

# *Renaissance Conference*



## **FINAL REPORT 2013**



**Theme: Living in Urban Centres**

Venue: Scarborough Civic Centre 150 Borough Drive,  
Toronto, ON M1P 4N7

Conference held on Saturday October 19, 2013

# Final Report of the Renaissance Conference 2013

Held October 19, 2013

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# 1. INTRODUCTION BY CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS

## Murray Johnston and Ian Elder

Dear Readers,

This year was our 27<sup>th</sup> annual Renaissance Conference, and a very successful one it was!. Conference organizers are grateful for contributions and assistance rendered by the following Members of Provincial Parliament – Brad Duguid, Bas Balkissoon, Mitzie Hunter, Tracy MacCharles (represented by Kofi Achampong), Joe Dickson and Soo Wong. It should be noted that the conference was organized and run by volunteers from various riding associations.

The theme of this year's conference was "**Living in Urban Centres**". This year we were rewarded by a thought-provoking and entertaining speech by the CEO of the Greater Toronto CivicAction Alliance, John Tory. Very dynamic and productive discussions took place in the various workshops which included presentations by experts in three areas that are very relevant at this time:

1. Transportation Gridlock in Urban Centres
2. Home Ownership Protection
3. Youth and Employment

This report is being distributed to all conference participants, speakers, panellists and is being submitted to the Ontario Government for its consideration. We believe our findings (as summarized on page 15 of this report) should prove useful in developing and implementing real solutions to the issues discussed at the conference. The electronic version of this report will be available at the Renaissance Conference website at <http://renaissanceconference.ca>

As Co-Chairs, we would like to thank all the members of the organizing committee (see names on last page of this report), the presenters, and panellists who so freely contributed their time and expertise to make the conference a success. We were especially grateful to Kofi Achampong, Policy Advisor to Tracy MacCharles, as he stepped in as a panellist at the last minute.

It was also great to see the retired Gerry Phillips in attendance. Gerry, of course, is well known for his service as an MPP for Scarborough-Agincourt for many years but also for his vision and dedication in hosting the Renaissance Conference for over a quarter century. Over the years, we have covered a wide range of topics relative to that time, and gained considerable insights from many learned people as panellists and keynote speakers.

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

Respectfully submitted,



Murray Johnston and Ian Elder  
Conference Co-Chairs

## **2. SUMMARY OF ADDRESS BY KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

### **John Tory, CEO Greater Toronto CivicAction Alliance *Let's work together!***

His entrance was highly anticipated as everyone wanted to hear what John Tory, voluntary Chair of CivicAction, lawyer and broadcaster had to say. As the keynote speaker for the Renaissance Conference, the crowd was all ears even some with cameras, pens and notepads in hand. Attendees had heard all about transportation gridlock, home ownership protection and youth and employment earlier in the day from experts in the field. So it was somewhat anticipated that John's wrap-up speech would be the icing on the cake.

The Hon. Brad Duguid, MPP for Scarborough Centre and Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, had the honour of introducing John Tory. One could tell just how eager the audience was to hear from the former leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. They were delighted to hear some of the stories and quips of the sparring in the legislature in years gone by, all in good natured politician style. John made special mention of his encounters with and respect for former cabinet minister, Gerry Phillips, who was among the audience.

Mr. Tory said that the Renaissance Conference was democracy at its finest and complimented the organizers and speakers for their efforts. He cautioned governments not to keep reinventing the wheel. "Take the initiatives that work, and replicate" was his advice. John focussed his speech on transportation, youth employment and priority neighbourhoods. He noted that Toronto has fallen behind in the provision of good transportation. He praised the previous government for restarting public financing of transit in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). John urged the government not to falter but to continue working with and supporting Metrolinx, as it strives to improve public transportation in the area. He felt that politicians should let the experts implement their plans and to do so in a way that progress would be made each year.

He said we constantly need to review our accountability framework; we should put strict accountability and audit procedures around initiatives to avoid mistakes of the past. He believes the time has come for the Ontario Government to adopt performance measures and more transparency to ensure that government agencies are delivering what they are being paid to do. John reiterated that the Ontario Government has to be bold because people want strong government with sensible solutions that works collaboratively. Government has a chance to improve the lives of people.

John indicated that transportation is the most important topic on people's mind, given the traffic gridlock that Toronto and the GTHA are facing. We need to take the politics out of it! The politicians should provide the money then let the experts do what they are good at (with proper oversight, of course). John also provided other simple ideas to relieve congestion and help get traffic moving in the GTHA such as synchronizing traffic signals to go with the flow of traffic. He said that our signal system was set up 50 years ago and it is in dire need of overhaul. We need to keep making progress each year in the provision of public transportation so that we are not left behind with a deteriorating infrastructure and a growing population.

John also reminded us that improvements do not come free. There is a cost to everything that is worth doing and that Ontarians will be happy in the end to go through short term pain for long term gain and he mentioned that . Premier Wynne should be commended for raising the issue of paying for improvements.

### **3. WORKSHOP: TRANSPORTATION GRIDLOCK**

**Chair:** Joe Dickson, MPP Ajax-Pickering  
**Panellists:** Mitzie Hunter, MPP Scarborough Guildwood  
Bruce McCuaig, CEO Metrolinx  
Dr. Gordon Chong, Former Vice Chair, Toronto Transit Commission

#### **Key Challenge**

Given that transportation gridlock affects economic growth and productivity, and family life, what are some practical solutions that could be pursued?

#### **Opening Remarks**

In her opening remarks Mitzie Hunter noted that gridlock has been identified by CivicAction as affecting the quality of life and a major impediment to a well functioning city. To tackle the problem of gridlock, Mitzie said that we should look at transportation from a system point of view and recognize that travel patterns have changed. Travelling north from Toronto is now a bigger issue than the original southerly flow. She noted that the Government supports the "Big Move" strategic plan being put forward by Metrolinx as a way to provide more efficient movement of people and goods and thereby improve people's health and quality of life throughout the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

The aim of the Big Move is to design and build a true transit network, one which is interconnected and based on a multi-modal approach. Of course, we do have to obtain the funds to do this work and secure support from the general public as stakeholders.

Mitzie suggested we look at how public support was obtained for similar transit work in Los Angeles. This was done by reducing their system plans to individual smaller component projects which were easier to understand and to manage. We should tie these individual projects to employment needs and opportunities.

Bruce McCuaig said an obvious indicator of our transportation problem was that our commute time has risen and that we now have the longest average commute of 83 minutes per commuter which results in a cost of \$6 billion. Bruce said this has happened because of 30 years of underinvestment in the transportation infrastructure. He agreed with Mitzie that traffic patterns have changed due to the relocation of employment. Metrolinx's "Big Move" is a systematic approach to solving the problem. Bruce noted that we have only started on the way to creating an integrated transit system. However, the challenge is now to ensure funding of a system sufficient to build and operate. There is no dedicated revenue so we have to raise more money, perhaps by public-private partnerships and/or revenue tools such as a fuel tax.

Gordon Chong said that we must take action without delay to create a system which should involve a sensible balance of private (cars) and public transportation (transit). Much time has been lost already as system expansion has been spoken about for many years but these plans were not implemented. He cautioned that planning projections have been inaccurate to date, as it is difficult to predict growth of urban areas.

However, Gordon noted that we need to move forward to grow the system but we should take care and aim for a true networked system. Business can provide front end costs for development but public funds (i.e. tax dollars) are needed for operation. He believed that there should still be public ownership of any public private partnership solution.

#### **OPEN DISCUSSION**

##### **Political Input**

Asked whether or how we could remove politics from decision making, Gordon felt that we can't totally keep politics out of decision making as there must be public consultation in the planning and development stage. Government should resist "looking back" but instead move ahead. We need good leadership with "vision".

## **TRANSPORTATION GRIDLOCK (Continued)**

### **The Big Move and Ease of Access**

A workshop participant supported Metrolinx's Big Move strategy but was concerned about ease of access to the system. The panel agreed and favoured the development of a fully integrated, easy to use, interconnected system. It was recognized that we need to rebuild the Kennedy station as a true "hub" on the network to ensure ease of transfer from one rapid transit line to another. The Bloor Danforth subway, the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, the replacement of the rapid transit line to Scarborough Town Centre & beyond and the Stouffville GO line will all intersect here as do many bus routes. We do need to improve accessibility in terms of station locations and aim for the creation of true "hubs" throughout the system, region-wide.

### **Financing of the Big Move**

There was some discussion about how the expansion of the transportation system would be funded from development through to operation. So far \$50 Billion is projected for the Big Move which covers transit, bike lanes and highways. \$16 Billion has already been committed but there is a \$34 Billion shortfall. We need dedicated sustainable funding. We need to examine all potential revenue streams and involve the public to obtain general support as the public is looking for value for money. The investment strategy recommendations for the additional revenues are due in December 2013.

To achieve true sustainable long term funding will require the cooperation of all three levels of government. We need to press the federal government to adopt a national transit strategy as is common in most developed nations.

### **Bringing the public on side in transit expansion**

The public needs to be educated through consultation and through the media. The "Big Move" by Metrolinx involves a range of projects region wide which it plans to implement over a number of years. As it is difficult to comprehend a 30-year vision, the public should be presented with a staged, project by project plan with an explanation of the prioritization. We have examples of such staged development elsewhere where the public has bought into the schedule – an obvious example is the success in Los Angeles. Moreover, we see developed countries around the world where improved public transportation is fast, accessible, and protects the environment from increasing air pollution.

### **What about Public-Private Partnerships?**

Asked about the use and worth of "public-private partnerships" it was believed that these could help the funding situation providing great care is taken to ensure sufficient public ownership and oversight are done to ensure value for money and fairness.

### **Paying for Transit**

How do we pay for the provision of good transit in urban areas? It was pointed out that we could do so in various ways including taxes on fuel or property, fare structure (pay by distance instead of flat fare), congestion charges, etc. Keep in mind that the main users of public transit are often people with less money at their disposal. The aim is, of course, to get more people to use transit from varying income levels.

### **Fare and Schedule Integration**

The ease of transfer between transit system within the GTHA and with external systems was raised when someone asked about making it easier to transfer between inter-city VIA Rail and GTHA transit systems like GO Transit or suburban bus lines. The attendee noted the ability to book integrated travel in the UK.

Bruce indicated that GO and VIA have already initiated some fare integration and that it was the intention for the Presto Card to be able to be used across Ontario. Improving scheduling to make transfer between systems easier is desirable. This is another example of the need for a National Transit Strategy.

**The issue of Gridlock**

Traffic congestion results from increased traffic on limited road space so reducing the volume of private vehicles makes sense as does improving traffic flow by design techniques such as implementing modern sequenced traffic signal control.

**Conclusions**

To deal with the stifling effect of increasing congestion which is choking the city and adversely affecting economic growth and family life, it is imperative we make up for lost time and implement the Big Move plan put forward by Metrolinx. We must maintain the momentum on delivering expanded and improved transportation service.

For more information on the Big Move, you can consult the Metrolinx website at

[http://www.metrolinx.com/en/regionalplanning/bigmove/The\\_Big\\_Move\\_Baseline\\_Monitoring\\_Executive\\_Summary\\_EN.pdf](http://www.metrolinx.com/en/regionalplanning/bigmove/The_Big_Move_Baseline_Monitoring_Executive_Summary_EN.pdf)

## 4. WORKSHOP: HOME OWNERSHIP PROTECTION

**Chair:** Bas Balkissoon, MPP, Scarborough Rouge River  
**Panellists:** Kofi Achampong\*, Policy Advisor to Hon. Tracy MacCharles, MPP Pickering Scarborough East, Minister of Consumer Services  
(\*Kofi Achampong represented the Hon. Tracy MacCharles who was unable to attend.)  
Anne Briscoe, Broker/ Owner, Century 21 Briscoe Estates  
Bob Coffey, Director, Condo Owners Association of Ontario

### Key Challenges

How do we educate home owners regarding the rights and protections available to them?  
What improvements can be made?

### Opening Remarks

This workshop could be fairly characterized as an 'open discussion' forum. We had the opportunity to hear directly from government about current initiatives designed to offer greater home ownership protection within the province of Ontario – particularly in the realm of condominium living. We also had critics who identified the need for government to do more to address specific concerns and adopt policies that would further protect owners from the prospect of poor condominium management. On the real estate front, we heard that agents are not always transparent with buyers and sellers and that more needs to be done to ensure agents aren't manipulating prices or engaging in fraudulent behaviour.

Anne Briscoe spoke of her experience with buying and selling real estate since 1968. She emphasized that home ownership is the most beneficial financial and personal commitment that a family can make in terms of financial security and the benefits that come from the security and personal satisfaction of owning a home. She stressed that no one should pay more than they can afford and that it is important to consider the real cost: principal, interest, taxes plus the cost of utilities, life and mortgage insurance that should be part of a homeowner's protection.

### Open Discussion

#### Review of The Condominium Act

Ontario's Condominium Act has not been updated since 1998. During this time, the condo market has exploded with an estimated 10% of Ontarians living in 600,000 condo units. To put that in perspective, that's roughly 1.3 million people; more than the entire population of Manitoba. The expectation is that this trend is set to continue. In fact, recent figures suggest that condos account for approximately 50% of all new home sales.

With more and more people – from retiring seniors, to new Canadians and first-time buyers - choosing to live in condos, there is broad recognition among resident advocates and professionals that stronger rules are needed for all areas of the sector.

Indeed, a home is often the biggest purchase a person or family will ever make in their lifetime. It is therefore critical that government develop policies that protect home buyers.

In June 2012, the Ministry of Consumer Services launched a 3 stage process of reviewing the Act by engaging the services of a Public Policy Forum – a consultancy firm – with the expressed purpose of leading a public engagement strategy. The first phase of this strategy involved multiple streams of public engagement and contribution.

Streams within the first phase were as follows: public information sessions held in four different cities throughout Ontario (Toronto, Mississauga, Ottawa, London); residents panel comprised of 36 condominium residents from across the province for three full-day sessions; four full-day stakeholder roundtables as well as an open-ended email and letter platform where citizens and concerned stakeholders could directly share their thoughts with government.

## **HOME OWNERSHIP PROTECTION (Continued)**

A findings report was then drafted by the Public Policy Forum for the purpose of sharing information with government as well as setting the stage for second phase of the review process – a series of expert roundtables charged with examining the findings and distilling them into more workable solutions/options. The stage two report was published in September of 2013 and has presented the government with a clear set of proposals designed to tackle multiple areas of concern in relation to condo living.

The third stage of the report involved reconvening the resident's panel for the expressed purpose of reviewing and approving the Stage Two report. Once complete, government officials would draft an Action Plan for implementing the recommendations.

### **So What Have We Learned?**

There were a few points worth mentioning:

#### **Unlicensed Condo Managers**

Multiple stakeholders – from property managers to owners/residents and developers, all mentioned a need to move towards a licensing regime for condominium managers. Boards often relied on the expertise of condo managers and without a clearly articulated professional standard, there will likely be a wide ranging disparity in the quality of management across the province.

#### **Frustration with Board Governance**

Many condo owners expressed frustration with their Condo Boards. We heard that condo owners often find their Boards unresponsive to requests for general information, particularly financial data. We also heard consistent complaints about Boards failing to meet prescribed requirements under the Act, such as rules with respect to meeting notifications, rules concerning quorum, conflicts of interest and proxy voting.

Many public information session attendees and letter writers also noted that Board members often lacked the expertise to manage buildings often worth tens of millions of dollars. The need therefore, to enhance and put into place more stringent requirements for Board membership and encourage ongoing education was a consistent theme throughout the multiple streams of engagement.

#### **Cost of Bringing Complaint Prohibitive**

Condo owners also noted that it was too expensive for them to pursue cases against Boards in court once the Act's mandated mediation process failed to achieve a mutual outcome. Ironically, Boards often hired lawyers using fees paid to the corporation by unit owners to defend against owner complaints. This was said to result in an unfair landscape for obtaining resolution of potentially legitimate grievances.

#### **What Can We Do Now?**

During this process, we realized that although there were some serious differences of opinion about what needs to be done, there was consensus amongst those involved that there is a need to move towards licensing condominium managers. Incidentally, in July 2013, Tracy MacCharles, the Minister of Consumer Services, announced the government's plans to move forward on establishing a mandatory licensing system for condominium managers.

#### **What are Some Other Interesting Recommendations?**

A key recommendation emerging from the Condominium Act is a proposal to create a 'Condo Office'. Experts proposed this idea as a hub for data retention, conflict resolution, and condo manager licensing. A moderate levy of between \$1- \$3 per condo unit has been put forward as a means of financing this office. As it stands, the government is still assessing this recommendation with an eye towards addressing many of the concerns that were heard throughout the review process.

## **HOME OWNERSHIP PROTECTION (Continued)**

### **Use of the Condo Office**

Bob Coffey talked about TARION which is a private corporation established to protect the rights of home owners and regulate new home builders. TARION administers the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan act. Some don't think TARION ever worked for owners as at one condo, the bricks didn't bond and it cost a million dollars to remedy which fortunately was in the reserve fund but the owners got nothing from the board - because there were no home owners on the board. Bob Coffey thought the Condo Office should be paid for by the Province and not by the owners. Bob thinks the power of non-owner occupied units should be scaled back dramatically - their votes are being given as proxies to people who do not own units, only renters.

Kofi Achampong said many condos are being managed by people who have no formal management training or experience. Corporations often contract these companies, but the treatment between corporations, the responsiveness of the managers and responsiveness of the board are all concerns that the ministry has heard about and that's why the Ontario Government is planning to bring forward legislation to license property managers. The report presents the 'Condo Office' as a one stop shop to address the issues.

Currently, if something is not happening as the condo owner's desire, they have very little option other than going to court. This needs a solution which provides a mechanism to funnel these issues since the only option is going to court. The vast majority of condo related issues are ones that can be resolved quickly. Essentially, what the experts did was assess the differing perspectives of stakeholders. The reality is that everyone blames everyone else. Owners blame developers and developers blame managers. It should be noted that condos are partially regulated by municipalities. Building code issues and taxation issues need to be addressed --and the government plans to do just that.

Anne Briscoe spoke about the need for real estate agents to disclose commissions associated with their sales. Anne stressed the need to ensure that employees who work in condominium sales office show rooms are not giving advice or information that they are not licensed to give.

### **Fraud in Real Estate Purchasing**

The government has a Bill (Bill 55) that aims to address concerns within the real estate market pertaining to 'phantom bids'. Phantom bids are essentially situations where a prospective buyer has been informed that another bid has been made for a property, although no such verifiable offer has actually been made. The intent is to encourage the buyer to 'up their bid' out of fear of being 'out-bided'.

If passed, Bill 55 would give the Real Estate Council of Ontario (the arms-length regulator) a greater ability to investigate these situations and would also require real estate agents to keep written evidence of all offers in multiple-bidding scenarios.

## 5. WORKSHOP: YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT

**Chair:** Brad Duguid, MPP, Scarborough Centre  
Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities

**Panellists:** Shaun Chen, Vice Chair, Toronto District School Board  
Margaret Stanowski, Executive Director, Operation Springboard  
Corey Beckford, Director of HUB, Operation Springboard

### Key Challenge

How can we assist young people to prepare for and obtain appropriate and productive employment while satisfying the needs of employers.

### Opening Remarks

Shaun Chen's early working life as a computer engineer has influenced his work as a school trustee. Shaun is concerned that one in five youths is unemployed despite the training options available and yet these options are not fully understood. Shaun commended on the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program where a student can earn up to half the credits required for a Secondary School Diploma by co-op programs. We have to be careful to not pigeon-hole students in early years and thus constrain their development.

Brad Duguid noted that a young person used to be able to ask an older person for career advice. However, nowadays job opportunities and the economy are changing so fast that is no longer the case. In the current economic climate, the best advice now is to get post secondary education and learn some skills. Learning does not end with school education but continues through life. People have to be flexible and willing to learn throughout their career. Brad spoke of the 4-part Youth Strategy announced by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities as follows:

- A) **Youth Employment Fund** – This program is designed for a 4 to 6 month placement with a chance for the youth to stay at the job thereafter. The key is for the youth to gain the “experience” so often required and it will also help the youth decide what to do in the future.
- B) **Youth Innovation Fund** - This is to build on the success of Ontario's Small Business Accelerators which have been recognized as the best way to get entrepreneurship going. Innovation is critical for the future and we need more entrepreneurs.
- C) **Youth Entrepreneurship Fund** – A money fund to assist youth to start up businesses as it is important to build the entrepreneurial mentality.
- D) **Youth Connections Fund** – This fund will involve labour, academia and business in repairing the “skills gap” we see so often in youths these days. Unfortunately, the federal government is cutting funds for vulnerable workers to use in their separate Canada Jobs Fund and this poses a significant danger to the support for these workers.

In her opening remarks, Margaret Stanowski said that **Operation Springboard** works with “vulnerable” people who have difficulty in finding employment. In her experience there is never a “quick fix”. Instead what is required is a strategy blended from a variety of programs and supervised over a period of time. Some youth cases require constant follow-up for some years, including working with an employer. There is also a need for employers to take a chance on some youth.

Margaret said that young people need to take responsibility for their actions but also need to be given a chance to succeed; otherwise the future may involve welfare and/or jail for some youths. Operation Springboard created a digital platform for the situations faced by at-risk youths. This “Community Learning Hub” was demonstrated by Corey Beckford of Operation Springboard. Using the program, a client youth can choose a topic appropriate to his or her need. Brad Duguid is seeking North American recognition of this “made-in-Scarborough” solution, so it could become a source of income to Ontario if sold elsewhere.

## **YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT (Continued)**

Although there has been a steady recovery since the recession, youth unemployment is still twice that of the workforce as a whole. We are concerned that this hurts our society because unemployed young people make no contribution in taxes and in the future, they will be “non-competitive” in the economy and unable to get jobs.

### **Open Discussion**

#### **Community-Based Programs for Youth Employment**

It was recognized that some communities were more in need of such programs than other communities. An example of a Community HUB is the Youth Resource Centre in the Scarborough Town Centre which provides “space” for youth to engage in such activities as music, dance and homework.

#### **Intergenerational Barriers to Youth Employment**

Participants noted that we tend to socialize with our own age groups in North America. We even talk down to youth (referring to them as “kids”) and employers are looking for working adults not children.

Marg Stanowski noted that her organization deals with people of all ages and that mentorships are required for both the youth AND the employers. Corey Beckford said that he has had to “hold hands” with both the employer and the youth to get things done. Shaun Chen noted that there has been a shift in secondary schools towards “Specialist High Skills Majors” for several sectors of the economy, including Business, Finance, Hospitality and Tourism. Indeed, Pearson CI in the Malvern area has just such a “Health and Wellness” program.

Brad Duguid noted that it used to be common for grandparents to live in a house with subsequent generations or at least to spend a lot of time with their grandchildren but this is not the case today. Youth attendance at seniors’ events can make seniors really come alive but such programs are “hit and miss”. We have to work better with our youth – e.g. we have to explain to young people why having a smart appearance is one of the important things to enable them to obtain and retain employment.

#### **High-Risk Areas**

Some workshop participants expressed concern that after serious recent incidents in places such as Galloway-Kingston Road or Lawrence-Morningside area, there was much political posturing but nothing of substance came about after the criminal investigation was over.

Brad Duguid worked in Youth Crime Prevention programs for over 20 years and he spoke of the frustration of governments having to come in after an incident and try to pick up the pieces. Margaret Stanowski noted that a recent economic report in British Columbia said that unemployment is the greatest predictor of crime, and thus we “need to keep politics out of it” and rely on evidence, not rhetoric, to invest in our youth. Brad noted that community-based programs such as “**Redemptive Services**” are needed to reduce youths from repeating an undesirable behavior after they have experienced negative consequences. A “one-youth-at-a-time” approach is needed to reach out to such youths.

#### **Follow-Up to Programs**

Asked if any evaluation has been done on the success of programs to help people obtain appropriate training and/or employment, Brad Duguid noted that the former “Youth Job Strategy” was evaluated by Eric Hoskins (Ontario's Minister of Children and Youth Services at the time) about two years ago and this led to the new \$295 million fund for the “Youth Strategy” announced last week. However, there is a major challenge created by the Federal Government that is cutting funds to joint programs.

#### **Good Employers Are Out There - They Just Need to be Encouraged**

It was noted that youths need to understand how best to approach potential employers. A “holistic” approach is needed because certain skills are required for certain jobs. Youths also need to know the things that would prevent them from getting a job, for example:

## **YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT (Continued)**

- a) Issues relating to drugs and/or alcohol addiction or charges
- b) Stages of change, i.e., thinking about the consequences before doing an act
- c) Focus on assets not deficits, e.g., many say they cannot have a job if there is no daycare
- d) The need for punctuality and discipline are required to get and keep a job
- e) A criminal record hinders their chances of landing a job

### **Access to All Programs at “One Window”**

Brad Duguid pointed out that the problem is not always client-based because access to all available programs is needed at “one window”. This “one window” strategy requires a fully-integrated system to get a standard level of assessment to avoid people getting lost in interdepartmental bureaucracy. We have some great programs but we need the infrastructure to deliver them on an individual, more personal basis.

### **Internships**

Colleges and universities act responsibly by providing good supervision to comply with labour laws and to provide worthwhile work experience for their students. Young students need to work in order to gain experience but they are often not paid, even though this work may be required to obtain academic credits.

Margaret Stanowski said such programs should be tailored to the individual. Brad Duguid noted that Ontario leads the OECD in post-secondary education and in international tests, and that we need to pursue on-the-job learning to encourage people to be innovative and to be competitive to succeed economically. A workshop participant observed from experience that it was best to do an internship early in one’s career.

### **Skills Shortage?**

Grade 12 students are finding access to popular work in their field of education to be difficult. There is sometimes a mis-match between job opportunities and skills available in certain regions. Brad noted that there are only estimates of shortages, real shortages in some trades in certain areas but not in other trades or areas. For example, we may have a shortage of welders in Sudbury but a surplus in Windsor and we may mislead young people if we report only the shortage in Sudbury. This is being examined by the Ontario Government but there is not enough information to work with due to the Federal Government’s recent changes in collecting statistics.

### **Minimum Wage**

There was some discussion about the right level of minimum wage compensation to ensure sufficient reward for services rendered. However it is a delicate balance and therefore should not be too high as to be a burden on employers and thereby reduce the likelihood of employment. It was agreed that in the future the Ontario Government may decide to peg the minimum wage to inflation with a panel set up to advise the government on what level would be best.

### **Canada Job Grants**

Participants discussed the new federal Canada Job Grants program. The Federal Conservative government abandoned many joint programs with the provinces and instead announced this new program with \$5,000 to be contributed by the employer, the federal government and the provincial government for each new job created.

In the workshop it was concluded that this program had not been thought through properly due to the lack of any consultation with the provinces or other stakeholders. It does not provide jobs accessible to small or medium-sized businesses. This program was given \$400 million in federal funding, mostly from the labour market Agreement Fund which used to fund most major joint provincial-federal programs for vulnerable employees.

## **YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT (Continued)**

Under the new program the provinces must match the contributions that the federal government chooses to make from this new fund. \$116 million was cut from Ontario programs, which represents a 60% reduction in the funds for those programs for vulnerable employees. Ontario and the other provinces have raised objections to this new program and only now has the Federal government been in discussion regarding this issue.

More information on the concerns surrounding the Canada Job Grants program may be obtained from the Building Skills Together report from the Provincial and Territorial Labour Ministers and released by the Council of the Federation.

Refer to the Council of the Federation website at <http://www.conseildelafederation.ca/en/publications> or the website of the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities at <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng> . The Ontario Ministry website also has the communiqué issued by the Provincial and Territorial Labour Market ministers:  
[http://www.flmm-fmmt.ca/CMFiles/FINAL%20ENGLISH\\_PT%20FLMMCommunique.pdf](http://www.flmm-fmmt.ca/CMFiles/FINAL%20ENGLISH_PT%20FLMMCommunique.pdf)

### **Conclusions**

The workshop participants agreed we should ensure that each young person is assessed individually instead of a “one size fits all” approach. It was also generally agreed that business, education and government should work more closely together to be more effective.

It was generally agreed that the Youth Jobs Strategy was a good way to address Youth Unemployment and that the Government should focus on providing practical individual treatment for youths by having all programs available from one source such as the HUB.

## **6. OVERALL CONFERENCE REVIEW**

### **by Ian Elder, Editor**

#### **Gridlock**

Conference participants were particularly concerned at the current difficulty in moving around in urban centres such as Greater Toronto. They expressed an overriding desire that the work underway to improve transportation be continued. We need to maintain the momentum on delivering expanded and improved transportation service. Expanding service is a must to cope with increasing ridership and population. The time for talking is over. Some simple changes can be made to manage traffic flow like improving synchronization of traffic lights and enforcing legislation to prevent vehicles blocking intersections. We must be aware that there are distinct constraints which prevent just building new highways.

#### **Home Ownership**

The discussion on Home Ownership focussed mainly on the protection of Condo Owners since there has been a marked increase in condo living. The current discussions and consultations with interested parties regarding improvements to the Condominium Act must be maintained in order to resolve issues that home owners have about lack of effective involvement. There is much concern about the proportion of disposable income which has to be dedicated to the cost of accommodation.

#### **Youth and Employment**

The attendees in this workshop focussed on how best to assist young people prepare for and obtain appropriate and productive employment. It was felt there is a need for more collaboration between business, education and government sectors to make it easier for youth to enter and remain in the workforce.

The government's focus on providing practical assistance to youths in contrast to austerity measures advocated by some is supported by experience abroad. For example, in Scotland, a dedicated Youth Minister was appointed and in one year, youth unemployment dropped by 6 percentage points.

#### **Overall Assessment and Conclusion**

On the Transportation Gridlock issue, various studies and reports have been done to address the increasing traffic congestion in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). There have been too many studies, too many re-evaluations and not enough action and nothing significant have been accomplished. There is a much larger volume of traffic on our roads and we stand to lose economically and in our quality of life if we do nothing to fix this problem. Traffic headaches also affect people who live outside the GTHA when they travel here for business or pleasure. Our governments at all levels need to get moving on transit solutions. We should ensure that the recommendations of Metrolinx (i.e. the Big Move) are followed through to provide much needed relief and service to our citizens.

In conclusion, the general theme from all of the conference discussions could be summed up as a desire for people and governments to work in collaboration with each other, be innovative, and put partisan considerations aside in order to make progress and to improve life in big city conurbations. This would include working collaboratively with citizens, corporations, other governments and stakeholders to expand and improve such things as transportation, opportunities for youths, and protection of homeowners.

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