnocultural diversity are mentioned, they tend to be identified as future concerns, and not addressed as part of the basic elements or context of planning practice (cf. Hodge, 1998: 439-40). In fact, planning has a long tradition of defining itself as a profession of experts who make technical, rational, comprehensive decisions in the interest of the public. Planning in the "public interest", then, is often

described as the most appropriate, equitable approach. Nonetheless, although such a perspective pervades existing legislation and planning practice, there has been a long and steady chorus of dissenters. Reflecting on planners' roles in city-building, Leung argues:

> Planners have to learn to appreciate the messiness and fuzziness about city dynamics… it is true that planners have been telling partial truths because those are what they have been trained to see. The rhetorics of long-term, comprehensive and co-ordinated planning are the rhetorics of power – the top-down, bird's-eye view, the big picture – literally and metaphorically… This view is powerful because it gives a sense of comprehension and control, but it makes no allowance for the ambiguities and contradictions that are vital ingredients of the living city (1994: 128).

2.1 Planning and the 'Public Interest'

Encompassing the goals of technical optimality and ethical good (Mazza, 1996: 397), planning is deemed to be in the 'public interest' when it produces "sound, amenable development for the community as a whole" (Hodge, 1998: 197). Within the dominant tradition of what is known as rational comprehensive planning, not only has it been assumed that there is such a thing as a common 'public interest', but it has also been taken for granted that due to their education and position, planners (and other political administrators) are deemed capable of defining that 'public interest' (Alexander, 1992: 129).

Determining what that looks like in practice, however, is unavoidably tangled in the political nature of local decision-making, a process fragmented by the various interests hoping to exert influence. What the 'public interest' means, therefore, is related to who defines the 'public interest'. But as Hodge explains:

> Quite simply, there is no ready mechanism for doing this. Politicians will argue that voters have sanctioned their views; citizen groups will argue that their grass-roots views truly reflect the public interest; and planners may argue that their comprehensive view of the community provides the basis for such a definition. Clearly, there is ample room for conflict among participants in whichever definition the planner adopts (1998: 402).

The first challenge to the dominant perspective in planning came in the 1960s as both practitioners and theorists began to ask why matters of interest to the poor and the

marginalized were often not part of what was defined as the 'public interest'. This critique coalesced around a seminal article by Paul Davidoff (1965) and his idea of "advocacy planning". Alarmed that planners were too concerned with the process of planning and had lost sight of the outcomes, Davidoff argued that planning was not a value neutral activity, and that planners should not only identify the values underlying their prescriptions, but more importantly that they should affirm them and take a political stand as advocates for what they deemed right. Davidoff presented a fundamental challenge to the assumed neutrality of planning, and the ability of planners to equitably define the public interest.

While advocacy planning has been widely credited with broadening the scope and the roles and responsibilities of planners, some of the mostly white, middle class professionals who went into poor neighbourhoods to act as advocates for the marginalized found the experience sobering (Sandercock, 1998: 89). In cases where a lack of decision-making power was the problem, advocacy skills proved to be of limited utility. Moreover, as Sandercock argues, the planners came to these communities with an agenda, conceptualized the problem and defined the terms of a solution:

> Under this model [advocacy planning] some planners would now explicitly think about and represent the poor in the planning process—without, however, actually giving the poor a voice in that process... Advocacy planning expanded the role of professionals and left the structure of power intact (1998: 89-90).

Despite its limitations, advocacy planning opened up the concept of a single 'public interest' for scrutiny. In the decades that followed, other groups in society came forward arguing that their interests were not being met by the planning process and its reliance on a planner-defined 'public interest'. Feminist activists within planning were analyzing gender inequalities (Moore Milroy, 1990). People of colour were drawing attention to racist practices in planning (Thomas and Ritzdorf, 1997). Gay and lesbian activists were addressing oppression affecting their lives in cities (Forsyth, 1997; Valentine, 1993). Today, multicultural difference is also becoming a category of analysis in planning (Sandercock, 1998). Combined, these various critiques

> ...have left this particular historical notion of 'the public interest' in tatters, as have the lived realities of late twentieth-century existence. A defining

characteristic of this era is a multiplicity of cultural communities and social groups dwelling in any one city or region, often alongside and yet not connecting with each other, sometimes incapable or barely capable of peaceful co-existence (Sandercock, 1998: 197).

As the range of interests affected by the planning process is recognized, the concept of a single 'public interest' is severely undermined. Those who do not wish to abandon the idea entirely must address the way they will define the 'public interest'. There have been a few attempts to do just that (Alexander, 1992: 130-31). One is to see the public interest in a normative framework, a concept based on explicit values, as in advocacy planning (Davidoff, 1965). In this case, planning might be deemed to be in the public interest if it is equitable, or if it improves the situation of those worst off in the community. Another alternative is to interpret the 'public interest' in terms of the 'relevant public' (Klosterman, 1980: 326). Here planning would be considered in the public interest if it benefits the group of individuals that are relevant to the issue at hand. Although this approach requires that the planner decide who is 'relevant', arguably the plurality of interests that exists can be more readily acknowledged for a single policy or decision than for planning practice in general. Perhaps the most enduring approach to redefining the 'public interest' has been a broadening of democratic public participation. From this perspective, planning is in the public interest when everyone participates, with the legitimacy of the process directly related to the level of participation (Arnstein, 1969). This too has its drawbacks, however, articulated in the debate over the efficiency and effectiveness of public participation strategies (Wallace, Woo and Boudreau, 1997).

Rather than bolstering a discredited concept, Sandercock opts for the creation of a new, fragmented definition of the 'public interest'. Planners under the traditional paradigm operate in the 'public interest' and present a public image of neutrality; planning policies are expected to be gender- and race-neutral. Sandercock argues that the concept of the 'public interest' must be deconstructed: "We must acknowledge that there are *multiple publics*" (1998: 30; italics in original).

A "multiple publics" perspective does not mean planning without any concern for the public, but rather planning in a way that assumes diversity in behavior, opinion and experiences to be the norm. Planning from this perspective must recognize the

complexities in decision-making within any community. Municipalities are not assumed to have a collective purpose, nor are municipal planners expected to articulate a single 'public interest'. Such an approach to planning is exciting for those interested in the intersection of planning and immigration. As will become clear in the next section, however, in practice most planners are nowhere near this ideal.

3.0 HISTORICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The disconnection between planning and immigration in most planning literature and planning practice points to long-standing assumptions within the professional tradition that informs most municipal planning today. Urban planning in Canada is an activity implemented by municipalities, though governed by provincial legislation. Municipalities make Official Plans to guide local planning decisions but these plans must fit within the plans and policies of a regional government (where one exists) and finally provincial legislation. The *Ontario Planning Act (1996)*, as is the general tradition in Canada, is highly focused on land use issues, leaving health, education, social services, environmental quality and the economy to fall under other provincial and municipal legislation and policies.

At the macro-level of Official Plan-making, municipalities are controlled by the need for upper-tier approval of their plans, given on the grounds that it fits within existing legislation and policy. At the micro-level of particular land use decisions, municipal governments are checked by the provincial requirement to inform the public fully about planning matters under consideration. Planning departments must hold public meetings to discuss official plans, official plan amendments, and zoning bylaws. They must also inform any agency that council considers to have an interest in a particular planning matter. Those in disagreement with a planning decision have recourse to the Ontario Municipal Board, a quasi-judicial body guided by the *Planning Act* that has authority to settle such disputes. Both of these venues—the public meeting and the Ontario Municipal Board—provide an opportunity for citizens who are able and willing to challenge the practice of planning on a site-specific basis.

Despite its interconnections with other municipal services, municipal planning almost exclusively focuses on the regulation of land development. Not surprisingly, multiculturalism or immigration are not mentioned in the *Planning Act*. A rational model of planning dominates planning practice, and structures planning legislation:

> Analysis of the language used in Ontario's planning legislation reveals that people are described in the *Planning Act* as generic and undifferentiated. References to "persons" or "the public" are found throughout ... The parties affected by planning decisions are therefore assumed to be the individual, or the public as a whole, described as an aggregate. Further, the language of the *Act* conveys the assumption that any party is equally capable of enunciating concerns about planning processes and decisions and having them heeded (Wallace and Moore Milroy, 1999: 67).

Beyond legislation, provincial governments also direct municipal planning with policy. Under Section 3 of the *Ontario Planning Act* planning authorities "shall have regard to" policy statements issued under the *Act*. Policy statements are powerful tools for the Province not only to specify "matters of provincial interest", but also to justify provincial involvement in municipal planning (e.g. by providing means to appeal a local planning decision to the Ontario Municipal Board). The spirit of such policy statements is to emphasize the "…complex inter-relationship among environmental, economic and social factors in land use planning" (Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 1996). The most recent provincial Policy Statement (issued in 1996) makes no mention of ethno-cultural diversity, nor does it suggest that there is anything other than a single "public interest". This is in keeping with previous policy statements. The policy statement that preceded it said only that:

> The linkages between social and human services needs and land use planning should be recognized in land use planning decisions; and opportunities for facilities and services, including public service facilities, should be provided to residents diverse in ability, age, income and culture (Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 1994: B.1.).

The profession, albeit conservative, has gone farther to acknowledge the importance of immigration and diversity for planning practice than the existing legislation. In 1994, the national professional body, the Canadian Institute of Planners, adopted a Statement of Values which directed planners "to value the natural and cultural environment", "to respect diversity" and to foster "meaningful public participation by all

individual groups and seek to articulate the needs of those whose interests have not been represented" (Canadian Institute of Planners, 1994). This recognition of diversity is greatly tempered by the companion Code of Professional Conduct which is much more similar to the *Planning Act* in this regard, and is enforceable by the Institute where the Statement of Values is not. Within the Code, planners are instructed to "practice in a manner that represents the needs, values and aspirations of the public" (Canadian Institute of Planners, 1994), a "public" that is evidently defined as "generic".

Within such a legislative and professional context, it is not surprising that there has been very little movement to incorporate diversity resulting from immigration into planning processes. Even the more progressive planners appear more comfortable if they can use technical criteria to rationalize their defense of minority interests, or to acknowledge the ethno-cultural implications of their work. As Qadeer explains:

> Overall, land use planning in Ontario treats culturally differentiated activities as exceptional cases of residential, commercial or other general classes of function use. It is officially "blind" to cultural differences in the use of land, though it proceeds by accommodating them on site specific bases (1994: 193).

A question exists, however, as to whether or not such an approach will continue to be the norm. The connection of immigration and multiculturalism to planning has gained a higher profile in recent years with a growing body of media coverage, politicized development issues and Ontario Municipal Board hearings. This study set out to identify to what degree immigration had become an issue for planners in the Greater Toronto Area, and in particular how municipalities were addressing the challenges of a diverse population. It is to the findings of this research that we now turn.

4.0 FINDINGS

Planning is a relatively conservative profession, and change comes slowly. Supported by a professional and legislative context that pays little attention to issues of immigration, and trained within a rational comprehensive model of planning practice, planners in the Greater Toronto Area held remarkably consistent views about the impact of immigration on planning. Both urban and suburban planners from across the region

described this issue as interesting and relevant for their municipality but outside the particular responsibilities of the planning department. Those municipalities where planners had the greatest experience with immigration, and had developed a corporate response to address it, were nevertheless best equipped to meet the challenges.

4.1 Demographic Profiles

Planners from all the municipalities in this study described collecting demographic information about the population they worked with. There was considerable variation among municipalities, however, as to where this information came from, and the degree to which planners used such information in their daily work. Compared to other cities in the region, the City of Toronto's role as the GTA's central city meant that it had had the longest history of immigration and ethnocultural diversity, and of documenting the demographic impacts of these trends on the city (City of Toronto Urban Planning, 1998). The City of Toronto had demographic data broken down by ward for use at the corporate level, and had made it available on their website for use by the public at large. Because of the city's large territory and diverse population, planning within **Toronto's Urban Development Services** was organized geographically into districts, and demographic data was aggregated as a resource for planners working within the boundaries of these districts. Demographic data were regularly incorporated into planning reports and studies as part of the context within which issues were addressed.

Demographic data played a more modest role in planning departments within the suburban municipalities examined in this study. One of the most structured attempts to use such data was within **Mississauga Planning and Building** (Policy Planning Division), which catalogued and monitored the spatial arrangement of diversity in the municipality primarily through "Community Profiles". These profiles served a basic information function for the general public (e.g. people looking to set up a business) and municipal service departments (e.g. community services; libraries). As a Mississauga planner explained: "We are certainly aware we are a diverse community. We try to get data on how we are growing, changing… raise awareness."

Apart from the City of Toronto, municipalities in this study were members of two-tier regional municipalities -- the Region of Peel and the Region of York. Basic demographic information was available from the regional municipality and this may have contributed to a lack of perceived need to focus on demographic change at the local level. Several planners suggested that they had not invested the resources in demographic analysis and in monitoring population changes because immigration and ethnocultural diversity were not pressing issues in their municipalities. As one planner explained, "You are maybe five years too early in asking this question… These changes will come over time."

4.2 Site-Specific Accommodation

Immigration and planning have come into conflict in recent years in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), garnering media attention and extensive political debate at times. Given the ethnocultural diversity of the region's central city it is not surprising that some notable examples of conflict have appeared in the City of Toronto: the rezoning of an industrial site for a mosque in (former) East York (Duncanson and Van Rijn, 1996); redevelopment of a roller skating rink into an Asian mall in (former) Scarborough (Qadeer, 1994); and the battle over a Jamaican community centre in (former) North York (McMurray, 1998). Planners in suburban municipalities faced similar land use challenges as their municipalities attracted growing numbers of immigrants, as was illustrated dramatically when the Deputy Mayor of Markham made statements about her constituents' concerns with increased Asian immigration and in particular Asian mall developments (Shackleton, 1995). Planners responded to each situation by attempting to judge the technical merits of each development application without addressing the particular ethnic or cultural needs of the population involved.

Planners in the GTA preferred to handle these issues within the technical arena of traditional planning practice. As one planner explained: "Cultural diversification means space is used in ways than were otherwise intended. This raises issues about compatibility, parking, traffic, use." Speaking to an issue of a mosque, one suburban planner tried to clarify the connection between culture and planning:

The issues were traffic oriented, transportation impacts. People always think there is another motive, but I don't think that is the case. I can't speak for the politicians, but staff try to be as objective as possible. In fact, we are extra careful about being as objective as possible on a controversial application because we know we might be at the OMB [Ontario Municipal Board] and then our professional credentials are on the line. Another issue has been Chinese malls. A mall is a mall, retail is retail. We are not going to approve more retail just because of cultural issues. We try to strip away ethnic overtones in dealing with applications.

Echoing this approach, a planner in another municipality maintained that concerns over places of worship should not be seen as conflicts arising from immigration and diversity, but rather as questions of land use, regardless of whether the building would function as a Jewish synagogue, an Islamic mosque or a Buddhist temple. This planner insisted:

Our perspective is that we don't know what is the most important or useful location for this type of development. But these issues have to do with changing patterns of subdivision development and not ethnicity. It is a site, a building. What goes on inside the box is not a concern of the planning department, or of any other department perhaps... I'd say you should be careful you are not looking for issues that aren't there... The planning process does not distinguish between ethnic characteristics; the process is the process and we have never had an occasion to restructure that.

4.3 Accommodating Diversity?

In most instances, planners did not target specific ethnocultural groups for involvement in the planning process, seeing that to be counter to the general goal of planning in the "public interest". Several planners explained that there had been no requests for a different approach to planning, with one suburban planner describing planning as an "English-only activity" in her municipality – the implication being that there was no need for anything else. The City of Toronto was the clear exception, with substantial effort going into translation and multilingual documentation. These efforts, however, were supported by corporate-level initiatives, as described in Chapter One of this report.

At least according to the planners interviewed for this study, the place where planning can address ethnocultural differences and the impact of immigration is by remaining flexible to alternative development forms. Best practices were seen to be those where "planners have made some compromises, found ways to make it [diversity] work." This "compromise" is a strong commitment to flexibility in the planning process, especially in suburban municipalities where both planners and politicians often share a very pro-growth orientation. As Markham's Chief planner was quoted as saying: "We plan for growth, we manage growth, but we do not differentiate based on ethnicity" (Galashan, 1999). With this flexible approach to planning, multiculturalism is neither acknowledged nor encouraged within the planning framework. What may be encouraged is what one planner described as a flexible attitude to all possible uses: big box retail, ethnospecific retail, or any other development trend.

Beyond accommodating diversity on a site-specific basis, the **City of Toronto's Urban Development Services** in particular had attempted to be flexible in accommodating ethnocultural diversity. Deliberate design guidelines that foster the propagation of ethno-cultural elements in development were the exception, and were reserved for areas such as old Chinatown or Kensington Market. The more common approach seemed to be for planners to adapt and change guidelines to promote flexibility in development. As one experienced Toronto planner explained, "There needs to be flexibility for diversity of development, but not ethnic diversity."

The reluctance to tread into planning for ethnic diversity was argued in terms of the need to plan for the entire community, to plan with the "public interest" in mind. Planners argued that proactive attempts to apply zoning (density, parking, height requirements) to foster uses commonly associated with one ethnic group could be restrictive for another ethnic group.

4.4 Reflecting on Planning Practice: Is Immigration Indeed Relevant?

Immigration has an impact on the physical form and the social character of communities throughout the Greater Toronto Area. This is evident in the ethno-cultural diversity seen in public spaces, in immigration settlement patterns in urban and suburban

neighbourhoods, in architectural and landscape design, and in the commercial activity immigrants support. All of these impacts are within the terrain of urban planning. This points to an interesting contradiction. On the one hand, ethno-cultural diversity was helping to shape the character of the urban and suburban municipalities in this study because of the high proportion of immigrants in their populations -- the context of the planners' daily work. Planners are responsible for recommending appropriate land use, and thus for influencing both the physical form and use of (sub)urban space. On the other hand, the planners interviewed were remarkably consistent in seeing immigration to be outside the domain of their work. The degree to which demographic changes from immigration were considered a priority varied among the cities, but all planning departments approached land use from an ethnic or culturally-neutral position. There are three points, however, at which immigration and ethnocultural diversity may be relevant to urban planning: demographics, citizen participation, and defining a "public interest".

4.4.1 Demographics

At the most basic level, ethnocultural diversity is relevant to the demographic analysis on which planners often based decisions about economic and physical growth (Knack, 1997). Whether developing a new Official Plan, preparing for increased demand for subdivision development, or encouraging intensification and redevelopment, planners regularly develop projections and portraits of their community. Evaluating the impacts of increased immigration can be an obvious and key part of such analysis.

Demographic analysis can also be useful at a more site-specific level as a means of factoring the context of land use decisions into an assessment of a particular plan's merit. For example, just as market analysis or economic forecasting might aid in a development proposal, so might an understanding of who lives in a particular community. In this study, all the municipal planners described immigration as a relevant component of demographic analysis, though whether or not they had the time and resources (or relied on other levels of government) to do it did vary.

4.4.2 Citizen Participation

A more significant challenge facing planners in an ethnoculturally diverse community is that of facilitating citizen participation within the land use planning process. In fact, there has been considerable debate about how far planners should go in making public participation a priority in the planning process (Marshall and Roberts, 1997; Seelig and Seelig, 1997). Planners have a legislated responsibility to consult the public over land use decisions, yet they are not told how to do this. It is therefore within the discretion of individual planning departments to decide what format this consultation will take and if groups will be encouraged to attend. For example, not all groups may feel equally comfortable in traditional venues such as a public "town hall" meeting or a land use adjustment committee meeting. Lack of literacy, an inability to function in English, culturally defined gender roles, or an unfamiliarity with political decision making processes are just some of the many barriers to effective participation by the whole community.

The city governments looked at in this study could be placed along a continuum, ranging from those that saw translation, multilingual documentation and devising strategies to encourage participation by diverse groups as their responsibility, to those that wanted to avoid targeting one group over another, and instead preferred to aim for general participation by interested members of the community. Interestingly, the results corresponded to the different corporate responses taken by individual municipal governments to issues of access and equity (see Chapter One), with Toronto being virtually a stand alone leader in its efforts to broaden the basis for participation.

4.4.3 Defining a "public interest"

Beyond the participatory aspects of the planning process, ethnocultural diversity is also challenging the way communities are defined and understood by planners. Though the profession defines itself as technical, neutral and rational, alternative critiques of planning have revealed the bias and assumptions embedded within a "neutral" and "rational" approach. Thus, immigration and its resulting diversity in cities create a unique challenge for a profession that is committed to planning for a single,

identifiable "public interest". Questions such as how the city's diversity is represented in planning offices, who sits at the table when planning decisions are made, and what assumptions are made about the form and content of the process move the discussion about immigration's impact on planning into new, uncharted waters.

Despite a history of immigration, planners in the Toronto region were not yet at a point where they saw ethno-cultural diversity as a relevant component of land use planning. Toronto was the only municipality that even came close to doing so, in its neighbourhood approach to planning, yet even there planners talked about the importance of an ethno-culturally neutral process. The biggest concern appeared to be that recognition of ethnicity and culture in specific planning situations would in some tangible way disadvantage another group. What this perspective did not acknowledge, however, were the assumptions found within the status quo. As Qadeer describes with an often cited example from the Globe and Mail:

Italians and Portuguese like to keep trees short allowing better view of neighbours, Anglo-Saxons want trees to be tall and leafy blocking any views to/from neighbours, Chinese believe trees in front of a home bring bad luck. What are the city's bylaws? Which group do they implicitly/explicitly support? (can't cut it down but can trim it to a mere bush on pole) (1997: 481).

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Although this study for the most part identified a conservative and reactive approach to immigrant settlement on the part of planning departments in the Greater Toronto Area, some planners did acknowledge that diversity was challenging the urban and suburban environments in which they operated and the tools and assumptions on which their profession has traditionally depended. Evidence of this could be found in the amazing efforts they made to achieve representative participation from the community, or in the personal relationships planners developed with key stakeholders in the neighbourhoods they worked in. In those cities or neighbourhoods where planners had had the greatest experience with immigration they had learned that planning amidst diversity is a messy, time consuming and unpredictable process.

Identifying ethnocultural diversity as a relevant component of planning is not an easy transition for planners, who are rooted in a tradition that calls for the universal application of plans and policies and that assumes some degree of community or public interest. It will require longer time frames and an evolving or flexible sense of desired outcomes for the process to change. Moreover, differences between urban and suburban municipalities are reflected in the different land use priorities of different communities and their governments, and their different expectations as to how the process will function. As some of the planners interviewed for this study warned, it is important to be careful not to make an issue out of immigration and diversity where none exists. It is equally important, however, for planners to recognize the cultural assumptions embedded in traditional planning practice and how immigration and planning intersect. Planners are insistent on not wanting to plan for ethnicity or culture, but rather on relying on the technical merits of proposals, yet the challenges of ethnicity and culture cannot be disassociated from planning.

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CHAPTER 10: LIBRARIES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The public library is a place where people from all income groups and of all ages and abilities can access popular reading and audio/visual materials for a nominal cost. Libraries are a source of information about community events, voluntary sector service organizations, and government programs. They serve as meeting places for community members – especially children and seniors. They are learning centres for adults, and a reference resource for those seeking everything from employment information to gardening advice. Increasingly, libraries are also places to access the Internet.

For newcomers to Canada, libraries play a vital role in the settlement process. Libraries serve as places of information, recreation, and communal interaction. In some municipalities, public libraries also serve as links to countries of origin, providing access to multilingual collections. Libraries have resources for Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOFEL) exams, English-as-a Second-Language (ESL) training, and in some cases hold ESL classes themselves. Yet perhaps the greatest service libraries provide to newcomers is in providing physical places where they can integrate into and learn about their new communities:

> Clearly libraries are busy places. But it's not all about numbers. Public libraries are also, and perhaps most importantly, a touchstone for local community values, and centres for local economic development, in ways that the big bookstores and the Internet never will be (Matyas, 1999).

Or as another author writes:

> Most often, we have discovered that the users of the public library depend on its physicality. They need to know that a place is there for them and their children... the place the community calls the library still serves to draw the community to it and pull the community together (Lembeck, 1998: 29).

Given the role of libraries in promoting community cohesion, many argue the need for staff members who understand local diversity -- social, economic and cultural. The successful library, then, is one that attracts users by reflecting and serving the diversity of its community.

2.0 KEY ISSUES

Despite the strong support that libraries attract from users, libraries as public institutions face significant challenges. The context in which library services are delivered is changing. Technology is changing the ways in which people search for and collect information. Capital expenditures are needed to upgrade or maintain infrastructure at a time when municipal budgets are strained. Libraries must compete with upscale bookstores for middle class patrons -- the traditional core of library users. Immigration is bringing new needs and demands into urban public library systems as libraries strive to make themselves relevant to local populations and attract new users. As one author summarized:

> The goal for public libraries should be to embrace these inevitable changes and to emerge as stronger, more efficient, and more effective institutions. For libraries to support and serve the communities in which they exist, various environmental factors must first be recognized and understood, and then they must be reconciled with the concepts and beliefs of the public library communities they serve… the current environment surrounding pubic libraries (whether it be economic, political, or social) demands informed, yet cautious activism (Lembeck, 1998: 19-20).

The means of addressing this complex set of challenges is typically discussed in the literature in terms of the need for strong leadership to create a vision or role for public libraries that is appropriate to current conditions:

> Leadership… is arguably at a greater premium that at any time in the history of the profession. If libraries are to craft bold mission statements, reconceptualize services and embrace marketing, then the profession needs visionaries, entrepreneurs and leaders as never before (Haycock and McCallum, 1997, 34).

Trying to "reconceptualize services" with immigrants in mind raises two key issues. One is the issue of *service delivery*, and whether or not an ethnoracially diverse profession is required to deliver services to an ethnoracially diverse population. The second issue is the *services* themselves and how libraries can encourage immigrants and ethnoracial groups to use them.

2.1 The need for an ethnoracially diverse profession

At a time when the library profession is looking for "visionaries" and "entrepreneurs" to take on leadership roles, there are those who question how well the existing profession represents the populations it serves. A 1992 American study by the Public Library Association (Services to Multicultural Populations Committee) identified insufficient funding and/or insufficient staffing as the greatest obstacles to serving multicultural populations (Du Mont, Buttlar and Caynon, 1994: 37). In a Canadian study of library directors belonging to the Council of Administrators of Large Urban Public Libraries, the authors noted "Demographically, the directors showed some clear characteristics -- Caucasian, with nearly 80% born within Canada" (Haycock and McCallum, 1997: 36). This line of examination has been more fully developed in the United States, where African and Hispanic Americans seeking to join the profession have raised questions about the institutional barriers they face.

The issue is more than one of discrimination within the profession. It also encompasses a concern about the ability of libraries to meet the needs of ethnoracially diverse populations if their staffs do not reflect that diversity (Du Mont, Buttlar and Caynon, 1994: 10). The "goal should be to build a diverse staff sensitive to the needs of all users and knowledgeable about different backgrounds" (Janes and Meltzer, 1990 in Du Mont, Buttlar and Caynon, 1994: 81).

In the United States, some librarians from "minority" groups have chosen to form ethnic library associations to combat institutional barriers. Emerging out of the civil rights movement,

> These associations cross many professional and geographic boundaries, including public, special, school, and academic librarians from technical and public service as well as administration. What unites these professionals is an interest in professional opportunities for minority librarians, fostering access to unbiased ethnic information and recruitment of minority librarians to lead library service into a multicultural future (Echavarria and Wertheimer, 1997, 373-74).

During the 1970s, associations and groups were formed among Black, Spanish-speaking, Asian, American Indian, Jewish-American and Chinese-American librarians (Echavarria and Wertheimer, 1997: 374-75). These groups had joined forces by the early

1980s to form an Ethnic Materials and Information Exchange Round Table, although they have also continued to operate as separate organizations. As one set of researchers suggests:

> Until multiculturalism and cultural pluralism are institutionalized as pervasive values, the need will continue for minority librarians to have the support of being with others like themselves (Echavarria and Wertheimer, 1997: 390).

No comparable ethnic librarian associations exist in Canada. Nonetheless, observers have noted similar barriers to entry into the profession by people from ethnoracially diverse backgrounds. For example, one black librarian suggests:

> Why are so few people of African descent drawn to Canadian librarianship? That's a question I ask myself every once in a while. Some of the reasons I can guess at – institutional discrimination, lack of role models, not enough promotion of the profession, lonness once you're in it, the cost of a graduate education… (Jones, 1997, 12).

2.2 Reaching out to a diverse population

Library services are dictated in large part by customer needs and satisfaction rather than by legislative requirements or regulations, as is the case with most of the other services examined in this study. A successful library is a library whose collection is well used. Yet beyond seeking user satisfaction, public libraries have defined a role for themselves as important social centres. In the words of Victoria Anderson, Chief Librarian for the Greater Victoria Public Library, "The library is their last bastion of social interaction... We want to make sure the option of personal assistance is always there" (Crawley, 2000, 13).

In order to achieve their community objectives, librarians regularly examine the ways in which they communicate to the public and often how they might deliver services better to subgroups of the population. A significant amount of work has gone into the development of children's library services, for example. Libraries have also looked at ways to make services more accessible and appropriate for seniors and low-income groups. In general, librarians tend to define their mandate as the delivery of appropriate

services to the local population. This means that what may be necessary in one location may not be as necessary in another.

As immigration changes the composition of many cities and neighbourhoods in Canada, libraries have to accommodate the needs of ethnoracially diverse user groups. At the most basic level, this may require librarians to examine signage to ensure it communicates effectively to diverse users. "Properly designed, multiculturally-sensitive signage," says one writer "is an effective tool for increased access, meeting user needs and making the voice of the library more welcoming" (Boyd, 1993: 61-2). At a more demanding level, accommodating ethnoracial groups may call for a substantial re-evaluation of service delivery, one in which librarians discard "the standard notions of what a "core" collection is or what basic services are and instead learn to communicate to a mass of diverse audiences" (Du Mont, Buttlar and Caynon, 1994: 10).

2.2.1 Ethnoracially diverse collections

A lack of multilingual collections is the most frequent critique of standard notions of the "core" collection, especially in multicultural neighbourhoods. Libraries are an important cultural resource for cities, and their collections should reflect the citizens they serve. In multicultural cities, librarians are coming to realize that collections that reflect diversity are not a passing fad (Miller-Lachmann, 1993: 99) and should be part of a redefined "core". In less diverse communities, debates about the need for diversity in library collections are more politicized. Looking at the racial divisions between cities and suburbs in the United States, some argue that even in predominately white, affluent, suburban libraries children need to see "minority" children in positive, non-stereotypical ways if they are to develop understanding and respect for difference (Parrish, 1993; Miller-Lachmann, 1993).

Choosing what to include in a multicultural collection is a process that may also produce conflict and tension. Working with communities to determine their needs raises questions about the role of the professional librarian as "expert", the need to ensure quality and avoid tokenism in multilingual and multicultural collections, and how and

where to involve diverse citizens in library programming and acquisition. The challenge for librarians, then,

> …is to decide upon the level of diversity necessary for full participation by
> members of the library's community, and the maximum extent to which such
> diversity can be encouraged through services and collection development...
> (Du Mont, Buttlar and Caynon, 1994: 9)

2.2.2 Beyond accommodation

The challenges that ethnoracial diversity presents to libraries has stimulated a debate about whether this public institution should try to meet changing community needs by reacting to requests for service, or whether it should advocate for and reach out to underserved populations. Diversity raises the issue of library neutrality:

> Libraries are open to all… and have no sectarian, religious, political,
> economic, or other bias in terms of collections (i.e., types of materials) or
> services offered. They are "neutral" in this sense of openness… rather than in
> the negative sense of "not taking sides". The negative concept of neutrality is
> useful in avoiding becoming embroiled in sectarian disputes (where the library
> certainly does not belong) but it should not be used to prevent the library from
> responding to the special needs of the poor, the oppressed, the disadvantaged
> or even the middle class in its own community (Marshall, 1984: 298).

The need to be both inclusive and unbiased is a practical challenge librarians deal with in relation to the particular mix of their community. According to some, this paradoxical position prevents librarians from being apolitical (Lembeck, 1998: 21).

Library outreach crosses into the territory of community activism when librarians become involved in issues related to societal inequalities or power imbalances between groups. In describing why, as a black librarian in Nova Scotia, she has taken on a community activist role, Jones explains:

> "Yes, I promote cultural identity within the library. Yes, I encourage
> multicultural programming. Yes, when my community has a concern, I will be
> there to help find the answers… What is the difference between a librarian
> and an activist, other than the way they do their jobs? Are both not in the
> promotional, informational business? As a librarian, I'm an educator,
> information provider, caregiver, and so much more. Add race to that mix, stir
> in a touch of cultural identity, top it off with community expectation, and
> there you have it: a librarian and community activist" (Jones, 1997, 12).

Activist or empowering roles for librarians vis-à-vis ethnoracial groups are hotly debated in the United States, however. Debates center on "a tension between services and collections to respond to diversity and services and collections that promote consensus" (Du Mont, Buttlar and Caynon, 1994: 9). For some the responsibility of the library as a public institution is to "maintain a neutral position in response to social issues while at the same time providing services and materials appropriate to the communities they serve" (Leonard, 1993: 4). This writer continues…

> For example, is it truly in the best interests of a Hispanic community to provide extensive bilingual services and a large bilingual collection. Or are such services, in the long run subtly debilitating to the very population they were meant to serve. In this country [United States] there is perhaps no skill that is more important than a proficiency in English (Leonard, 1993: 12).

Such a view of the public library's mandate is in direct contrast to one that depicts the institution as needing to redefine itself as a multicultural institution, "…whose members, belonging to various ethnic groups and backgrounds, contribute as staff members, participate in planning and offer service in a manner that reflects the community's own unique needs. They also possess the skills to engage ethnic community members in collaborative planning and service delivery activities" (Du Mont, Buttlar and Caynon, 1994: 46).

2.2.3 Multicultural poor

Libraries have been described as operating on the margins rather than within the mainstream (Moore, 1996: 71). Although middle-class urban dwellers are often the most vocal supporters and defenders of libraries, services for the poor have long been part of the public library service mandate. Historically, the library was a public institution "to equalize education and self-improvement opportunity for the working poor" (Buschman, 1998: 18). This need to "educate" the poor coincided with heavy immigration. Today:

> ... the definition of the poor has become more contemporary: the economically disadvantaged -- among whom minorities, women and children are disproportionately represented -- the homeless, and displaced workers have become the focus of library services for the poor (Buschman, 1998: 20).

Not all libraries, of course, see services to the poor as part of their mandate. Many suburban libraries and libraries in wealthier neighbourhoods too easily see low-income customers as "problem patrons" and have adopted hostile stances to the homeless, for example (Buschman, 1998; Kester, 1997). Yet for those without the money to access electronic sources of information or reading materials in upscale coffee shop/bookstores the public library is a vital link to education and information. When poverty and immigration combine, the importance of libraries as places of recreation, information and communal interaction is all the more pronounced. Immigrants and refugees who are struggling economically in urban centres may find the public library an important lifeboat.

2.3 The costs of adapting to diversity

Library budgets, like those of many other municipal services, are faced with decreasing or eliminated funding from provincial and municipal government sources. This fiscal environment has forced library administrators to be creative, entrepreneurial and flexible in the way they define the scope of library services and adapt to local needs. Some library boards are looking to professionally-run fundraising campaigns instead of taxpayers as a major source of revenue. In some cases, fundraising can make the difference in determining whether or not a special program can be offered. For some library boards, fundraising has also become a key source of new capital (Elash, 1998).

When multicultural services are seen as special programs, they must compete for limited resources with other worthwhile programs. Adapting to diversity becomes just one part of a long list of unmet demands on systems with shrinking budgets.

From another point of view, however, adapting to diversity can help to increase library use. Some argue that multiculturalism needs to be seen as an integral part of library services – a matter of doing it better, rather than doing something different. By extension,

> …if public libraries are successful in overcoming resistance to change in the
> diffcult area of accepting and promoting diversity, [they] should be well

positioned to handle other types of change as well (Du Mont, Buttlar and Caynon, 1994: 44).

3.0   HISTORICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

What libraries offer in terms of varying levels of service should be considered in relation to how much the local government has to spend. Public library funding is almost entirely municipally derived, which means that it comes mainly from property tax revenue:

> "This may be stating the obvious – but it is an important factor. Demographics, including average income level and average level of education, create and affect the economic conditions surrounding our public libraries" (Lembeck, 1998: 23).

The other important element is community concerns and interests -- what a municipality invests in library services and how library boards determine service priorities are also the results of political pressures.

3.1   Multicultural Politics and the Toronto Public Library

The history of the Toronto Public Library is noteworthy not only because of the library system's relatively large size within the Greater Toronto Area, but also because of the way its board has addressed the challenges of immigration. During the 1970s and 1980s, Canada as a whole was facing a shift in source countries for immigrants, and these trends were most acutely felt in major immigrant receiving cities like Toronto. At the time, however, "it was commonplace for [North American] libraries to view diversity as a disruption and a liability. Consequently, many librarians attempted to minimize the impact of diversity among staff and patrons" (Du Mont, Buttlar and Caynon, 1994: 12). Toronto was a noteworthy exception during this period – in large part because of political pressures coming from an active, multicultural citizenry.

The unique approach the Toronto Public Library took to addressing multiculturalism in programs and service delivery was strongly affected by the citizen activism and reform politics of the mid to late 1970s. In addition to campaigning to save

neighbourhoods from razing and lobbying to stop expressways, Torontonians were paying attention to the less visible processes and institutions of municipal government – committees, task forces, working groups and boards like the library board (Marshall, 1984: 49). So called "reformers" had gained membership positions on the library board by the mid 1970s, influencing the creation of citizen advisory groups and commissioning reports and studies to better understand local needs. What was discovered, among other things, was a tremendous local need for multilingual collections and multiculturally appropriate services.

Calls to improve library services came from mainstream and community organizations, immigrant service providers, ethnic organizations and a multiethnic mix of individuals. The library board was slow to take concrete action, however, beyond commissioning studies, initiating some pioneering efforts to connect libraries with cultural events in the Italian community in the 1960s, and making efforts to target child readers of all ethnic groups. Staff members were ill equipped to handle the tremendous demographic shift the city was experiencing in the 1970s and 1980s. As de Sousa (1984: 213-214) reflects, "libraries were working on false assumptions":

- *immigrants were poor potential for library use*, and once they learned sufficient English, "foreign" sections would no longer be necessary

- *special programs targeting ethnic groups were unnecessary* - existing users already knew of services, non-users were apathetic, and immigrants generally were unlikely to become users

- *the role of the library was to provide the classics* – the special needs of groups within the community were rarely identified.

When a local library did reach out to a particular ethnic group in the community it was in response to active citizens, such as occurred for the Portuguese at the Sanderson Branch, or the Chinese in Riverdale in the early 1970s. By 1974, however, the goal of achieving widespread citizen participation had taken hold in Toronto, and "as part of the general upsurge, immigrant pressures began to be felt, and became an increasingly important component of the process" (de Sousa, 1984: 219). The late 1970s witnessed a

significant increase in the Toronto Public Library's multilingual collection, and attention began to be paid to the ethnic backgrounds and community experience of staff.

Another source of pressure on libraries to address immigrant needs came from low-income neighbourhoods wanting libraries to serve as social and community spaces. According to a study conducted in Toronto's Parkdale neighbourhood, some local residents saw libraries as having a special responsibility to meet the cultural needs of children from low-income groups - needs that are met at home in wealthier neighbourhoods" (Clarke, 1984). Some wanted them to function as student study centres, seniors' recreation centres, meeting places for community groups, and community information sources. Immigrant residents participating in the study also wanted libraries to be places of information about the home country, places where they could see themselves reflected and learn about their own cultures and backgrounds.

There was not the same kind of money available at the time of this study to allow libraries to target specific user groups. Once a leader in providing children's services, for example, even the Toronto Public Library suffered substantial reductions in that area in the mid 1990s (Aspinall, 1995: 5-7). Nonetheless, the historical context of the Toronto Public Library was still remarkable. Even though the context was different,

> "…the number of diverse workers and patrons who expect[ed] more than tolerance or indifference in the library [had] reached critical numbers, making indifference ineffective as a strategy for developing adequate library services" (Du Mont, Buttlar and Caynon, 1994: 12).

Toronto's history also points to the potential for citizen action to affect local library services, and the importance of libraries as a community resource and as potential sources of integration for newcomers.

3.2   Circulating Multilingual Collections

Toronto's experience with multicultural community activism and reform politics is unique in the Greater Toronto Area, and indeed in much of Canada. For many municipalities, the means to address changing needs in library services were made

available through a federal government program known as the Multilingual Bibliographic Service (MBS). The program began in 1973 and was administered by the National Archives. The MBS flourished at the time *The Multicultural Act* was passed, and throughout the 1980s helped local libraries meet these new service needs.

The MBS worked through regional centres, distributing "blocks" of books in requested languages. The number of blocks per language group a municipality received was determined by a priority system based on local demand. The program was eventually phased out, but even at its end was supplementing local libraries across Canada with 420,000 volumes in 32 languages (Carlson, 1996).

In Ontario, the MBS distributed and circulated the collection through the Ontario Library Service. After the federal government withdrew from the program in 1998, the Ontario Library Service took on responsibility for acquisition of a multilingual collection for its 1,000+ library boards. The Southern Ontario Multilingual Pool (SOMP) distributed blocks of books ordered by municipal libraries that were registered with the program. Although municipalities in the GTA did not rely on SOMP as the sole source of multilingual material, SOMP was playing an important role in supporting and structuring multilingual acquisition. The downside was that SOMP was subject to some of the same criticisms leveled at its predecessor, the MBS – it could not easily accommodate the needs of changing language groups, and was only effective if central stock was regularly replenished, updated and expanded.

3.3   A testament to the quiet strength of libraries

Soon after the Ontario government began to download responsibilities to municipal governments in 1996, its actions triggered a debate that highlighted the importance attached to libraries in both urban and rural communities in Ontario.

Bill 109, the *Local Control of Public Libraries Act*, was introduced in early 1997 at a time when the Ontario government was pursuing a variety of municipal restructuring initiatives. Librarians and library users were concerned about how the bill would change the way libraries were funded. They argued that municipal control would put libraries in

smaller communities at risk of closure, and that the user fees allowed for in the bill would guarantee free access to information for print materials only. Thus, said its critics, the bill would create a two-tier system of have and have-not libraries.   It would also discourage inter-library loans because each library would have its own system of charges and services (Crane, 1998: 22). The bill would also have changed the way libraries were governed by eliminating the requirement for a majority of community representatives on local library boards.

After concentrated public pressure the provincial government announced that it would not go forward with the bill. The fact that the bill was rescinded might not seem out-of-the-ordinary had it not happened in a political climate where whole cities were being amalgamated despite loud objections from politicians, pundits and the public. How was it that quiet, "apolitical" libraries managed to hold their ground?

Motivating the bill was a projected $30 million in expected savings. Because of public resistance, however, the government decided that the savings were not worth the effort. It heard emotional arguments describing libraries in motherhood terms, and practical arguments about independent learning (Crane, 1998: 23).   Michael Gavelle, the Ontario Liberal Party culture critic, described the threat posed to libraries in smaller cities and rural areas in these terms: "Devolving responsibility to the local level means towns have to choose between buying books and housing seniors. I feel passionately about this. The public library is where the whole world opens up to you" (Ross, 1997). In the end, Bill 109 stimulated a debate on the need for libraries and pulled together support that had not been obvious before -- at least not to government policymakers.

4.0   FINDINGS

Immigrants make up a large number of local library users in Canada's multicultural cities. Yet finding the means to meet the needs of an immigrant-rich citizenry is a constant challenge for library boards, especially those faced with the ethnocultural diversity found in many Greater Toronto Area municipalities. This study examined how library boards serving the cities of **Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton,**

Vaughan and Markham were trying to meet the needs of a diverse population and address the challenges of immigration in the late 1990s.

4.1   Multilingual collections

All of the librarians we interviewed recognized the need for outreach programs to raise community awareness of library services. In cities like those included in this study, that "community" was made up of an ethnoculturally diverse population that included many recent arrivals. A key challenge associated with bringing immigrants into libraries was to maintain a multilingual collection and to make it "front and centre" in library service.

For the most part, municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area seemed to have learned from the history of the Toronto Public Library. There was widespread recognition that immigrants were great potential users of libraries. The biggest challenge in meeting the needs of a diverse population was meeting the ongoing demands for materials in specific languages. In some cases, this challenge was localized in particular neighbourhoods, especially for those groups that tended to cluster geographically and in municipalities where population density allowed for a larger number of library branches. For other library boards, however, the need for multilingual material was felt more equally across the system.

Even municipalities with a long history of immigration faced the challenge of dealing with changing community needs as new groups entered. And, as several librarians explained, libraries not only needed to respond to increasing numbers of groups but also to interpret cultural needs. "Take the Portuguese" one librarian said, "the numbers say provide the services but we've learned over time that they are not big readers." Other librarians pointed out that some ethnocultural groups looked for multilingual books while others requested multilingual videos or periodicals in their own language. While librarians recognized that a generic approach to meeting immigrant needs was clearly ineffective, however, they also emphasized the difficulty of finding information about new groups. "We need to get to know more about the needs of people," said one, "but even getting a basic understanding can sometimes be difficult."

4.1.1   Budget pressures

"It's always a struggle to operate on a shoestring with a shortage of staff and time," one librarian observed. For many library boards, justifying multilingual acquisition could be difficult, especially in municipalities where library funds had been cut.   Apart from grants for technology acquisition, provincial funding for libraries was negligible..[48] In some cases community fundraising made up the shortfall, but grants for multilingual collections appeared to be in jeopardy. Limited budgets meant making choices. "[Libraries are] balancing the needs of newcomers, which are immediate, against those of more settled immigrants who want to retain culture and read in their own language, or share it with their children," one librarian suggested.

In those municipalities where a policy or plan had committed the board to maintaining a multilingual collection, limited resources were less of an issue. Multilingual materials were not as readily traded off for other pressing needs but remained a long-term commitment. Policies or plans were also in place to support staff training, and there was recognition of the need for a diverse and sensitive frontline staff. One librarian explained, however, that political leadership at some level was needed to support ethnocultural initiatives in all service areas, including libraries.

4.1.2   Difficulties of Acquiring Material

Even when a library acquisitions manager was clear about the sorts of materials the municipality should be collecting, finding appropriate material was not always easy. Acquiring books in many less developed countries was fraught with publication and purchasing problems. A library board had to establish contacts, find materials that were not outdated, distinguish those of good quality, and transport the materials from all parts of the world. Because "the collection is the spine of library services," in the words of one librarian, the amount of effort needed to acquire hard-to-find materials was often beyond

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[48] While funding for technology may compete with funding for multilingual collections, both types of service meet immigrants needs. According to the librarians interviewed, immigrants were big users of

the ability of smaller library boards. A librarian in Brampton explained that a recent problem in acquiring an adequate collection for certain groups "was not one of representation, nor the fault of the library, but the fact that the material was not part of the mainstream press."

These problems were why the Southern Ontario Multilingual Pool (SOMP) was created. For the librarians we interviewed, however, SOMP was not the answer. As one librarian explained, SOMP "was supposed to be a way to combat the fact that there is not enough money being put into acquisition. But it's not useful if the same books are recirculated all the time."   Some librarians criticized SOMP for not being able to meet the needs of the GTA's highly diverse communities, or for not having a collection that was comprehensive enough. Others suggested, however, that SOMP's mandate suited smaller or rural municipalities where the collection could not be "read out" so quickly. All the municipalities in this study maintained their own multilingual collections, and several were expanding them.

4.2   Community Outreach

Despite problems in securing funds with which to acquire material in other languages and the difficulty of forecasting the needs of newcomers, all the librarians interviewed agreed that libraries should reflect the diversity of their surrounding communities:

> Libraries are centrally rooted in their communities. Communities are whatever groups and cultures they are made up of. Library services should reflect this diversity.

Community outreach required creativity and effort, particularly when the community was ethnoculturally and linguistically diverse. Library staff members, including those in Toronto, acknowledged that the need to market themselves to diverse communities - "letting them know we are here" - could be a barrier to service delivery.

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computers in libraries, finding them especially useful as sources of multilingual information, and a venue for searching and preparing for jobs.

Communicating in different languages and using different vehicles were some of the ways library boards were trying to overcome this barrier.

Although they agreed that community outreach was important, some librarians emphasized that it was also important to manage peoples' expectations, given the financial constraints that libraries faced. Each library system had to make choices as to how it will deliver services to immigrants. In many cases this meant focusing on children and immigrant families as key users. As one librarian explained, "immigrant groups need to understand that libraries can't be all things to all people."

4.2.1   *English-as-a-Second-Language Services*

Recreational reading is not high on the list of priorities for newcomers, a reality that can contribute to the false assumption that immigrants are poor potential library users. As municipalities in the GTA have discovered, newcomers use the library to meet a range of immediate needs – community information, access to technology, and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) services. Fulfilling the need for ESL services is well suited to libraries. The material collected can often be used across ethnocultural groups instead of by single groups, as is the case with multilingual collections. In some cases, libraries also provide space, publicity and staff resources, in addition to an ESL collection, in partnership with community groups.

Libraries also worked with community groups and ethnospecific organizations to deliver employment readiness services, offer citizenship and orientation classes, and determine local needs and offer direction for multilingual acquisition. One librarian thought that this quasi-settlement role could be expanded on: "There is a need for the library to be part of settlement work. Organizations already bring their clients to us - show them how to use the Internet (for skills upgrading), bring people to access books, ESL…"

4.2.2 Intra-jurisdictional cooperation

One way of trying to meet the diverse needs of immigrants in the library system has been intra-jurisdictional cooperation. When the City of Toronto was created out of an amalgamation of Metropolitan Toronto with the former cities of Toronto, East York, Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough, and York, the library boards were also amalgamated to create a single, much larger **Toronto Public Library**. This amalgamated board had 97 branches and served over two million people – making it larger than the New York Public Library or the Los Angeles Public Library (Kester, 1998: 6). While the task of managing such a large and diverse system brought its own challenges, the Toronto Public Library had advantages over other library boards in the Greater Toronto Area because of its size. These included a more diverse staff, a significantly larger multilingual collection, and greater ability to circulate its resources around the city. Smaller linguistic chunks of its "mother collection" could be sent to individual library branches as needed. Smaller library boards tended to concentrate their multilingual and ESL collections in main branches or reference libraries.

Outside Toronto, some interesting regional cooperative initiatives were also in place. The **York Region** Public Libraries Information Database, a fairly new initiative, allowed interchangeable library privileges among the library systems of Newmarket, Aurora, Markham, Vaughan and Richmond Hill. Library users could use their local cards in all the partner municipalities. There was no extra charge for borrowing materials. In Peel Region there was not the same level of cooperation among municipal library systems, although there was some collective activity around staff training.

4.3   Size Matters

In some ways it is difficult to compare the way public libraries across the GTA have experienced and responded to immigration. While the municipalities examined in this study all had similar proportions of immigrants in their populations, they varied significantly in their population size, in the composition of their immigrant communities, and in the scope of their library systems (see Table 10).

The Toronto board was much larger than the others and, as discussed above, operated more as a regional than as a local public library system. Toronto had a greater variety of staff resources dedicated to meeting the multicultural needs of its population, and a greater range of multilingual materials in its collection. On the other hand, the Toronto board also faced the challenge of meeting the needs of non-city residents because people living in other cities were referred to or found their way to Toronto if they could not find what they were looking for locally.[49]

Table 10: Size of Public Libraries, Selected Greater Toronto Area Municipalities

Municipality	Total Population (1996)	Immigrant Population (1996)		# of Library Branches (2001)	Per Capita Ratio*
		Total	%		
Toronto	2,385,421	1,124,410	48	98	1:24,341
York Region					
Markham	173,383	83,130	48	5	1:34,676
Vaughan	132,549	55,325	42	6	1:22,091
Peel Region					
Brampton	268,251	96,115	36	4	1:67,062
Mississauga	544,382	234,860	43	14	1:38,894

Source: Statistics Canada (1996); Interviews with senior public library staff in each municipality.
* Per Capita Ratio is the ratio of library branches to total population.

NOTE: 1996 data for population and total immigrant population is the most recent data available until the 2001 Census results are released. Projections indicate that the immigrant population will increase or remain stable for all municipalities shown above.

The size of the immigrant group also mattered. Where the group was strong in speaking out for its collective needs and could organize and lobby for its members, it was

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[49] While library cards were issued to residents of a particular municipality, they were not difficult for non-residents to acquire. For example, students attending school in a municipality other than their own had access to its libraries, friends or family might choose to "share" library privileges, or a non-resident could purchase a card for a small fee.

better able than smaller, less organized groups to influence acquisition practices and program development. Many librarians interviewed for this study also agreed that large and established immigrant groups were able to create expectations within the community and among politicians that their members' needs should be met in their mother tongue. This expectation was clearly not there for newer, smaller groups. Services for these groups were slower to catch up and needs were usually not well met.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that libraries can, and in the case of the Greater Toronto Area certainly do, fulfill a settlement role for newcomers to Canada. Libraries are physical places that in many ways embody their communities. They play a similar role to local schools and recreation programs in creating a sense of belonging for immigrants. Libraries also contain many of the resources, both electronic and print, that immigrants value as they search for jobs, acquire language skills, find out about their new communities and their new country, and retain links to their cultures. Librarians in the GTA described cooperative efforts with community groups that were successfully meeting the particular needs of immigrants. Their work should be encouraged and better supported by funding agencies.

In the words of one librarian, "Library services [for immigrants] need to be integrated [with other services], not seen as special or marginalized services. They also need to be looked at as positive assets, meaningful to the city." The needs of immigrants were best met in municipalities where the public library system is acknowledged (in policies and/or programs) to be serving a multicultural population. Librarians at the front counter appeared to be well aware that their client base is changing. They were struggling to make their programming relevant to these new users. Yet without political leadership, expanding multilingual acquisition and achieving cooperation regionally and with local community organizations was proving to be very difficult.

Few of the librarians interviewed mentioned staff diversity or staff training as being critical to the delivery of quality services to immigrants. Given the debate that exists in the literature on this point, a closer examination of the skills and knowledge base

needed to meet settlement needs would be worthwhile. It is reasonable to assume that delivering services to a diverse and changing population requires unique skills but it is not always clear what those skills are. Public libraries need to discover the real needs of immigrants. This challenge will only grow as city regions like the GTA continue to attract newcomers.

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CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.0 MUNICIPALITIES AND IMMIGRATION

The ethnocultural diversity found in the Greater Toronto Region is a tremendous asset for the region, but also a significant challenge. In attracting the largest proportion of immigrants to Canada, municipalities in the GTA are struggling with the settlement needs of an extremely varied group of people. In trying to address these needs, municipalities are in an ill-defined position – immigration settlement is a federal government responsibility but municipalities are creatures of provincial governments. What this means in practice is that municipal governments have neither the legislated authority nor the financial capability to address the settlement needs of immigrants in a systematic way.

On the other hand, immigration is very relevant to the way municipalities deliver their services and to the content of their policies. Immigration changes the demographic mix of local populations and thus can change the pressures on and demands for particular services, as was illustrated in the education, housing, health, recreation, planning and library chapters of this study in particular. Immigration also challenges the ability of municipalities to deliver public services that are accessible to all residents. Lack of facility in English, lack of knowledge of available programs, and encounters with discrimination and racism in accessing services are just some of the barriers confronting municipal staff members who try to make service delivery equitable. In some service areas, immigrants are not only a large sub-group of the total population, but form the majority of the service client base (as was found to be the case with social services and public transit in Toronto), making the existence of these barriers all the more important. And while immigrants negotiate entry into the country with the federal government, the services municipalities deliver intersect with the range of settlement needs newcomers face upon entry into Canadian society.

In this study we focused on nine municipal services: social services, housing, transit, education, policing, health, recreation, urban planning, and public libraries. Finding a place to live, getting children into a school, addressing health needs, tracking

down information about housing, jobs and community services, and traveling around the city in search of employment – these are some of the most immediate examples of where municipal service delivery and immigration intersect. As this study shows, however, the contact with municipal services grows as immigrants become more aware of their new society and try to find a place within it.

We conclude our report by drawing out the key findings of our research, with particular attention to where Citizenship and Immigration Canada could play a role. Beyond supporting calls for additional funding to ease the pressures of delivering services to diverse communities, **we see a critical need for upper level governments in Canada to take notice of the challenges facing immigrant-rich municipalities, and of the strategies that are being used or that are required to address them.** The future success of Canada's immigration program, we argue, is strongly linked to the ability of municipalities and urban regions to absorb newcomers and to provide services to increasingly diverse populations.

2.0 THE CHALLENGES OF IMMIGRATION FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

Municipal governments deliver "public" services – that is, services that are available to all residents. Where resources and political will are available, they create specialized programs to meet the unique needs of a particular group (e.g. recreation programs for youth; housing for seniors). Immigration, however, has proved to be a singular challenge for municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area because the demands are so complex. Immigrants are not a single group with needs that can be met by a single program; the diversity of language groups is an obvious barrier to such an approach. Cultural practices, discrimination, and lack of familiarity with service structures also stand in the way of a programmatic approach. Moreover, immigrants make up such a significant percentage of the total population of many municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area (36 - 48 per cent in 1996 - see Chapter One) that calls for greater access to and equity in municipal services cannot be ignored.

Despite the multicultural reality found in the Greater Toronto Area, our study illustrates that municipalities still have a great distance to go before they are able to meet

the diverse needs of their communities. **Although municipalities rarely make immigration a priority, however, municipal staff in immigrant-receiving communities are by and large making efforts to address the needs of immigrants on a daily basis**. Their attempts are often under-resourced, with staff stretching time and money where possible. They are also poorly linked with similar efforts within their municipalities or in sister departments in other municipalities.

Not only is immigration posing new challenges for municipal agencies in their attempts to deliver adequate and appropriate services but it is also changing the way municipal staff define their work. Those responsible for delivering programs increasingly see their jobs as becoming more "social assistance" oriented. This viewpoint was especially noteworthy among those working in professionalized service areas, and was often strongest in the City of Toronto. In education, policing, recreation and public health, staff described their role as having "expanded", and increasingly to have become more like "social work" as they attempted to meet the needs of those they worked with. This sentiment was attached to interactions with the public at large, but the range of settlement needs seemed to make it especially relevant when working with immigrants. At the other end of the spectrum were urban planners, especially outside the City of Toronto, who worked from the assumption that there was a public interest; that they were "planning for the whole public" as one planner put it. Unlike the other service areas where staff recognized that immigration posed unique challenges, planning staff were reluctant to focus on differences. They preferred to deliver services in a universal fashion.

Municipal staff in all service areas were functioning at a time of transition and stress when this study was conducted. Service providers in the City of Toronto were struggling with an amalgamation process that had begun in 1998. Computer system reorganization to address Y2K concerns was an issue that was especially relevant to those services that relied on large databases (e.g. social services and housing). Ontario's Progressive Conservative government (elected in 1995) had also reorganized and redistributed responsibilities and funding arrangements for municipal services, a process known as the Who Does What initiative. Finally, the political climate in Ontario had changed from the early 1990s, when the NDP government had spearheaded a number of

initiatives to promote ethnocultural diversity, address racism in society, and ensure access and equity in government. For those who had supported such initiatives, the changes brought in by the Conservative government represented a substantial step backward in efforts to make immigration and multiculturalism priority concerns in Ontario in general or in the Greater Toronto Area in particular.

Within this climate of change, it was interesting to find that **the majority of municipal staff interviewed in this study did not blame provincial changes (either political or organizational) for their difficulties in trying to meet the challenges of immigration.** In fact, many people recognized the pressures that had led the government to download responsibilities, and agreed that all municipalities faced the need to do more with less. **One notable exception to this observation was in the area of education.** In nearly all the school boards we examined, staff complained about the "ground lost" after the removal of a provincial equity agenda. Two points help to explain their complaint: (1) education was the one service area for which the NDP government had made addressing ethnocultural diversity a strong provincial priority, and had issued policy directives (Memorandum 119) and (2) the relationship between teachers, unions and the province of Ontario had been strained under the Conservative government in ways not experienced in other service areas.

Unlike the governments of Quebec or British Columbia, the government of Ontario appeared to have no interest in taking on responsibility for immigrant settlement (Wallace and Frisken, 2000: 15). Thus municipalities were struggling to find ways to address the needs of their changing populations in a policy vacuum. An absence of legislative or policy guidance from the province presented them with both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge was to make immigration a local priority in service areas that were already stretched and strained. The opportunity, however, was that municipalities had some flexibility in deciding how to approach this challenge. This flexibility allowed for innovation in municipal policy and programming, though always within the constraints of their reduced budgets. Examples of municipal agencies that were trying to address issues of immigration and diversity in service delivery – health in Peel Region, social services in Toronto, and policing in York Region - pointed to the exciting possibilities for municipal initiative.

2.1 Communicating to a Diverse Public

The challenge most often identified by municipal staff members was that of communicating with a diverse public. In some service areas, such as social services, housing, health, transit, and public libraries, this challenge was faced at the front lines by staff members who struggled to identify and understand the needs of immigrant clients. In other service areas, such as recreation, planning, education and policing, the challenge was more indirect, being wrapped up with a municipality's ability to respond to a range of community needs, including those of immigrants. The changing demographic character of many cities in the Greater Toronto Area has been forcing municipal governments to reconsider how they had defined their community's needs in the past and whether or not past definitions were still adequate.

The degree to which municipal staff are responsive to ethnocultural groups seems to be related to the ability of each particular group to have its concerns heard. Even where municipal staff had made serious attempts to reach out to immigrants, there was considerable disparity between the resources available (e.g. translated materials, interpretation services, etc.) to immigrants belonging to large, established ethnocultural groups compared to new, emerging communities. **It is meeting the needs of newer or smaller ethnocultural groups where community-based organizations play an especially important role in immigration settlement and municipal service delivery.** Community-based organizations have been particularly vocal in challenging municipal service providers in health, housing and social services to address inequalities in resources allocated to mainstream vs. ethnospecific organizations.

> **RECOMMENDATION:** Citizenship and Immigration Canada, as the primary funder for community-based organizations delivering immigrant settlement services, can play a leadership role in acknowledging the *range* of settlement needs immigrants face – many of which intersect with municipal responsibilities. Delivering services that meet immigrant needs makes good political and economic sense for municipal governments, but can be a tough sell to municipal councils that lack support from upper tier governments.

3.0 A REGION UNITED OR DIVIDED?

Just as immigrants cannot be considered a single group with uniform needs, so too the challenges of immigration are variable and diffuse.   Both the challenges of immigration and the strategies used to address them can differ widely from one municipality to another, depending on the ethnocultural mix of their populations and the service areas in question (to name but two key variables).

Given the uncoordinated ways in which individual departments within municipalities are addressing the challenges of immigration, the skeptic might argue that it would be futile to expect cooperation and coordination at a regional level. This study partly supported such a conclusion. It found few collaborative efforts at the scale of the Greater Toronto Area and they had had only limited success. Examples where diversity and immigration had spawned regional cooperation included: the linking of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services and York Region, Peel Region, and Toronto social services departments; the linking of the ethnocultural departments (or their equivalent) of school boards across the province, and an antiracism initiative linking the ethnocultural sections of police services not only within the GTA but also beyond its boundaries. Arrangements such as these tended to be based on a perceived need to share information, although some were more explicitly aimed at building capacity to address issues in a coordinated way. Inevitably, however, staff were stretched to meet internal demands and upper level governments had decreased their funding for such initiatives. There was a lack of confidence that common challenges could be addressed by formal regional coordination without support from upper levels of government.

On the other hand**, regional cooperation was thriving at a more informal level in nearly all of the service areas we examined.** Staff made and retained contacts in other municipalities and with other levels of government whenever such contacts helped them to complete the tasks before them. These informal connections and personal alliances had sometimes led to more formal attempts at regional cooperation. Some of these ties were based on expertise (for example, staff in many suburban municipal service areas had sought out expertise and advice from their Toronto counterparts), some were

based on shared clients (for example, social services and housing staff, or social services and policing), and some on the recognition that there was a small number of people working on these issues in particular service areas within the region, as in education or policing. In most service areas and most of the municipalities we studied, however, ties were strongest between municipalities and their (upper-tier) regional municipalities, and between Peel Region and Toronto. **Ties between municipalities and upper levels of government (provincial or federal) appeared to be very weak**. Most people said that there had been a change in their relationship with provincial officials, noting that the degree of informal contact and information sharing had declined dramatically after the Conservative government took office. Persons interviewed in nearly all service areas said that formal and informal contacts with the federal government were rare or non-existent. Some individuals, particularly staff members working in social services and housing, emphasized the need for a relationship with the federal government. They also complained that their lack of information about immigration made it difficult for municipal agencies to plan or anticipate the need for service changes.

> **RECOMMENDATION:** Citizenship and Immigration Canada should help to build inter-departmental linkages by providing information and helping to bring people together from across the Greater Toronto Area. The challenges and opportunities created by immigration cross municipal boundaries in the GTA. Thus there is a role for collaboration across these boundaries among persons working within particular immigrant settlement areas.

> **RECOMMENDATION:** There should be clearer communication between municipalities receiving immigrants and Citizenship and Immigration Canada to facilitate advanced preparation for new arrivals where possible. Although the federal government cannot forecast the source countries of immigrants admitted to Canada, it is the federal government that decides the number of immigrants that will come to Canada. It also monitors the intended destinations of newcomers (by province and municipality). Citizenship and Immigration Canada is in a much better position to gauge immigration trends than municipalities, which for jurisdictional, political and financial reasons tend to focus primarily on local development and property issues.

3.1 Lessons from Toronto's Experience

The City of Toronto's long experience with immigration had allowed for more experiments with delivering services to an ethnoculturally diverse population than had

occurred in other GTA municipalities. Going back at least to the 1960s, Toronto had been developing programs and policies in response to immigration in a variety of municipal service areas. The timing of these initiatives is worth noting, however. At the time of Toronto's immigration boom during the 1960s and early 1970s, the welfare state was fairly strong and federal and provincial assistance for municipal programs was expanding. By contrast, Peel and York regions began to experience a substantial influx of immigrants during a later period, when the welfare state had entered a period of gradual decline. Federal and provincial support was slowing down or leveling off. The election of a fiscally conservative provincial government in 1995 should therefore be seen as part of a process and not as a new departure. Several Peel and York staff members emphasized the importance of historical context, both in terms of the amount of funding available to municipal departments to meet expanding needs in service delivery and in upper level government support for such initiatives.

These differing histories had created different public service cultures as well. There were people in Toronto departments who clung to attitudes, ways of doing things and ways of interacting that were developed while government programs were expanding. Their attitudes were in part fueled by an interest in developing new initiatives to meet the needs of an ethnoculturally diverse population. Although not found in every municipal service area, there was more friction between Toronto officials and the province than there was between suburban officials and the province. There were also more differences between Toronto officals and suburban officials than there were among the suburban officials themselves. With some exceptions, suburban officials tended to be more accepting of the idea that government had to operate like a business. The build-up of experienced staff who were committed to promoting accessibility in the City of Toronto had also resulted in its being the only municipality in the region with an integrated, central support unit dedicated to issues of access and equity (see Chapter One).

Within the service areas explored in this study, it was clear that other municipal service providers in the GTA were aware of Toronto's experience. For political, ideological and especially economic reasons, however, they did not regard Toronto as the "model" for service delivery innovations. Suburban staff recognized that they could not

engage in the kinds of service delivery experiments that were possible for Toronto in the 1970s and 1980s. Some suburban officials also held much different political values than had been present in the City of Toronto during the earlier period. Even if money were to become available, therefore, it seemed unlikely that suburban municipalities would follow in Toronto's footsteps in the foreseeable future. Preoccupied with the need to provide infrastructure to accommodate further growth, these municipalities were interested in managing the challenges of immigration rather than in addressing the issues of access and equity or the particular service needs associated with immigration. Many suburban officials, particularly in Peel Region, considered immigrant settlement to be outside the responsibility of municipalities and to require federal and/or provincial action.

3.2 Partnerships Between Municipalities and the Community Sector

Although program delivery models varied greatly among different municipal service areas, the activities of municipal agencies and community organizations often intersected or overlapped. Despite the blanket use of the term "partnerships", however, these relationships were complex and often varied considerably in the degree of cooperation and collaboration that actually existed. Some community-based organizations and some municipalities were even skeptical about or antagonistic toward one another.

Two facts are important to an understanding of the relationship between community-based organizations and municipalities: (1) even if they have similar functional concerns, they do not serve the same interests or "clients," and (2) their relationship is structurally unequal. **Municipal agencies are responsible for providing services to the entire population of the municipality for which they work, not just to its immigrant members.** Even in municipalities that had a high proportion of immigrants in their populations (the case for all the municipalities in this study) municipal staff repeatedly explained the challenge of balancing competing community interests: between newcomers and the Canadian-born, between different ethnocultural groups, and sometimes between interests within a single ethnocultural group. Municipal service providers had to mediate these conflicting demands on the local public sector and

thus could not become advocates for immigrant needs even if they worked directly with immigrants.

Relationships between municipal agencies and community-based organizations were also structurally unequal. In some cases municipal agencies functioned as "mainstream" organizations that competed with ethnospecific community-based organizations for upper level government funding. Increasingly, however, upper level governments had made funding conditional on "collaborative partnerships" between mainstream organizations and community-based organizations. When municipalities entered into such arrangements, they were often in a position to control the agendas. Moreover, municipal governments sometimes contracted with community-based organizations for service delivery (through grants or purchase-of-service agreements) and were thereby able to dictate the conditions for funding. As other government funding resources shrank this money made up a significant portion of core funding for smaller community-based organizations, especially in the City of Toronto. It was important to these organizations' survival, therefore, but could also be a cause for resentment.

The study found evidence that municipal agencies partnering with the community sector could be effective in meeting some of the needs of immigrant settlement and in providing services more equitably (e.g. health in Peel Region, recreation in Toronto, social services in and across Toronto, Peel Region, and York Region), but that these partnerships happened slowly as experience and mutual trust grew. Ultimately, however, cooperative relationships served the interests both of municipalities that lacked the human and financial resources to respond to ethnoculturally diverse populations, and of community-based organizations desiring a more active role in providing services to their own clients.

> **RECOMMENDATION:** Citizenship and Immigration Canada should take a long-term view in encouraging partnerships between municipal agencies and community-based organizations, paying particular attention to the balance of power in those partnerships. Such partnerships are important in meeting the range of settlement needs immigrants face, but are most effective when they evolve out of shared interests and experience.

4.0 FACING THE ANTI-IMMIGRANT BACKLASH

The majority of Canadians supports immigration as a general principle. At the municipal or neighbourhood level, however, immigration may be much more contentious, both among mambers of the public and also among city councilors, who are influenced by the overlapping interests of voters and taxpayers.

While this study did not focus on public perceptions of immigration, the reality of or the potential for an anti-immigrant backlash within the Greater Toronto Area population was an issue raised by interviewees in a variety of service areas. A recent study of GTA municipalities revealed that planning was the service where ethnocultural diversity and service delivery most often collided, typically being expressed as NIMBY (not-in-my-back-yard) complaints and in some cases mushrooming into serious political tensions (Siemiatycki and Isin, 1997).   Staff members in a range of service areas told interviewers that they had had to pay attention to conservative and sometimes hostile attitudes toward immigration among the public and politicians. They described having to be careful not to seem to be giving immigrants special privileges in service delivery (e.g. in recreation and housing). They also said that in some service areas immigrants were sometimes blamed for problems (like lack of affordable housing and transit deficiencies) that really resulted from the failure of government policies.

Particularly in Peel Region, but also to a lesser degree in Toronto and York, there was also concern that municipal agencies were being excessively burdened by the challenges of meeting immigrant settlement needs when immigration was really a federal government responsibility. Staff described how this attitude constrained their ability to advocate politically controversial policies and programs to meet immigrant needs (e.g. in social services, education and policing).   While municipal governments lack jurisdiction or policy-making influence over immigration, however, the demographics of many GTA municipalities often make it hard for their staff to distinguish between issues that are unique to immigrants and more general issues. This was true, for example, for the staff of municipal social service and housing agencies.

5.0 THE NEED TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE MUNICIPAL ROLE IN IMMIGRATION SETTLEMENT

This study provided an original look at immigrant settlement, focusing on municipal responses to immigration in selected municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area. It explores the ways in which municipal public service agencies were responding to the challenges posed by immigration at the end of the 1990s, when immigration not only accounted for a growing proportion of the populations of several municipalities but was also making them more ethnoculturally diverse. Further work needs to be done to compare the challenges faced by other municipalities in the region, and within other Canadian cities.

As Canadian cities continue to attract immigrants, and as their importance in global and regional networks increases, the challenges created by immigration in urban regions will attract increasing attention from both policymakers and academics. This study illustrates that municipal governments do play a role in addressing those challenges, despite their lack of formal or legal responsibility either for immigration or for immigrant settlement. We were particularly interested in understanding that role from the perspective of municipal staff. A next obvious step is to compare staff perspectives with those of community-based organizations serving immigrants and of immigrants themselves, looking at their level of awareness of municipal initiatives to address immigrant needs, and at how they judge the quality and adequacy of the services that municipal governments provide.

Municipal governments in the more ethnoculturally diverse parts of the Greater Toronto Area played an important role in immigrant settlement, often as active partners with the federal and provincial governments in trying to meet the immediate needs of newcomers. Their role was seldom recognized, however. Furthermore, the links between municipal governments and immigration extended well beyond services that addressed immediate needs Acquiring a better understanding of these links is likely to be critical both to the success and vitality of Canada's urban centers and to the ability of newcomers to negotiate their place within Canadian society.

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