



Scarborough Renaissance Conference

The Post Recession Economy

April 14, 2012

Final Report



Renaissance Conference, 2012

The Post Recession Economy

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**1. INTRODUCTION - by Conference Co-Chairs:
Murray Johnston and Ian Elder**

This year was our 26th annual Renaissance Conference. The conference was sponsored by the following Scarborough Members of Provincial Parliament – Tracy MacCharles, Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti, Margaret Best, Brad Duguid, and Soo Wong. It should be noted that the conference was organized and run by volunteers from all the Scarborough riding associations.

The theme of this year's highly successful conference was the Post Recession Economy. This year we were rewarded by a thoughtful, wise and energetic speech by the CEO of Centennial College, Ann Buller.

Very dynamic and productive discussions took place in the various workshops which included presentations by experts in three areas:

1. Economy and Employment
2. Healthcare Reform and Sustainability
3. Youth Engagement.

As co-Chairs, we would like to thank all the members of the organizing committee, the presenters, and panellists who so freely gave their time and expertise in making our conference a success.

We would like to thank the Chairs of the morning workshops – MPP's Bas Balkissoon, Margaret Best and Tracy MacCharles and Bill Tatsis, assistant to Lorenzo Berardinetti MPP. Also thanks are due to the Hon. Brad Duguid and to Soo Wong MPP for contributing their knowledge and experience to their respective workshops

On behalf of the organizing committee, we were especially grateful to Gerry Phillips for his vision and dedication in hosting the

Renaissance Conference for a quarter century and for agreeing to be the Conference Honourary Chairperson . We were very pleased to have Gerry speak about the vision and purpose of these conferences. Over the years we have covered a wide range of subjects and gained considerable insights from many learned people as panellists and keynote speakers.

It is to be hoped that the Renaissance conference will continue for many years to come to honour Gerry Phillips' legacy and build on the interest and involvement of all the Scarborough ridings.

Of course, the conference would not be possible without the participation of the concerned and dedicated citizens who come to share their views for the benefit of the community.

Respectfully Submitted

Murray Johnston and Ian Elder,
Conference Co-Chairs

2. SUMMARY OF ADDRESS BY KEYNOTE SPEAKER – Ann Buller, CEO Centennial College

The Way Forward – Education & Training is Key

In her keynote address, Ann Buller focussed on the need to provide people with access to appropriate training to prepare them for the varying challenges they will face throughout life – employment (self and/or company), life long learning, raising a family and engaging in society perhaps in a volunteer role.

She spoke about the role of colleges, including her own, in preparing people for employment and for creating new enterprises. Ann Buller was steadfast in her belief that colleges must meet the economic and social inclusion imperatives facing our country. Colleges must prepare students not just for employment in their field of study, but also for their role as global citizens. She noted that in today's volatile economic climate, change was becoming the new normal. Indeed, we should embrace it. In fact, "Centennial asks each grad - are you ready to change the world?".

Ms. Buller talked about the necessity of training graduates to be the initiators of change in the field they are entering and seeking ways to engage and educate people who have been left behind - to get these individuals into higher education. The pride of colleges should come from who we bring in and not who we exclude.

All in all Ann gave a rousing, energetic and thought provoking speech. As one attendee noted "if Ann Buller's smarts and energy could be bottled, we would have a magic potion indeed."

3. WORKSHOP: Economy and Employment

Chair **Bill Tatsis,**
Office of Lorenzo Berardinetti,
MPP ScarboroughSouthwest

Panellists **Brad Duguid MPP Scarborough Centre**
Minister of Economic Development and Innovation

Dave Ryan
Co-chair of GTA Promotions Committee
and Mayor of Pickering

Dr. John Harris
Chair of Accounting and Financial Services,
Centennial College

Key Challenges

*What can be done to reduce unemployment?
How do we encourage innovation to generate new jobs, transform
and grow the economy and ensure people are suitably trained?
Helping newcomers contribute to the economy.*

Opening Remarks

Brad Duguid compared where Ontario stands against other jurisdictions throughout the world. Economic conditions are currently volatile which is causing concern worldwide due to continued uncertainty in Europe. Ontario has done a good job in responding to these concerns by relying on our strong fundamentals and playing to our strengths and our competitive advantage.

Representing the GTMA (Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance), **Mayor Ryan** said that it is obvious that we need to grow our economy and

have more job growth. We must work together to increase our job base. We need to work together more collaboratively and we should start by integrating development with planning.

As Program Chair in the School of Business, **Dr. Harris** felt that Centennial College is a good barometer of the current climate and an indicator of potential solutions to the current economic malaise. His School has a strong focus on the jobs currently in the workforce with many trade programs involving a renewed partnership between College and Universities.

The key challenge facing us is to reduce unemployment and Brad noted that we should learn some lessons from Europe to foresee what could happen if we were not to deal with the fiscal situation here. Ontario has good economic fundamentals of an educated, trained work force, competitive tax environment and continued investment in our infrastructure. The Ontario Government is determined to get Ontario's books balanced by 2017/2018 and thereby rebuild a strong economy using our economic fundamentals as a base.

Dr. Harris agreed with the Ontario Budget's focus on reducing the deficit and encouraging growth. We have to create opportunities for economic activity so that companies will need to hire employees to complete work projects. Furthermore, we have to ensure there are sufficient suitably trained people available and ready to work on the work projects which are planned or underway. Work plans must include and identify any training that may be required.

"Jobs without people is equivalent to people without jobs!"

Open Discussion

In open discussion, several aspects of the economy were covered:

Helping newcomers integrate

In the Healthcare field, Dave Ryan believed that we have to make it easier for foreign trained doctors to acquire accreditation in Ontario and be used in the workforce here. Brad noted the existence of many independent regulatory bodies (societies, associations). This creates a complex accreditation process in which foreign trained professionals find it difficult and cumbersome to navigate. However, the Ontario Fairness Commission under the Leadership of Commissioner Jean Augustine is working with regulatory bodies to improve and streamline the licensing procedures in the various professions. This is having positive effects.

For further information, please consult the Commission's Licence to Succeed report – see <http://www.fairnesscommissioner.ca/en/downloads> .

Brad noted that there needs to be better awareness of the importance of immigrant contribution to the required renewal of our economy. Of course, we should ensure newcomers are better prepared to join the workforce through proper training, streamlined accreditation and the elimination of barriers to entrepreneurship

The Value of Apprenticeship

Many workshop participants advocated more apprenticeship programs to facilitate entry into the workplace of suitably trained people. Brad indicated that although there are a number of apprenticeship programs, there is a lack of science based apprenticeship programs. We need to take a careful look at training course content to ensure it fits the needs of the changing workplace.

Jobs for Young People

Concern was raised about how we get young people into the workforce. Dr. John Harris emphasized the importance of getting a foot in the door and obtaining work experience through cooperative programmes such as those at Centennial College. There is an 80% hiring rate for graduates

from Centennial College. Co-operative experiences combined with skills learning programmes have produced positive results.

Training to suit the new economy

It was generally agreed that we need to ensure people are suitably trained or retrained for the jobs required in today's economy. Dr. John Harris noted that a significant number of students have completed University before coming to college for the graduate programs. There is Program Advisory Committee (PAC) in place to make sure that the courses and the jobs connect.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship

It was felt that the biggest challenge facing us is how to encourage greater innovation. There is much research into innovation but the adoption of innovative ideas is slow in the world of commerce. Our big weakness is a lack of entrepreneur culture. We tend to train people to find jobs but don't train them to create jobs

Encouraging Small Business

As small business is a major contributor to the growth of the economy and the generation of new jobs, a question was raised about action to help small and medium sized business. It was noted that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce have programs in place for small businesses, one to help businesses comply with Ontario's customer service standard and one which assists with the integration of Foreign Trained Professionals. Placing job applicants into training positions in a small business operation requires the business owner to fulfill his obligation to provide a positive and rewarding experience for such employees.

For more information, please consult: <http://occ.on.ca/programs/>

Develop New Opportunities

It was agreed we need to assist people and companies develop and become aware of opportunities and open up the trade missions. There is an Angel Tax Credit which encourages individuals to invest into start up companies. Looking at the global economy, we need to look beyond the borders. A good example is Samco, building parts for solar panels that are exported to India.

Workshop Conclusions

It was agreed we need to create the right climate to attract investment, create jobs and grow the economy. A strong economy creates jobs for Ontarians and protects the services that matter most to Ontario families — health care and education. To increase innovation and productivity the Government decided to create the Jobs and Prosperity Council which will identify and advise the government on ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of approximately \$2-billion worth of tax and discretionary incentives. As announced in the 2012 Budget, the Council will be composed of leaders from business, labour, academia, government and non-government organizations and will report directly to the Premier. The Jobs and Prosperity Council will generate new ideas and approaches aimed at improving Ontario's long-term productivity and competitiveness. There is certainly a need for practical ways to translate ideas into production.

For more information, please consult <http://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2012/05/strong-action-for-ontarios-economy.html>

Note – since the Renaissance Conference it has been announced that Gordon Nixon, President and CEO of the Royal Bank of Canada, will be the Chair of the Jobs and Prosperity Council– see: <http://occ.on.ca/2012/occ-welcomes-appointment-of-gordon-nixon-as-jobs-and-prosperity-council-chair/>

The workshop participants did stress the need to encourage a more coordinated approach to training people to prepare them for suitable employment.

4. WORKSHOP – Healthcare Reform and Sustainability

- Chair** **Bas Balkissoon,**
MPP Scarborough Rouge River
- Panellists** **Tracy MacCharles**
MPP Pickering – Scarborough East
- Adrianna Tetley**
Executive Director for the
Association of Ontario Health Centres
- Deborah Hammons**
CEO Central East,
Local Health Integration Networks
- Amelia McCutcheon**
Vice President, Cardiac, Cancer and Critical Care
Rouge Valley Health Care System

Key Challenges

How can we reform health care services?

Opening Remarks

Tracy MacCharles noted that much good progress has been made in healthcare in the last few years and that passing the 2012 budget will help protect healthcare in challenging economic times. She noted there are many challenges to the long term sustainability of Health Care due to aging demographics and fiscal constraints. The focus of the Ontario Government is the “Right Care, Right Time and Right Place”. People do need to receive medical care suited to their needs, when they need it and at an appropriate location.

Adrianna Tetley said the focus should be on the creation of well run team based care and reorienting the healthcare field toward primary patient centred care. She felt that we need to encourage people to take more interest in their own well-being. Healthcare System Navigators could help patients and their families arrange and coordinate their healthcare.

Deborah Hammons agreed with the Healthcare system becoming more patient focussed and for the patient to become fully involved all the way through her care. Patients would be encouraged to make wise choices to improve their lifestyles. We need a careful analysis of the way healthcare is delivered so as to make it more effective and tailored to the patient.

Amelia McCutcheon spoke of the critical need for multi-disciplinary teams working together to provide better and wiser care. These teams would include professionals such as doctors, nurses, nurse-practitioners, radiologists, chiropractors, pharmacists and dentists. Medical services should be provided in a one-stop shopping environment with the focus on prevention and primary care.

Open Discussion

Several aspects of Healthcare provision and reform were discussed:

Public Vs Private Healthcare

A misconception exists that healthcare in Ontario is only being publicly funded. In fact, the government provides most of the funding for the healthcare system but it is privately delivered by most medical practitioners.

Resource Planning

Where do we spend our healthcare dollars? This is an ongoing debate within the healthcare system and with the general public. Do we need more doctors or do we need to use our nurses and nurse-practitioners more effectively? The community healthcare centres are proving to be

very effective in addressing the ever-increasing demands of service and prevention of serious diseases. Investments in electronic record keeping and sharing of information are beginning to show dramatic results.

User Fees

Evidence is available to show that user fees are not the answer to cutting healthcare costs. The poorest or under-privileged in society often make the most demands on the system and they don't have the money for service. The general consensus of the group was that this was not worth pursuing at this time. Reform of the system is required but there should be more focus on primary care and developing more integrated and co-ordinated delivery systems. These reforms need to take place in our own healthcare practices at home, in our doctor's offices, and in our hospitals.

Patient Records

Most of the attendees felt quite strongly that they should have access to their own patient records. It was felt that all medical practitioners should be able to provide medical information and test results like we have access to our financial records. If patients are to take on more responsibility for their health, then quick and easy access to personal healthcare information is a fundamental issue. Electronic record-keeping should be encouraged within the medical profession. We must, however, ensure the security of personal medical information.

Long Wait Times and Need for More Doctors

This area is a major criticism of public healthcare in Ontario. Health Force Ontario is very successful in getting doctors placed around the province. A new program is fast-tracking foreign doctors into residency programs within hospitals and healthcare centres. While everyone still complains about the wait times, Ontario wait times are the best across Canada. Healthcare centres across the province are helping to reduce the number of visits to Emergency in local hospitals. The provision of a Healthcare

System Navigator to help patients obtain the right help in the right place and the right time has been suggested.

Elder Care

Elder care is becoming an area of increasing concern. With our aging population, even greater demands will be made upon all aspects of the healthcare system. Long term stays in a hospital setting are not economically feasible.

Homecare has been successfully used for many years especially through Community Health Care services. Several success stories were shared during the discussions. The complexity of issues however, seems to indicate that a variety of service models may have to be implemented as “one size does not fit all”. While many agree that patient care and recuperation in the patient’s home is preferable, that is not always possible given the structure of the family and the resulting impact on the healthcare budget. The concept of a “navigator” to co-ordinate patient care was raised again. This is a concept that is being actively pursued within the healthcare system.

Services for the elderly need to be improved to maintain quality of life as long as possible. We understand Family health teams and local health networks are looking at the issue of looking after people towards the end of the life cycle.

Workshop Conclusions

It was generally agreed that change is happening in our healthcare system –and it is a change for the better. Fiscal responsibility and the public’s healthcare expectations are the driving forces. The system is not sustainable in its present form. Healthcare provision should be more

patient centred thereby encouraging joint patient-medical professional participation and patient involvement in their own medical outcomes. It should be emphasized that electronic records are essential for integrated healthcare and better outcomes.

It was no surprise to learn that people living at the lowest socio-economic level are the greatest users in the healthcare system. Income is widely seen as the most important of the critical determinants of health and a glaring cause of health inequality. Until income, social status, education and literacy are seriously addressed along with more emphasis placed on primary healthcare, our system will continue to struggle to meet the ever-demanding expectations of the public. The challenge to improve is as much to us as individuals as it is to our healthcare providers.

There was a general consensus that fundamental reform of the provision of health care is necessary and although some reforms are underway there is still much to be done especially to encourage coordinated and integrated patient focussed primary care. The use of a Healthcare System Navigator would fit in with the desired aim of creating an integrated system.

Further information on the progress in hand and being considered can be obtained from the following sources:

The Association of Ontario Health Centres’ report on the Second Stage of Medicare -
http://www.aohc.org/index.php?ci_id=2203&la_id=1

Ontario’s Action Plan to transform health care:
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/news/release/2012/jan/nr_20120130_1.aspx

5. WORKSHOP – Youth Engagement

Chair **Margarett Best**
 MPP Scarborough Guildwood

Panellists**Soo Wong**
 MPP Scarborough Agincourt
 Minister of Economic Development and Innovation

Dr Gervan Fearon
 Dean, Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education

George Xu
 Student and winner of the Ontario Youth Volunteer Service Award

Key Challenge

How do we involve youth in society?

Opening Remarks

Soo Wong has been a student leader, school trustee and community leader. As an immigrant child, her parents instilled in her the value of working hard. Indeed, as a student, Soo didn't like to be a passenger in life; she wanted to be a driver.

Young people need to feel important and relevant so that they will be engaged.

Dr. Gervan spoke of the value of engagement in a good education, physical fitness, good employment and family life. He also noted that post secondary education provides access to 70% of jobs. We need to pay particular attention to Youth Unemployment – being in the workforce improves self esteem.

George Xu , as a student, stressed the importance of getting involved from a young age. He noted that not everything can be taught by a textbook – that many valuable skills are learned through participation in volunteer activities.

Volunteering gives an idea of what one might want to do in the future. It encourages youth to channel passion into success. Volunteering teaches one to manage time effectively. Many students do not know how to get started (they don't know where to go). Some parents are focused on marks; they are concerned that volunteering will cause marks to fall. There is a need to get parents involved and to understand there is more to education than marks.

The panellists challenged parents to set high expectations for their children's success; an approach that has been demonstrated to be highly correlated with youth engagement and goal setting. The panellists themselves acknowledged the powerful influence their own parents had on their personal drive to achieve, to work hard and to give back to the community. That parental support was a key motivator and extended across cultural differences. They agreed that parents who had continued their own educational pursuits tended to be passionate about setting the bar higher for their own children's academic achievement.

Open Discussion

Importance of Mental and Physical Health

The panellists and others addressed the importance of both physical and mental health as underlying factors in youth success. Healthy, fit youth were identified as having better physical and mental reserves to learn more readily and contribute outside of school through volunteering and giving back to their community. Dr. Fearon noted that mental health as an issue is only now becoming socially acceptable to address in public. It is necessary for our educational institutions to provide avenues to discuss mental health with experts in the field being made available to provide appropriate training.

Dropout Rates in Youth

Concern was expressed over access to Post Secondary Education (PSE) for people who drop out and don't finish high school. We need to provide easier access for such people to get into post secondary education.

Most colleges and universities allow for people over 19 or for those who have been out of school for more than 2 years, to register as mature students. There is financial help in the form of bridging programs and grants. Post secondary education provides the best chance for improving access to job opportunities.

The key to reducing the dropout rate is to improve the mutual involvement of parents and teachers in order to involve youth in all aspects of life. We have to recognize that not all parents feel comfortable in such a role because they did not have post secondary education themselves.

Parental Participation in the School System

Children need mentors both within and outside of the school system, to foster academic success. As George Xu said, parents need to be interested and ask their kids how they are doing in school. Parents, teachers and students need to foster greater involvement. This joint involvement should start early in the educational life cycle.

Through joint discussion, we can work to improve literacy, social responsibility and mutual respect. We need to identify signs and symptoms early and address them. There is a need to work to prevent students dropping out of school by making education more rewarding.

Youth panellist, George Xu identified time management as being important in addition to achievement. He encouraged youth to also take a leadership role to engage their parents in taking an interest in their children's educational pursuits.

Youth Unemployment

Some families don't see the benefits of a higher education when there is the opportunity to earn some money instead of continuing in school. Dr Fearon noted that the data shows that the higher the level of education, the lower the risk of unemployment. Soo Wong noted that a purpose of education is to provide skills and knowledge. These attributes can be applied to whatever job opportunities arise whether new or old technology.

Cooperative and Internship Programmes (e.g. Apprenticeships)

Participants wanted to know more about co-operative, internship and apprenticeship programs being offered at college. We need to show how beneficial higher education is and encourage more such programs and more involvement. We need to educate parents about the value of such programmes when related to job opportunities.

Democratic Participation

Some participants wondered about how to engage young people in our civic life, through democratic activity. George Xu believed that having Mock Elections at school exposed students to voting and could lead to more engaged voting habits later.

It was agreed we need to engage youth in all aspects of life but, we need to recognize that getting young people engaged means listening to and valuing their ideas, which may be challenging, but would be a force for progress.

Flexibility for the Future

Dr. Fearon noted that in the future by the time workers are at mid career they may have been through 3 – 5 jobs. People need flexibility to work in a rapidly changing workplace. He also noted that although we are not good at forecasting what jobs will be needed in the future,

we should ensure education focuses on skills, rather than particular jobs. Flexibility is key.

Workshop Conclusions

From the foregoing discussions it is evident that there are many factors which could encourage Youth Engagement and thereby improve their standing in life and prepare them for the future.

- Improve awareness of the benefits of higher education to enable youth to cope with life's challenges (eg. work, family, community, health).
- Encourage mutual involvement of students, parents and teachers in planning the appropriate education of young people.
- Participation in volunteer activities is seen as very worthwhile and should be better promoted as it fosters a more productive and cooperative community.
- Allow youth to take a lead role in all the above aspects to encourage youth Initiative and responsibility.

6. Overview of Conference – by Ian Elder, Editor

Throughout the Conference, it became evident that the participants were keenly aware of the depth of the recession and realized that innovative, practical solutions were needed. In the case of young people, unemployment for them hovered above 14 per cent. However, just as concerned were seniors and average middle class workers unable to find work. Some businesses have had to stop hiring in order to weather the economic conditions.

Conference participants had the difficult task of trying to find solutions to the current economic challenges. With the objective of fostering useful innovation and productivity, the Ontario government has established the Jobs and Prosperity Council. Essentially, the Council was given the task to search out and encourage innovation and new and more efficient ways of producing goods and services. Generally, the three workshops tended to focus upon finding approaches which would investigate new ways to awaken employment opportunities.

In the Healthcare Reform and Sustainability workshop, participants realized the need to re-engineer the provision of healthcare so that it is focussed on the patient with the emphasis on primary care. There was also much support for a System navigator to help patients obtain the right care at the right time in the right place.

Impressively, youth engaged wholeheartedly in the challenge presented by the Conference. Much was learned from their approach to the problems presented by the recession. Remarkably, youth could clearly see the fundamental need for people to engage and work together toward their common goal. Young people truly believed that the success of any venture would depend upon working collaboratively. They noted that change is vital and must be embraced. "Give us an opportunity and we will take up the challenge", said one participant.

7. Acknowledgements and Appreciation

The organizers of the 2012 Renaissance Conference would like to express their appreciation for the contributions of the following:

Recorders and Facilitators – Rohit Singh, Anna Paoella, Joseph Guiyab, Bill Tatsis, Peter Vanderyagt and Bob Bedford deserve thanks for their diligent note taking of speeches and discussions and for assisting with the proceedings of the various workshops.

Planning and Administration – We were very grateful for the wise council provided by the representatives of the various riding associations including Bob Bedford, Ian Daly, Allan Cobb, Doris Ward, Viresh Mathur, Hratch Aynedjian, Jo-Anne Linton, Salma Zahid, Samia Khandakar, Anne-Marie Thompson, Stacey Berry, Jason Liang and Scott Maxwell.