

# Healthier Cities and Towns: Some “Best Practices” for Canadian Municipalities

Health and the Community No. 3

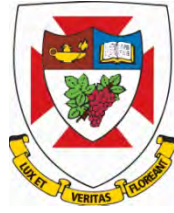
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by Barbara Mathur  
1997

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**HEALTHIER CITIES AND TOWNS: SOME “BEST PRACTICES” FOR CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES**

**Health and the Community No. 3**

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Barbara Mathur

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## FOREWORD

The Healthy Cities/Communities movement in Canada is now close to 10 years old. Over that period of time, hundreds of communities across the country have initiated—and a large number of them are still maintaining—new ways of dealing with quality-of-life issues. Led in many cases by their municipal governments, they have innovated in areas like local economic development, crime prevention, protection of the environment, social integration of the handicapped, promotion of a better family life, the fight against poverty, etc.

For that purpose, they often have invented new rules for decision as well as for action. Based on the vision that each person, each organization is a resource for its community, those rules set aside traditional barriers and bring people together in a co-operative and participative effort to improve life for everyone. In a period of rising inequities, at a time when central governments are downsizing and disengaging from many public responsibilities, the burden of insuring healthy living conditions too often falls back on communities. While such a situation is worrying, it can also be seen as an opportunity to reshape our society with a bottom-up approach, a society that would re-establish solidarity inside and among communities. Then, as this movement becomes strong enough, it could also bring fundamental changes to decision-making at higher levels.

This book is about municipal leadership in the actual development of a new society with community solidarity as main building block.

Réal Lacombe  
Réseau québécois de villes et villages en santé

## PREFACE

The Healthy Cities project is a World Health Organization (WHO) initiative through which municipal governments and citizens can collaborate to devise and implement strategies for improving quality of life. In Canada, a project known as the "Canadian Healthy Communities Project" has similar objectives; it has been used to strengthen the economic and social wellbeing of many municipalities in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia. Cities and towns of other jurisdictions have had variable success.

This work is intended as a resource for non-Quebec Canadian municipal governments that have not established Healthy Cities projects as such, but which may want to develop initiatives based on principles consistent with WHO's Healthy Cities. It is a "companion" to *L'Obsession du citoyen, vade mecum pour villes et villages ou il fait bon vivre*, written by Roger Lachance and Martine Morisset and published in 1995 by the Réseau québécois de villes et villages en santé. That guide also is a resource, specifically for municipalities within Quebec which do not have Villes et villages en santé (Healthy Cities) projects, but which may want to develop initiatives based on the principles central to the movement. The Lachance and Morisset book is a rich source of ideas: The authors identify sound management philosophies and practices of municipal government; they describe some initiatives which relate directly to the healthy cities concept and others which relate indirectly, which save money or in other ways free the administration to realize "healthy city like" initiatives within their municipalities.

In 1995, Réal Lacombe, co-ordinator of Villes et villages en santé, spoke with me about the need for another *vade mecum*, a guidebook for the rest of Canada, in the English language and in the context of the division of powers and responsibilities typically found in non-Quebec Canada. And so this project was begun, carried out in partial fulfilment of a sabbatical leave under grant from the University of Saskatchewan January 1 - June 30, 1996.

Special thanks go to Shelly Jule and Jean François Rioux for their assistance in translating *L'Obsession du citoyen, vade mecum pour villes et village ou il fait bon vivre* into English and to Kerry Wolfe for her patience with word processing the audio cassettes. The Intergovernmental Committee on Urban and Regional Research, the Ontario Health Promotion Clearinghouse and the Ontario Healthy Communities Secretariat generously assisted with information about resources, and that help is appreciated. A subvention from the University of Saskatchewan assisted with the financing of this publication. Finally, to Dr. M. A. Beavis and the publisher, the Institute of Urban Studies at the University of Winnipeg, my thanks.





# HEALTHIER CITIES AND TOWNS: SOME "BEST PRACTICES" FOR CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES

Barbara Mathur\*

## I. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

One may ask why this book related to "healthy cities and towns" is being written now, when municipal governments have slim financial resources related to reduced moneys from senior governments, and when Canada's national Healthy Communities project, from which the ideas of this book stem, has ended. In fact, those two events are why the guide is needed: to help municipalities address the central question of "Given our current limited resources, what more can we do than we are doing now to improve quality of life within our populations?" Assuming that little or no new money will be available for the task, but that money may be freed up through increased efficiencies, still begs the question: "To what efforts should that money be redirected?" What are the "best practices" that are needed, not only to effect the necessary efficiencies, but also in the areas of building healthy physical environments, promoting economic growth, developing social and cultural wellbeing, and so on.

This guide will describe "best practices" which have been tried and found useful in some Canadian municipalities and from which others may benefit, and will suggest studies or reports through which further information may be obtained on specific subjects. It will speak to municipal government and its officials because municipal government is the place where the answers must lie. It is assumed that for any particular municipality, readers will find initiatives described with which they are already familiar, may in fact have been carrying out for years. However, it is expected that the guide also includes suggestions of best practices which the municipality has not tried and which may be useful for achieving savings or improving quality of life for its citizens.

Because of the importance of an understanding of context in terms of municipal government's traditional and current role and in terms of the influence of the Canadian Healthy Communities Project, these will be considered first.

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## **II. THE ROLE OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IN HEALTH**

### **EARLY SUCCESSES IN DISEASE PREVENTION**

Traditionally, municipal government has played a major role in maintaining the wellbeing of citizens, although the basis for the role has been somewhat different than it is today. At the turn of the century, municipalities were instrumental in improving the public's physical health through a wide range of services and programs, such as slum clearance, community planning, water treatment, and so forth. These interventions were based on the traditional view of health as "freedom from disease" and of disease prevention as the main challenge of municipalities (Mathur, 1989). Water treatment, sewage treatment, public health services and so on have become part of the ongoing activities of municipalities and must be continued for safety from infectious diseases.

### **THE CURRENT CHALLENGE**

More recently, with the meeting of many basic needs, the nature of medical problems has changed, so that in the developed world (with the notable exceptions of AIDS, tuberculosis and a looming crisis related to the use of antibiotics), infectious diseases have been eclipsed by circulatory and respiratory diseases, cancer and accidents as major causes of death. In health departments and municipal governments generally, concerns about health now include the effects of chronic illness, disability and stress, and the provision of services that support quality of life and the efforts of people to cope. Additional activities need to be implemented to prevent pollution, prevent accidents, reduce stress, *etc.*, activities which in many cases will require collaboration with senior levels of government.

### **THE "NEW PUBLIC HEALTH"**

The shift in thinking about what is meant by "health" began about 1946, when WHO published a definition of the term as meaning more than freedom from disease, to include "complete physical, mental and social wellbeing" (WHO Constitution, 1946, p. 1). The new definition paved the way for the current conception of health as "a social, personal and physical resource" (Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, p. 2), or as wellness, "the capacity of individuals to realize goals and carry out socially defined roles" (Baranowski, 1981, p. 251). Quality of life thereby became an integral factor. A strength of this interpretation is that it can apply not only to individuals, but also to families, organizations and even cities and towns. That is, cities and towns can be seen as "healthy" to the extent that their governments take a holistic approach toward managing the social and physical environments to meet the quality of life needs of (all) their citizens. The proponents of the new public health perspective recognized two processes as central. The first, intersectoral collaboration, was important because those things that produce better

quality of life and improve the capacity of individuals to "realize goals and carry out socially defined roles" go beyond the territories of health departments to involve all sectors of society, not only government, but the private and volunteer sectors as well. The second was public participation, important because citizens are the best informants of what they need for optimal wellness.

### **"HEALTH FOR ALL" AND ITS IMPLICATIONS**

In the latter years of the twentieth century, WHO has continued to be a major influence in the shifting perceptions about health, particularly with the 1978 adoption of "Health for All by the Year 2000" (HFA) as the major goal of WHO and its member states. Then in 1984, WHO Euro and its member governments agreed on 38 specific targets toward achieving HFA, targets which, to be reached, would require intersectoral collaboration, a concerted effort from all sectors of the community and from government departments not traditionally involved in "health." The Healthy Cities movement, when it began in the late 1980s, would be seen by many local governments in Europe as a way to achieve HFA, to mobilize their resources and address problems of city core decay, violence, crime, environmental pollution and other pathologies of urban life.

In the same period that professionals and some governments had been accepting a broader perception of their role in health, the public, at least in the Western world, had become more involved in the meeting of its needs: the consumer movement, high costs of curative treatment and advances in technology and communication have created and fed a demand among citizens for fuller information and more input into decisions that affect their wellbeing. Health promotion had come to be more than "the prevention of disease," to be defined as "the process of enabling people to gain control over and improve their health" (Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, 1986, p. 2). Consistent with the definition, the public had become ready for greater participation.

The new conception of health has not diminished the importance of municipal government or of the implication that the health of citizens should be central for municipal government. In fact, that centrality is acknowledged by municipal government's routine citing of the health and safety of citizens as the rationale when it proposes to make or change bylaws. As in the past, municipal government is squarely charged with the responsibility for such public health measures as clean water supply, waste removal and community planning. The way in which municipal government operates in promoting health has evolved, now including the processes of collaboration with various sectors in the community around the provision of services, a broader involvement of different municipal government departments and the promotion of participation from citizens. Given that three fourths of Canadians now reside in cities and that the trend to urbanization is expected to continue—to reach 93 percent in North America by 2025 (WHO, 1986, p.

15)—the need for a renewed focus on the wellbeing of people in urban areas is increasing. Accordingly, the Healthy Cities/Healthy Communities project was developed as a means by which municipal governments and citizens, working together, can improve the physical and social environments that affect citizens' wellbeing and quality of life (Lane, 1989).

### **III. THE HEALTHY CITIES/HEALTHY COMMUNITIES MOVEMENT**

#### **CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS**

In 1974, Marc Lalonde built on the foundation provided by WHO's definition of health to produce his *A New Perspective for the Health of Canadians*, a framework that included not only human biology, but also environment, the health care system and individual lifestyle in "health." The model introduced the idea that visions of health had to move beyond individual biology to include elements like health care programs, social and economic factors and the natural and human-made environments.

In 1984, a "Beyond Health Care" conference was held to review the progress made since the Lalonde publication and to promote an ecological view of health in human settlements. At that Toronto meeting, the concept of "healthy city" arose from a paper presented by L. Duhl of Berkeley, California. The idea caught the attention of I. Kickbusch, attending the conference on behalf of WHO Europe; with assistance from Duhl and from T. Hancock, who had organized the conference, she developed the concept and in 1986, launched "Healthy Cities" as a five-year project of WHO Europe. The idea soon became a movement, spreading quickly through Europe, and later to the rest of the world.

Each project is specific, varying with the perceived priority needs of the community, the financial and human resources available, the level of energy and commitment of municipal council, staff and citizens, and the perceptions and biases of the prime movers. Just as the focus of HFA was on equity of access to those things that promote quality of life, so it is with Healthy Cities. Each participating project is expected to use an intersectoral approach to address inequities in health, to foster public participation and healthy physical and social environments. Although evaluation of any health promotion or quality of life initiative is problematic, with some benefits taking many years to unfold fully, those committees which undertake an initial "health status audit" of the city or town facilitate a later assessment of the worth of their program.

#### **THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE**

In Canada, the initiative was originally sponsored by the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) and the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP), joined in 1987 by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). In 1987, with assistance from Health and Welfare Canada, a National Co-ordinating office was established for the Canadian Healthy Communities Project; a steering committee was set up and a national Co-ordinator hired. The project flourished in some provinces, most spectacularly Quebec, where it is said that over 200 local projects succeed. Today, Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia have strong provincial networks; since the funding for the project's national office and steering committee was withdrawn in 1991, these offices have guided not only their own projects, but also some in other

provinces. Some provincial networks also maintain ties with WHO and the international Healthy Cities movement, such as the Quebec network's founding and continued assistance with the African Francophone Network of Healthy Cities and Towns.

At the time of its inception, the name of the project in English-speaking Canada was established not as "Healthy Cities," as in other countries, but as "Healthy Communities." The title has particular strengths and weaknesses. A major advantage of "health" in the title is that the term stimulates immediate interest because everyone has ideas about what "health" is and notions about how it might be improved. On the other hand, on the basis of the name, some projects have been relegated to Health Departments, not to the central, interdepartmental places needed for full effectiveness. Unfortunately, any interventions requiring an interdepartmental approach are much less likely to happen if they arise from a department level, such as health, outside a central planning location in government. The unhappy outcome is a clear risk when council members and/or senior management think of "health" in the narrower, traditional way. Probably in at least some instances, municipal officials have been reluctant to embrace broad activities in health out of fear that they would be setting a precedent for the "downloading" of responsibility from provincial to local government.

The advantage of building "communities" into the title is that the term implies a sense of belonging and invites and reflects participation from a wide range of settlements, regardless of size. However, whereas "city" (in "Healthy Cities") implies an entity with government, "community" may imply something else, such as "like-mindedness of interest" or "neighbourhood," neither of which necessarily includes geographic or legal boundaries or local government.

The implications are major. Successful local projects share not only the goal to use the concept as a tool by which to improve all citizens' access to quality of life, but also share the perspective that municipal government is centrally involved, because those things that have to be altered to improve "everyday" services and processes are the business of municipal government. After local government of the city or town makes its commitment through a public declaration that the municipality will be "healthy" and operate in a way to maximize its "citizen-centredness," it is that same municipal government which is meant to collaborate with the public, private and volunteer sectors to design and implement plans toward that goal. That same government is called upon to work with citizens to determine what they need for a healthy environment, to implement the changes needed to accomplish it, and later, to evaluate how successful the collaboration has been. While citizens who proceed without municipal government involvement may develop useful "health promotion" projects, they will not likely bring about lasting changes, with the sustainability that might otherwise be possible and that typifies successful Healthy Cities projects. An insufficient emphasis on municipal government involvement in Canada's "Healthy

Communities" project may have been a major impediment to the national project, to the extent that the initiative lost the interest of municipal officials and produced little evidence by which Health Canada could continue funding the National Office.

Quebec's *Villes et villages en santé* project has not taken the name "Healthy Communities," but chose instead one which translates to "Healthy Cities and Towns" and implies the involvement of municipal government. Quebec has a provincial organization which provides municipal governments with information and assistance. It acts as co-ordinator and animateur for projects, and focuses on those things which are within the purview of municipal governments. For Quebec's "Healthy Cities and Towns," as with "Healthy Communities," the name has not likely directly affected the level of municipal government involvement, but is an illustration of where the project's emphasis lies.

The argument has been made above that, in the sense that the actions of municipal government have so much immediate impact on the daily lives of people, health is as much a matter of municipal interest as provincial jurisdiction. This is not to say that the origins of inequities among Canadian citizens are primarily local. However, although the problems may stem from regional and international factors, from national and provincial economies and national and provincial policies, it is the municipality which is confronted with the results. In the instance of housing, jurisdiction lies with provincial governments and the resources are at the national level, but the problems are experienced at the municipal level. Healthy Cities projects are a way for municipal governments, given their situations and resources, to promote equity and quality of life, for example, by mobilizing the volunteer energies of the community toward community projects.

Having provincial networks and funding and other support from provincial governments has been a distinct advantage for projects in Ontario and British Columbia, as well as Quebec. The networks provide a forum for information sharing and a vehicle for the co-ordination of initiatives, public relations and lobbying activities. They likely also promote a uniform perspective that emphasizes outcomes as well as process, for example by publishing some projects' "success stories" as models for others. With undue emphasis on process, such processes as intersectoral collaboration and public participation may come to be seen as ends in themselves, and not merely effective tools to produce the outcomes of good air and water quality, sufficient employment opportunities, recreation facilities and so on.

Another hurdle that is particularly Canadian is that for most people, the quality of life in many of the country's cities and towns is currently good. Canadians are generally comfortable with the knowledge that, according to a 1996 United Nations' study on optimal countries in which to live, Canada is the location of choice, on such factors as availability of work, longevity, health care and so forth. While problems in the physical or social environment do exist and are increasing in Canada, they are often not

apparent to the extent they alarm the government or citizens. With the striking exception of Rouyn-Noranda, the site of Canada's first Healthy City Project, seldom is industrial pollution of the town's environment so advanced as to mobilize council members or citizens to start or participate in a project.

### "HEALTHY CITIES" WORLDWIDE

Elsewhere in the world, the Healthy Cities idea has been spreading rapidly: by 1995, there were over 1000 local projects (Lachance and Morisset, 1995) and over 30 national networks. Until recently, the project existed only in the industrialized world, but now, with particular promotion by WHO Asia, similar initiatives are appearing in the Third World. The first was an ambitious and comprehensive project in Chittagong, Bangladesh. By early 1996, WHO had made plans to launch an extensive campaign for development of the idea throughout Asia (personal communication, N. Shah, WHO Asia Representative, January 29, 1996).

### TOWARD HEALTHIER CITIES AND TOWNS

Hancock and Duhl have defined a healthy city as:

. . . one that is continually creating and improving those social and physical environments and expanding those physical community resources which enable people to support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing themselves to their maximum potential (1988, p. 14).

Clearly, the reaching of such an ideal requires commitment to the goal by the public and all parts of municipal government. Having a project may make reaching the objective of good government easier, inspiring council members, public servants and citizens, strengthening their interest and civic pride and at the same time, their general support and willingness to volunteer. As Lachance and Morisset have demonstrated in *L'Obsession du citoyen*, a wide range of ideas may be used to the benefit of any local government, with or without a project. Similarly, this guide is also founded on the assumption that even without declaring a Healthy City project, municipal governments can implement good ideas so consistent with the project that they have come to be seen as typical.

Relying on a variety of sources, especially *L'Obsession du citoyen*, the remainder of this guide will describe municipal level ideas or initiatives which are consistent with local "quality of life" and/or the Healthy Cities project. Appendices include a list of resources regarding Healthy Communities projects in Canada, the "Kids' Place Survey" instrument, and the text for a "Healthy City Guided Imagery," a useful tool by which any municipal government can discern its citizens' impressions and hopes about the place where they live.



#### IV. WHAT MORE CAN MUNICIPALITIES DO TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF LIMITED RESOURCES?

Some "best practices" related to citizen-centredness and good government for municipalities are straightforward and well known, typifying any organization with a reputation for client or citizen centredness. They are listed exhaustively and described in detail in most public administration texts. Considered below are some aspects of the following practices: build a corporate culture of client centredness; implement best decision practices; maintain processes to stay in touch with citizens' wants and needs; and involve other sectors of the community. Other important practices are also not directly related to citizen quality of life, but result in taking in, saving or spending money wisely and free up resources for other initiatives. Considered next, they are: enhance the income of municipal government; realize savings within departments; and intermunicipal collaboration. Last but not least, some best practices relating directly to the population's wellbeing or "quality of life" initiatives are described, in the areas of: build and maintain healthy physical environments; enhance economic development; support social and cultural wellbeing; and protect the public. Examples are provided from across Canada.

##### A. IMPLEMENT BEST PRACTICES RELATED TO CITIZEN CENTREDNESS IN GOVERNMENT

- **Build a Corporate Culture of Client Centredness**

Trevor Hancock has written extensively about what he considers to be "the central purpose of government and governance," emphasizing that the goal should be to enhance the human development of the population (1996, p. 25). Central to Hancock's argument is that the present system of government in Canada is essentially based on the nineteenth century, with departments of public works, public health, parks, planning and so on organized on the nineteenth century model of disciplinarity in separate sectors, while most of the issues (health, safety, sustainability, equity, *etc.*) cut across the nineteenth century departments, and that our planning systems and regulations must change significantly to meet current and future challenges. "Too often," Hancock has contended, "the central function of government is aligned with that of economic development alone, and if economic development threatens human development, then we must change the means" (1996, p. 25). Client centredness must be paramount.

Lachance and Morisset have described the culture of client centredness in municipal government as analogous to the "customer first" attitude prevalent in successful businesses (1995, p. 6). In such an atmosphere, the municipality's **mission, goals and values of the organization** need to be explicit and clearly to reflect an obsession with meeting the needs of the citizens. Equity, which can translate as the right of each individual to reach his/her potential, is likely to be a central value in a city or town based on

citizen satisfaction (Lachance and Morisset, 1995, p. 144). In a climate of **interdepartmental collaboration**, policies are established which must relate closely to that value and the mission and goal of the municipality. The climate is characterized by **teamwork**, both within municipal government and outside, that is, in the relations the government has with its public servants and with individuals, groups of citizens and organizations from other sectors, even with other municipalities and sometimes other levels of government.

The importance of the **commitment and competence of public servants** for client centred government must not be under-rated. Peter Willmott, Director of Health Protection for the Regional Municipality of Halton, Ontario, has commented that "success is a result of individuals, not structures" (Ontario Healthy Communities Secretariat, 1996, p 61). The authors of *Communities and Local Government, Working Together* maintained that it was the Halton Region staff's comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of political structures and municipal government that allowed them to present concepts basic to the proposed municipal strategies to other staff and to politicians in a form which appealed to them (p. 60), and which led to the successful adoption of these strategies. As Halton's Ellis Katsof said of the Healthy Communities concept, having an "internal" champion to network and promote new ideas is a major advantage, particularly in larger communities, where bringing other staff "on side" may take more time.

Of course, other conditions must be in place to build a climate for public service commitment and competence. Lachance and Morisset, for example, have emphasized the importance of facilitating optimal communication and of **listening to public servants' ideas** about the organization and their work (1995, p. 61). The organization must have a structure which permits such interaction. Burlington's *Future Focus, A Strategic Plan for the City of Burlington* described how the new organizational structure and management system enabled managers to effect greater control over their areas of responsibility, which is expected to promote a greater degree of "vertical" participation by staff at all levels (1991, p. 55). **Sound personnel management practices** must be pervasive, in particular, co-ordinated and fair human resource policies, adequate remuneration and optimal conditions of work, all of which are important for morale, pride of work and productivity. For the same reason, **clear communication of expectations between elected officials and public servants**, facilitated by a widespread acceptance of the mission, goals and values, is essential.

- **Implement Best Decision Practices**

As the framework for client-centred decisions, **a clear picture of the characteristics of the population** is important. The City of Montreal authors of *The Guide for an Area Portrait* wrote that

"knowledge of the living environment and the socio-economic characteristics of the community are fundamental to this community having better control of development and the improvement of quality of life" (City of Montreal, 1993). Along with such elements as **the debt picture of the municipality and the political, legal and operational aspects of government**, the population picture is essential to provide a valid and reliable basis for the making of sound financial and other decisions.

Citizens' wants and needs are essential to know about, and **specific studies**, often from academic institutions, can be particularly helpful as a tool for planning interventions. Charette's *Public Opinion in Canadian Inner Cities* (1994) describes public opinion in the core areas of the five largest Prairie cities, with regard to quality of life; crime and safety; preferred place of residence; satisfaction with housing; downtown; municipal services and civic government; and city priorities (Charette, 1994).

**Strategic planning**, although not necessarily a part of a municipality's official plan, is, in the light of the current reduction in financial and human resources, an increasingly appropriate tool for municipal government. It may be described as a creative process which, in light of the mission, objectives and other characteristics of the organization and those of its immediate and greater environments, identifies the most appropriate actions to be taken. A particular focus exists, such as in the case of municipal government, attracting new residents, developing tourist potential or economic opportunities.

As cited by Lachance and Morisset, Jauch and Glueck have described strategic planning as an economic/political process with five elements:

- Definition of mission, goals and values;
- Analysis and diagnosis of the characteristics of the municipal structure and the environment;
- Choice of appropriate strategies from among various options;
- Implementation of the plans, policies, structure and administrative style consistent with the strategy; and,
- Ongoing evaluation for effectiveness (1990, p 54).

Each of the steps would be clearly discernable in a citizen centred municipal government.

With regard to the carrying out of strategic planning, Lachance and Morisset have laid out the contributions to the process to be made by the various players, such as city council, the mayor, public servants, partner stakeholders and the citizens in general. Without their singlemindedness toward strategic planning, the authors claim, a clear basis for decisions is not possible. And, according to Saskatchewan's Minister's Advisory Committee on Inter-Community Co-operation and Community Quality of Life, the strategic plan is "critical to establish a clear framework for municipal governments with the objective of achieving economic viability, social equity and community quality of life. . . . [it] should

encompass a prioritization of the development, maintenance and decommissioning of municipal infrastructure" (1993, p. vii).

An example of the strategic planning process in the late 1980s may be found in *Burlington Future Focus, Strategic Planning: A Process that Works: The Burlington Experience [1987-1991]*. "At its simplest," the authors wrote, "strategic planning is a process used to establish a vision and direction for a municipality to develop the strategies and actions for getting there. It is the umbrella plan which guides and directs the detailed plans and policies of the municipality . . . it is a "top down" process—while community input is essential to the process, ultimately, it's the political leaders who must make the decisions about the future growth and nature of the municipality." (p. 6).

In subsequent budget periods, the budget and the plan together provide the opportunity for assessment of each other, since **budget items not consistent with the plan should be eliminated**. The authors of *Burlington Future Focus, A Strategic Plan for the City of Burlington* described the annual budget for current operations and capital works to be critical planning tools through which the municipality can monitor the implementation of Council policy and service effectiveness and efficiency (1991, p. 55). Because the improvement of "best practices" relies on feedback about how closely policies and programs meet the municipality's mission, such continual evaluation is essential.

Another best financial practice found in a citizen centred government is **equity of taxation**. Equity, a fundamental concept of client centred government generally, must be demonstrated not only in an equitable government's delivery of services, but also in the methods used to generate the municipality's income. The best insurance for taxation equity is likely a committee established for that purpose, most appropriately composed of elected and appointed people and specialists, all of whom are committed to the concept. Further, as Lachance and Morisset (1995) have contended, equity involves not only considering the not so well-to-do along with the prosperous, but also future generations of citizens along with the present one.

- **Maintain Processes to Stay in Touch with Citizen Wants and Needs**

The Healthy Cities movement has brought with it an emphasis on public input into municipal government decisions; in fact, a clear assessment of the characteristics of the population, including its health status, needs and wants, is crucial to any undertaking which fits the needs of a community. The information may be obtained through a variety of ways, **public polls and surveys and public meetings** being perhaps the most common. The advantages go beyond having a data base to facilitate planning; considering the value of Montreal's *The Guide for an Area Portrait*, its authors claimed that constructing

the profile promoted intersectoral collaboration, necessary to "share competencies and various resources, [so we could] define together what a healthy area is, to give ourselves a new vision of our environment (City of Montreal, 1993, p. 17, as cited by Lachance and Morisset, p. 19).

Before the latest official review of its community plan, Peachland, B.C. sought broad-based input on the future of its city, in part through the holding of a public meeting in which the participants created the agenda. Concerns were identified about residential density, rate of development, the provision of land for social purposes such as seniors' housing and so on. A household questionnaire followed to test ideas and opinions arising from the meeting and produced results which are expected to be useful for the community plan review (Katsos, 1994, p. 21).

One community assessment tool used in meeting settings to determine the wants and needs of people, and which has been used by several communities in Canada, is the **"Healthy City Visioning Process,"** designed to elicit the elements that participants envision to be part of their conception of their "ideal" community sometime in the future. As suggested in Appendix B, the data generated provide a basis for interventions designed to get and keep the positive characteristics envisioned in the town or city and to eliminate or lessen the negative ones. A "visioning day" for Woolwich, Ontario resulted in the delineation of three themes which have provided the foci for three working groups: the Clean Waterways Group, the Woolwich Trails Group, and the Sustainable Development Group, one of whose goals is to insure community input into the values that guide municipal decision-making (Dupont, 1996, p. 9). In London, Ontario, the impetus for "visioning" arose from the Vision '96 community participation process to develop the city's new Official Plan, and is expected to bring together citizens and groups from many sectors to create a community-based vision for a healthy downtown (Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, 1995, p. 6).

An innovative tool has been used with school children in Edmonton, Winnipeg and elsewhere to learn about their impressions of the places in which they live and play. The mayor's committee of Seattle, Washington had designed the illustrated questionnaire to gather Seattle's young people's impressions of desirable and undesirable aspects of their physical environments; and the information obtained was useful for Seattle's building a more "child friendly" environment. The tool, the **"Kids' Place" Survey Instrument,** could be used with other age groups also; it is included here as Appendix C.

Citizen centred government relies as surely on an informed public as it does on an accurate data base. In particular, informing young people about local government could provide a basis for lifelong civic pride and municipal involvement; it could be achieved through having **tours or "open door days" or events for student participation** in council meetings or visits to municipal government office settings, such as the town clerk's office or the municipal planning department. The Quebec municipality of

Rimouski outfitted an **"information bus"** which toured the region's high schools to inform students about municipal government, build civic pride and promote discussion about problems of crime, violence, vandalism and street drugs.

Some of these ideas may also work with the public in other age groups, as would **media presentations, having question periods at council meetings, routinely televising council meetings, and the distribution of information pamphlets about the workings of municipal government.** If young people are a concern, however, the campaign for those citizens may be more effective if they have information or participatory events in the company of their age-mates, as opposed to a "mixed target" group.

As part of Vancouver's West End Neighbours in Action project, six sub-groups were formed around issues the community identified as important, such as safety, housing and mental health. One sub-group involved issues related to young people. They formed a broad-based action committee with representation from a number of interested agencies and, in partnership with the Institute of Health Promotion Research at the University of British Columbia, developed a proposal for a two year action research project entitled "Engaging West End Youth in Identifying Their Health Issues and Solutions." The results should provide a basis for decisions and also foster a climate for further citizen participation (Katsof, 1994, p. 55).

Gathering input from the citizenry through the mayor or council members through holding **radio or television "phone-in" sessions** is commonly used by municipal governments, and works especially for specific and high interest current issues, such as some related to zoning or taxation. So does **inviting the public to present** to sessions of council, and the municipal government which values such input will facilitate it by effectively publicizing the call for input, and by allowing sufficient time and assistance for the preparation of written or verbal presentations.

Public participation over extended periods is commonly facilitated through **appointing citizens to advisory committees**, such as those on community or economic development, health, family welfare, housing or parks and recreation, or on equity of taxation, as mentioned earlier. Rouyn-Noranda presents a good example of involving citizens. That municipality, forged from the 1986 unification of the two communities which comprise its name, was an isolated, often economically depressed community with a high unemployment rate, high rate of school drop-outs and a high level of soil and water pollution from industrial contamination. A **City and Citizens' Committee** was set up, initially to address the serious lead contamination in the area. It established a forum for discussion by the City, Noranda Mines staff and anyone else interested in the problem, and set the tone for future "partnering" with local businesses and for ongoing public consultation and participation (Katsof, 1994, p. 95).

- **Involve Other Sectors of the Community**

Lachance and Morisset (1995) spoke of how municipal public servants become the pillars on which a city or town must rely to achieve its objectives, but note that the truly client-centred municipality also must form partnerships outside its public service. Often viewed narrowly to include only the involvement of business, partnership may also involve linking with other municipalities, inter-municipal organizations, individuals, *ad hoc* organizations or any other entity necessary to establish a common vision and meet a need for the population (1995, p. 25). Partnering is especially likely to be useful for specific initiatives or issues, for which **involving businesses, school boards or local social or service clubs** has been productive. These were the partnerships nurtured by Rimouski, for example, by which that community realized contributions of materials, personnel and technical and administrative support for its "Information Bus" initiative, described briefly above.

## **B. TAKING IN, SPENDING OR SAVING MONEY WISELY**

- **Enhance the Income of Municipal Government**

One of the actions listed in the *Burlington Future Focus: A Strategic Plan for the City of Burlington* reflects a current concern about funding for municipalities across Canada; it states that City Council and City Management "will seek to expand the sources of revenue available to support city projects and programs beyond **traditional funding sources**, by pursuing an **expanded program of joint ventures, sponsorships, management contracts with private, voluntary and other public institutions** and **subsidization with senior levels of government**" (p. 59).

One widely used income tool discussed in *L'Obsession du citoyen*, involves **building permits and development fees**, which, according to the authors, have the advantage of allowing a reflection of the real cost of residential choices, while also being administratively efficient (p. 78). An action listed in the Burlington strategic plan was for Council to "continue to aim for new development to pay its way by undertaking reviews of development charges on a regular basis . . . ensuring that the city-administered development processing costs are charged to the benefiting parties" (p. 59).

The impact of pricing of municipal services goes well beyond the budget. According to Vojnovic (1994), encouraging an optimal allocation of resources through correct pricing would be the main policy initiative toward fulfilling the equity conditions required for advancing toward sustainable development. The author looked at services he considered as currently underpriced, such as municipal water and waste management, and other factors, such as the use of agricultural machinery and fertilizers, and the social costs of private automobile use, and maintained that by recognizing the true costs in pricing, urban regions would have a greater propensity to intensify to a more compact and efficient urban form (1994).

A strategy for alternative service delivery which is also a revenue generating mechanism is the controversial "**user fee**," which in 1991, according to Kitchen, constituted an average of 13 percent of total municipal revenues in all Canadian provinces (Kitchen, 1995). According to the author, user fees are important because they permit a more flexible revenue that allows municipal governments to get away from overdependence on property taxes and transfers from senior levels of government. User fees are appropriate when the service is primarily a private good, when exclusion is possible and when the fees can be collected efficiently; they tend to be used for technical or infrastructure services, such as parking, public transit, water, building permits, use of arenas or pools, homes for the aged, and not to services of community-wide benefit (Kent, 1987, as cited in Skelley, 1996).

Kitchen maintained that user fees can actually broaden a municipality's tax base if the additional revenues are collected from people or organizations residing outside its boundaries and which would normally be exempt from financial responsibility. Although user fees may improve the efficiency of resource allocation, he said, it may also increase barriers of access for some, may lead to underutilisation of existing municipal facilities and/or excessive costs of administration (1995). Skelley noted the contention from critics of user fees (Auld and Kitchen, 1988) that their excessive adoption would adversely affect low income households, and he repeated Knighton's (1985) admonition that municipal government has to consider whether it has a moral, legal or ethical obligation to provide the service from general revenues [and not added fees] (Skelley, 1996, p. 13).

- **Reduce Expenditures in Departments**

Many measures in the area of reducing spending in departments are consistent with those of the sound employee management practices of a citizen-centred government and are implemented commonly. Examples are: to **implement and maintain employee safety measures**, in the interest of good management, employee safety and morale and which would also reduce costs related to lost time and productivity due to injuries. Another, which would require an initial outlay but which could lead to overall savings, might be to establish staff positions specifically for savings, such as to **establish an "energy efficiency" staff position** with sufficient status and administrative support to be effective.

A step which Lachance and Morisset discuss and which municipalities are considering or reconsidering is to **"privatize" services where economically feasible and where value of service is not jeopardized**, such as may be the case for waste collection, paratransit service, or others. Michael Skelley would agree that considering the "contracting out" option may be appropriate. In his 1996 report, *Alternative Service Delivery in Canadian Municipalities*, he addressed contracting out among other alternative service delivery methods. An attitude shift has taken place in recent years, he contended,



such that governments are now not so much expected to produce services as to see that they are produced. Faced with the prospects of declining revenues and increased expenditure responsibilities, he added, most governments choose one of two options, either to raise taxes or reduce spending, and eschew the more entrepreneurial solutions to the problem, including a better use of the private sector and local non-profit groups. Skelley explored several alternatives to total local government production, and outlined the merits and problems of each according to the criteria of efficiency, effectiveness, equity and accountability. The alternatives include:

- Contracting out a service to the private sector;
- Intergovernmental agreements to provide a service in co-operation with another local government or agency or another level of government;
- Using volunteers to deliver all or part of a service;
- Promoting self-help within a community;
- Franchising out a service to the private/nonprofit sector;
- Providing vouchers to local citizens to give to private service producers;
- Giving a subsidy as an incentive to provide a service;
- Charging user fees to achieve efficient consumption of a service (1996, p 1).

With regard to **contracting out**, Skelley has contended that the option works better under some conditions than in others, such as when services have outputs that are easily measured, as in the case of solid waste management compared to parks and recreation (1995). It also works best for services that are not exclusively complex, since complexity affects the ability to monitor the contracted out service (Ferris and Grady, 1986), and for services that can be broken down into a number of different components or for which user fees can be charged. Citing the Organization for Economic and Co-operative Development (OECD, 1987), Skelley claimed that contracting out tends to be more appropriate for services that are technical rather than social in nature, because the precise outputs of social services are hard to define and to measure (1996). Wherever tariffs are used, having an accurate accounting of costs allows for **implementing tariffs that reflect the real costs**. In the community of Mirabel, Quebec, for example, having an exact measure of the amount of pollution from the effluent water produced by companies in its Laurentian municipality was essential to determining and recovering the cost of treatment (Lachance and Morisset, 1995, p. 74).

Skelley's 1996 publication also includes a description of related provincial legislation and municipal services within Canada and provides examples of alternative service delivery methods within Canada. One such instance concerns the privatization of water and waste water treatment in the region of Hamilton-Wentworth, Ontario in 1995. The region agreed to the arrangement on the basis of economic

development, the contractor agreeing to invest \$10 million in the area over ten years and to employ at least 100 persons over the number needed to maintain the facilities, and also on the guarantee of \$500,000 annual operations savings. The innovation had the support of the local union because the regional staff became employees of the contractor and were offered a profit sharing plan (CMHC, 1995). According to Skelley, the region is now considering privatization of other local services, notably economic development (p. 33).

The prospect of anticipated cost savings in equipment and person-power was also the basis on which Paradise, Newfoundland, contracted out its garbage collection, snow clearance and other public works maintenance. That community of 8,000 also took advantage of volunteer labour in helping to construct recreational facilities, and, as of August 1995, began sharing facilities for animal control with an adjacent municipality, with a consequent saving of \$60,000. On the other hand, the community has noted that the use of volunteers could sometimes result in slower delivery of a service and/or problems with volunteer accountability (Skelley, p. 37).

Other costs may at least partially offset the financial benefits of privatization. Comparing private *versus* public service delivery, Starr (1987) talked about the social benefits associated with public provision, including concern for the environment and the provision of health and social benefits to employees, to which he might have added: attention to the hiring of women, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities.

With regard to the equity aspects of involving the private sector, because the motivations (of private companies) are profit oriented and usually do not include regard for the disadvantaged sections of the local population, involving the private sector does not reduce the government's regulatory role or take away its responsibility to ensure the quality of the service (Skelley, 1996).

- **Intermunicipal Collaboration**

Intermunicipal collaboration is an area through which some municipal governments have realized considerable savings. Probably all municipal governments and most certainly smaller ones, could **collaborate with respect to revenue collection systems, information systems and the provision and maintaining of goods and services**, such as sharing the purchasing of materials and supplies; sharing of goods, such as maintenance equipment, sharing of services, such as waste collection; and sharing of staff, having departments provide services to more than one municipality, such as for planning.

Particularly striking as a motivation to change is the current marked outmigration from rural areas, particularly in Saskatchewan. The authors of the province's *Report of the Minister's Advisory Committee on Inter-community Co-operation and Community Quality of Life* (1993) promoted the provision of services

to some municipalities on a larger scale. The task, according to the report, is to determine the optimal areas for the service being delivered, noting that service delivery areas may be defined in terms of population, geographic area, assessment or some combination of the three (p. 12). Among other recommendations, the committee called upon the provincial government to provide financial and advisory assistance to municipal governments in developing regional strategic plans that could include policies in such areas as transportation, recreation, emergency and protective service, and land use and development.

Smaller communities may benefit from **amalgamation** to create a threshold for economic and efficient delivery of municipal services. Here also, the most notable examples are from Saskatchewan, where such a move is an important option for savings. With 834 municipalities (or 84 municipalities per 100,000 people), Saskatchewan has the largest number of municipal governments per 100,000 population in Canada, strikingly greater than the next province, Prince Edward Island, at 68/100,000, and the last, British Columbia, with 5/100,000 (1993, p. 13). The Advisory Committee's 1993 Report, cited above, recommended that the province's Department of Municipal Government "proactively assist elected officials and municipalities in determining the impact of amalgamations and [status changes for municipalities which are decreasing in population] on hamlets, villages, small towns and rural municipalities." Further, it recommended that the province "establish a goal of a significant reduction in the number of separate local government entities by the year 2000" (p. 18). Saskatchewan's Cory and Corman Park municipalities voluntarily amalgamated in the 1970s to their mutual continuing benefit, and provide a model for others in the province who consider that step.

### **C. REDIRECT MONEYS TOWARD QUALITY OF LIFE INITIATIVES**

- **Healthy Physical Environments**

Quality of life initiatives which directly affect citizen wellbeing include healthy physical environments, economic development, social and cultural wellbeing and public safety. Of all of these, **the creation and maintenance of healthy physical environments** is important for many reasons, not the least of which is the strength of its link to equity. Improving the health of the physical environment affects everyone in the community, but primarily those who are worse off financially, because by definition, lower income citizens have fewer resources to ward off the ill effects of an unhealthy environment. Private water cleansing systems, vacations to healthier places, the money and knowledge to build an optimal nutritional status, and cleaner and less crowded home conditions are a few examples of ways by which the more affluent buffer themselves from environmental problems, but which the poor have limited power to address. Improving the physical environment, therefore, benefits everyone, but especially the poor,

improving their access to recreation, fresh air, clean water and other things which improve quality of life.

The physical environment is also problematic because a particular problem may involve threats to the ecosystem that are not apparent to the average citizen, in which case, the public and its governments may be reluctant to spend the funds needed for corrective action. Fortunately, however, recent years have seen an increased understanding and activism with regard to the environment. According to Clifford Maynes, "In the last several years, the global environment crisis has finally hit home. We now realize the terrible truth . . . that life support systems are being undermined by the misuse of resources, contamination of air, water and soil, loss of biological diversity and disruption of essential ecological processes" (1991, p. 1). Canadians, he maintained, must lead the way, must adopt new ways of living that can be sustained indefinitely, without degrading the environment or depleting resources, so that future generations around the world can share the natural bounty we now enjoy ( p. 1). In *Environment and Local Government* (1991), Maynes made the case for a more active and enlightened role by municipal governments in the area of environmental protection. Local governments have a strong potential for **building sustainability**, on the basis that they are the closest and therefore, most sensitive to the environment; they are also closest to the citizens, on whom success depends; they have powers and responsibilities in many areas of environmental concern; and they have links to others, such as Conservation Authorities and public health units, through which ideas about sustainability can be brought to fruition (1991, p. 1).

Local governments generally need to focus more on their processes for gathering and analysing information to improve their effectiveness in meeting environmental objectives. Elected officials, staff and the public need a shared and reliable knowledge base from which to act. Collaboration with others in the municipality may be the answer: the City of Peterborough, for one, is **working with conservation groups and naturalists to collect information** about "environmentally significant areas" and local ecology. Peterborough's study has developed an approach adapted from the "ABC method" to collect data in three categories—Abiotic, Biotic and Cultural—as background to the establishment of a protection strategy (Maynes, 1991, p. 5).

Municipalities are increasingly adopting the approach of producing **state of the environment (SOE) reports**, where information is presented under a variety of considerations. For example, Metropolitan Toronto's *State of the Environment Report* (1995) is a comprehensive document with sections on natural areas, plants and animals, soil quality, settlement impacts and land consumption, solid and hazardous wastes, air pollutants, and so forth (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department, 1995). Victoria's *Environmental Issues in Greater Victoria* is another SOE report, which discusses the local ecosystem in terms of sustainable urban lifestyles (Schaefer, 1992).

SOE reports should be updated on a regular basis, perhaps to coincide with the term of office for municipal government, or with the **regular review and update of the Official Plan**. Regular updates provide a point of comparison and allow for identifying trends; they provide material for discussions by **round table gatherings** or **environmental advisory committees**, and for the construction of **corporate plans that are consistent with the demands of sustainability** (Maynes, 1991, p. 5).

Examples of "environment friendly" municipal initiatives are legion, and are promoted in the spate of reports from recent round tables and other conferences on sustainable development; some of the reports are listed in the appended resources list. With regard to the environment generally, one suggestion is **create working committees on the environment**, particularly in areas such as monitoring pollution, "greening" the community, *etc.* Also important is to **involve citizens** in the committees; The City of Waterloo involved the public in the preparation of its *Waste Management Master Plan* and developed a strong strategy to implement reduction, reuse and recycling at the local level (Maynes, 1991, p. 17).

**Multi-media public information campaigns** are often called for to increase public involvement in environment related activities, and may also serve to increase the citizens' pride and care for their environment generally. Publicity was a large factor in the success of Peterborough's "Green-up" Project of assessments to and interventions with households. Assessments were made of energy use, including a "blower" door test that revealed where cold air leaks into the house; advisors provided tips on ways to reduce energy and water consumption, household waste generation, "green" cleaning and gardening. Also, free energy conserving hardware items were distributed, such as water-efficient showerheads, hot water heating and pipe insulation, and toilet dams. Local financing was made available for measures such as upgrading insulation or energy efficient windows and a list of qualified contractors was distributed.

Commitment and participation in environmental initiatives may be generated more easily where a **local authority** has been established and a piece of park or other territory has been named, one with which citizens can identify and be proud, such as with river development authorities. Saskatoon's Meewasin Valley authority is an example. In that project, as elsewhere, related events, such as community tree plantings, provide an opportunity for public involvement and also for teaching about what individuals can do for ecosystem maintenance. Lachance and Morisset (1995) reported that, by involving community groups and citizens with the Ministry of Forestry in a tree planting program, Sherbrooke doubled the number of **planted trees** with the same budget and almost completely eliminated vandalism on its trees. Also in that city, 400 children created signs about pesticides and participated in a parade with the mayor during environment festivals (p. 112). In Longuille, Quebec, a tree was planted for every child born in the city during the International Year of the Family (Lachance and Morisset, 1995, p. 112).

Whatever the incentive, involving citizens is important as **volunteers** for hands-on activities, such as park, schoolground or other **neighbourhood clean-up campaigns** or special events, such as for **composting demonstrations**, or for the popular "**collection days**" for collecting toxic domestic waste, old batteries, paints, pesticides and other chemicals.

Lachance and Morisset have described other initiatives related to environmental protection and enhancement, in areas such as transportation, water consumption, disposal of waste, composting, monitoring of industrial pollution, and so forth. Still more are reported in the *Sustainable Communities Resource Package*, put together by the Ontario Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy (1995).

Planning and implementation for sustainability objectives is bound to be facilitated as municipalities share and learn from each others' experiences. A useful resource is Maclaren's discussion of urban sustainability in which she defines the concept, identifies indicators and describes the steps in developing an urban sustainability report (1992). In the study, *Green City Views: Public Opinion and Urban Environments in Ten Canadian Cities*, Patterson developed quality of life indices in 11 domains, including the physical environment, housing, transportation, leisure, attachment to the city, and so on; the author explored the relationship of these indices to each other and to an overall index of quality of urban life (Patterson, 1995).

According to DésRosiers (1995) an optimistic note is the increased attention in recent years to the analysis of urban forms and the elaboration of different scenarios of development. He cited the move in Ontario toward the adoption of a new urban strategy for the whole province that targets environmental balance, economic and cultural local communities, and in the Greater Vancouver Area, which in 1990, adopted a regional approach to urban development which included a policy of transportation and use of soils. In all cases, he maintained, the common denominator was territorial development based on more rational use of resources and a better quality of life for citizens (p. 83).

- **Economic Development**

Des Rosiers spoke of the link between land use and economic development, maintaining that the challenges are quite simple, usually being a choice between, on the one hand, the spreading of urban functions onto an increasingly growing territory and, on the other, the maintaining of a relatively strong central structure with a commercial nucleus characterized by dynamism, cohesion and a social identity. Speaking of the many examples of "main street" and other city core revitalization programs, he says there are at least 30 in Quebec, resulting in increased urban pride among the citizens, joint public and private sector planning and development programs and increased job creation (1995, p. 84). Granby, Quebec, for example, amalgamated its three downtown business associations into one; a greatly improved

appearance of the core area was only one of the happy results from the seven million dollars worth of private works started there in the three years prior to 1990. Coaticooke, Quebec, troubled by proximity to the U.S. border, rallied to create ten new businesses on main street; their **"Christmas in July" promotional campaign** attracted fifteen thousand people to the downtown area and greatly reduced losses from what had been extensive cross-border shopping. Drummondville, Quebec, also developed a successful **business recruitment and marketing strategy**, so that in the middle of a recession, they were able to attract fifteen new businesses and commercial projects, creating 150 new jobs and bringing in new investment of four million dollars. According to DesRosiers (1995), these communities have risen to a challenge of economic constraint that is more serious than any before in Canada.

Other examples of municipal responses to "downloading" and other economic problems can be found across the country. In Ontario, London's community participation process to develop the city's new Official Plan was the impetus for, among other positive results, **the establishing of a Community Loan Fund** and promoting micro community economic development. Atikokan, through a partnership of government, industry and labour, planned and created an "Eco-home" which uses half the energy of the R2000 model; not only has that project produced a house that is technologically advanced and uses sustainable construction techniques, it has produced a welcome economic spin-off to local business (Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, 1995, p. 1). Also in Ontario, Durham Region set up a regional **Community Economic Development Advisory Committee** to create a community-based economic strategy for the area. Among other activities to stimulate the economy, Durham Region plans to hold **Economic Trade Fairs** in conjunction with the joint meetings of the Boards of Trade and Chambers of Commerce of the region (Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, 1995, p. 4).

Not all strategies or publications about them have focused on the traditional "marketing and promotion" tack for economic development. In the *Community Economic Strategy for the Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth*, the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth has contrasted the traditional strategy of competing for new commercial or industrial enterprises with the new **approach of encouraging existing local businesses**. Concepts discussed in the draft report are economic vision; goals regarding skills, competitiveness, diversification and quality of life (1992).

Although economic development is not by itself the answer to a quality lifestyle for citizens, the stability which it affords allows municipal government and the citizens to invest their energies into developing those social and cultural elements which are also essential. Ongoing changes in technology and communication, family structure, demographics, recreation, education and work life, social values, etc., will translate into a constant need for reconsidering development, economic and land use decisions. According to DesRosiers, the current and coming challenge is to involve citizens, making them fully aware

of the consequences of their decisions and stimulating them to be much more involved in the management of local and regional affairs and to invest as much energy as they now devote to federal and provincial politics (1995, p. 89).

Tied to environment and land use but also integral to economic development, lifestyle and wellbeing is transportation, an area which has generated increasing academic and public interest. Some authors, David Engwicht, for example, fault traffic as the crucial reason for a decline in the quality of urban and town life. His 1993 Australia-based book poses ideas on how traffic is destroying the eco-city and he offers practical advice on the creation and maintenance of eco-cities. In Canada, traffic related mortality and morbidity statistics across the country have provided the impetus for many municipal government discussions and initiatives. Some of these are commonplace, e.g., **speed controls; the use of *culs-de-sac*, one-way streets and dead-ends in planning communities; safety campaigns; priority lanes for buses and "car-pool" cars; "drinking and driving" and vehicle safety checks; well-planned bus routes on convenient schedules for the users' activities and with reasonable fares, and safe, transparent bus shelters; access to public transportation for the elderly and physically challenged; adequate parking space, preferably off the street; closing off areas to vehicular traffic, etc.** Also, many have developed bicycle and pedestrian paths and encourage their use. Hull, Quebec, has organized a **"bicycle day"**; during this popular, day-long event, the whole population is invited to cycle to school or work activities and to join others for a community meal. In Rockland, Ontario, the municipality, social clubs and Chamber of Commerce are participating in a campaign to **promote greater use of buses**, to stimulate the local economy and also to protect the environment by reducing the level of car emissions (Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, 1995, p. 9).

- **Social and Cultural Wellbeing**

As the level of government closest to the people, municipal government can enjoy its task of encouragement and support for many popular cultural activities: **ethnic festivals** such as "folkfest," "Oktoberfest" or "highland" games; **seasonal celebrations**, including the welcome "Winterfest," "Louis Riel Day" or other local sports days; and various (jazz, country and folk) music happenings and "fringe" and humour festivals. Decisions about these events must surely be easier than others which also affect wellbeing but are much more controversial: whether to open a gambling casino to augment municipal income; whether to have and where to situate community living centres, women's shelters and other group homes; how to respond to pressures for and against bylaws regarding smoking in public places; how to meet the growing problem of economic disparity with more than support to local food banks; and so on. Along with **learning from the experience of other municipalities as their data become available**,



other responses may be helpful, such as **undertaking specific studies and interventions according to the community's needs, informing the citizens fully** so that they may make sound decisions; **supporting those in the community who are working on improving quality of life for the community; working with "home and school" associations and others to determine and address local family needs; involving church or ethnic leaders and groups in specific local projects, such as implementing "community kitchens" for teaching nutrition and economic food preparation; and facilitating the co-ordination of the efforts of service clubs, community agencies, and others, and finally, to increasing the awareness of these and other groups of the role they can play to promote community wellbeing.**

Housing is an area in which continuing demographic changes in Canada's population will create increased demands, specifically for those with special needs, such as the elderly; several recent publications about living environments should support the decisions which municipal governments across the country will be called upon to make. For example, for the Centre for Future Studies in Housing and Living Environments, Murdie and his colleagues have put together two related publications: *Quality of Life Research: An Annotated Bibliography* and *Modelling Quality of Life Indicators in Canada: A Feasibility Analysis*, both in 1994. The indicators they include are: housing, land use, transportation, natural environment, employment and commerce, health, education, recreation, crime and safety, and social welfare.

Residential density and quality of life were studied by Leung, who looked at a mix of housing sites to determine the effect of residential density and home and neighbourhood crowding on resident satisfaction and neighbourhood quality (1994). In *Density and Liveability*, Leung has joined others for discussions on such topics as density and quality of life, measures of quality of life, personal safety and the politics of intensification (1995). In his (1992) *Environmental Issues in Greater Victoria*, Schaefer has also explored the effects of urban sprawl and the ecological impact of high- and low-density housing. On the projection that the senior citizen component of the population in the Ottawa-Carleton area will more than double in the next 25 years, the Regional/Municipal Working Group on Housing of the municipal region put out a background paper on seniors' housing; the discussion document suggests that the elders' specific housing needs and preferences and health service requirements will require that changes be made to current policies to meet the projected increase in demand, if the high quality of life for the region's seniors is to be maintained (1996).

- **Public Safety**

Like economic viability of a community, public safety is a necessary, if not sufficient, component

for citizen wellbeing, and one which, in times of decreased funding from senior levels of government, calls for ingenuity from municipal government. **Shared service delivery** funded by senior government(s) may be an option, a good example of which is Saskatchewan's **Co-ordinated Regional Response System**, developed under the province's Inter-community Co-operation Program. Partly to improve the service and reduce the cost of protective services through the pooling of resources, the Regional Response System supports municipalities in South Central Saskatchewan with regard to fire, police, emergency medical and emergency measures services. Among other goals, the service is concerned with achieving a totally integrated system for communications and protocols for protective service personnel, and establishing a protective services response system based on response times. Benefits have been increased educational and training opportunities for regional protective personnel, a more knowledgeable public with regard to protective services and increased co-operation and communication among the participating municipalities, whose staff have begun to discuss other key regional issues such as economic development. Skelley has cited Saskatchewan's Inter-community Co-operation Program as Canada's best example of provincial legislation to facilitate alternative service provision by municipalities (1996, p. 53).

*Safer Cities: Social and Political Action for Stronger and Safer Communities* describes how Edmonton used **partnering to address crime**. Following the European and North American Conference on Crime Prevention and Urban Safety held in Montreal, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities disseminated information on Safer Cities to its member municipalities, seeking their involvement. Approached by citizens to establish a Safer Cities agenda, Edmonton's Mayor and City Council set up a (largely volunteer) **task force** to study problems related to safety and recommend action to prevent crime and build a better and safer community (Friedenthal, 1994).

Finally, and also sparked by the Montreal Conference on Urban Safety and Crime Prevention, was Regina's four-step process for crime reduction in the city. Committed to active public participation regarding crime prevention over the previous 20 years, City Council adopted the program to forge community partnerships to address the social causes of crime. The four steps included, first, the establishment of a steering committee and a 1990 spring conference to explore ways to make Regina a safer community; second, the setting up of ten working groups, on topics such as cross-cultural understanding, violence against women, poverty and unemployment, media and crime, and so on; third, the holding of a 1991 action planning conference, which identified two main issues, family violence and Indian and Métis issues; and fourth, maintenance of commitment, of which clear communication to the public is an integral part. Unfortunately, in spite of the program and the highest level of financial support for crime prevention programs in Canada in the early 1990s (Urban Safety and Crime Prevention in

Canada, 1991), Statistics Canada would later report that Regina "leads" the country in overall crime, according to 1995 figures, with 14,601 reported incidents per 100,000 people, compared to the next highest, Vancouver, at 14,516/100,000. In violent crimes, at 1,148/100,000, the city fared better, having fewer than Thunder Bay (at 1,818/100,000), Victoria, St. John's, Vancouver, Saskatoon, Winnipeg and Halifax, in that order. Sudbury, Ontario had Canada's most enviable record, at 9,022 reported crimes per 100,000 and 1,133 reported violent crimes per 100,000 (Blevins, 1996, p. 1). International levels were not available for comparison.

The figures are discouraging, but the problems have not gone unrecognized; nor have efforts to address them. In Thunder Bay, which in 1995 had the country's highest number of reported violent crimes, the local Coalition on Youth and Crime received the 1996 Crime Prevention Ontario Community Award for its holistic approach to youth and crime issues. The approach includes working groups in areas such as Employment and Skills Training, Street and Youth, *etc.* Such targeting of causes, rather than consequences, is likely to be fruitful in the long run.

Decreased funding from senior levels of government for protection has inspired citizen concern and in some cases, collaboration between local police and communities. Specific measures seen more in recent years are: **round table community discussions of crime in the city; the establishing and publicizing of neighbourhood police posts; bicycle community patrols by police; increased attendance of police at school and community events; and the training of postal workers and other citizens to detect risk situations.** Sherbrooke's Directorate of Youth Protection, Park and Leisure Services and Community Services have worked together to train young people who work with children in public parks to detect signs of child abuse. Other measures are **organizing information sessions for parents and children on the use of drugs and alcohol, on vandalism, on violence among youth; improving street and park lighting; promoting the use of the 911 emergency telephone number; improving recreation activities for young people, especially in low income areas; and installing public telephones in parks and on street corners.** Most important is likely the **adoption of an attitude of public responsibility for crime prevention.** According to Audy, former police chief of Hull, "In crime prevention, the police force is only one of the intervening parties, the one who is paid; there is also a whole system of values of the society that you have to reinforce if you want to diminish crime" (1991, p. 4, as cited by Lachance and Morisset, 1995, p. 102). **A more informed population and increased visibility of police in the community** are likely to be important steps.

Fire prevention and management have also been areas in which some municipalities have looked beyond the traditional and somewhat successful measures of **educating school children and the public in general about fire prevention and management; distributing smoke detectors at a price made**

**cheaper because of bulk buying; involving service clubs and other community groups in fire prevention education or activities; implementing bylaws against firecrackers and bonfires without permits, and so forth.** The municipality of Montmany, Quebec, hired two students to **inspect homes** and to make the population aware of the importance of smoke detectors. They also distributed **stickers to the homes**, to be placed on the bedroom windows of children or senior or handicapped people to signal firefighters which parts of homes are priorities for getting people out. The fire department of Saint-Etienne-de-Bolton, also in Quebec, has developed a water reserve in the municipal park that serves to fill the fire trucks. Beautiful to look at in summer, it is also a reservoir in winter for water to flood municipal rinks (Lachance and Morisset, 1995). Apparently, in fire prevention and management, as in the other responsibilities of municipal government discussed above, implementing imaginative and sound practices is the best route toward healthy cities and towns.

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## APPENDIX B: TEXT FOR HEALTHY CITY GUIDED IMAGERY\*

Now we are going to take a trip to the future, to an ideally healthy (name of place) about 20 years from now. This is not \_\_\_\_\_ as it is today, nor is it the place we think it probably will be; this is \_\_\_\_\_ as we would like it to be if everything worked well and we truly became a healthy city.” So make yourself comfortable; you may find it useful to close your eyes so that you can more easily “see” the future place in your mind’s eye.

Now I want you to imagine you are hovering over \_\_\_\_\_, a couple of thousand feet in the air, perhaps in a balloon or a very quiet helicopter over an ideally healthy \_\_\_\_\_, about 20 years from now. Look down at the city beneath you. What does it look like? What colours and shapes do you see? What time of year is it? What would it look like at different times of the year? Look out across the city and see the shapes of the buildings and structures of the city. Can you see how people and goods move to and fro? What sounds come up to you from \_\_\_\_\_ and what smells?

Now I want you to descend slowly toward the centre of the city, looking more closely as you come down at the shapes of the buildings and the public spaces. We are going to land in the centre of the area in the morning of a working day. As you get closer to the ground, listen again to the sounds, and smell again the scents of the city.

The people seem unconcerned as you land in the centre of a public space in the downtown area and look around you. Who is there? What ages? What are they doing? How are they getting around? How do they react to you and to each other? What does this space look like? How safe does it feel? Walk around the downtown area. What activities are going on? Where are people working? What sort of work are they doing? What else are they doing, apart from work?

Walk into a workplace—it could be an office, a store, a school, an industrial setting. How does this place feel as a place to work? Look at the people working there. How do they look? How are the people there interacting with each other? Now take time to go to a different place of work and see what’s happening there and how it feels.

Now imagine yourself in a different part of the city, perhaps out in the suburbs, on a working day. How is it different? What activities are going on there? What’s happening back in the neighbourhoods and in the community during this working day?

Imagine now it’s lunchtime. Where are the people going for their lunch? What sort of food are they eating? How does it look, how does it smell? What else are people doing apart from eating? What

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\*From Lane (1989), as adapted from Hancock (1988). The text should be spoken slowly, with many pauses and taking perhaps eight to ten minutes to allow participants plenty of time to “look around” and make images for themselves. Before you begin, have pencils and paper handy so participants can record their impressions at the end.

“Use “town” or “community” where appropriate.



sorts of stores are there? Walk into a store and look around. What is being sold? How is it being sold? What sorts of goods and products are available? How do they relate to the healthiness of the city?

As the workday comes to a close, go home with someone from a place of work. How does that person get home? Where is home? How far does that person have to travel? Walk with this person through the neighbourhood, this ideally healthy neighbourhood. How does it look? What sorts of buildings are there? What sort of open spaces? What facilities and services? Who lives there? How do these people relate to each other? How does the neighbourhood feel? Do you feel safe?

Now walk down the street where this person lives. Who is living there? What ages, what sorts of families, what cultural groups? Go into this person's home. What does it look like? Is this a house or an apartment? Who is living here? Is it a family and who is living in the family? How does the family and the household feel? What are they doing? How do they earn their living? Are there kids? Where do they go to school, and what are they learning about life, and about health?

Imagine now it's time for dinner. What are people eating in this household? How is the food? Who is there to eat it? and after dinner, what does the family do? How do people relax—or do they relax? What do they do with their free time in the evenings—or is it free?

Now walk out into the community again, now it is dark. How does it feel to be out in the street at night? Who is out there? What's going on in the neighbourhood and the community?

Now go back downtown. How do you get there in the evening? What's going on downtown? What does it feel like to be downtown at night?

Now imagine that it's a week-end, pick any season of the year you want. Remember, this is your ideally healthy community. What do people do on the week-ends? What do they do with their leisure time? What recreational, educational and other activities do they undertake? What is going on in the city and in the neighbourhood?

Are people leaving town? If so, how are they leaving? Where are they going? Are people working on the week-end? Who is working? What sort of work are they doing?

Now imagine it's a different season. What is happening over the week-end in this season? What activities are available to people?

Now, before we leave this ideally healthy city, think back on all that you have seen. Think about whether you saw the very young and the very old; disabled people; minority groups; the rich; the poor; Did you see them all in the city? How is life for them?

Now I want you to come back slowly to the present time, reflecting on all you have seen, and then write down a dozen or so of the most striking things you saw, heard, smelled or touched. Write down the things that surprised you, the things that pleased you, the things that upset you. What was it that made an impression on you in this ideally healthy city? And then we'll talk about what you saw . . .

\* \* \*

Group discussion accompanying the exercise may produce pictures that are remarkably similar,

often involving peaceful settings blessed with green spaces and a harmonious environment for diverse peoples. While the images produced are mostly positive (as asked for by the facilitator) some are not. All should be listed by a recorder to produce a composite "vision" of this city/town/neighbourhood of the future. Then discussion can move toward determining those decisions and actions by municipal government, by the business and industrial sector and by the citizens which will keep and strengthen the positive images and address those that are not.

**APPENDIX C:**  
**KIDS' PLACE QUESTIONNAIRE, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON**

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"KIDS' PLACE" SURVEY INSTRUMENT

(1) (2-3) (4-5) (6-7) (8)

GIRL:

BOY:

F 1   
G 2 (9)

AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

Age   
(10-11)

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ postal code

Quarter   
(12)

SCHOOL NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DEGREE: \_\_\_\_\_

code postal   
(13-16)

What things or places do these words make you think of? Write your answers.

12  
(8)

example

<p><b>WET</b> When it's rain or LAKE</p>	<p><i>Smells good</i></p>	<p><b>MYSTERIOUS</b></p>
<p><b>DIRTY</b></p>	<p><b>SAFE</b></p>	<p><b>QUIET</b></p>
<p><b>BEAUTIFUL</b></p>	<p>Sad</p>	<p><b>Friendly</b></p>
<p><b>FUN</b></p>	<p><i>Peaceful</i></p>	<p>Unfriendly</p>
<p><b>BORING</b></p>	<p><b>CROWDED</b></p>	<p><b>BUSY</b></p>
<p><b>UGLY</b></p>	<p><i>Smells bad</i></p>	<p><b>HELPFUL</b></p>
<p><b>DANGEROUS</b></p>	<p>noisy</p>	<p><b>TIRING</b></p>

a   
(9-11) (12-13)

b   
(14-16) (17-18)

c   
(19-21) (22-23)

d   
(24-26) (27-28)

e   
(29-31) (32-33)

f   
(34-36) (37-38)

g   
(39-41) (42-43)

h   
(44-46) (47-48)

i   
(49-51) (52-53)

j   
(54-56) (57-58)

k   
(59-61) (62-63)

l   
(64-66) (67-68)

m   
(69-71) (72-73)

13  
(8)

n   
(9-11) (12-13)

o   
(14-16) (17-18)

p   
(19-21) (22-23)

q   
(24-26) (27-28)

r   
(29-31) (32-33)

s   
(34-36) (37-38)

t   
(39-41) (42-43)

u   
(44-46) (47-48)

v   
(49-51) (52-53)

w   
(54-56) (57-58)

x   
(59-61) (62-63)

y   
(64-66) (67-68)

- I think the best place to go in my neighborhood is: \_\_\_\_\_
- I think the best place to go with my parents is: \_\_\_\_\_
- My favorite place in the city is: \_\_\_\_\_
- My parents' favorite place to go with me is: \_\_\_\_\_
- If I were Mayor, the first thing I would do to make Rouyn-Noranda a better place for kids is: \_\_\_\_\_