

**Social Issues & Trends in Cambridge:  
A Preliminary Update**

**January 2002**

Submitted to United Way Allocations Committee and the City of Cambridge

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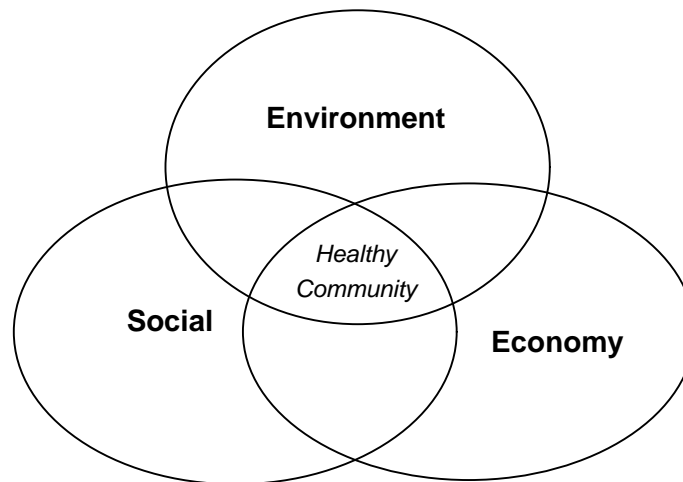
## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries “*Social Issues and Trends in Cambridge*” report. This is a preliminary report with the plan to develop and release a more extensive report in early 2003, including 2001, Census data and indicator data based on the Quality of Life model developed by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

The purpose of this report is to provide information on social trends to local funders and policy makers so that these decision makers are able to make informed choices. Specifically, the United Way of Cambridge and North Dumfries requested that the Social Planning Council create a report to outline key social needs to their Allocations Committee. In addition, this report will provide a forum for the discussion of social service issues including unmet needs and community capacities by groups such as the Social Issues Advisory (SIA) Committee - a Committee of the Social Planning Council, and funded by United Way and the City of Cambridge. This report will allow the SIA to begin a process of describing and prioritizing social service issues and capacities for the Cambridge area.

It should be recognized that this report is a snap shot of the social trends in Cambridge and North Dumfries. In fact, a more complete picture of the overall health of a community would include more information on economic and environmental indicators (see the Healthy Communities diagram below). The timeline for this report did not allow a complete update of all social data that is currently available and included in our *Cambridge and North Dumfries Community Trends at the Turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, released in February 2000. However, the data included in this report has been identified through a number of data collection efforts including the *Our Common Future, Our Progress* released in January 2000, a survey of community agencies conducted in May 2001 and a discussion at Social Issues Advisory Committee meetings in October 2001 and January 2002 (see *Appendix: Draft Social Issues Advisory Group Issues Diagram & Issues Summary*).

The Social Planning Council has a rich history of providing data and information to social service organizations, policy makers and funders. The Social Planning Council believes that research on the health and well-being of communities, with an emphasis on measuring the progress being made and where more work is needed, is critical for long-term community sustainability. Increasingly the Social Planning Council has been utilizing the Healthy Communities Model, as shown in the diagram below, to describe the interconnectedness and complexity of social, health, community, environmental, and economic issues for a community. We will be working with the community during 2002, to examine more fully these interrelationships and prepare to produce a more comprehensive report in early 2003.



**Healthy Communities Model**  
Source: Healthy Communities model in *Indicators that Count*, 1999 by Trevor Hancock.

Through several public meetings in 2001, the following list has been identified as important social issues in Cambridge.

- Youth<sup>1</sup>
- Seniors<sup>1</sup>
- Multiculturalism
- Community Health
- Basic Needs
- Literacy
- Volunteerism
- Accessibility
- Transportation
- Violence
- Poverty
- Childcare

This list provides us with a manageable outline for a preliminary report on local social issues<sup>2</sup>. In order to provide context to the social issues explored in this report we have also provided some general demographic information in the first section.

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<sup>1</sup> The Youth, Seniors, and Multiculturalism issues are slightly different in focus than the other issues noted here in that they are a collection of numerous issues or concerns that affect a certain group within the community. In this report those groups are noted in the Demographics section and in other sections where appropriate.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the sections in this report, focusing on the list of key social issues, currently do not have updated data or a comprehensive collection of indicators. Ongoing research and understanding in all of these areas is necessary. Air quality was also identified as an important issue. Although it certainly has social implications it was not included in this report, which focused on the social/community sector.