

Connections!

Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries

24 Queen's Square, Cambridge, ON N1S 1H6

February, 2000

Community Trends at the Turn of the 21st Century

The Social Planning Council spent a great deal of time during 1999 collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data that exposed some interesting trends in our local communities. As a result, a major new report is now available for purchase and four supplementary reports are available for free.

We began work in the spring of 1999 with a group of dedicated individuals from a variety of human service organizations who had indicated an interest in working with us on an update of the City's strategic plan, ***Our Common Future***. After nine months of hard work, we presented two major documents to Cambridge City Council in January 2000. One was a progress report and the other was a list of recommendations, which may function as a blueprint for action for our local communities. These are available for free while supplies last. Two additional reports are available that contain all the qualitative data that were collected from almost 150 community residents and 38 human service providers. The fifth and final report is titled "Community Trends at the Turn of the 21st Century".

Taken together, the qualitative and quantitative data show the following trends:

- An increase in the demand for seniors programs and services;
- A need for affordable, accessible and available housing/shelter for a variety of people;
- A need for improvements to the public transit system especially for people with disabilities;
- A need to continue local efforts intended to mitigate the effects of poverty and enhance people's opportunity to meet their basic needs;
- Greater cultural, ethnic and language diversity over the past few years;
- A need to further enhance a variety of opportunities for young people;
- The fast pace of population growth and its impact on the natural, built and social environments;
- A need to enhance our local efforts with and for people with mental health issues – especially children's and adolescents' mental health needs; and
- Some principles for the design and delivery of local human services given the current state of volunteerism and the current government restructuring process.

The Social Planning Council will now assist the City to implement many of the recommendations that were adopted by City Council in January 2000.

Making valid and reliable data available to the community, human service providers, funders and governments is part of the mandate of the Social Planning Council. Please call the Council if you are interested in any of the five reports produced for ***Our Common Future, Our Progress***.

This work was made possible through additional funding from the City of Cambridge and the local United Way.

IN THIS ISSUE...

Community Trends

Regional Community Trends Research

Electronics Trends Database

Cambridge Action on Homelessness

Healthy Communities Conference

Who Cares?

Did You Know....

AGM

Social Planning Council AGM - May 26, 2000 at 7:30 a.m. with breakfast

Visit our new website!! <http://www.sentex.net/~spcplan>

Regional Community Trends Research

We have been successful in our partnership with the Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo to secure funding from the Region of Waterloo to create a regional community trends database. This database idea has been discussed by the two Social Planning Councils for a number of years. Our recent work on community trends in Cambridge and North Dumfries has paved the way for us to create such a mechanism on a larger scale.

Electronic Trends Database for Cambridge and North Dumfries

Our recent "experiment" working with human service organizations on their client utilization data taught us much about the costs and benefits of using such local data for informing trend analyses. We are still slowly moving forward on creating an electronic trends database but need to secure the financial resources first.

Cambridge Action on Homelessness

Since the summer of 1999, when we released Understanding Homelessness in Waterloo Region, a group of dedicated individuals has been trying to resolve local emergency shelter issues. The Social Planning Council was approached by a variety of these organizations and asked to facilitate an action planning process. At this time, 12 organizations are involved and we meet monthly. The main goals of the Group include: creating a year-round emergency shelter in Cambridge in collaboration with Out of the Cold; networking and sharing information in order to maximize people's access to our services; liaising with other groups and organizations that are working on related issues; and working collectively on building a long range plan for emergency shelter recognizing the housing continuum upon which our work should unfold. If your organization is involved with emergency shelter issues and would like to join this group, please call the Social Planning Council or Out of the Cold.

Healthy Communities Conference

The Waterloo Region Healthy Community Good Ideas Group invites people involved in organizations or projects that are intended to enhance the economic, environmental and human conditions in our communities to "tell their stories" on Saturday April 29, 2000. This is "Chapter Three of a shared Waterloo Region story" that is being written over the course of a number of years.

The two Social Planning Councils in Waterloo Region will assist with the opening and closing of the day. It is expected that there will be some opportunity to explore the tensions between increasing pressure to think globally and the need to act locally and how this is playing itself out in our Region.

Who Cares?

Over the next few weeks you may be hearing about this initiative, which the Social Planning Council is hoping to launch. With the current debate about government restructuring all around us, the Social Planning Council Board of Directors believes that it is uniquely situated to offer data and information that will help inform the debate about the design and delivery of human services specifically.

We have already collected information from many local organizations during the past few years which provide a foundation for us to engage human service providers in a discussion centered around the following question, "what do you not want to lose in any government restructuring process?" For example, we already know that people are concerned about a potential move to centralize human services. At this time we are considering a quick fax around to many organizations and some round-table discussions.

The Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo will be working on the same initiative for the five other municipalities in the Region.



Did you know ...

... that there is an international women's march being organized?

World Women's March 2000 is an opportunity for organizations around the world to talk and take actions on issues of poverty and violence against women. The World Women's March 2000 will be launched on International women's day on march 8th and culminate in a march at the United Nations in New York on October 17th – the International Day for the Elimination of Poverty. Here in Canada, labour and women's groups will be using the international campaign to hold events and integrate the themes of reducing poverty and reducing violence against women into our existing events and work. The goals are to build awareness and work for change, both here in Canada and around the world. The March has been endorsed by over 135 countries and 2200 organizations. The Social Planning Council has received information for the Cambridge area, from the following organizations Ontario Federation of Labour, Canadian Labour Congress, and the Ontario Coalition for Social Justice.

... that income disparities among families continue to grow?

In 1996, the poorest Canadian families brought home 13% of all earnings, down from 17% in 1989. A child's chances of living in poverty in the 1990s increased if they lived with young parents, a lone parent, or if their parent was a member of a visible minority.
(Source: Canadian Council on Social Development, *The Progress of Canada's Children into the Millennium*, 1999-2000)

... that job growth in the "health and social sector" is leading the way?

Job growth in the "health and social sector" classification is leading the way, according to Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey. Over 88% of new jobs in January 2000 were in this sector. In a twelve month period, jobs in this "health and social sector" classification were at a higher rate than any other classification.
(Source: *Community Action: Canada's Community Service Reporter*, Feb. 14, 2000 – quote from pg. 1)

... that disability is a strong indicator of poverty?

The connection between disability, poverty and gender is clear. In 1995, 36.2% of women aged 15 to 64 with disabilities in Canada were poor, compared to 18.5% of women without disabilities. A similar pattern was observed among men, although the rates were slightly lower for men.
(Source: Canadian Council on Social Development, *Perception*, Vol. 23, No. 3, Dec. 1999, pg. 7).

... that there is a possible legal challenge to the federal government's decision to remove the protections of the Canada Assistance Plan?

The Charter Committee on Poverty Issues (CCPI) which is co-ordinated by the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA) is a national coalition of low-income activists and advocates. They have been working for a long time on the possibility of a federal legal challenge regarding the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP). CAP was crucial for low income working people because it required that provincial social assistance programs provide benefits which reasonably covered basic requirements and did not force people to work against their will. Many of the devastating cuts to social assistance programs and the workfare programs implemented in many provinces since 1995 could have been challenged as violations of CAP. The government claimed that the new Health and Social Service Transfer that replaced CAP provided 'flexibility' and that new agreements would protect social programs, but no protections are emerging. Canada's decision to revoke CAP was strongly condemned last December by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The group has decided that it may be time to proceed with a challenge.
(Source: quoted from *National Anti-Poverty Organization News*, No. 73, Jan. 2000, pg. 5)

... that our Executive Director

is available to assist community groups, funders and government departments

with:

- ◆ developing inclusive public participation strategies
- ◆ designing and implementing community based research projects
- ◆ finding useful data for program planning purposes
- ◆ creating workable community development plans
- ◆ analyzing community trends
- ◆ analyzing public policy and its impacts
- ◆ running workshops, seminars and conferences



Social Planning Council Mission

As a voluntary independent voice, the Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries will actively participate in building and strengthening our community through research, analysis, facilitation and education.

Organizational Goals

- a) To predict, identify and address gaps in community services.
- b) To have equitable and accessible opportunities for all residents to impact on decision-making processes.
- c) To facilitate and support positive social change through partnerships with other organizations.
- d) To facilitate the empowerment and capacity building processes within our community.
- e) To conduct public policy analysis in order to educate and encourage action as appropriate.

Social Planning Council Services

The Social Planning Council focuses its work in the following three service areas. It is noteworthy that these services are not mutually exclusive. For example, the Council might begin community-based research work with a group of organizations, but eight months later the process is focusing on the implementation of recommendations intended to bring about desirable social change.

- **Community Research and Analysis**
- **Education, Action and Implementation**

Recent Publications List

- Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Trends at the Turn of the 21st Century (February 2000)
- Our Common Future, Our Progress: Report to Cambridge City Council (January 2000)
- Our Common Future, Our Progress: Areas Requiring Action Recommended by Our Common Future Advisory Committee to Cambridge City Council (January 2000)
- Our Common Future, Our Progress, Content Analysis of Focus Groups and Public Meetings (December 1999)
- Our Common Future, Our Progress: Human Service Provider Survey Results (December 1999)
- Legal Aid Issues in Cambridge and North Dumfries (August 1999)
- Homelessness in Cambridge (August 1999)
- Understanding Homelessness in Waterloo Region (June 1999)
- Cambridge Community Systems: Accomplishments & Lessons (Dec. 1998)
- Waterloo Region Quality of Life Index: A Discussion Paper (Oct. 1998)
- Information for Youth in Cambridge & North Dumfries (Oct. 1998, wallet size)
- 1997 Cambridge & North Dumfries Social Services Inventory (Mar. 1998)

Connections! is published three times per year by the Public Relations Committee of the Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries. *Deadline for submissions to the next Newsletter is May 1, 2000.* All correspondence to the Council, including membership and publications order forms, may be sent to:

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