Social Sustainability in Vancouver

Merrill Cooper

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Social Sustainability in Vancouver

By

Merrill Cooper

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This research paper was commissioned from Canadian Policy Research Networks through a partnership between the City of Vancouver, the United Way of the Lower Mainland, and the Vancouver Foundation. The paper seeks to provide a broad picture of social sustainability in Vancouver and the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) and to provide a better understanding of current and emerging social issues. Canadian Policy Research Networks is responsible for the content of the paper.
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Executive Summary

At present, Vancouver is one of Canada’s largest and most influential cities, boasting a spectacular natural landscape, a temperate clime, and a strong economy. Identified as the most livable city in the world in 2005, Vancouver also ranks high with respect to personal safety, health care, arts and culture, diversity, education, and infrastructure. Overall, Vancouver is a thriving world-class metropolis, and the envy of many other cities around the world for its beauty, culture of innovation, eco-sensitive practices and policies, and multicultural population. As such, it is the second most popular destination in Canada for new immigrants, particularly those from China and South Asia.

With a view to maintaining high quality of life in Vancouver, in 2002, Vancouver City Council adopted principles for environmental, economic, and social sustainability as a basis for city actions and operations. The object of sustainability planning is to ensure that Vancouver becomes a community that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. As defined by the City of Vancouver, social sustainability reflects three primary outcomes: residents’ basic needs – including housing, health care, food, jobs, income, and safety – are met; residents develop their personal capacity and fully participate in, contribute to, and benefit from all aspects of community; and communities have the capacity to foster and support social inclusion on all dimensions and the positive development of all residents. Social sustainability assumes a certain level of equality among all residents, and growth that is compatible with the harmonious evolution of civil society. It implies that diverse groups and cultural practices are integrated in a just and equitable fashion, and this is reflected in all aspects of economic, social, political, and cultural life in the city. These assumptions and implications reflect a social inclusion framework or strategy for change toward fairness and equity for all members of society, in all aspects of life.

Yet, current and emerging social and economic trends suggest that Vancouver is moving away from, rather than toward, social inclusion and social sustainability:

- The gap between Vancouver’s rich and poor is growing as evident in the facts that the adult and child poverty levels are among the highest in Canada, and food and housing insecurity is on the rise. In addition, the proportion of residents living below Statistics Canada’s Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) exceeds 25% in more than half of the City of Vancouver’s neighbourhoods. There is also a troubling correlation between poverty and visible minority or Aboriginal status.
- Vancouver’s Aboriginal and highly-educated immigrant populations continue to experience labour market exclusion, and Aboriginal peoples continue to suffer the consequences of ongoing overt racism and exclusion on many fronts.
- One in ten workers in Greater Vancouver lives below LICO – by far the highest incidence of working poor of any major city in Canada. A growing schism is emerging between high-skill, well-paid jobs and low-skill, poorly-paid, precarious jobs which, in conjunction with other trends, suggests increasing income disparity and, for many, decreasing income security over time. These changes may increase the depth of poverty experienced by some lower-income segments of society, including young people who lack post-secondary education and members of lone-parent households.
Housing costs have spiralled beyond the reach of middle-income individuals and families, non-market housing for Vancouver’s most marginalized residents has been evaporating, and homelessness has more than doubled in recent years. Housing affordability issues are also forcing low-income families to congregate in neighbourhoods that, at best, lack the features and amenities that benefit and support children and parents and, at worst, place children at risk on many dimensions.

If these trends continue along their current trajectories, the number of children, youth, adults, and families who suffer social and economic exclusion will increase, further threatening Vancouver’s long-term social sustainability over time.

Population growth and changing demography may further compound Vancouver’s social sustainability challenges. Over the next 25 years, Vancouver’s population is expected to rise by 18% to 710,989; Greater Vancouver’s population will escalate by 32% to 2.88 million. Most of this growth will be driven by in-migration and particularly immigration, rather than birth rates. Greater Vancouver is likely to continue to be one of the major Canadian destinations of choice for immigrants who come from a wide spectrum of countries, and bring with them a rich variety of cultures, languages, and backgrounds. In addition, due to population aging, in 25 years the population of both Greater Vancouver and the City of Vancouver will be dominated by people of middle age and older, with proportionately fewer children and youth.

As the population ages, seniors’ health issues will assume increasing prominence. Advances in medicine may further extend the average lifespan, especially among upper-income and educated people. However, these advances are unlikely to fully address the illnesses and disabilities that generally accompany old age. Seniors’ health will also become more of a social concern. For example, the fact that women are having children later in life adds to family pressures, as they struggle to care for both their children and their aging parents. In some Vancouver communities, up to 55% of seniors are living alone. This trend is expected to continue indefinitely among the Canadian-born population although, in some ethnocultural groups, it is more common for extended families to live together. Demand for supported living and long-term care facilities for seniors with varied cultural backgrounds and levels of English-language proficiency is, however, likely to rise over time. In addition, the political clout exercised by a growing number of seniors may shift social and education spending priorities away from children and youth to issues of greater concern to seniors, such as safety, security and health care.

An increasing proportion of the population comprised of immigrants, most of them members of visible minority groups, will offer both opportunities and challenges for Vancouver’s social sustainability over time. Immigrants bring with them a rich tapestry of languages and cultures that will continue to boost Vancouver’s cultural capital and, if the city can continue to attract young and highly-educated immigrants, will help to sustain both the labour force and the number of children and youth in the city. However, negative consequences may ensue if immigrant children and youth can not obtain adequate English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction and educational programs to enable them to succeed in school and beyond, and if newcomers are not provided with the settlement and integration supports they require. Immigrant-serving organizations, many of which are not-for-profit agencies, will be challenged to meet burgeoning needs. In recent years, there has been much discussion among ethnocultural organizations about strained capacity in a context of
limited funding and increasing demand. Whether settlement and other agencies will be able to accommodate significantly more clients depends on the extent to which their capacity is increased through additional funding and support.

Moreover, if skilled immigrant workers can not secure employment which matches and rewards their talents and education levels, many individuals will simply migrate to other cities or countries which recognize and reward their talents. Finally, if the current trajectory of increasing poverty among immigrants continues, it will perpetuate and heighten social exclusion among an increasingly significant proportion of the population, perhaps even creating a disenfranchised immigrant underclass.

In the coming years, the City of Vancouver will also be challenged to explore new approaches to representing and engaging citizens given the changing demographics and, probably, growing social exclusion. A range of institutions, including municipal and provincial governments, will need to open new avenues for participation, particularly for immigrants, in all aspects of civic life, from electoral politics to community organizations, schools, and local institutions.

Threats to social sustainability in Vancouver are real and imminent. The social vision to which Vancouver aspires will require renewed investment in initiatives to ensure that residents’ basic needs are met, that residents can develop their personal capacity, and that communities foster the social inclusion and positive development of all residents. Recognition of, and appreciation for, the contributions that all residents can make to the city will be vital first steps. Rebuilding the buffers against the hardships of poverty will benefit all residents of Vancouver, regardless of their income level.

Clearly, it is beyond the scope and financial capacity of a municipality to foster social inclusion and to address the broad range of challenges which threaten Vancouver’s social sustainability. Initiatives of this breadth and magnitude can not be accomplished by the City of Vancouver alone. Sustained governmental intervention at the federal and provincial levels is needed to reduce individual and family poverty and ensure a basic quality of life via adequate health care, education, income, settlement programs, and social services which, concurrently, foster social mobility and reduce and prevent spatially-concentrated poverty. This means that there is a compelling need for local action to raise public awareness, influence national and provincial policy agendas, and ensure the coordination of structural measures with urban and other place-based initiatives within the City of Vancouver and Greater Vancouver.

Moreover, all three levels of government must work in collaboration with the local not-for-profit and private sectors to find and implement timely and effective solutions. Fortunately, there exist many examples of cross-sectoral collaborations in Vancouver and elsewhere in Canada that are tackling and mitigating problems similar to those which are emerging in Vancouver. The time to take action is now. Otherwise, Vancouver may be at risk of pervasive urban decay and social exclusion in the coming years.
1.0 Introduction

Vancouver is one of Canada’s largest and most influential cities, boasting a spectacular natural landscape, a temperate clime, and a strong economy. Identified as the most livable city in the world in 2005, Vancouver also ranks high with respect to personal safety, health care, arts and culture, education, and infrastructure. Overall, Vancouver is a thriving world-class metropolis, and the envy of many other cities around the world for its beauty, culture of innovation, eco-sensitive practices and policies, and multicultural population. As such, it is the second most popular destination in Canada for new immigrants, particularly those from China and South Asia.

Yet, current and emerging social and economic trends suggest that Vancouver is moving away from, rather than toward, social inclusion and social sustainability. The gap between Vancouver’s rich and poor is growing as evident in the fact that the adult and child poverty levels are among the highest in Canada, and more than half of Vancouver’s neighbourhoods may be defined as “high poverty” or “very high poverty” areas. There is also a troubling correlation between poverty and visible minority or Aboriginal status. Vancouver’s Aboriginal and highly-educated immigrant populations continue to experience labour market exclusion, and Aboriginal peoples continue to suffer the consequences of ongoing overt racism and exclusion on many fronts. Housing costs have spiralled beyond the reach of middle-income individuals and families, non-market housing for Vancouver’s most marginalized residents has been evaporating, and homelessness has more than doubled in recent years. Finally, the “greying” of the population carries with it many implications for the labour force and economy, along with health, social and other services.

The City of Vancouver and some of its community partners, such as the United Way of the Lower Mainland and the Vancouver Foundation, have consistently taken a proactive approach to addressing the problems experienced and barriers encountered by both newcomers and long-time residents. However, in recent years, provincial cost-cutting measures have challenged many of the social programs introduced in the late 1990s. Funding to fight hunger and homelessness, provide children with an equal start in life, and ensure that low-income adults and families have opportunities to better their circumstances has been reduced, and this impact is becoming visible in communities across British Columbia.

With a view to addressing these and other problems, Vancouver City Council adopted principles for environmental, economic, and social sustainability as a basis for city actions and operations in 2002. The object of sustainability planning is to ensure that Vancouver becomes a community that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
“Social sustainability” is described as follows:\(^2\)

For a community to function and be sustainable, the basic needs of its residents must be met. A socially sustainable community must have the ability to maintain and build on its own resources and have the resiliency to prevent and/or address problems in the future. There are two types or levels of resources in the community that are available to build social sustainability (and, indeed, economic and environmental sustainability) – individual or human capacity, and social or community capacity. Individual or human capacity refers to the attributes and resources that individuals can contribute to their own well-being and to the well-being of the community as a whole. Such resources include education, skills, health, values and leadership. Social or community capacity is defined as the relationships, networks and norms that facilitate collective action taken to improve upon quality of life and to ensure that such improvements are sustainable. To be effective and sustainable, both these individual and community resources need to be developed and used within the context of four guiding principles – equity, social inclusion and interaction, security, and adaptability.

According to this description, social sustainability reflects three primary outcomes: residents’ basic needs – including housing, health care, food, jobs, income, and safety – are met; residents develop their personal capacity and fully participate in, contribute to, and benefit from all aspects of community; and communities have the capacity to foster and support social inclusion on all dimensions and the positive development of all residents.

Social sustainability assumes a certain level of equality among all residents, and growth that is compatible with the harmonious evolution of civil society. It implies that diverse groups and cultural practices are integrated in a just and equitable fashion, and this is reflected in all aspects of economic, social, political, and cultural life in the city.\(^3\) These assumptions and implications reflect a social inclusion framework or strategy for change toward fairness and equity for all members of society, in all aspects of life.

As defined by Inclusive Cities Canada,

Social inclusion is the capacity and willingness of our society to keep all groups within reach of what we expect as a society – the social commitment and investments necessary to ensure that all people are close to (within reach of) our common aspirations, common life and its common wealth. An inclusive community is one that provides opportunities for the optimal well-being and healthy development of all children, youth and adults. All members of the community potentially gain from social inclusion – those who are vulnerable for reasons of poverty, racism, or fear of difference – as well as the broader community that benefits when everyone is able to participate as a valued and contributing member.\(^4\)
Clearly, it is beyond the scope and financial capacity of the municipality alone to foster social inclusion and to address the broad range of challenges which threaten Vancouver’s social sustainability. All levels of government, along with the not-for-profit and private sectors, must work both individually and collectively to find and implement timely and effective solutions. Otherwise, Vancouver may be at risk of pervasive urban decay in the coming years. To this end, the City of Vancouver, the Vancouver Foundation, and the United Way of the Lower Mainland have commissioned from Canadian Policy Research Networks a paper that explores the anticipated effects of demographic and social change on social sustainability in Vancouver now, and in the foreseeable future.

Information and data have been gathered from federal, provincial, and municipal governments, along with Canadian policy think-tanks and academic literature. Throughout this report, available data are provided for both the City of Vancouver and the Greater Vancouver Regional District, as social sustainability within the City of Vancouver has implications for the broader communities of Greater Vancouver and vice versa.

The paper begins with an overview of projected key demographic trends for Vancouver and the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) over the next 25 years. The following sections address each of the three components of social sustainability – basic needs, individual capacity, and community capacity – in light of Vancouver’s evolving demography in conjunction with structural changes to the economy and workforce, rising educational requirements, and other social trends. Suggestions are offered for areas in which the City of Vancouver may wish to focus its efforts over the next few years with a view to becoming a more socially sustainable metropolis over time. Finally, case studies exemplifying the ways in which social challenges have been tackled in other cities via cross-sectoral partnerships are provided in Appendix 1.
2.0 Population Growth and Demography

Over the next 25 years, the population of Greater Vancouver\(^5\) is expected to increase by over 700,000 people (32%) to 2.88 million. Within the City of Vancouver, where 27.5% of people in Greater Vancouver reside, the population is forecast to rise to 710,989, an increase of 108,758 people, or 18%, by 2031.\(^6\)

These projected rates of population growth are slightly lower than those experienced over the past 30 years, but represent a challenging number of people to be accommodated and integrated within a fixed geographic space.

Table 1. Population Projections: City of Vancouver, GVRD, and Province of British Columbia\(^7\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2026</th>
<th>2031</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Vancouver</td>
<td>602,231</td>
<td>625,594</td>
<td>648,930</td>
<td>670,801</td>
<td>691,729</td>
<td>710,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GVRD</td>
<td>2,177,215</td>
<td>2,313,025</td>
<td>2,468,646</td>
<td>2,616,766</td>
<td>2,755,034</td>
<td>2,880,518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province of British Columbia</td>
<td>4,284,100</td>
<td>4,539,100</td>
<td>4,823,800</td>
<td>5,093,200</td>
<td>5,337,400</td>
<td>5,552,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the foreseeable future, Vancouver’s size and demographic profile will be most influenced by immigration and population aging, both of which will affect the shape and dimensions of all aspects of life in the city, and generate both challenges and opportunities with respect to social sustainability.

2.1 The “Greying” of the Population

In recent years, British Columbia’s population growth has occurred entirely among people aged 45 years and over. Consistent with trends in Canada and around the world, British Columbia’s population is aging, although seniors tend to be most concentrated in cities other than Vancouver.\(^8\) Despite this, in 25 years, the population of both Greater Vancouver and the City of Vancouver will be dominated by people of middle age and older, with proportionately fewer children and youth.

This trend is already underway. Between 1996 and 2001 in Greater Vancouver, the proportion of seniors increased by 12%, twice the rate of growth of the child and youth population. Overall, the median age (the age at which half the population falls above and half below) in Greater Vancouver increased by 1.9 years to 37.4, slightly below the national average of 37.6 years. Residents of the City of Vancouver were slightly younger, with a median age of 37.2 years, although this represented an increase in age of 1.4 years since 1996. This slightly younger population in the City of Vancouver is attributable to the higher level of immigrants, who tend to be younger, as noted later in this report.
Population aging in Greater Vancouver and Vancouver will skyrocket in the coming years: By 2031, the over-65 age cohort in Greater Vancouver is projected to double, while the number of children and youth is expected to rise by only 10%.

In the City of Vancouver, the 65 and over age cohort is projected to increase by 23% in just 10 years, from 74,439 in 2006 to 91,728. By 2031, the seniors’ population will almost double to 144,101, and seniors will account for over 20% of the total population. However, the number of children and youth will remain essentially unchanged, meaning that the proportion of children and youth in the total population will decline from 15.8% in 2006 to 13.4% in 2031.

Population aging in both Greater Vancouver and the City of Vancouver may be marginally offset by net in-migration, particularly among immigrants to Canada, as discussed below. Immigrants are younger on average than the Canadian-born population, and are often in their child-bearing years when they arrive in this country.

Table 3. Population Projections by Age Group, City of Vancouver, including UEL, 2001-2031

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>0-4</th>
<th>5-12</th>
<th>13-17</th>
<th>18-24</th>
<th>25-44</th>
<th>45-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>26,849</td>
<td>42,000</td>
<td>26,826</td>
<td>53,763</td>
<td>224,729</td>
<td>153,625</td>
<td>74,439</td>
<td>602,231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>26,199</td>
<td>41,491</td>
<td>29,501</td>
<td>52,521</td>
<td>222,239</td>
<td>174,643</td>
<td>79,000</td>
<td>625,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>26,081</td>
<td>40,374</td>
<td>29,345</td>
<td>54,642</td>
<td>219,789</td>
<td>186,971</td>
<td>91,728</td>
<td>648,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>26,217</td>
<td>39,891</td>
<td>28,509</td>
<td>54,601</td>
<td>220,849</td>
<td>192,468</td>
<td>108,266</td>
<td>670,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026</td>
<td>26,282</td>
<td>40,347</td>
<td>27,833</td>
<td>53,756</td>
<td>225,763</td>
<td>191,458</td>
<td>126,290</td>
<td>691,729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2031</td>
<td>26,433</td>
<td>40,841</td>
<td>28,095</td>
<td>52,632</td>
<td>229,350</td>
<td>189,537</td>
<td>144,101</td>
<td>710,989</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 Migrants to Vancouver

Population growth in both Greater Vancouver and the City of Vancouver has been and, in the coming years, will be even more dependent upon net migration (the difference between the number of people coming to the area and the number leaving). This is because the natural increase – the difference between births and deaths – will be slowly eroded by lower birth rates within an aging population.

Between 1994 and 2003, annual net migration to Greater Vancouver ranged from 18,318 in 1997 to 45,864 in 1995, for an average of 20,000 per year over a ten-year period.\(^{\text{12}}\)

Net migration is highly sensitive to a broad range of fluctuating factors, therefore, population forecasts for Vancouver are always somewhat speculative. In Vancouver, international immigration has long been the key population driver. Vancouver is the second most popular destination for immigrants to Canada after Toronto. Between 1991 and 2001, 75% of population growth in the City of Vancouver was attributable to immigrants. However, both the number of newcomers and their destination within Canada vary with national and, now, provincial policies, along with economic and other conditions in both home and host countries.\(^{\text{13}}\) That being said, it is expected that approximately 18% of immigrants to Canada will continue to settle in Greater Vancouver.\(^{\text{14}}\)

Table 4. Immigrants to the City of Vancouver and the Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA) of Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Canadian Born</th>
<th>Canadian Born (Proportion)</th>
<th>Foreign Born</th>
<th>Foreign Born (Proportion)</th>
<th>Non-Permanent Residents</th>
<th>Non-Permanent Residents (Proportion)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver (City)</td>
<td>539,625</td>
<td>279,510</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>247,635</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>12,480</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver (CMA)</td>
<td>1,967,475</td>
<td>1,199,760</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>738,555</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>29,165</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montreal (CMA)</td>
<td>3,380,640</td>
<td>2,724,205</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>621,890</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>34,550</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto (CMA)</td>
<td>4,647,960</td>
<td>2,556,860</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>2,032,960</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>58,135</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2001, immigrants accounted for 37% of Greater Vancouver residents,\(^{\text{15}}\) and 46% of people living in the City of Vancouver. The City of Vancouver is unique in Canada in its focused immigration. Fifty-six percent of all recent immigrants (those who arrived in the preceding five years) in 2001 were from East Asia, and 67% of all recent immigrants came from just five source countries: China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India and the Philippines.\(^{\text{16}}\) This diversity is also reflected in the variety of languages spoken in the City of Vancouver: after English (the mother tongue identified by 49% of the population), Chinese languages are the most common (27%), followed by Punjabi (2.7%), Tagalog (2.4%), Vietnamese (2.2%), French (1.7%), and Spanish (1.5%).\(^{\text{17}}\)
Table 5. Immigrants in the City of Vancouver, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>All Immigrants</th>
<th>Recent Immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People's Republic of China</td>
<td>58,445</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>35,095</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>18,080</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>12,980</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>12,345</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>13,830</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>96,865</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>247,640</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Visible Minority Populations for the City of Vancouver, the Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA) of Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visible Minority Status</th>
<th>Vancouver (City) Population</th>
<th>Vancouver (City) Proportion</th>
<th>Vancouver (CMA) Population</th>
<th>Vancouver (CMA) Proportion</th>
<th>Montreal (CMA) Population</th>
<th>Montreal (CMA) Proportion</th>
<th>Toronto (CMA) Population</th>
<th>Toronto (CMA) Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>539,630</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1,967,480</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>3,380,645</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>4,647,955</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible Minority Population</td>
<td>264,495</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
<td>725,655</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>458,330</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>1,712,530</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>161,110</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>342,665</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>52,110</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>409,535</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian</td>
<td>30,655</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>164,365</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>57,935</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>473,810</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4,780</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>18,405</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>139,305</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>310,500</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>22,085</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>57,025</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>17,890</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>133,675</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin American</td>
<td>6,490</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>18,715</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>53,155</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>75,915</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asian</td>
<td>14,670</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>28,460</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>39,570</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>53,565</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>1,465</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>5,905</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>67,830</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>42,830</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Asian</td>
<td>3,160</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>21,435</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>11,580</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>52,980</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>6,130</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>28,850</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>3,760</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>42,620</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>8,280</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>24,025</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>2,295</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>17,420</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible Minority</td>
<td>1,115</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>3,320</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>6,785</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>66,455</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Visible Minorities</td>
<td>4,550</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>12,490</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>6,115</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>33,240</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Others</td>
<td>275,130</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td>1,241,820</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
<td>2,922,315</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
<td>2,935,425</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Greater Vancouver’s residents also include about 3,000 of Canada’s non-permanent residents; persons from other countries who hold a student authorization, a minister’s permit, a temporary work permit, or who are refugee claimants. In 2001, about 70% of non-permanent residents were from Asian countries, primarily China, Hong Kong, Korea, and the Philippines. Most of the people from Korea were students; a majority of those from the Philippines were temporary workers under the Live-In Care Giver Program. Figures specific to the City of Vancouver are not available.

Both Greater Vancouver and the City of Vancouver boast high numbers of residents who are members of visible minority groups, and this is expected to increase over time. In Greater Vancouver, the proportion of the population comprised of visible minorities is expected to rise from 36% in 2001 to between 47% and 53% (1.1 to 1.5 million people) by 2017 (the latest year for which projections are available). The visible minority population is largely comprised of immigrants, and immigrants are younger on average than the Canadian-born population. Therefore, it is expected that people who do not belong to a visible minority group will remain in the majority in the over-50 age cohort, while visible minority persons will be more numerous in the under-50 age groups. The ethnocultural breakdown is not expected to change significantly from 2001.

The City of Vancouver’s visible minority population already comprised 49% of the total population in 2001. Ethnocultural forecasts for the city itself are not available but, because the city attracts a high proportion of the immigrants who settle in Greater Vancouver, this percentage is sure to rise over time, likely at a steeper rate than in the region as a whole.

2.3 Religious Affiliation

Consistent with projected immigration and demographic patterns, it is expected that more British Columbia residents will be affiliated with non-Christian religions in 2017. In 2001, 36% of all residents had a religious affiliation, up from 31% 10 years earlier, largely because immigrants are more likely than people born in Canada to have a religious affiliation. Between 1991 and 2001, Protestant religions experienced a 10.8% decline in affiliation; religions showing increased affiliation included Buddhist (+134.8%), Muslim (+125.5%), Sikh (+81.5%) and Hindu (+73.6%), such that, by 2001, 14% of the population were affiliated with non-Christian religions. As shown in the following table, this percentage is expected to increase to 18% by 2017 in concert with ongoing immigration. Figures on religious affiliation specific to Greater Vancouver and the City of Vancouver are not available, however, it may be expected that more than 18% of residents will be affiliated with non-Christian religions, given the higher proportions of East and South Asian residents relative to the rest of the province.
Table 7. Population (in Thousands) by Ethnocultural Population Characteristics, British Columbia 2001 and 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visible Minorities</th>
<th>Immigrants</th>
<th>Allophones</th>
<th>Non-Christian Religions</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>740.7</td>
<td>1,261.4</td>
<td>772.3</td>
<td>1,139.1</td>
<td>736.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 Changing Family Structure

The number of households in Vancouver is expected to rise significantly over time due to increases in population size in conjunction with an increase in the number of seniors living alone and changes in family composition. The proportion of Vancouverites who are single and have never been married may continue to grow, as it has over the past 20 years. In 1981, 33% of Vancouver had never been married; by 2001, this had risen to 43%. Likewise, the percentage of lone-parent families, most of them headed by women, rose from 14% to 17% between 1981 and 2001 and, consistent with national trends, this may continue to increase over time.

Long-term projections about family structure are complicated by shifting definitions of family and by immigration trends. Family structure will be shaped by increasing (or, at least, more visible) numbers of same-sex families, with and without children. In 2001, Greater Vancouver had the highest percentage of self-identified same-sex couples in Canada. Divorce rates are lower in most immigrant population groups, and immigrant families have been more likely to include members of extended family, such as grandparents. The size of recent immigrant families appears to have declined over the past decade, and it is difficult to be certain about future trends in the sponsorship of parents and grandparents, which is highly dependent on country of origin and immigration policy.

Projected increases in the number of lone-parent families headed by women have broad implications. Changes in family structure may affect labour standards, pensions, taxation, child care benefits, and services to children. Children living with single parents are often at a higher risk of poverty. Both poverty and lone-parenting, individually and in combination, increase the risk of health and developmental problems for young people, particularly in early childhood. High numbers of low-income families may increase demand for social housing which, if unmet, may contribute to other health and developmental challenges and to homelessness among families with young children. In addition, lone-parent families are often socially isolated and seldom participate in virtually all forms of civic engagement, from club membership to political interest. Work outside the home can improve this situation, however, mothers with children under the age of 16 who are parenting alone are far less likely to be employed than mothers in two-parent families.
3.0 Changing Demography and Social Sustainability

As defined by the City of Vancouver, social sustainability requires that three conditions are satisfied: the basic needs of residents are met, individuals develop high levels of personal capacity and capital, and communities have the capacity to foster and support social inclusion on all dimensions. Each component is explored in turn.

3.1 Basic Needs

In a socially sustainable city, the basic needs of children, families, and adults, regardless of their diverse backgrounds, are met. Residents can obtain and maintain jobs that enable them to be productive and utilize their skills and abilities, they have sufficient income to financially support themselves and their families, they live in adequate, appropriate, and affordable housing, and they enjoy high levels of personal safety and security.

3.1.1 Income Security

Greater Vancouver’s economy has been robust in recent years, particularly in 2005 and 2006, largely attributable to growth in residential and non-residential construction, along with business and industry starts, retail sales, tourism, and transportation. The majority of the current construction boom has been spurred by the approach of the 2010 Winter Olympics that will be hosted by Vancouver and surrounding municipalities. Over time, Vancouver’s economic drivers are expected to continue to expand beyond resource-based industries to include technology, film production and tourism. It is anticipated that the City of Vancouver will receive the majority of the economic growth in these new sectors.

Continued economic stability in Greater Vancouver and the City of Vancouver will hinge in part on the development of new revenue-sharing strategies with the federal and provincial governments. However, in Vancouver, the ways in which all levels of government choose to anticipate and respond to the effects of demographic change on the labour force will influence the depth of income disparity and the degree of social exclusion experienced by residents.

Labour Market

As of February 2006, Greater Vancouver boasted a labour force participation rate of 65.9% and an unemployment rate of 4.8% (the lowest unemployment rate in three decades). Continuing economic growth in conjunction with an aging population is expected to contribute to labour shortages in the coming years, particularly after 2011 when the first of the baby boomers reaches retirement age. By this year, for the first time, more people will be leaving the BC workforce than entering it. In addition, investment associated with the 2010 Olympics is expected to continue to boost job growth and further tighten the labour market over the next few years.

It is often suggested that labour shortages may offer some benefits to low-income workers, as employers may be compelled to raise wages, offer benefits, and provide better working conditions in order to attract and retain workers. However, the disadvantages may outweigh such benefits in the longer-term due to negative impacts on productivity and an outflow of capital and jobs to countries with both workers and lower labour costs.
Moreover, labour shortages must be considered in the context of structural changes to British Columbia’s economy. As summarized by Skills Canada, technological trends in production are creating an increasing demand for workers with the skills and competencies to use that technology. This is shifting the skills requirements for all jobs upwards: a growing proportion of jobs will require some training beyond high school.\textsuperscript{35} Statistics Canada reports that over 40% of the labour force growth in Greater Vancouver over the past decade occurred in highly-skilled occupations that normally require a university education. Information technology occupations alone accounted for 14% of the overall labour force growth. Low-skill occupations, particularly jobs in customer service, general office work, and administration, accounted for only 28% of Vancouver’s labour force increase.\textsuperscript{36}

All of this points to a growing schism between high-skill, well-paid jobs and low-skill, poorly-paid jobs: Even in a tight labour market, “[e]mployees with the highest levels of skills and education will be most in demand to fill jobs requiring specific skills. As a result, their wages and compensation will increase. Those with lower skills and less education will not see a resulting increase in incomes and will have less purchasing power...”\textsuperscript{37} At the same time, the number and proportion of “precarious jobs” (those featuring low pay, health risks, lack of job security, lack of employment standard coverage, few employment benefits, and lack of access to learning opportunities) are likely to continue to rise throughout the country.\textsuperscript{38} Almost one in 10 workers in Greater Vancouver already lives in poverty – the highest incidence of working poor of any major city in Canada – and this is likely to continue.\textsuperscript{39} Together, economic and labour market trends mean that unskilled and low-skilled Vancouverites may have a better chance of obtaining work, but the quality of and pay for that work is likely to be poor relative to the cost of living and to the wages of highly-skilled workers.

Vancouver’s social sustainability requires that all workers, including immigrants, Aboriginal peoples, women, youth, older workers, and persons with disabilities, have the opportunity to participate in the labour force. Yet, each of these groups and, particularly, Aboriginal and immigrant workers, continues to experience labour market exclusion in Vancouver.

**Aboriginal Employment**

The employment rate among Aboriginal workers aged 25 to 54 years in Greater Vancouver has not improved in 20 years: in 2001, the rate was 61.8% (0.2% higher than in 1981), compared to 78.2% among non-Aboriginal workers. This difference is partially due to differences in post-secondary education levels: Aboriginal young people with university degrees were employed at the same rate as their non-Aboriginal counterparts, although this was not true for Aboriginal people with other forms of post-secondary education in Greater Vancouver.\textsuperscript{40} Among full-time, full-year Aboriginal workers of all ages and education levels, average annual earnings were only $34,696, compared to the earnings of non-Aboriginals at $44,552.\textsuperscript{41} Overall, median employment income for Aboriginal people in Greater Vancouver was $20,038, compared to $27,836 for non-Aboriginal people.\textsuperscript{42}
Immigrant Employment

The situation is only marginally better for immigrants, especially recent immigrants. Immigrants and, particularly, immigrant women in Greater Vancouver continue to experience higher unemployment rates and lower wages, and employment in low-skilled occupations, than people born in Canada. In 2001, full-time, full-year recent immigrant men aged 25 to 54 earned an average of $39,460, compared to the $57,712 earned by their Canadian-born counterparts; recent immigrant women meeting these characteristics earned $29,098, compared to the $42,181 earned by their Canadian-born counterparts. These earnings gaps were among the largest among major Canadian Metropolitan Areas, and much higher than in Victoria, BC where, at least for men, there were no differences between the earnings of recent immigrants and Canadian-born workers with these age and employment characteristics.

Until the 1990s, new immigrants have earned less than the average native-born Canadian upon arrival, but their earnings have caught up to or surpassed the Canadian average after 10 to 14 years and, among immigrants selected on the basis of education and skills, as soon as one year after arrival. Over the past decade, however, employment rates among recent immigrants have declined markedly and earnings have been significantly lower than native-born residents and previous cohorts of immigrants, despite the fact that most of these people are better educated than previous cohorts. In Greater Vancouver, recent immigrants with a university degree were much more likely to be working in a low-skill occupation than their Canadian-born counterparts: 31% of recent immigrants with a degree were employed in low-skill jobs compared with 13% of Canadian-born graduates. This is all the more remarkable given that Greater Vancouver attracts more economic class immigrants (67%), who are expected to have the skills, education, work experience, language ability and other qualities needed to participate in the Canadian labour market, than any other city in Canada.

Some of the decline in earnings among immigrants is related to shifts in English language skills and source regions, but much of it stems from a number of workforce barriers, including difficulties in gaining recognition of foreign credentials; lack of information for newcomers about how to access a profession or trade; lack of access to adequate, occupation-specific educational/training upgrading, language training and testing; lack of uniformity of standards in regulated occupations across provinces and territories; lack of Canadian experience making it difficult to access employment; the piecemeal nature of interventions by nongovernmental organizations in their support to foreign-trained immigrants; and discrimination.

Labour shortages do offer great promise for the economic integration of population groups who have traditionally been marginalized in the labour market. As the labour market continues to tighten, employers will be increasingly compelled to recognize foreign skills, pay skilled immigrant workers competitive wages, and overcome personal biases they may hold about cultural and ethnic differences. Moreover, Vancouver’s ability to continue to attract and retain both immigrant and Canadian-born workers from elsewhere in Canada will be increasingly challenged by local living and working conditions. Over the next 30 years, the proportion of the population over the age of 60 will double in all OECD countries. All of these countries will be seeking to maintain their labour forces, escalating the war for global talent. In a world economy that affords talented workers the option to move to desirable jobs all over the globe, Vancouver will be stretched to entice foreign workers if they are unable to secure jobs that recognize, match, and reward their qualifications.
**Income**

The benefits of economic growth in Vancouver have not been shared by all citizens. Rises in income have been increasingly concentrated among the wealthiest echelons of Vancouverites, escalating the disparity of incomes between rich and poor. Between 1991 and 2001, only the wealthiest 5% of families enjoyed any increase in real income; the remaining 95% experienced a decrease, and over half of individuals and families experienced a decrease of at least 20%. In addition, the income gap for families grew from 7.8 to 12.8, an increase more than double that in Canada as a whole (see Figures 1 and 2). The richest 10% of families had incomes of $127,000 compared to $9,900 for the poorest 10% of families. Among unattached individuals, the income gap grew by 100% over the 10-year period, as compared with an average of 33% among other large cities.

**Figure 1. Family Income Gap**

![Family Income Gap](image1)

**Figure 2. Changes in Family Income (1991-2001)**

![Changes in Family Income](image2)
Using data from the Urban Poverty Project, obtained from the Canadian Council on Social Development, GVRD Policy and Planning\textsuperscript{54} reports that 20.8\% of people in Greater Vancouver and 27.0\% of people in the City of Vancouver lived in poverty\textsuperscript{55} in 2001 (Table 8). Using data from the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID), Statistics Canada reports a somewhat lower poverty rate of 16.3\% in Greater Vancouver in 2001 (Table 9).\textsuperscript{56} Figures for the City of Vancouver are not yet available. Differences between the data reported by the two sources are likely attributable to different methods of calculating low income.\textsuperscript{57}

The data provided in Table 9 clearly show that, while the overall poverty rate in Greater Vancouver remained relatively stable over the five-year period between 2000 and 2004, and the adult poverty rate declined, Greater Vancouver’s child poverty rate increased by six percentage points, from 16.2\% in 2000 to 22.2\% in 2004. In addition, while 2004 data specific to the City of Vancouver are not available, it is clear that poverty rates in Vancouver have followed the same pattern as in Greater Vancouver, but they have consistently been much higher for all age groups than in Greater Vancouver. It is not unreasonable to infer from these data and patterns that poverty rates and, particularly, child poverty rates, in Vancouver remain among the highest in Canada.

Table 8. Percentage of Persons “Living In or Near Poverty,” GVRD and City of Vancouver, 2001\textsuperscript{58}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Persons</th>
<th>0-14</th>
<th>&gt;=65</th>
<th>Immigrants</th>
<th>Recent Immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater Vancouver</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver/UEL</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Percentage of Persons in Low Income after Tax, 1992 Base, British Columbia and Greater Vancouver (GVRD)\textsuperscript{59}

| Persons in Low Income | British Columbia | GVRD |  |  |  |
|-----------------------|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|                       | All Persons      | < 18 years | 18-64 years | 65+ years | All Persons | < 18 years | 18-64 years | 65+ years |
| 1999                  | 16.4\%           | 17.4\% | 17.2\% | 10.2\% | 19.9\% | 19.6\% | 20.6\% | 17.0\% |
| 2000                  | 15.1\%           | 14.1\% | 16.5\% | 9.6\%  | 17.8\% | 16.2\% | 18.7\% | 15.7\% |
| 2001                  | 14.1\%           | 14.0\% | 15.1\% | 9.1\%  | 16.3\% | 13.8\% | 17.1\% | 15.8\% |
| 2002                  | 16.0\%           | 18.3\% | 16.1\% | 11.7\% | 18.9\% | 21.8\% | 17.7\% | 21.0\% |
| 2003                  | 15.3\%           | 18.7\% | 15.2\% | 10.4\% | 16.5\% | 20.2\% | 15.3\% | 16.9\% |
| 2004\textsuperscript{60} | 14.2\%           | 18.1\% | 14.3\% | 8.0\%  | 17.0\% | 22.2\% | 15.9\% | 13.8\% |
Welfare rates in British Columbia peaked in 1994, prior to the introduction of the National Child Benefit Supplement. A couple with two children would have received $18,584 in 1994 (in 2004 dollars) compared to about $12,000 in basic assistance received in 2004. Since that time, the number of welfare recipients in British Columbia has declined from 218,900 in 1995 to 104,334 in 2005. The most precipitous decline occurred between 2001 and 2003, when caseloads decreased by 40%.

Table 10. Number of Welfare and Disability Assistance Recipients, British Columbia, 1995-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Temporary Assistance</th>
<th></th>
<th>Disability Assistance</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>CIHR</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected to Work</td>
<td>Expected to Work with Medical Condition</td>
<td>Temporarily Excused</td>
<td>Persistent Multiple Barriers</td>
<td>Sub-Total</td>
<td>Persons with Disabilities</td>
<td>Sub-Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Average</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>174,937</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17,756</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>192,693</td>
<td>22,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>121,822</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30,204</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>152,026</td>
<td>27,814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>98,643</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25,983</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>124,626</td>
<td>33,888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>85,864</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22,991</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>108,855</td>
<td>42,996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>36,671</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19,695</td>
<td>8,440</td>
<td>64,805</td>
<td>48,879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>19,345</td>
<td>6,874</td>
<td>7,190</td>
<td>9,780</td>
<td>43,190</td>
<td>56,616</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2002, as part of its platform of fiscal restraint and deficit reduction, the Government of British Columbia introduced significant changes to policies and legislation governing income support programs. Eligibility requirements were tightened: new welfare applicants are now required to demonstrate two consecutive years of financial independence before they are eligible to apply for benefits and would-be applicants must wait a minimum of three weeks after enquiring about benefits before they are allowed to submit an application, during which time they are supposed to be seeking work. The duration of benefits was reduced: For “employable” individuals, support is now limited to two years during any five-year period; for recipients with children, benefits are reduced after two years. Finally, earnings exemptions (considered by most analysts to be critical to moving off welfare) and child support exemptions were eliminated, and the asset limit was reduced. Complaints about unfairness in the application of the new policies were endorsed in March 2006 by an Ombudsman’s investigation. In response to the Ombudsman’s findings, the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance is making changes to staff training and orientation, along with modifications to legislation, policies and practices, and the information provided to the public. However, the changes appear to centre on proper enforcement of the rules; no changes to benefit levels or eligibility rules are expected.
Along with the above changes, in 2002, the BC government discontinued an initiative that allowed welfare recipients to upgrade their formal educational qualifications while continuing to receive benefits. This initiative eliminated tuition for recipients and provided targeted funding for post-secondary institutions to set up services specifically for students on income assistance. As noted by Butterwisk and White, “[s]ince 2002, the emphasis for income assistance recipients has shifted to short-term job search and job placement programs, with funding linked to performance targets. These programs have proved to be costly, and largely ineffective for helping [income assistance] recipients with multiple barriers to employment. Indeed, post-2002 training and job placement programs have focused on people who have been receiving income assistance for only a short time and who have few barriers to employment, while longer-term recipients with more barriers to employment (the very people on whom the previous programs were focused) have been left with few training options.”

Distinct from policy and program changes directly affecting welfare recipients but highly relevant to low- and middle-income families, the province also introduced cutbacks to the child care subsidy program. These changes have made it increasingly difficult for over 10,000 families to access regulated child care as the maximum allowable family income eligible for the child care subsidy was reduced. For example, in 2003 a single mother with one child in regulated child care and a gross annual income of $24,300 was eligible for a subsidy of $1,874 towards annual child care costs. This amount is $1,534 less than the old annual subsidy of $3,408.

Ongoing restrictions in welfare support and elimination of education support and, arguably, cutbacks to child care subsidies, have contributed to escalating hardship among Vancouver’s low-income population, as evidenced by increased food insecurity and homelessness. The Dieticians of Canada report that the average monthly cost to feed a family of four (two parents, two children) in British Columbia in 2005 was $654. Rents average nearly $1,500 per month for a three-bedroom unit in Vancouver. Social assistance benefits for this family size are $991 per month, with $555 the maximum permissible for rent. The situation is even bleaker for single-parent families and individuals living alone. As a result, families on welfare are three times more likely to report food insecurity. In fact, 54% of BC food bank users are on income assistance. In addition, food bank usage is growing: In 2004, 42% more children and 16% more people in total relied on food banks than in 2003.

As discussed further in the following section, welfare cutbacks also appear to be a key factor driving up the number of homeless people in Greater Vancouver and the City of Vancouver.

The evidence presented of increasing marginalization and social exclusion among particular demographic groups over time poses real threats to Vancouver’s social sustainability. “Social exclusion” is defined in many ways but, in general, it refers to social disaffiliation, deprivation of financial resources, and limited access to basic social goods and services. It is both an outcome and a process. At risk of oversimplification, social exclusion is manifested by poverty, a low sense of community, lack of employment, low levels of education, and high crime rates. It is fuelled by inadequate income support, lack of affordable housing and public services, lack of access to education and training, lack of access to health and social services, direct and systemic discrimination, negative public attitudes, lack of effective legislation, dysfunctional families, low personal and positive social capital, and community breakdown and underdeveloped community capacity.
In other words, social exclusion intersects, but is not synonymous, with poverty. Those who are poor are often involuntarily excluded from participation in society, but there are other reasons, such as racism, heterosexism, and other forms of discrimination, for which people may be excluded. However, as pointed out in a recent publication of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), adequate income for individuals, families and, ultimately, communities is essential “not just for securing food, clothing and shelter, but because it contributes to their health and security, forming a stable base from which they can participate in their community.” The FCM report describes the connections between the “income gap” and the “accessibility gap” – which includes access issues like “user fees, transportation costs and eligibility requirements” – that directly prevent individuals and families with low incomes from participating in community life.  

Many of the causes and consequences of social exclusion are on the rise in Vancouver, and problems may escalate in relation to interrelated social and demographic changes, as discussed throughout the document. As noted by Bradford, a city may prominently feature both economic prosperity and social exclusion, a pattern which appears to be emerging in Vancouver. Failure to ensure that Vancouver is and remains an inclusive city may further jeopardize the well-being of individuals and broader communities.

### 3.1.2 Housing and Homelessness

#### Housing

Over the next 25 years, Vancouver will be progressively more pressured by population growth and demographic change to address affordable and non-market housing shortages. Affordable housing shortages are reaching crisis proportions, and this is expected to continue indefinitely. In 2001, the incidence of core housing need was high at 22% in Vancouver and 15% in Greater Vancouver. In the City of Vancouver, renters (31%) were more likely to be in core housing need than owners (10%). As in other Canadian cities, core housing need was most prevalent among Aboriginal, immigrant, and lone-parent households headed by women, and among people who live alone, particularly seniors. The main issue is affordability. Housing demand has risen while supply has tightened, leading to escalating housing prices and rents. In 2001, Vancouver had the highest proportion of households of any metropolitan area in Canada that pay 30% or more of their income on shelter, and has recently been identified as having one of the least affordable housing markets in the western world.

As part of its bid to secure the 2010 Olympic Games, the City of Vancouver committed to the concept of designing the first “socially sustainable” Games. Recognizing that safe, secure, and affordable housing is a necessary condition for social inclusion, in 2003 the city adopted or re-endorsed plans to maintain the city’s stock of low-income housing, encourage the development of affordable housing among all residential neighbourhoods, and take action on homelessness. Among other measures, this included re-activation of the Downtown Eastside housing plan to maintain and upgrade housing for existing residents in the Downtown Eastside, improve existing single room occupancy units (SROs), and build replacement low-income housing. It also included the comprehensive Southeast False Creek project, which begins with construction of the 600-unit Vancouver Olympic Village by 2009, most of which will be converted to social and affordable housing, and concludes with six million square feet of development providing housing for 12,000 to 16,000 new residents by 2018. It had been conceived that the community will
include 26 acres of park, a community centre and non-motorized boating facility, an elementary school, three child care facilities, an interfaith spiritual centre, and a housing mix with 33% affordable housing, up to 33% modest market housing, and the balance in market housing.\textsuperscript{82} However, the affordable housing target has since been reduced to 20%, and developers will only be encouraged, rather than required, to provide modest market housing in the first phase.\textsuperscript{83}

The Downtown Eastside housing plan and Southeast False Creek Project, along with several other ambitious social and affordable housing initiatives, will help to contain growing housing problems, but it is unlikely to eliminate them over the longer term. Given the expected increases in income disparity and poverty among a significant proportion of Vancouver residents, affordable housing will be an increasing problem.

The social and health consequences of affordable housing shortages can be broad and destructive for individuals and families. Low-income families are forced to allocate money that would otherwise be spent on food, clothing, recreation, and other essentials toward rent payments that exceed their means. Their housing situations are often unstable, requiring them to make frequent residential moves which can uproot children from their schools and communities and compound other family stressors. Moreover, low-cost housing is often of poor quality and can expose children to a number of health risks. These include the risks associated with contaminants such as mould, lead, asbestos, and other toxic chemicals, which are often present in older housing, furnishing and carpets. In addition, there is an association between accidents and a greater number of hazards present in substandard housing. Faulty heating systems, unprotected radiators and pipes, and floor furnaces, for example, have been associated with carbon monoxide poisoning, burns, and house fires.\textsuperscript{84}

\textbf{Homelessness}

The most extreme consequence of affordable housing shortages is homelessness, which is, of course, associated with a broad range of individual and social ills. Vancouver’s 2005 count of homeless persons revealed that homelessness in Greater Vancouver had almost doubled in three years, from 1,121 persons in 2002 to 2,174 in 2005. Within the City of Vancouver, the homeless population escalated from 628 persons in 2002 to 1,291 in 2005, an increase of 106%.\textsuperscript{85} Thirty-five percent of those enumerated reported that they had been homeless for more than one year, and some for many years with 24% responding that they had been homeless for less than one month. Seventy-four percent of those counted reported having one or more health conditions (i.e. addiction, medical condition, mental illness, or physical disability), with the street homeless identifying more health concerns than the sheltered homeless. The most common health concern was addiction as reported by 53% of the street homeless and 43% of the sheltered homeless.\textsuperscript{86}

It is widely agreed that Vancouver’s homeless problem has been escalated by shortages of appropriate, adequate and affordable housing and de-institutionalization of persons with mental illness without corresponding increases in community supports and supported housing.\textsuperscript{87} But cutbacks to social assistance and other supports have also played a significant role. In 2004, only 20% of the street homeless were receiving welfare,\textsuperscript{88} as compared with 85% in 2001.\textsuperscript{89} Overall, only 45% of Greater Vancouver’s homeless population had a steady income source such as income assistance, pension or disability benefits.
Affordable housing shortages and the prevalence of low income among Vancouver’s residents are also placing vast numbers of people at risk of homelessness. An additional 125,000 people (56,000 households) in Greater Vancouver and 40,000 people (20,500 households) in the City of Vancouver were identified as being at risk of homelessness in 2001 because they were living in places that were not safe, secure, or affordable (paying over 50% of their gross income on housing). This amounted to 8% of the city’s population, and the percentage has almost certainly increased over the past five years.

The City of Vancouver’s 2005 Homeless Action Plan calls for more affordable housing to prevent vulnerable individuals and families from descending into homelessness. The report outlines a range of policy interventions to increase disposable income, such as increases to the minimum wage, living wage initiatives, and changes to the tax structure. For those who are already homeless, the Plan identifies the need for affordable housing, social housing, supportive housing, and transitional housing, along with improved shelter facilities to reduce turn-aways, as vital to addressing the homeless problem. Also required are improved income and social support, detoxification facilities and addiction services, health and dental services, and extensive services for persons with mental illness or a combination of mental illness and addictions. It is recognized, however, that housing and homelessness are primarily provincial responsibilities.

Actions to provide adequate, appropriate, and affordable housing and to combat homelessness are critical to Vancouver’s social sustainability. Without a home, it is virtually impossible to maintain good physical and mental health, enjoy family life, or be involved in community. Additional policy and programming initiatives on several dimensions, including meaningful improvements to British Columbia’s welfare system, will be required to avert growing social exclusion in the city and in the region.

### 3.1.3 Safety and Security

It is projected that, as the population ages, more money will be spent on safety via, for example, gated communities and law enforcement, although crime rates are projected to fall. Seniors tend to be more security conscious than other population groups and, in conjunction with the widely-held perception that crime rates are rising, concerns about personal security will likely become more prevalent. In fact, overall crime rates in Canada peaked in 1992 and have been declining ever since.

Recent crime statistics for Greater Vancouver and the City of Vancouver are generally consistent with these trends: in the City of Vancouver, the crime rate (number of Criminal Code offences per 1,000 population) declined from 2.0 in 1992 to 1.3 in 2004. Crimes against persons are much higher in Strathcona and Downtown than elsewhere in the city.

In Greater Vancouver, the rate for serious violent crime averaged 3.4 between 2002 and 2004, a decline of 3.7% over the preceding three-year period. The serious property crime rate declined by 9% between the two periods, for a total decline of 8% in the overall serious crime rate. Averaged between 2002 and 2004, the serious violent crime rate among young offenders was 2.8, and serious property crime rate was 1.1.
The two most important factors affecting crime rates are the size of the male population between 15 and 25 years of age and, to a lesser extent, the economy. In Canada in 2004, for example, persons aged 15 to 24 represented 14% of the Canadian population while accounting for 32% of those accused of property crimes and 42% of those accused of violent crimes. Also, a few young people account for most of the crimes committed by young offenders (aged 12 to 17).

Based on age projections alone, the overall recorded crime rate in Canada is forecast to fall to 85% of its 1999 level by 2026 and to 81% by 2041. The risk of criminal victimization is forecast to follow a very similar trajectory. Recorded rates of crimes that are characteristic of teenagers and young adults such as robbery and break and enter, should fall slightly faster and farther; whereas crimes that are more characteristic of older adults, such as sexual assault and impaired driving, should be affected less by the aging of the population.

Age-based forecasts are complicated by the other factors associated with crime. Some predict the emergence of a new breed of young offender: technologically-astute youth who use their knowledge to hack into computer networks and so forth. But it is generally agreed that the more familiar type of young offender will continue to be responsible for traditional youth crimes. Like current young offenders, “[t]hey will largely be of lower socio-economic status, the product of dysfunctional environments, with learning disabilities and a history of criminal involvement.”

Some predict that advancing technology and the new knowledge-based economy may disproportionately affect less skilled, lower socio-economic groups, creating feelings of exclusion, resulting in an increase in crime among disenfranchised populations.

Should factors contributing to social exclusion rates among Vancouver’s children and youth continue along their current trajectory, it is possible that crime rates in the city could rise marginally over time. Some of today’s children who are growing up in poverty, who live in unstable families or in abusive situations, whose parents have addictions or are themselves criminally involved, and who achieve low levels of education are likely to come in conflict with the law in their teens or in early adulthood.

In the coming years, police may be called upon to deal with a more socially-stratified population. On the one hand, the public’s expectations of the police in controlling not only crime but social disorder, will likely rise. Vancouver has already witnessed decreases in public tolerance of loitering, panhandling, and squeegee people, as evidenced by survey findings. Vancouver’s street and traffic by-law prohibiting “obstructive solicitation,” and the provincial Safe Streets Act and Trespass Amendment Act. The police may be increasingly challenged to both meet the expectations of the general public and deal respectfully with marginalized people.

In addition, the police will need to continue to take meaningful steps to be representative of the ethnoculturally diverse people they serve, or risk fuelling a sense of alienation and antagonism between the police and members of visible minority groups. Such problems have developed in Montreal and Toronto, and it is not inconceivable that they could emerge in Vancouver as well.
3.2 Individual Capacity

In a socially sustainable city, individuals develop their personal capacity and capital through education, access to health care and social services, and the opportunity to fully participate in, contribute to, and benefit from all aspects of community.

3.2.1 Education

Post-Secondary Education

The populations of Greater Vancouver and the City of Vancouver are among the most highly-educated in Canada. This is partially due to the in-migration of skilled workers from other provinces and countries, but it is also attributable to high school graduation rates (80% in the City of Vancouver in 2004-05) and to high rates of post-secondary completion among residents that exceed those of many other Canadian cities. In the City of Vancouver, 72% of high school graduates transitioned to a BC post-secondary institution (33% to universities, 39% to colleges) in 2002-03, compared to 52% in British Columbia. In 2001, 30% of the City of Vancouver’s population had a university degree, compared to 22.5% in Greater Vancouver and 17.6% in British Columbia as a whole.

It is expected that, from now until 2015, 44% of jobs in British Columbia will require a certificate or diploma, and 29% will require a university degree. These requirements may be higher within the City of Vancouver where, as noted earlier, job growth will be high in the technological sectors. The demand for highly educated workers in particular will likely continue beyond 2015, because the age cohort moving to retirement after this time is more educated than previous cohorts of retirees. One implication of these combined demographic and education changes is that post-secondary education participation of younger persons will need to continue to rise, both to continue to meet the demands of an evolving knowledge-based economy, and also to replace a large and educated group of retiring workers.

Literacy

In 2001, there were still 40,245 people (9% of the population) over the age of 20 years in the City of Vancouver with less than a grade 9 education, which has been traditionally seen as the level of education needed to acquire functional literacy. In addition, the 2003 International Adult Literacy Survey found that 40% of adult British Columbians do not have the minimum levels of literacy required to fully participate in today’s economy. Literacy and a high school diploma are minimal educational requirements for access to the labour market, and even those young people with a diploma and no post-secondary education face a difficult transition from school to work.

High School Completion and the Pursuit of Post-Secondary Studies

Not surprisingly, socio-economic factors have a strong influence on whether students finish high school. As revealed by the national Youth in Transition Survey, dropouts are about twice as likely to be from a single-parent family as graduates, while graduates are twice as likely as drop-
outs to have a parent with some post-secondary education. Parents of high school graduates are more likely to have occupations requiring more formal education and providing greater economic rewards. Fathers of dropouts are most likely to be trades, transport and equipment operators. Dropouts are three times as likely as graduates to be married or living with a partner, and seven times as likely to have dependent children.111

Clearly, comprehensive efforts are required to encourage lower-income youth to pursue some form of post-secondary education or training, or they will be at high risk of social exclusion in their adult years. The provincial government intends to create 25,000 new post-secondary seats by 2010.112 However, escalating tuition fees in British Columbia may be prohibitive for growing numbers of students, particularly those who may need the most encouragement to continue their education. In 2005-06, British Columbia’s average undergraduate tuition stood at $4,874, an increase of 89.8% from 1999-00.113 Statistics Canada has demonstrated that family income is a major determinant of participation in university education. In 2001, about 40% of 18 to 21-year-olds from the highest-income families had ever attended university compared to 16% of those from the lowest-income families, although a similar proportion (about 28%) of youth from all income groups attend college.114

The possibility of a deeper schism between highly- and poorly-educated Vancouverites looms. Those who lack the necessary education and literacy skills to compete in the labour market will be excluded from new economic opportunities and will be pushed even further to the margins of society. Continued lack of educational success among a significant proportion of Vancouver’s youth may foster the growth of a chronically low-income underclass in the city, along with all of the problems this entails.

**Demographic Challenges**

Additional challenges faced by the education system are posed by the declining proportion and changing demographic composition of children and youth in Vancouver, which will influence the structure, curricula, and delivery of both public and private education at all levels.

First, competition for public dollars may be dominated by seniors who place greater priority on issues such as health care than on education. Second, potential growth in the number of lone-parent families has implications for children’s educational success, as children growing up in these families tend to have poorer educational outcomes than children in two-parent families, particularly if the family is low income.115 In addition, regardless of family structure, dual-wage families are increasing,116 resulting in “time crunches” which can limit parents’ abilities to be involved in their children’s education and in the need for increased out-of-school care. The trend toward two parents working outside the home is almost certain to continue over time, placing additional pressures on schools to provide supervision and guidance to students. The ability of schools to accommodate these demands will influence students’ educational outcomes and long-term social and economic success.

Additional challenges for the education system stem from increasing numbers of immigrant students. At present, there are 33,785 students (55% of all students) in the K-12 school system in the City of Vancouver, including both public and independent schools, whose primary language
spoken at home is not English or French. One hundred and ten languages spoken by students have been identified. English as a Second Language (ESL) students in Vancouver number 14,600, comprising 24% of all students.¹¹⁷

Concerns about the delivery of education to ESL students include a five-year funding cap for ESL, and the lack of services to assess the educational needs of ESL students in their first language. Some have contended that the ESL system is in complete disarray due to financial inadequacies.¹¹⁸ Research shows that it typically takes immigrant children two years to learn functional English and as many as seven years to be literate enough in English to adequately catch up in academic performance.¹¹⁹ To eventually close the achievement gap, they must maintain an accelerated progress rate for several years.¹²⁰ The time required to achieve English language proficiency varies with age at arrival and child’s degree of proficiency in his or her mother tongue.¹²¹

The high school graduation rates of ESL students in the City of Vancouver match or exceed those of other students. According to the BC Ministry of Education, in 2004-05, 82% of ESL students, compared to 77% of non-ESL students, graduated from high school.¹²² In light of the challenges faced by ESL students, which include levels of English proficiency, socio-economic status, cultural background, experiences of hardship in their country of origin, and experiences with discrimination, marginalization, and issues of identity,¹²³ this is a remarkable achievement. It is also inconsistent with education statistics from other cities and provinces.¹²⁴ Other research suggests that ESL student completion rates may vary considerably by ethnocultural group and country of origin, immigration status, and socio-economic status. In a five-year study of 2,200 immigrant students in Vancouver, Gunderson reported that over 60% “disappeared” from high school. He was not able to determine the numbers of students who had dropped out, transferred to a new district, or discontinued the study of English, math, science, and social studies. The disappearance rate was highest among refugee students.¹²⁵ Likewise, in a recent study, Toohey and Derwing conclude that students who entered British Columbia through the family and refugee classes are disappearing through “cracks” in the system.¹²⁶

Aboriginal youth in Vancouver experience lower levels of educational attainment than non-Aboriginal youth. In 2004-05, only 31% of Aboriginal students graduated from high school in the City of Vancouver.¹²⁷ Yet, there have been improvements over time. Between 1981 and 2001 in Greater Vancouver, there was a 12% decline in the share of Aboriginal male youth (aged 20 to 24 years) who did not complete high school and who were not attending school, compared with a 16% decline for non-Aboriginal male youth; for Aboriginal female youth, there was a decline of 22%, compared with 14% for non-Aboriginal female youth. Likewise, school attendance rates among Aboriginal youth aged 15 to 24 years increased from 46% in 1981 to 53% in 2001; for non-Aboriginal youth, it increased from 50% to 67%. The proportion of Aboriginal women aged 25 to 34 years who had completed post-secondary education and were not attending school also increased, from 20% to 32%, compared to non-Aboriginal females, the proportion of whom increased from 32% to 49%. Post-secondary completion rates for Aboriginal men in this age cohort increased from 24% to 28% over the 20-year period.¹²⁸ Overall, Aboriginal girls and women have made bigger educational strides than their male counterparts in Greater Vancouver.
Clearly, the educational situation of both immigrant and Aboriginal children and youth is critical to Vancouver’s social sustainability and high quality of life. It remains to be seen, however, if Vancouver’s education system will be able to accommodate increasing demands for ESL instruction, growing diversity of educational and cultural backgrounds, and the social and economic challenges often experienced by immigrant and Aboriginal families. Failure to do so may contribute to the social exclusion of immigrant and Aboriginal youth, who may express their alienation in negative ways.

**Poverty**

The Vancouver School Board reports that the spread of poverty among students is increasing. In 2004-05, 16% of students participated in a school meal program. About 10,000 meals were provided each day. As commented by the Board, “[t]he spread of poverty within and outside the borders of what is usually considered Vancouver’s inner city has far-reaching consequences for the Vancouver school district. Demands for services to help vulnerable children are continuing to grow.”

**3.2.2 Health**

As measured by life expectancy and a range of other indicators, the health status of the overall population of Greater Vancouver is among the best in Canada. It is widely recognized that health status is influenced by a broad range of physical and social variables. Factors contributing to population health include health behaviours such as smoking, drinking, and physical activity; health conditions such as obesity; psycho-social factors including depression and life stress; health system characteristics including unmet health care needs; and socio-demographic characteristics, including age, education, unemployment, low income, income inequality, and the share of the population comprised of Aboriginal peoples and recent immigrants. In 2001, Greater Vancouver had the lowest or among the lowest rates of smoking, heavy drinking, physical inactivity, and obesity of any census metropolitan area in Canada. Vancouverites also boasted one of the lowest levels of life stress in the country and people with perceived unmet health care needs. Finally, Vancouver has the second highest proportion of immigrants and one of the most educated populations of all Canadian Census Metropolitan Areas.

That being said, the evolving social and demographic profile of the City of Vancouver, particularly the aging of the population, has implications for both health and health care in the city.

**Population Aging**

As the population ages, seniors’ health issues will assume increasing prominence. Life expectancy in Vancouver is currently 81.1 years. Advances in medicine may further extend the average lifespan such that people, especially upper-income and educated people, live well beyond this age, but they are unlikely to fully address the illnesses and disabilities that generally accompany old age. Seniors’ health will also become more of a social concern. For example, the fact that women are having children later in life adds to family pressures, as they struggle to care for both their children and their aging parents. In some Vancouver communities, up to 55% of
seniors are living alone. This trend is expected to continue indefinitely among the Canadian-born population although, in some ethnocultural groups, it is more common for extended families to live together. Demand for supported living and long-term care facilities for seniors with varied cultural backgrounds and levels of English-language proficiency is, however, likely to rise over time.

Demands on the health care system are also expected to increase as the population ages. Seniors consume a high proportion of health care services relative to the proportion of the population they occupy. For example, seniors in Greater Vancouver are three times more likely than those aged 45 to 64 years to be hospitalized, and people aged 75 years or more are 75% more likely to be hospitalized than those aged 65 to 74.\textsuperscript{133} However, as stressed by the Institute of Aging, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, “[t]he apocalyptic predictions regarding disproportionate use of health services by seniors in the years to come must be tempered by recent scientific data.”\textsuperscript{134} The health of the new cohorts of seniors is expected to be much better than that of seniors now because the baby-boomer generation has a lower prevalence of heart disease, hypertension, arthritis and functional limitations compared with the previous cohorts at the same ages. In addition, the costs associated with caring for an older population will vary with the types and continuity of services provided. Integrated services network models, for example, have been shown to increase seniors’ autonomy and reduce residential placement rates, without increasing costs.\textsuperscript{135} On the other hand, research shows that British Columbia’s health care reforms shifting the focus from acute care beds to home care have not benefited the frail elderly, primarily because the home care provided is inadequate.\textsuperscript{136} These examples demonstrate that the future impacts of population aging on the health system will depend very much on the quality of health policy and programming.

The impacts of aging on the mental health of Vancouverites may pose new challenges in health care delivery. For example, the prevalence of dementia is expected to double within the next two decades,\textsuperscript{137} and this may be even more challenging as the proportion of immigrant seniors, some of whom may have limited English-language proficiency and many of whom will have different expectations of health service providers, increases over time.

\textit{Immigrants}

Overall, recent immigrants to Canada, with the exception of refugees, are in better physical and mental health than the Canadian-born population, even when age, education, and income are taken into account. Immigrants’ health does tend to deteriorate with time spent in Canada, although this does not appear to be attributable to immigrants emulating less healthy Canadian behaviours.\textsuperscript{138} The key factors that affect immigrant health include the immigration experience itself, the length of time the new Canadian has lived in Canada, factors from their country and culture of origin, and socio-economic factors in Canada, such as income, education, marital status, social support and official language skills. Access to health services may also be reduced among immigrants due to a wide range of barriers including language, culture, and unfamiliarity with the Canadian health care system.\textsuperscript{139} Confident predictions about the long-term health status of immigrants in Vancouver are not possible due to the instability of or eroding conditions in many countries of origin and the shifting socio-economic conditions of immigrants in the city.
Other Health Concerns

Aboriginal Peoples

Of particular concern is the health status of Aboriginal peoples in the city and in the region. Based on life expectancy, infant mortality, and rates of premature death, Aboriginal people living in Greater Vancouver and the Simon Fraser regions have the poorest health in the province. As summarized in a report of the BC Provincial Health Office, “status Indians in BC can expect to live 7.5 years less than other British Columbians. For almost every cause of death, Status Indians die at higher rates and younger ages. HIV/AIDS and alcohol-related deaths show a worsening trend.”

Despite this, overall mortality rates are improving, due to a combination of factors including an ongoing decline in infant mortality rates in the Aboriginal population and a gradual shift in health and illness patterns from infectious to chronic diseases (as in the non-Aboriginal population).

Low Income

Additional health trends of concern include the prevalence of health risk factors experienced by low-income Vancouverites. The importance of the linkages between socio-economic status and health can not be overstated. Members of groups that experience marginality and social exclusion, particularly for extended periods of time, experience poorer health on average than those who do not. In fact, some have suggested that social and economic characteristics of individuals and populations are more important antecedents of health than health behaviours and medical care.

Barring a dramatic reversal of the trend toward increasing wealth disparities between rich and poor in Vancouver, it is expected that the health status of lower-income adults and children will continue to be worse than that of other Vancouverites over the next 25 years.

3.2.3 Social Services

Population growth alone over the next 30 years will result in increased demand for social services. The nature and dimensions of this demand will also be shaped by changing demographics and the social trends described above.

Population Aging

Clearly, growth in number and percentage of seniors in Vancouver will be accompanied by higher volumes of persons with disabilities and low-income seniors who may require extensive health and social supports. As life expectancies increase and many seniors remain healthy and active, however, demand for alternate forms of recreation which are accessible to this age cohort will probably rise.
Family Structure and Child Care

Increased numbers of dual wage-earner families and lone-parent families will likely heighten demand for child care, even though the number of children in Vancouver will remain relatively constant. At present, only about 15% of children who require regulated child care spaces actually receive them.\textsuperscript{143} The benefits of high-quality child care and early childhood education, particularly for disadvantaged children, are well documented, as are the short- and long-term consequences of failing to provide these services to children and families.\textsuperscript{144} As labour shortages entice more women into the workforce,\textsuperscript{145} demand for child care is expected to continue to rise, and the consequences of failing to provide young children with affordable, high-quality care may have implications for social sustainability in both the short- and long-term.

Services for Immigrants

A growing volume of immigrants in Vancouver means that demand for ESL, settlement, and other services for newcomers will continue to rise, and service delivery organizations, many of which are not-for-profit agencies, will be challenged to meet burgeoning needs. In recent years, there has been much discussion among ethnocultural organizations about strained capacity in a context of limited funding and increasing demand.\textsuperscript{146} Whether settlement and other agencies will be able to accommodate significantly more clients depends on the extent to which their capacity is increased through additional funding.

It should also be noted that refugees in Vancouver, like elsewhere in Canada, often face tremendous settlement challenges stemming from issues such as trauma experienced in their home countries; lack of education; legal and other barriers to obtaining permanent residency status, work permits, and social services; and family separation. Meeting the needs of refugees may be an ongoing challenge in Vancouver.\textsuperscript{147}

In light of government downsizing and “downloading” in recent years, building and maintaining the capacity of both ethnocultural and “mainstream” groups to function effectively and meet burgeoning client and stakeholder demand is consistently identified as an urgent priority by foundations, policy think-tanks, academics, and advocates.\textsuperscript{148}

Supporting the integration of new immigrants in Canadian society is vital to their social inclusion on all dimensions. Immigrant-serving and ethnocultural organizations play key roles in fostering social inclusion among newcomers and members of diverse ethnocultural groups. In addition to providing direct services such as settlement, language instruction, cultural bridging, and individual advocacy, immigrant and ethnocultural organizations and ethnocultural community groups provide “informal links of companionship and mutual aid that provide sense of belonging and emotional and other support… [and] the outward linkages of networks that provide people with ladders to change their situations (i.e., jobs, houses) and levers (politics, lobbying instruments) to change their social locations.”\textsuperscript{149}

The majority of new immigrants are members of visible minority groups and some researchers predict an increased focus on issues concerning race and racism\textsuperscript{150} with more backlash against immigrants in economic downturns. This may require more emphasis on multicultural programs
and an increased exploration of integration issues. The BC Human Rights Tribunal, which replaced the Human Rights Commission in 2003, reports that in 2004-05, it received 1,099 new complaints, of which 277 were screened out at the initial screening stage. Forty-five percent of all complaints related to employment; the most commonly cited grounds were physical disability (16%), mental disability (11%), sex (including pregnancy) (13%), family status (7%), race (11%), ancestry (7%), colour (7%) and place of origin (7%). Collectively, complaints relating to race, colour, ancestry, and place of origin comprised 32% (263) of all complaints.

3.2.4 Civic Engagement

On a broad scale, civic engagement is both an important antecedent to and an integral component of social sustainability. Participation of all citizens in society is a democratic ideal: “Democracy requires that political decisions take into account, to the extent possible, the interests of those who must abide by the decisions once made.”

The term “civic engagement” has traditionally been synonymous with formal citizen participation in the political process. “Formal participation” refers to activities undertaken in an electoral arena, including voting, running for office, and involvement in a political party. As this definition excludes vital forms of community involvement and individuals who are not citizens, the meaning of civic engagement has since expanded to include “informal participation.” Information participation refers to all kinds of activities and organizations that seek to improve society, such as volunteering with schools, faith groups, local residents’ associations, women’s organizations, political solidarity groups, unions, environmental organizations, and ethnocultural associations. This also may include direct and indirect efforts to influence the formulation and implementation of public policy via the organization. The broader definition of civic engagement is vital to the social inclusion of groups that have traditionally been excluded from formal participation, including those who are not Canadian citizens. Moreover, informal civic participation fosters social sustainability through social inclusion, community development, and personal and social capital development. Community associations, not-for-profit organizations, and other groups provide a forum for people to come together to pursue common interests, and participation itself “promotes interpersonal trust and social bonds among community members and provides a solid foundation for community action on many fronts.” Communities directly benefit from the contributions made by these groups.

Volunteering

A 2005 Quality of Life report of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities identified a downward trend in civic engagement in Canada and, specifically, Vancouver, as measured by rates of charitable donations and volunteering. Volunteering is a clear measure of civic engagement, as it represents many of the ways in which people contribute to communities and improve the lives of others. Providing charitable donations also indicates some degree of interest or engagement in the broader community but, perhaps more importantly, charitable giving is associated with volunteering, helping others, giving money to others directly, and participating in organizations or groups. Donors are more likely than non-donors to engage in other supportive activities, and the likelihood of involvement in these activities increases with the amount given.
Data from Statistics Canada’s 2000 and 1997 National Surveys of Giving, Volunteering and Participating\textsuperscript{158} and, where available, 1987 Volunteer Activity Survey, suggest that declines in civic engagement may not be as significant as initially feared. In British Columbia as a whole, charitable donations declined by only 1\% between 1997 and 2000, and formal volunteering (through a charitable or not-for-profit organization) declined by 6\%, and was only 3\% lower than in 1987. In Greater Vancouver, rates of giving were 7\% lower than in the province as a whole, but rates of volunteering were only 1\% lower. Rates of giving were highest among women, people aged 35 to 54 years, employed people, people with at least a high school education, and people of middle income or higher. Rates of volunteering were highest among employed individuals in high income brackets with a university degree, and among people who described themselves as religious.

Lower rates of volunteering and giving in Greater Vancouver than in the province as a whole may be attributable to the high proportion of new immigrants in the region. Both charitable giving and volunteering increase with the length of time lived in a community, for all Canadians regardless of country of birth, and new immigrants have obviously spent less time in their communities. In addition, although provincial figures are not available, national data showed that the percentage of Canadians who devoted time to helping others in informal ways, such as shopping for them, driving them to appointments, and providing care for the sick or elderly, had increased by 4\%, and the percentage who had helped people other than relatives had increased by 8\%. It may be that some people have simply shifted their contribution to more informal types of volunteering.

In Greater Vancouver, volunteering in arts, culture and recreation, social service, religious, and health organizations accounted for three-quarters of all volunteer hours and 71\% of all volunteer events in the City of Vancouver. In both British Columbia as a whole and in Greater Vancouver, volunteers engaged in a wide range of voluntary activities, most commonly helping to organize activities, serving as a member of a board or committee, and canvassing, campaigning, or fundraising. In addition, although figures from the National Survey are not available for Greater Vancouver or the City of Vancouver, the percentage of people in British Columbia who belonged to or participated in at least one group or organization increased by about 5\% from 1997 to 2000. Finally, voter turn-out statistics from City of Vancouver elections from 1930 to 2005 reveal no pattern of increase or decrease over time.\textsuperscript{159}

That being said, an increasing proportion of immigrants in Vancouver’s population is likely to influence a downturn in civic engagement unless specific efforts are made to encourage their formal and informal participation in all facets of decision-making. These efforts should include changes to both public attitudes and public institutions. Civic engagement is a two-way street: Individuals and groups need to participate in decision-making, and public institutions\textsuperscript{160} need to invite, listen to, and make changes in accordance with the input and expertise of these individuals and groups.\textsuperscript{161} At present, the social, political and cultural participation of members of diverse groups is often blocked by a range of factors, many of which are shaped by discrimination and racism. These factors are built into the structures, cultures, and power relations of political, legal, economic, educational, and social organizations and systems.\textsuperscript{162} In the coming years, the City of Vancouver will be challenged to explore new approaches to representing and engaging citizens given the changing demographics and, probably, growing
social exclusion. A range of institutions, including the City of Vancouver, will need to open new avenues for participation, particularly for immigrants, in all aspects of civic life, from electoral politics to community organizations, schools, and local institutions. In fact, research shows that, among immigrants, community-level participation may be a supplement to, substitute for, or stepping stone on the path to formal participation. 

3.3 Community Capacity

3.3.1 Neighbourhoods and Social Sustainability

While there is no single definition of a “strong” or “good” neighbourhood, approaches to measuring neighbourhood quality of life generally centre on the following themes: (1) social inclusion, as reflected by perceptions of friendliness, safety, neighbourliness, and sense of community, and the presence of informal and formal supports and opportunities for community involvement and volunteer work; (2) housing access and affordability, and quality of the built and natural environment; (3) access, affordability and quality of programs and services; and (4) positive community economic development.

In addition, there is no firm consensus in the literature about what constitutes a “poor” or “low-income” neighbourhood. Many American studies have selected a household poverty rate of 20%, whereas Statistics Canada uses a poverty rate of 40%. These percentages represent the thresholds at which serious social problems appear to emerge. Some American research reports that, once the percentage of low-income residents in a neighbourhood reaches 15%, the neighbourhood begins to discourage positive behaviours; when the poverty level reaches 20%, the neighbourhood actually begins to encourage negative behaviours. However, European studies replicating this research have shown either less dramatic impacts and different thresholds or no impacts. It has been suggested that these differences in effects may be attributable to the more extensive social, health, and other support programs in European countries, as compared with the United States, which are believed to mute negative neighbourhood effects overall. It may be reasonably inferred from all of this research that Canada’s social programs may also serve to mitigate some of the consequences of neighbourhood poverty, meaning that a poverty threshold above 20% is most appropriate for social planning purposes in Canadian cities. Consistent with the research and these inferences, the United Way of Greater Toronto and the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) identify “high poverty areas” as those in which 26% to 39.9% percent of households have low income, and “very high poverty areas” as those in which at least 40% of households have low income. The United Way/CCSD definitions are likely suitable for all major Canadian cities.

Likewise, there is no agreed-upon definition of a “poor quality” neighbourhood. In the literature, indicators of poor neighbourhood quality include high rates of concentrated poverty, unemployment, residential mobility, (sometimes) ethnic diversity, density of single-parent households, and crime.

Research shows that, nationally, residents in poor quality neighbourhoods express growing dissatisfaction in their personal life satisfaction over time, and consistently identify employment, improved finances, housing, and enhancement of services (e.g. policing, health and social services, recreation) as factors that need to be addressed to achieve improved quality of life.
Problems in each of these areas undermine social inclusion and social cohesion, preventing residents from fully participating in social, cultural, civic and economic aspects of their communities, and improving neighbourhoods from within.\(^{172}\) People’s perceptions of individual quality of life and neighbourhood quality of life are also sensitive to how other people perceive them and their neighbourhoods. Residents of both high- and low-income neighbourhoods report poorer quality of life if they think that their situation compares poorly to others, or if people who are not residents of their neighbourhood perceive their neighbourhood as a bad place to live.\(^{173}\)

Residents of poor quality neighbourhoods typically include high proportions of people with no market income, low educational attainment, low school enrolment among adolescents and young adults, and a high share of income from transfers. The effects of these variables are more profound when they exist in combination. In addition, many of these neighbourhoods feature high concentrations of population groups who face many social and economic barriers and are at high risk of living in poverty, including recent immigrants, Aboriginal peoples, unattached adults, and lone-parent families.\(^{174}\) As summarized by Bradford, “the poor… not only live in poverty but among other people who are also poor and separated from those who are not, signalling the absence of social networks linking to opportunity, or even information about where potential opportunities might exist. This leads to place-specific “neighbourhood effects,” whereby social exclusion, perhaps originating in individual human capital deficiencies or unemployment, is compounded by features of the locality itself.”\(^{175}\)

Several community-based mechanisms both fuel social exclusion and serve as barriers to escaping poverty. The first is neighbourhood isolation and stigmatization. Poor neighbourhoods are often isolated from the larger community and the neighbourhoods’ poor reputation is projected onto individual residents, limiting their social mobility and chances of securing well-paid employment.\(^{176}\) Social exclusion is also fostered by poor quality of and lack of access to neighbourhood resources including health, recreation, child care, and other key services; informal organizations;\(^{177}\) and employment.\(^{178}\) The links between poor resources and poverty and other negative outcomes are usually explained in terms of an instrumental model, where the absence of institutional resources in poor neighbourhoods limits individual agency.\(^{179}\)

In addition, social exclusion is fuelled by low levels of personal capital and positive social capital. In life, personal capital (education, skills, and other personal attributes) and social capital (connections and support) enable personal and economic success and social mobility. In middle-income neighbourhoods, residents often adopt specific strategies to maximize their gains through deployment of social, economic and cultural capital, given the resources and circumstances of the place in which they live.\(^{180}\) Poor neighbourhoods often lack positive role models due to the absence of a successful middle class,\(^{181}\) and may feature social ties and cultures which stress short-term goals and deviant norms.\(^{182}\) Also, because of high unemployment, high levels of lone parenthood and perhaps a high number of poor pensioner households, residents of poor neighbourhoods spend more time in their local areas than do residents of wealthier neighbourhoods “[and] …contacts tend to be between people with networks which do not extend into the world of work.”\(^{183}\) On the one hand, both families and individuals may be very isolated, with little connection to the neighbourhood in which they live. On the other hand, these neighbourhoods sometimes have high levels of within-community or “bonding” social capital but, depending on role models and peer associations, this may constrain, rather than enable, routes out of poverty.\(^{184}\)
Finally, low levels of personal and social capital often mean that, individually or collectively, residents do not have the ability, skills and resources to respond creatively and effectively to local problems and challenges. Without community capacity, as defined in the introduction, neighbourhoods are unable to mobilize around issues, to exercise the political clout required to attract public or private resources, and to forge vital connections beyond the neighbourhood (a component of “bridging” social capital). Although it is not clear which precedes the other, low community capacity is also associated with low sense of community, and its number of associated outcomes, and with low neighbourhood affiliation, often leading to residents leaving the neighbourhood as soon as they are able.

3.3.2 City of Vancouver Neighbourhoods and Social Sustainability

The following subsections of this paper focus on neighbourhoods within the City of Vancouver.

Neighbourhood Poverty in the City of Vancouver

Including the downtown core, in 15 of Vancouver’s 23 neighbourhoods and in the city as a whole, more than one-quarter of households lived below the Low Income Cut-Off in 2001.

Vancouver’s lowest-income neighbourhoods are located downtown. Eighty percent of residents in the Downtown Eastside and 36% of those in downtown live below LICO. Outside of the downtown core, the city’s lowest-income neighbourhoods are situated on the north-central and east sides of the city, and include Strathcona (59% low income), Grandview-Woodlands (38%), and Mount Pleasant (36%). High levels of poverty also exist in Hastings-Sunrise (26%), Kensington-Cedar Cottage (28%), Renfrew-Collingwood (27%), Killarney (26%), Victoria-Fraserview (28%), Sunset (29%), Oakridge (30%), and Marpole (31%).

Figure 3. City of Vancouver
This is not to say that all of the lower-income communities in Vancouver are “deprived” or “distressed” neighbourhoods. Oakridge and Marpole, for example, which lean to the west side of Vancouver, are mid-century suburban and middle-class neighbourhoods; Mount Pleasant is attracting a flurry of high-end, loft-style condominium development, and Riley Park features a mix of residential (including non-market housing) and commercial areas, green space, and a high concentration of social, recreational and health services. Overall, however, the east side neighbourhoods feature high rates of unemployment, social assistance, lone-parenthood, low income status, and low educational attainment in comparison with those on the west side of the city, which can collectively contribute to social exclusion, undermining the well-being of both child and adult residents.\textsuperscript{185}

The following table presents data on some of these factors, organized by health area. Although lower- and middle-income neighbourhoods are included within some health areas, it is still clear that factors contributing to social exclusion are highest in the downtown and Northeast communities.

**Table 11. City of Vancouver Health and Social Indicators of Risk\textsuperscript{186}**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City of Vancouver Health Areas</th>
<th>City Centre</th>
<th>Downtown Eastside</th>
<th>Northeast</th>
<th>Westside</th>
<th>Midtown</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>Vancouver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicators</td>
<td>West End Downtown Fairview</td>
<td>DTES Strathcona Fairview</td>
<td>Hastings-Sunrise Renfrew-Collingwood Cedar Cottage</td>
<td>Arbutus Ridge Dunbar Kerrisdale Kitsilano Shaughnessy Southlands West Point Grey\textsuperscript{187}</td>
<td>Mount Pleasant Riley Park South Cambie Kensington</td>
<td>Oakridge Marpole Sunset Victoria-Fraser Killarney</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone-Parent as % All Families (2001)</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Persons &gt;=65 yrs Living Alone (2001)</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Persons &gt;=5 yrs Who Moved Residences in Past Year (2001)</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Population Aged 19-64 Receiving BC Benefits (2003)</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Population &gt;20 Years with Less than Grade 9 Education (2001)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Births to Teenage Mothers 1998-2002 Average/1,000 Live Births</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To some extent, the distribution of low-income households along the east side reflects the high numbers of established immigrants who live in the southeast quadrant of the city, particularly in Sunset, Victoria-Fraserview, and Killarney. In the latter two neighbourhoods, Chinese families are concentrated in the northeast sides of the communities, and include high numbers of family members living together in a single residence. A majority of Vancouver’s South Asian population lives in Sunset and Victoria-Fraserview. Tagalog and Vietnamese are also emerging languages in Sunset and Victoria-Fraserview. A significant number of earlier immigrants and their descendants (German, Polish, Ukrainian, Finish and Russian families) still reside in these communities.

Vancouver Coastal Health reports that 10% of residents in the southeast quadrant of the city speak neither French nor English, which negatively influences their employment and income status, along with the process of integration into mainstream culture. On the other hand, recent immigrants have tended to settle in Oakridge, Marpole, Arbutus Ridge and, not unexpectedly, the University Endowment Lands (as many are students), although, curiously, the majority of immigrant-serving agencies are located in the north-centre and upper east sides of the city.

The east side distribution of low-income households is somewhat attributable to the City of Vancouver’s foresight in strategically dispersing non-market housing beyond the downtown core and within stable, low- to moderate-income residential areas.

Planning for Social Sustainability in the Downtown Core

The City of Vancouver is lauded around the world for its thoughtful approach to urban design. In the late 1980s and 1990s, well before “sustainable development” entered the common lexicon, planners focused on increased residential densification of the downtown core and the development of new inner city neighbourhoods as an alternative to urban sprawl. In downtown Vancouver, the focus has been on mixed-use design, blending residential and commercial properties with park space and other amenities, with a pedestrian focus and a diverse housing mix, including both market and non-market housing, mixed income housing, housing for single and family households, and seniors and special needs housing. In the downtown peninsula, more than 50 acres of new parks were developed and some 20 kilometres of the waterfront were laid out for walking and cycling. As a result, over 45,000 people moved downtown, bringing the population to about 90,000. The number of residents in the downtown core is expected to reach 120,000 by 2020.

The principles reflected in Vancouver’s approach to urban design reflect an emphasis on environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Yet, serious social problems continue to prevail in downtown Vancouver, particularly in the Downtown Eastside. The Downtown Eastside is well known as Canada’s most impoverished neighbourhood. The social malaise associated with staggering rates of HIV, drug use and overdose, and the disappearance or murder of over 60 sex trade workers who lived in the area heightened public awareness about the perils of poverty in the midst of an otherwise flourishing urban environment. The evolution and gentrification of Vancouver’s downtown has also carried with it a multitude of problems for long-time residents, particularly those living in the Downtown Eastside, and for new residents as well. The Downtown Eastside has a large stock of the city’s low-income housing, consisting of single room occupancy hotels (SROs), non-market housing, special needs residential facilities, and market housing. There is some disagreement among community stakeholders as to whether these units have since been replaced, and about whether the total stock of low-income housing in downtown has increased or decreased in recent years.
Residents who have purchased housing in the downtown core and the flocks of daily visitors who work and play in the area express concern about the presence of the highly marginalized and transient population that also lives in or frequents the downtown core. It must be emphasized that homelessness, prostitution, and drug involvement are often caused and perpetuated by economic, social, family, addictions, and mental and physical health problems that require special attention and comprehensive solutions. That being said, the presence of large numbers of homeless people, sex trade workers, and the illicit drug trade has a destabilizing influence on communities. Prostitution undermines communities via its association with the drug trade, unwanted visitors cruising through neighbourhoods, harassment, and improperly disposed of condoms and needles. Likewise, homeless people often gravitate to parks and familiar streets, and to unsupervised areas, which can cause apprehension among residents – particularly women, children, and seniors – and keep them indoors. The same is true of panhandling, littering, squatting, and vandalism.

Residents’ safety concerns, whether real or perceived, affect social inclusion and social cohesion, and prevent residents from fully participating in the social, cultural, civic and economic aspects of their communities and improving neighbourhoods from within. In communities where crime and violence are rampant, the sense of security, belonging and ownership among the population is eroded, which in turn deteriorates the quality of life in that community. Along with personal loss and injury, higher levels of crime and violence can negatively impact a community’s prospect of economic and social development.

Some of the social issues in the Downtown Eastside may be mitigated via initiatives under the Vancouver Agreement, signed in 2002 by the Governments of Canada, British Columbia and the City of Vancouver. The Vancouver Agreement seeks to promote and support sustainable economic, social and community development in Vancouver, beginning with the Downtown Eastside. Improvements to the Downtown Eastside have included redevelopment of the Woodward’s building and four new health facilities – the Downtown Community Health Centre, the Pender Community Health Centre, the Health Contact Centre, and the Lifeskills Centre – were opened in 2002 to improve and expand health and addictions services. Also, in 2003, the Downtown Eastside became home to North America’s first legal supervised injection site to further reduce the health risks associated with drug injection. Despite these initiatives, however, the Downtown Eastside continues to struggle with challenges stemming from crime, prostitution, drug use, and social disorder.

Planning for Social Sustainability in Residential Neighbourhoods

As succinctly summarized by Stroick, research shows that

“it is clear that in order to create a socially inclusive city that minimizes inequalities and is economically competitive, non-market housing should be dispersed throughout the city in mixed-income, mixed-use developments of a density that is appropriate to the host community. The geographic dispersal of non-market housing will help to ensure that low-income households are not clustered in close proximity to each other, thus avoiding the effects of neighbourhood decline that have been shown to occur when the concentration of poverty in a small area exceeds the critical level of 40%. Ideally, however, non-market housing developments should be located in lower to moderate poverty areas that have a concentration of poverty that is less than 26%.”
The research also suggests that other factors to be considered in identifying neighbourhoods for housing and other intervention initiatives include the percentage of the population 15 years and older that did not have a high school diploma; the unemployment rate for males; the percentage of income derived from government transfer payments; and the percentage of female single-parent families.195

The City of Vancouver’s approach to urban development, with a particular focus on increased residential densification, is now being applied to the renewal of existing neighbourhoods beyond the downtown with a view to accommodating the majority of all population growth over the next 25 years and, possibly, beyond, within existing municipal boundaries. As pointed out by the GVRD Policy and Planning Department, “[a]chieving significantly higher densities would almost certainly mean continued strong growth in the number of duplexes, rowhouses and apartments throughout the region, more residential infill and secondary suites, more mixed-use development in previously single-use areas, and more re-use of former industrial lands and underutilized commercial development.”196 Again, research shows that mixed-use neighbourhoods, such as those planned by the city, foster social cohesion and directly benefit residents of all ages, particularly if amenities are within easy walking distance and include banks and grocery stores, public transit, parks and playgrounds, safe routes for cyclists and pedestrians, and schools and daycares.197 Moreover, timely access to appropriate, high-quality educational and social supports, along with developmental and recreational programs for children, can go a long way in overcoming the long-term developmental and life course disadvantages associated with low socio-economic status.198

Vancouver’s Food Policy and approach for urban agriculture to provide an increased number of community gardens in neighbourhoods is one type of activity that can build social cohesion through recreation and non-profit governance of the garden in addition to providing the opportunity to citizens to grow their own food in an urban environment. Other community design features, beyond affordable and appropriate housing and the amenities identified above, that encourage social cohesion and social sustainability include:

- Street characteristics, such as discontinuous street patterns and narrow roads, that discourage heavy vehicular traffic. These features encourage informal contacts among neighbours “[that develop into social networks [and] are at the root of feelings of belonging and security, which are prime factors in resident satisfaction.”199

- Public art, featured prominently, and arts and cultural activities bring people together, draw newcomers into the community, and provide opportunities for learning and communication.200

- Pedestrian- and cyclist-oriented design, with pathways connecting all neighbourhood uses, with the majority of parking behind buildings.201

- Green space, as it has been found to have social and psychological benefits and “provides opportunity for relaxation, becomes a place for casual contacts, and forms a haven for kid’s play. (However, poorly designed and supervised, it can become a locale for crime and drug use.)”202

- Short building setbacks and front porches and balconies near the street, to encourage community interaction.203
• High density, with smaller houses on smaller lots mixed closely with apartments and multi-level buildings, and well-landscaped lots, to provide both privacy and sense of community.
• CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) principles.
• Physically- and visually-accessible public spaces, located along major pedestrian thoroughfares, to serve as focal and gathering places for community events and activities.\(^{204}\)

**Children and Community**

For children, the importance of community can not be overstated. Neighbourhood is less influential than family and individual factors,\(^{205}\) but researchers stress that “failure to acknowledge [neighbourhood] influences may mean overlooking key factors that differentiate successful and unsuccessful low-income urban children.”\(^{206}\) A wealth of research confirms that neighbourhood quality is related to child development.\(^{207}\) Most recently, using data from both the National Longitudinal Survey on Children and Youth (NLSCY) and the Understanding the Early Years (UEY) survey, Willms concluded that “[t]he four most important family and community factors related to children’s early vocabulary skills, aside from SES and number of children, were the amount that parents read to their child, the extent to which the family functioned as a cohesive unit, the degree of social support in the neighbourhood, and the stability of the neighbourhood.”\(^{208}\)

Recent research by Hertzman and colleagues\(^{209}\) on Vancouver neighbourhoods and children’s development has revealed strong associations between children’s development and the socio-economic status and other features of Vancouver neighbourhoods. As discussed in more detail later in this report, poverty and disadvantage are concentrated in Vancouver’s north-central and east side neighbourhoods. Hertzman and colleagues’ research shows that this is paralleled by developmental vulnerabilities among children in five areas – physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills and general knowledge – as measured by the Early Development Index. The researchers found that, “[a]s one goes from the most to least affluent neighbourhoods in town, the proportion of children who are vulnerable on at least one dimension of the Early Development Instrument (EDI) rises from 6% to 38%.” Vulnerability is greatest in Strathcona, Mount Pleasant, and Grandview-Woodlands.

Hertzman and colleagues also found that housing affordability, vacancy rates, and zoning issues are forcing families with young children to concentrate in areas of the city that are closest to commercial districts and transportation zones, rather than in neighbourhoods with family-friendly features. For example, “childcare is least accessible in the areas of Vancouver where it would likely have the greatest developmental benefits. There is a 10-fold difference in neighbourhood child care accessibility rates across Vancouver (from .89 slots per child to .09 slots per child).”\(^{210}\) The least-served areas and those with less access to centre-based care are found mostly in the working class areas of the east side.” Likewise, there are significant barriers for families living in certain neighbourhoods in accessing parenting, family literacy, and other family support programs that may improve developmental outcomes.
Consistent with previous research showing that children in low socio-economic status families can benefit from the presence of more affluent neighbours,\(^{211}\) this study shows that Vancouver children from families with socio-demographic risks (e.g. low-income, single-parent, low-education, etc.) who live in mixed-income or more affluent neighborhoods do not appear to be at as high developmental risk as their counterparts in low socio-economic neighbourhoods.

At present, few families with children live in the downtown core, and poverty rates of 36% in the Downtown and 80% in the Downtown Eastside, along with high rates of social disorder and crime, suggest that these neighbourhoods are not conducive to family life, and that children who live in these areas are at risk on many counts. Despite the thoughtful planning invested in downtown sustainability and the improvements made to the Downtown Eastside under the Vancouver Agreement, plans to locate more families in downtown Vancouver over time will need to pay close attention to a range of social and other issues, or face the possibility of placing even more children at risk. Even if social conditions continue to improve, many health and developmental problems have been associated with neighbourhood and housing features common in very high density urban areas. Underscoring the importance of designing residential neighbourhoods with a view to parks, school, and other amenities, Evans reports that:\(^{212}\)

- Residents of multi-family, compared with single-family homes, controlling for SES, report greater marital and parent-child conflict, and high-rise housing has been associated with less socially supportive relationships with neighbours.
- Elevated noise levels, typically from transportation, other people, and music, have been associated with children’s reading problems and intellectual deficiencies, long-term memory problems, elevated blood pressure, and motivation.
- Households on streets with higher traffic volume interact less with their neighbours relative to those residing on less congested streets.
- Close proximity to street traffic, in addition to raising the risk of pediatric injuries, is correlated with restrictions in outdoor play among 5-year-olds, smaller social networks for these children, and diminished social and motor skills.
- Several adverse child outcomes are related to residence in economically impoverished neighbourhoods with individual-level socio-economic status (SES) statistical controls but the role of physical neighbourhood characteristics is unclear. Among the potential developmentally salient physical characteristics of neighbourhoods are residential instability, housing quality, noise, crowding, toxic exposure, quality of municipal services, retail services (e.g. bars, liquor stores, grocery stores), recreational opportunities, including natural settings, street traffic, accessibility of transportation, and the physical quality of both educational and health care facilities.

**Immigrant Settlement and Social Sustainability**

As suggested above, over the past 20 years there has been a significant increase in the number of visible minority neighbourhoods in Vancouver. “Visible minority neighbourhoods” are defined as those census tracts in which more than 30% of the total population is from a single visible minority groups.\(^{213}\) In Greater Vancouver as a whole, the share of visible minority census tracts, primarily housing Chinese or South Asian residents, increased from 1% to 29%.\(^{214}\) The increase
in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of Chinese residents is simply attributable to the growing proportion of Chinese people in the Greater Vancouver population. South Asians, however, have followed the pattern of previous waves of immigrants from Europe, and become more concentrated in a limited number of neighbourhoods. This is not to say, of course, that all South Asians in Greater Vancouver live in close proximity.\textsuperscript{215}

Papillon\textsuperscript{216} observes that there is no consensus on the impact of spatial concentration of immigrants on the social sustainability of cities. On the one hand, it seems to contribute to the creation of social networks and may facilitate access to employment. On the other hand, spatial segregation in conjunction with poverty can lead to long-term social exclusion.\textsuperscript{217} In short, there are many good reasons for which immigrants may choose to live in close proximity, and certainly during the first few years following settlement. Common interests, religions, and languages lay the foundation for social networks and a sense of belonging in Canada, and contribute to within neighbourhood bonding and bridging social capital.\textsuperscript{218} The concerns arise when low-income immigrants are concentrated in low-income neighbourhoods, with affordable housing problems, lack of appropriate services and amenities, and poor employment prospects, as evidenced in the extreme by the recent rioting fuelled by despair and hopelessness in the Paris suburbs and, earlier, in Northern England. Certainly, the conditions at the genesis of these crises do not exist in Vancouver, or in any other Canadian city for that matter, but steps must be taken now to ensure that they do not evolve over time.

Within the City of Vancouver, the “sub-community” of Chinatown in the downtown is the only community notable for its extremely high concentration of both poverty and immigrants. With the exception of Chinatown, areas of immigrant poverty occur primarily in outlying suburbs and within larger low-income areas. This may be related to affordable housing shortages in the City of Vancouver, which may be forcing immigrants to locate in suburban areas.\textsuperscript{219} Overall, however, the concentration of immigrants in low-income neighbourhoods is far less frequent in Greater Vancouver than in Toronto and Montreal. Smith speculates that this may be due to cultural practices of particular immigrant groups which help to prevent situations that can give rise to poverty (such as lone-parent families and lack of high school completion) and the fact that many immigrant families combine their financial resources to ensure a higher level of income.\textsuperscript{220} Even so, the increasing overlap between immigrant poverty and ethnocultural concentrations in the Greater Vancouver region outside the City of Vancouver is cause for concern about the potential for growing socio-economic marginalization of immigrants in the coming years.
4.0 Summary and Conclusions

Vancouver and Greater Vancouver are consistently hailed as among the most desirable places in the world in which to live and, for many residents, quality of life is very high on all dimensions. However, a significant proportion of residents are excluded from fully participating in, contributing to, and benefiting from all that Vancouver has to offer. Vancouver’s social sustainability is already threatened by the inability of large numbers of residents to meet their basic needs, develop their individual capacities, and live in communities with the capacity to foster broad social inclusion and well-being. Despite the city and regions’s overall prosperity and positive economic outlook, poverty rates are high and Vancouver’s population is increasingly divided into “haves” and “have-nots.” The rich are getting richer and the poor are staying poor. Moreover, provincial government funding has been diverted from social programs that served to moderate the negative outcomes associated with low income and to ensure some equality of opportunity among individuals of all ages. Cutbacks to social programs have contributed to increased food insecurity, housing affordability problems and homelessness, decreased access to education and, ironically, probably to increased labour market exclusion, particularly for parents with children who are no longer able to access affordable, quality child care. Housing affordability issues are also directing many individuals and families and, particularly, immigrants and seniors, to establish residence in the suburban cities surrounding Vancouver. Within the city, these issues are forcing low-income families to congregate in neighbourhoods that, at best, lack the features and amenities that benefit and support children and parents and, at worst, place children at risk on many dimensions. The increasing spatial concentration of low-income individuals and families in the City of Vancouver’s north-central and east side communities may spawn the evolution of true poverty enclaves, and all that this entails, firmly dividing the city into two distinct realms defined by income. Finally, economic and labour market changes in British Columbia, as in Canada as a whole, will probably perpetuate and possibly exacerbate income gaps and increase the depth of poverty experienced by some lower-income segments of society, including young people who lack post-secondary education and lone-parent households. If these trends continue along their current trajectories, the number of children, youth, adults, and families who suffer social and economic exclusion will increase, further threatening Vancouver’s long-term social sustainability over time. The pressures of mounting poverty and exclusion are very real.

Vancouver’s evolving demography, and the ways in which it is planned for and managed, have broad implications for social sustainability. The consequences of an aging population will be felt in all aspects of life in the city – economic, social, and cultural. Planning needs to occur now to accommodate these changes and to ensure that seniors are able to contribute to ongoing social sustainability. In addition, the political clout exercised by a growing number of seniors may shift social and education spending priorities away from children and youth to issues of greater concern to seniors, such as safety and security and health care.

An increasing proportion of the population comprised of immigrants, most of them members of visible minority groups, will offer both opportunities and challenges for Vancouver’s social sustainability over time. Immigrants bring with them a rich tapestry of languages and cultures that will continue to boost Vancouver’s cultural capital and, if the city can continue to attract young and highly-educated immigrants, will help to sustain both the labour force and the number
of children and youth in the city. However, negative consequences may ensue if newcomers are not provided with the settlement and integration supports they require, and if immigrant children and youth can not obtain adequate ESL instruction and educational programs to enable them to succeed in school and beyond. If skilled workers can not secure well-paid employment in their fields, many individuals will simply migrate to other cities or countries which recognize and reward their talents. Moreover, if Vancouver is plagued by the social disorder which accompanies high levels of poverty and social exclusion, many Canadian-born workers may follow them. Finally, if the current trajectory of increasing poverty among immigrants continues, it will perpetuate and heighten social exclusion among an increasingly significant proportion of the population.

The social sustainability to which Vancouver aspires will require renewed investment in initiatives to ensure that residents’ basic needs are met, that residents can develop their personal capacity, and that communities foster the social inclusion and positive development of all residents. Recognition of and appreciation for the contributions that all residents can make to the city will be vital first steps. Rebuilding the buffers against the hardships of poverty will benefit all residents of Vancouver, regardless of their income level. There are no simple solutions to these problems.

Initiatives such as these can not be accomplished by the City of Vancouver alone. As observed by Papillon, “[c]reating a socially sustainable environment is a multi-faceted and complex process that involves a range of policy fields, from education to health, housing, urban planning and job creation.” For instance, sustained governmental intervention at the federal and provincial levels is needed to reduce individual and family poverty and ensure a basic quality of life via adequate health care, education, income, settlement programs, and social services which, concurrently, foster social mobility and reduce and prevent spatially-concentrated poverty. This means that there is a compelling need for local action to raise public awareness, influence national and provincial policy agendas, and ensure the coordination of structural measures with urban and other place-based initiatives within the City of Vancouver and Greater Vancouver.

Locally, there are endless opportunities for the voluntary, private, and public sectors – including all three levels of government – or combinations thereof, to work collaboratively on a broad range of initiatives and interventions. Case studies providing examples of ways in which such collaborations in other cities have tackled problems similar to those which have emerged or are expected to emerge are provided in Appendix 1.
Endnotes

1 According to The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Livability Ranking 2005.


5 Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) is a partnership of 21 municipalities and one electoral area that make up the metropolitan area referred to as Greater Vancouver or the Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area. In addition to the City of Vancouver, Greater Vancouver includes the following surrounding municipalities: Village of Anmore, Village of Belcarra, Bowen Island Municipality, City of Burnaby, City of Coquitlam, Corporation of Delta, Electoral Area A, City of Langley, Township of Langley, Village of Lions Bay, District of Maple Ridge, City of New Westminster, City of North Vancouver, District of North Vancouver, District of Pitt Meadows, City of Port Coquitlam, City of Port Moody, City of Richmond, City of Surrey, District of West Vancouver, and the City of White Rock.

6 Vancouver Economic Development Data Sheet, using data from BC Stats Population Projections, updated February 2006. Available at www.vancouvereconomic.com/tools_programs/pdfs/Population%20Projections.pdf. Please note that, at the time of this paper, these figures were being revised slightly. According to BC Stats Population Projections “PEOPLE 31,” the projected figure for the City of Vancouver in 2031 was slightly lower, at 692,000.


18 BC Stats. 2003. *2001 Census Fast Facts: Non-Permanent Residents & Citizenship*. Available at www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen01/facts/cff0107.pdf. This document states that during the 2001 Census, there were 37,190 NPRs living in British Columbia, accounting for about 19% of all the 198,645 non-permanent residents living in Canada at that time. More than three-quarters of the NPRs lived in the Vancouver metropolitan area.


25 City of Vancouver, Community Services. n.d. *Changing Population, Age Profiles and Households*. Available at www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/commsvcs/cityplans/populationhousing/changingpopulation.htm. Families were defined up to 1996 as husband/wife, with or without children, and single parents with one or more child. In 2001 the definition was extended to include same-sex couples, so direct comparison with previous years is not possible.


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CMHC defines a household as being in “core housing need” if the housing requires major repairs, if it has insufficient bedrooms for the size and makeup of the occupying household, and/or if shelter costs (including utilities and fees) consume more than 30% of before-tax household income and if the household would have to spend 30% or more of its income to pay the average rent of alternative local markets.

Canada Mortgage and Housing revised core-need data, provided by the City of Vancouver.

Canada Mortgage and Housing revised core-need data, provided by the City of Vancouver.


Identified by the Second Annual Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey. 2006. The survey includes all major urban markets in the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. Available at www.demographia.com/dhi-ix2005q3.pdf.


the Health of its Children (Doc4Kids Project) Boston: Boston Medical Center and Children’s Hospital, Department of Pediatrics.


92 “Affordable housing” refers to permanent housing that is affordable to households with low and modest incomes, who can live independently in the community with little or no support services. “Social housing” refers to housing built under federal/provincial or provincial programs and is designed to accommodate low and modest income households. It includes public housing; non-profit housing, co-operative housing, and urban aboriginal housing. Rent is often geared to income. “Supportive housing” is affordable housing with links to support services and no limit on the length of stay. It provides opportunities for individuals to stabilize their personal situation and re-establish connections with the community. “Transitional housing” is affordable housing where people can remain for a limited period of time (e.g. 30 days to 2-3 years). The expectation is that residents will move to permanent housing upon stabilizing their living situation. Support services are generally provided to help people move towards independence and self-sufficiency.


95 As defined by BC Stats, “[s]erious violent crime includes all crimes involving a weapon as well as sexual assaults resulting in bodily harm, non-sexual assaults resulting in serious injury and abductions. Breaking & Entering is the only property crime included in ‘serious.’ Property crimes excluded are Motor Vehicle Theft and minor crimes such as bicycle theft and pickpocketing.” BC Stats. 2005. *Indicators of Crime 2005*. Available at www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/sep/i_rd/data/rcrim.pdf.


97 Schneider, S. 2001. *The Future of Crime: A Review of the Research*. Ottawa: Department of Justice. Schneider notes that, based primarily on these two factors, researchers in the U.S. and the U.K. predict that there will be a low to moderate annual increase in the overall crime rate in these countries beginning in the next few years, and that similar patterns should be expected in other developed countries. If this holds true for Canada, it would represent a significant departure from recent trends.


113 Statistics Canada, "Tuition and Living Accommodation Costs for Full-time Students at Canadian Degree-granting Institutions (TLAC) survey." The Daily, September 1, 2005.


118 See, for example, *Vancouver Courier*. August 5, 2004. “School funding affects ESL students’ marks.”


Following is from Lee, C. n.d. *Spatial Analysis on Prospective Hospital Locations*. Geography Department of Simon Fraser University. Available at www.sfu.ca/geog/geog355fall03/christyl/introduction.htm.


Jedwab, J. n.d. *Representing identity: Non-formal political participation and the role of the state in Canada*. Available at canada.metropolis.net/events/Political%20Participation/papers%20and%20reports/jedwab_representing_e.doc.


City of Vancouver. *Election Results: Voter turn-out.* Available at vancouver.ca/ctvclerk/elections/voter_turnout.htm.

As defined by Canadian Heritage, organizations in the public or private sector that exert an important and prevalent influence on the general functioning of society.


Westside also includes the Musqueam Reserve and the University Endowment Lands.


See, for example, City of Vancouver. n.d. *Vancouver’s New Neighbourhoods: Achievements in Planning and Urban Design*. Available at vancouver.ca/commsvcs/currentplanning/urban/design/design/br2pdf/urban-design.pdf.


At the time of this report, the federal government was deliberating the future of the facility. To operate legally, Health Canada granted Insite a three-year operating exemption under Section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. The federal government has not committed to renewing the exemption, which expires September 12, 2006.


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Appendix 1. Case Studies

The following seven case studies provide examples of working cross-sectoral collaborations to develop and implement both small- and large-scale initiatives and interventions that address challenges such as those which have emerged or are likely to emerge in Vancouver. These include: responding to and valuing diversity, promoting civic engagement, increasing social cohesion and social inclusion, improving living conditions, combating poverty and the negative conditions associated with poverty, and augmenting and enhancing community services. These particular case studies have been selected among many because they have either been demonstrated to be effective or show promise of effectiveness over time, and because it would be possible to tailor and implement the initiatives in the City of Vancouver.

Case Study 1: Opportunities 2000 – Waterloo Region

Opportunities 2000 (OP2000) is a community-based poverty reduction initiative in Waterloo, Ontario, spearheaded by a local non-profit group, the Lutherwood Community Opportunities Development Association (CODA). Its primary objective was to help 2,000 households exit poverty by the end of the year 2000, while at the same time building the community’s capacity to combat poverty on a long-term basis. It also aimed to share the lessons learned along the way with other groups across Canada engaged in similar work in their own communities.

As a research partner in the OP2000 initiative, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy completed an evaluation of Opportunities 2000 Phase One. In keeping with the underlying theme of Caledon’s involvement, the evaluation was framed as an “action learning” process: an ongoing cycle of dialogue, action and reflection through which participants gradually develop a deeper, more complex understanding of the issues they are facing and the strategies that can lead to desirable outcomes. The evaluation set out to document the experience of the project in a manner that would help participants think critically and creatively about the work in which they are engaged.

The Final Evaluation Report indicates that the impact of OP2000’s first phase continues to be felt even as it prepares to pursue a second round of activity. The individuals and organizations mobilized to address poverty have maintained an active interest in this issue. A majority of the initiatives begun during the first phase have endured beyond OP2000’s original end date. Specific outcomes at the individual, organizational and community levels continue to mount.

As of December 31, 2000, Opportunities 2000 had assembled a broad network of local partners, including 41 non-profit organizations, 40 businesses, all four levels of government (federal, provincial, regional and local) and a working group of low-income residents. Forty-nine poverty reduction projects were initiated or sustained with assistance from Opportunities 2000. More than 1,600 individuals participated in these projects. Nearly 500 of those participants obtained new or improved employment, 151 proceeded to further training and education, 79 started small business ventures, 60 developed computer skills, 60 stabilized their housing conditions, 24 built financial assets, and many more experienced a range of benefits in terms of their personal development (e.g. improved self-confidence; strengthened networks of support). Among
respondents to a survey conducted near the end of the project, nearly half indicated that they had seen increases in their personal and household incomes.

In addition to the direct benefits experienced by individual participants, other household members benefited indirectly. Also, virtually all of OP2000’s non-profit partners indicated some improvement in organizational capacity as a result of participating in the project. Approximately 75% of the non-profit projects launched with support from Opportunities 2000 have continued into an additional phase.

Most important, OP2000 created a multi-sectoral network committed to seeking out innovative and effective ways to generate adequate economic opportunities for all community members. In the process, OP2000’s organizing team developed its capacity to serve as a local intermediary focused on poverty reduction. As the project evolved, its role as animator and facilitator of the network became more clearly defined. It is now well positioned to focus on institutional and systemic changes that can maximize OP2000’s impact on poverty during its next phase of activity.

**Case Study 2: Winnipeg Development Agreement (WDA)**

In 2001, Winnipeg completed a unique 20-year experience with tri-level funding for inner city revitalization. People living in Winnipeg’s inner city experience high unemployment and high poverty, particularly among Aboriginal people and lone mothers. Winnipeg has been identified as the “child poverty capital” of Canada seven times in the last 15 years.

The WDA was a tri-partite agreement among the City of Winnipeg, the Province of Manitoba, and the federal government. It focused on ameliorating negative conditions experienced by Aboriginal peoples, but the three funding partners had relative autonomy in program or project development. Each funding partner contributed $25 million per year to priorities of their choosing, which levered significant additional funds from the private sector. The City of Winnipeg’s priorities included employment equity, heritage buildings, neighbourhood investments, and riverbank development. The Province of Manitoba channelled funds into urban safety, neighbourhood infrastructure and housing, labour force training, and housing. The federal focus was on an Aboriginal Centre, housing, labour force training, information technology, and tourism/heritage. The over-riding lesson learned from the WDA was the need for public consultation at every stage of the process – at the planning stage, during program development, and during program implementation – using a variety of techniques.

A 2002 study commissioned by a coalition of inner city community groups argued for a renewed tri-level development agreement. Building on Our Strengths found that improvements were being made, particularly in the areas of increased safety and increased community pride. The study stressed that the improvements occurred in those parts of the inner city where community organizations emerged “from the bottom up” and were rooted in the community and where the funding was adequate. There was less or no improvement where these conditions did not exist.
Case Study 3: City of Montreal’s Intervention in Areas “in Decline”

Due to increasing poverty, higher crime rates, abandonment by merchants of commercial streets in certain neighbourhoods, and the presence of vacant buildings in the 1990s, the city of Montreal decided to intervene before conditions deteriorated too far. In 1999, the city negotiated a framework agreement with the Quebec government to support Montreal’s economic conversion, tourism industry and cultural and financial recovery. The focus was on poor areas and resulted in two action plans: the Action Plan for Sensitive Neighbourhoods, and the Intervention Plan for Targeted Neighbourhoods. Both plans targeted the same 11 areas or parts of neighbourhoods. It was hoped that intensive, short-term action, especially if it were concrete and tangible, would produce long-term effects. The results of these two initiatives have not yet been determined. The critical components are that funding is shared, projects are submitted locally but approved centrally, the approach is very multi-sectoral, and the action is framed by a formal agreement between the city and the Quebec government.

**Action Plan for Sensitive Neighbourhoods**

This initiative seeks to reduce poverty and promote social integration. It is a multi-sectoral approach and draws on citizen groups and community organizations. One of its objectives is to pool the resources of various government and municipal services to foster the emergence of joint strategic initiatives. It also seeks to provide more resources to community organizations active in these sectors so that they can intervene in certain aspects of social exclusion.

The objective of the plan is social development. The budget allocation was $5.6 million to the end of 2003. The plan supported original, concrete initiatives to address poverty, social exclusion, crime, violence, the school dropout phenomenon and difficulties in integrating newcomers. Activities took on a variety of forms such as street work, preventive organizing with youth (e.g. youth centres), mental health interventions, improving neighbourhood safety, providing support for parents, and the integration of new immigrants. Each action was tailored to the needs of each “sensitive” area and was implemented by established community groups. A project manager acted as liaison between the various stakeholders.

**Intervention Plan for Targeted Neighbourhoods**

This plan proposes actions to improve the physical environment and thereby improve the quality of life in the community. It is based on the implicit assumption that improving the physical environment can have a positive psychosocial effect on citizens by improving their sense of local affiliation or belonging. Forty-two million dollars was allocated to the end of 2003. The plan provides for the development of more than 100 new projects (in addition to regular housing programs); some of them are micro-interventions (such as refurbishing park equipment). They will focus on housing, community facilities, and revitalization of commercial streets, community improvement and intervention on the built environment.
Case Study 4: The Social and Economic Inclusion Initiative

The Social and Economic Inclusion Initiative (SEII) is a project of the Social Planning Network of Ontario (SPNO) and participating local organizational members. It is also known as the Closing the Distance Project. In 2002, the SPNO partnered with the Population and Public Health Branch (PPHB) of Health Canada – Ontario and Nunavut Region (now the Public Health Agency of Canada) to implement the PPHB’s goal:

- To demonstrate how communities can mobilize and develop healthy public policies and practices that foster social and economic inclusion, and thereby, improve the conditions needed for good health.

Following a series of roundtable consultations organized and hosted by local social planning councils across the Province of Ontario, the SEII was developed, approved and funded for the period October 2002 through March 2004 to achieve the following objectives:

- Creating communities of interest and generating project proposals on community mobilization and healthy public policy development from a social inclusion perspective (Phase 1, October 2002 through March 2003); and

- Implementing, documenting, and disseminating learning from the projects (Phase 2, April 2003 through March 2004).

Between October 2002 and March 2004, the SPNO worked with social planning councils and local community leadership in five Ontario cities to initiate the development of community mobilization strategies around issues of local or regional concern related to population health. The cities and issues were as follows:

- Kingston: homeless population
- Peel-Halton: newcomers seeking health and social services
- Central West Ontario (Kitchener-Waterloo, Cambridge, Brant County): youth and seniors in rural and urban communities
- Sudbury: Aboriginal and Francophone children and families
- Thunder Bay: isolated youth

The local social planning councils in each of these regions worked with community leadership to mobilize dialogue and action on priority local concerns on population health issues. An SPNO Resource Team provided central strategic and technical support to the five local projects; including documenting and analyzing their experiences in a series of critical case studies.

Late in 2004, four of the local projects applied for and received one-year funding renewal from the Public Health Agency of Canada – Ontario Region (formerly PPHB). The SPNO Central Resource Team was also re-funded to provide continuing support to project development.
Case Study 5: Vibrant Communities

Vibrant Communities is a community-driven effort to reduce poverty in Canada by creating partnerships that make use of people, organizations, businesses and governments. Vibrant Communities links up to 15 communities across the country in a collective effort to test the most effective ways to reduce poverty at the grassroots level. Initiatives reflect four key approaches:

- Comprehensive local initiatives aimed at poverty reduction;
- Grassroots collaboration involving all sectors of the community in these initiatives;
- Identifying community assets and putting them to good use in poverty-reduction efforts;
- A commitment to learning, change and sharing learnings.

The objectives of Vibrant Communities are:

- To reduce poverty for at least 5,000 households in Canada;
- To expand the number of Canadian communities actively using the four key approaches to poverty reduction;
- To link 15 communities in a process of collaborative learning and to support up to five communities to more deliberately learn and apply these approaches to poverty reduction;
- To engage 250 non-profit organizations and government agencies, 100 low-income leaders and 100 businesses in those communities to join in implementing poverty-reduction plans; and
- To distill and document lessons learned from these initiatives so that they can be shared with others and be used to help shape policies across sectors and at all levels of government.

Three sponsors support and contribute to Vibrant Communities: The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, and Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement. Some of the initiatives have a place-based or neighbourhood focus.

Vibrant Communities Toronto: Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative (RPNI)

Built 50 years ago, Regent Park in Toronto is one of the oldest publicly-funded housing projects in Canada. With 2,100 rent-geared-to-income units, Regent Park is home to 7,500 people, 50% of whom are children under 18 years of age. The community was rapidly deteriorating: buildings needed major repairs and upgrades and the physical design of the community created challenges for maintaining a safe and vibrant community.

A two-year process led by Toronto Community Housing, in direct consultation with community residents who have been working at this issue since 1995, has resulted in a revitalization plan for the community. On March 26, 2004, Ideas that Matter hosted a community meeting to solicit input on the community plan. For the first time in history, virtually the entire community came together and expressed support for the plan to physically and socially revitalize Regent Park.
RPNI receives its primary funding from the Maytree Foundation, The Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), and the Metcalf Foundation. These funding commitments are for varying periods of time at levels ranging from $15,000 to $100,000. RPNI is in the process of seeking out other sources of funding to increase its budget to about $300,000 per year.\textsuperscript{10}

Redevelopment is planned over 10 to 12 years in 12 phases.\textsuperscript{11} The plan is based on the principle of creating a healthy community and reintegrating it with the surrounding city. It recommends introducing streets, creating large new park spaces, aligning buildings along the streets and providing opportunities for employment, education, culture and community facilities. It describes how the existing 2,087 rent-geared-to-income units will be rebuilt in phases, in a mixed-income, mixed-use neighbourhood. Another 2,500 market units are proposed, including 500 affordable ownership units. Shops, community services and space for economic development activities are also planned.

Residents, community partners and TCHC will work to develop a community strategy to guide the investment in creating Regent Park as a vibrant and transforming community. A parallel community planning process focuses on Regent Park as a:

- \textit{Learning community}, addressing literacy, language, school retention, access to technology, certification, adult learning issues;
- \textit{Working community}, providing opportunities for skills development, training, small business incubation, local enterprise;
- \textit{Healthy community}, addressing issues related to health and well-being, access to care, food and nutrition; and
- \textit{Settlement community}, supporting access and participation in services and public institutions, enabling leadership and links to social and opportunity building networks.

\textit{Vibrant Communities Calgary}

Vibrant Communities Calgary evolved from a working group of the United Way of Calgary and Area’s Sustained Poverty Reduction initiative. It has recently incorporated as a stand-alone not-for-profit company in Alberta, although it continues to work in partnership with the United Way, which also provides funding support, and MCC Employment Development (a non-profit community economic development organization that provides multiple programs to recent immigrants and Canadian-born unemployed and underemployed Calgarians). In June 2005, VCC was confirmed as one of six Vibrant Communities “Trail Builders,” a designation that comes with a three-year funding commitment and additional coaching supports.

In the past two years, Vibrant Communities Calgary has tackled and made progress on three local poverty problems: they have influenced the Government of Alberta to increase the monthly living allowance for recipients of the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) program by $50 to a maximum of $1,000, and to increase support for Alberta Works (social assistance) recipients by 5%. In addition, Vibrant Communities Calgary influenced the City of Calgary to introduce a Universal Low Income Transit Pass, for $35, and they are now lobbying the Government of Alberta to contribute funding to continue the program beyond 2006. Finally,
they succeeded in convincing the City of Calgary to adopt a “No Sweat Ethical Procurement Policy” (a fair wage policy) with a budgetary allocation. Over time this is expected to include the provision that the city purchases all goods and services from Living Wage employers.12

Vibrant Communities Surrey13

Established in 2003, Vibrant Surrey has focused on broadening the engagement of the community in this comprehensive approach to improving the quality of life for everyone living in Surrey. A key element has been the development of a three-year strategic plan, built on three main themes: community learning, community economic development and community capacity building. This process has taken a variety of formats, including study sessions, focus groups and community meetings and culminated in September in an open house attended by over 120 businesses. Since then, Vibrant Surrey convenors have been working hard to translate all they have learned into a workable plan and they should be able to bring that back to the community by March 2006.

Other highlights of recent Vibrant Surrey activities include the launch in September 2005 of the Surrey Social Purchasing Portal, as well as that of Project Comeback, a support program for working day labourers, in November 2005. Work is also underway to assess and respond to the needs of women and youth engaged in the local sex trade. In the fall of 2004, Vibrant Surrey moved into Phase II of the Vibrant Communities initiative. Coast Capital Savings and United Way of the Lower Mainland, who have supported Vibrant Surrey from the beginning, also increased their contributions and new support has come from VanCity Community Foundation.

Case Study 6: Inclusive Cities Canada14

In November 2003, five social planning organizations across Canada and the Standing Committee on Social Infrastructure of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities embarked on a multi-year initiative to enhance social inclusion in Canada. Inclusive Cities Canada (ICC) receives multi-year core funding from Social Development Canada, as well as supplementary start-up funds from the Laidlaw Foundation. The five partner cities are Burlington (ON), Edmonton, Saint John (NB), Toronto and Vancouver.

Project funding allows ICC to put in place a national coordinator and regional coordinators in the participating social planning partners. It also provides support for external consultants to ICC for fieldwork and policy development. The national coordinator and external consultants act as a central resource team.

The strategic direction for the cross-Canada initiative comes from a National Steering Committee with members drawn from the following partners: Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia (in Vancouver); Edmonton Social Planning Council; Community Development Halton; Community Social Planning Council of Toronto; and Human Development Council of Saint John, NB; in collaboration with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM).

The social planning partners have established Civic Panels to provide leadership and direction to the initiative locally. Civic Panels are made up of municipal and community leaders. This
initiative builds on previous collaborative work between the Laidlaw Foundation, the FCM and several regional social planning councils. Community “soundings” were held in 11 cities in the fall of 2002 with community and civic leaders. These soundings revealed common areas of vulnerability and exclusion in urban communities across Canada, as well as distinct issues. The findings and recommendations for action are contained in the 2003 report, *Building Inclusive Communities: Cross-Canada Perspectives and Strategies*.15

Inclusive Cities Canada conducts research and engages local leadership and community participation in order to shape public policy and institutional practices. The initiative will create a horizontal civic alliance on social inclusion across urban communities in Canada. The goals of Inclusive Cities Canada are:

- To promote social inclusion as key to the development of a Canadian urban strategy;
- To support civic capacity to build inclusive communities in which all people are able to participate as valued and contributing members;
- To secure a stronger voice for civic communities in national social policy; and
- To ensure that community voices of diversity are recognized as core Canadian ones.

The first phase of the initiative involves research, analysis and reporting. Local Civic Panels and staff are preparing civic audit reports on social inclusion which will be released in 2005. The research process included community focus groups and local soundings that examined people’s perceptions of the “inclusivity” of their city and communities in terms of:

- **Diversity**: How well do public institutions, such as local government, the police and justice system, and public education provide valued recognition and respond to diverse groups in the population?
- **Human Development**: What opportunities exist for children and youth to develop their talents, skills and capacities to contribute to the community?
- **Civic Engagement**: What are cities and communities doing to promote active participation in local government, community organizations and civic life?
- **Living Conditions**: Are there significant differences in levels of income, decent jobs, safe neighbourhoods, and the availability of affordable housing among city residents?
- **Community Services**: How well is the city served by important public services such as health care, crisis, and transportation services?

The second phase of the initiative began in the spring of 2005. It concentrates on strengthening and expanding the cross-Canada civic network and developing strategic initiatives identified as local priorities. The cross-Canada report, focusing on the promotion of policies and practices that strengthen social infrastructure and build inclusive communities and cities, was released in June 2005 at a national roundtable in Ottawa.
Case Study 7: Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force

In April 2003, the Toronto City Summit Alliance released a report calling on governments to enter into an agreement to improve social services in neighbourhoods with growing needs. The Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force was established in 2004 as a joint initiative of the City of Toronto and the United Way of Greater Toronto with support from the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario to develop a blueprint for an agreement among all levels of government to coordinate new investments in neighbourhood-based social services and facilities. On June 30, 2005, the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy was released following a year-long process that commissioned six research studies to assess specific needs in neighbourhoods across Toronto, where investments most need to be made, and how residents, neighbourhood groups and governments can find solutions to neighbourhood issues and challenges. The strategy builds on the recommendations of several publications including Enough Talk, produced by the Task Force in 2003, and the United Way’s report, Poverty by Postal Code: The Geography of Neighbourhood Poverty, released April 2004.

An Inter-Governmental Table provides the overarching governance for the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, and ensures that the strategy is politically-led and publicly accountable. It is a forum in which all orders of government can work together, and will consist of one senior elected representative from each order of government. The Inter-Governmental Table will also establish the broad goals and objectives for the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy. An Investment Board guides the implementation of the strategy across selected neighbourhoods. The board includes representatives from each level of government, from each of Toronto’s publicly-funded school boards, from the United Way of Greater Toronto and the Ontario Trillium Foundation, and community members appointed by each of the three levels of government.
Endnotes – Appendix 1


7 www.closingthedistance.ca.

8 www.vibrantcommunities.ca.

9 www.tamarackcommunity.ca/g2s2b.html.


13 Text reproduced from the Vibrant Communities website of the Tamarack Institute. Available at tamarackcommunity.ca/g2s2a.html.

14 www.inclusivecities.ca.

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