

BRIDGING DIVIDES: WHAT CAN CITIES DO?

A SUMMARY OF THE PUBLIC FORUM
ON MAY 13, 2015
AT RYERSON UNIVERSITY

Founding Partner:



Media Partner:



RYERSON
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Ryerson City Building Institute





RYERSON CITY BUILDING INSTITUTE

Advancing Urban Transformation

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Bridging Divides: What Can Cities Do?

A summary of the public forum held on May 13, 2015,
at Ryerson University

About the Ryerson City Building Institute

The Ryerson City Building Institute is a multidisciplinary centre focused on understanding and finding solutions to the complex urban challenges facing our city regions nationally and globally. The Institute brings together political leadership, policy ideas and people from diverse backgrounds to address critical urban problems. The Institute works with partners across faculties and outside the university to deliver high-quality teaching, research and public engagement on urban issues. The Ryerson City Building Institute builds on Ryerson University's demonstrated expertise in collaborative city building.

Contributors

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Design and layout by Zinzan Studio

ISBN: 978-1-926769-42-1

Ryerson University, Toronto

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our cities are facing growing divides: people have uneven access to services and housing; congestion and transit shortfalls threaten our economic vitality; growing income polarization undermines social cohesion; recent arrivals face barriers to prosperity; and divisions in political culture are enabling disruptive wedge politics.

All of these complex divisions exist in the cities that make up the Greater Toronto and Hamilton (GTHA) city region. There are no simple solutions. That is why Ryerson City Building Institute brought together experts across disciplines to collaborate and develop solutions for actionable change in the GTHA.

In a unique public forum held by the Ryerson City Building Institute on May 13, 2015, urban thought leaders joined GTA mayors to discuss strategies aimed at bridging the growing divides in our cities. Six interdisciplinary teams of urban thinkers, practitioners and academics worked together to develop proposals that would help bridge the divides in transit, income polarization, immigration and identity, housing affordability, access to services and political culture. The ideas were then field tested in a moderated discussion led by Ryerson City Building Institute External Director, Anne Golden, with the mayors of Toronto, Mississauga and Ajax. This monograph summarizes the proposals and the mayoral discussion that followed.

The program built on the Toronto Star series on the Divided City/ United City that commenced shortly after the fall 2014 municipal elections. We are very grateful to the Toronto Star for supporting us as our media partner for this program and to all of our participants for contributing their ideas.

Through efforts such as this multi-disciplinary forum, the Ryerson City Building Institute seeks to promote a greater understanding of our region's challenges and what cities can do to solve them. Stark divisions may exist in our cities, but so do innovative solutions for bridging them.

TANZEEL MERCHANT

Executive Director, Ryerson City Building Institute

CANADA'S CITIES NEED TO START HELPING THEMSELVES

While there will always be a crucial role for higher levels of government, we in cities need to stop waiting, and get on with the things we can do.

Op-ed by Anne Golden and Ken Greenberg, as published in the Toronto Star on Sunday, May 10, 2015

“War is too important to be left to the generals.” It’s a phrase attributed to Georges Clemenceau on the matter of who should take responsibility for military decisions. When it comes to the fortune and fate of Canada’s urban centres, we’d amend that statement: Our cities are too important to be left to our senior levels of government alone.

The time has come for cities to do what they must, and what they can. While there will always be a crucial role for federal and provincial action, we in cities need to stop waiting, and get on with the things we can do.

Chief among the challenges facing our cities are the growing income and service disparities which lead to economic and social segregation and political polarization. City regions are where these divides hurt the most, and city regions are where they must be bridged. Canada is one of the most urbanized nations in the world, with 70 per cent of the country’s population living in census metropolitan areas. If we don’t address these divides in our largest urban areas, we won’t get our nation’s future right.

The divides are interconnected. Research shows that income inequality is inextricably linked to education inequality and health

inequality. It also affects a city's ability to sustain economic growth. We can see growing inequality reflected in cities as they become geographically segregated along income lines. And it contributes to a vicious circle: a decline in trust in our governments which undermines the public's willingness to support programs and investments to solve problems.

Our own city region is blessed with myriad assets and advantages, with all of the ingredients for economic and social success. We rank at, or near, the top of all global benchmarking reports. But these rankings belie the infrastructure, social, and cultural challenges that, if not forcefully addressed, will undermine that success.

This idea that cities must take the lead in resolving problems is catching on. "A revolution is stirring in America," argue Bruce Katz and Jennifer Bradley of the Brookings Institution; it is the cities and metros that "are taking on the big issues that Washington won't, or can't, solve." In Canada, there are notable examples of mayors across the country driving innovation on matters ranging from public transit and environmental protection to economic development and civic engagement.

However, for the most part, the municipal response to the pressures urbanization has wrought is to slog on in the hope that some other level of government will step forward to relieve those pressures with a plan or a cheque. Don't count on a cavalry riding in to the rescue. If we are looking for leadership to bridge the growing divides in our cities, the mirror is a great place to start.

This week the Ryerson City Building Institute is hosting a unique event that will see six teams of creative urban thinkers proposing to

three GTA mayors (Bonnie Crombie of Mississauga, Steve Parish of Ajax, and John Tory of Toronto) made in city solutions to major issues dividing our city region: transit deficits, income inequality, immigration and identity tensions, housing unaffordability, insufficient access to services, and value clashes enabling wedge politics.

It's a rare opportunity for such a broad range of thought leaders and innovators to pitch their best ideas to three mayors who represent 3.5 million people, more than half of our city region. There are no magic bullets, but the groups have been tasked very specifically with bringing forward practical ideas that cities can implement. This will be the first of many efforts by the Institute to unpack and tackle complex urban challenges.

ANNE GOLDEN, Ph.D., C.M., is the Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Ryerson City Building Institute. She is also a Distinguished Visiting Scholar and Special Advisor at Ryerson University. Her current board commitments include membership on Metrolinx, the regional transit agency, and Chairmanship of Evergreen CityWorks. Previously, she was President of the United Way of Greater Toronto for 14 years. Anne earned national profile for her work as Chair of the Homelessness Action Task Force (1999), the Greater Toronto Area Task Force (1996), and most recently, the Premier of Ontario's Transit Investment Strategy Advisory Panel (2013).

KEN GREENBERG is the Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Ryerson City Building Institute. He is an urban designer, teacher, writer, former Director of Urban Design and Architecture for the City of Toronto, and Principal of Greenberg Consultants. He is the recipient of the 2010 American Institute of Architects Thomas Jefferson Award for Public Design Excellence and the 2014 Sustainable Buildings Canada Lifetime Achievement Award. Involved in many grassroots and community initiatives, he is a Board Member of Park People, a non-profit dedicated to the improvement of Toronto's parks.

SYMPOSIUM AGENDA

6:00–6:10PM WELCOME REMARKS

Tanzeel Merchant, Executive Director, Ryerson CBI,
and Sheldon Levy, President and Vice Chancellor,
Ryerson University

6:10–6:15PM CALL TO ACTION

Remarks by Anne Golden, External Director,
Ryerson CBI

**6:15–6:25PM TORONTO STAR'S DIVIDED CITY/UNITED CITY
SERIES: A REFLECTION ON THE LESSONS LEARNED**

Presented by Michael Cooke, Editor in Chief,
Toronto Star

**6:25–7:10PM PANELISTS PRESENT IDEAS TO THE AUDIENCE,
THEIR PEERS, AND THE MAYORS**

7:00–8:00PM FACILITATED DISCUSSION

Mayors Bonnie Crombie, John Tory and Steve Parish
Moderated by Anne Golden

8:00–8:20PM AUDIENCE INVITED TO OFFER IDEAS

8:20–8:30PM CLOSING REMARKS

Ken Greenberg, Visiting Scholar, Ryerson CBI, and
Chris De Sousa, Director, School of Urban and
Regional Planning, Ryerson University

TORONTO STAR'S DIVIDED CITY/UNITED CITY SERIES: A REFLECTION ON THE LESSONS LEARNED

Presented by Michael Cooke, Editor in Chief, Toronto Star
May 13, 2015

I was asked tonight to present eight lessons that the Star has learned from the paper's "Divided City/United City" series. Our last two mayoral elections have produced patterns that are all too familiar: the old City of Toronto votes one way and the former suburbs vote another. As our political preferences grow more polarized, research shows that our city is becoming more economically divided as well. These patterns reveal a narrative of irascible division in Toronto, something that has come to be accepted as unquestioned truth. This provides fodder for those who want to de-amalgamate and they impose a rather static vision of what is a dynamic city in the midst of rapid and unstoppable change.

At the Star, we wanted to examine this perceived divide to understand it, and in many cases, to undermine it. We've done this through the series, "Divided City/United City", with a dozen or more reporters, edited by Irene Gentle and with social media by Serena Willoughby. While producing this series over the course of the last few months, we've taken all the assumptions and we've questioned them. When we found new information contrary to the evidence, we published it, and when we haven't, we sought to answer the next question, and the next question is always "why". Why have some areas in our city thrived and others have withered? That's why the series was called not just "Divided City", but "United City".

By diving down into the data behind those patterns, we found that the reality, of course, isn't black and white, but it's a great shade of grey, and that's very challenging. Because while Toronto has unquestionable divides, they aren't the stark, horrible dividing lines of many US cities. Within each geographic block, there tends to be a wide diversity of ages and ethnicities and income levels. From my point of view, as the editor of the Star, I see after this series and during this series that these divides aren't just geographic and demographic, they're psychological and they're cultural.

This Bridging Divides event is clear evidence that there is a will to discuss these issues and as we kick off the conversation, I want to share with you the eight lessons that we at the Star have learned through what have been wide ranging and diverse articles on these subjects. The first four lessons are different ways that Toronto has come to be divided and the second four are those things that might help us.

1. Psychological barriers are reinforced by physical ones

The first thing we learned was that psychological barriers are reinforced by physical ones. In every city and town there is an area referred to as "the wrong side of the tracks" and it is a stark reminder that physical barriers almost always reinforce psychological ones. In Toronto we have ravines and highways and rail corridors that all too often divide one neighbourhood from another, one kind of person or an income level or ethnicity from the others. But over the decades, as we've worked to bridge and breach and overcome these physical barriers, we've seen how the psychological divides have disappeared as well. Sometimes it's a question, simply, of putting a subway across

the Bloor Viaduct, to connect the east end with downtown. At other times, it's been much smaller and simpler solutions, like the new footbridges under the Gardiner that have opened up the south core to business development.

2. We are what we measure

We discovered also that, of course, we are what we measure. And while the best neighbourhoods in our city are often divided by income, access to transport, and proximity to schools, few people think about pollution levels. Using handheld devices, we engaged a group of students to walk around the city to record the levels of ultrafine particles, like soot, that are produced by traffic and other machines. The pollution hot spots they identified are concentrated near highway intersections, major roadways, and frankly, where the rich folks live. This data illustrates the counterintuitive notion that a health divide exists in the city whereby the most expensive neighbourhoods are also the most polluted.

3. Some divides aren't just geographic, but demographic

The third thing we found is that some divides aren't just geographic, but demographic. One of Toronto's biggest divides is between those born in Canada and those who have just arrived. There are at least 380,000 non-citizens in Toronto, and there are more if you count the undocumented immigrants. They work here, they pay taxes, they use the TTC, and their children go to school here. But they are detached and they are disengaged, and some are able to get only the precarious and low-paying work.

4. Many of our city's divides can only be seen at ground level

Here's a fun thing: many of our city's divides can only be seen at ground level. We found this wonderful man, Albert Kohl, who set out on an urban odyssey. Over the course of five days, he walked the border of Toronto, circumnavigating a 120km route from Etobicoke to Scarborough, reporting back for us. That's old-fashioned footstep reporting, and he showed us that many of our divides are only visible on foot.

5. Income inequality is reinforced in insidious ways (1): the wealthy receive better services

The income inequality in our community is reinforced in insidious ways. The wealthy, for example, receive better public services. Having a public school system is supposed to be the great leveller, and it's fair to say that Toronto's schools have a smaller achievement gap than just about anywhere else in the developed world. What this means is that whether you send your child to Toronto's worst public school or to its best, it won't make a great impact on their performance. But this egalitarian system is undermined by another disparity: the fundraising gap. Fundraising for schools varies widely between the schools in the district. The 20 wealthiest elementary schools in the Toronto District School Board raised \$4 million. And the bottom 20 raised just \$40,000. What does that do? Well, it shows that policies ought to encourage fundraising proceeds to be spread around. In some parts of the United States, schools are required to share a portion of their fundraising once it reaches a certain threshold. So, in some cases, 50 cents of every dollar raised over, say, \$10,000, will have to go to an

under-resourced school in the same school board. And I think that's a good thing and I think that kind of policy still encourages fundraising at schools, but it makes sure that it isn't only the wealthy areas and the wealthy schools that benefit.

6. Income inequality is reinforced in insidious ways (2): the poor receive worse services

Income inequality is reinforced in insidious ways, part two: the poor receive worse public services. Public schools serve the wealthy people better. Public transit serves the poor worse. The TTC has a network that ensures that 99% of residents in this city can live within a 10-minute walk of a transit stop. That's fantastic. But of course, not all transit is equal, especially when only 65% of buses arrive on time. Our reporters took a hard look at Toronto's transit deserts and how an unreliable commute can be the difference between getting and keeping a job, between getting to school and failing. Solutions to transit equity are very easy to describe, but very hard to bring about. But I would say that more buses and more GO Trains top the list. We also found that offering services later at night and early in the morning is crucial. Transit inequity will persist unless our transit agencies start working deliberately to improve the network at the periphery and getting the money to do so.

7. City funding isn't going to where the need is

The seventh thing that we learned: City funding isn't going to where the need is. It is thought that the homeless are all downtown. The services for drug addicts, the free meals, and the shelters are all concentrated there, too. But poverty has been growing around the

edges of our cities and the services haven't moved to keep up. The City has identified those Neighbourhood Improvement Areas on the edges, but the lion's share of the funding still goes downtown.

8. Many problems can be overcome with simple, creative thinking

Many problems can be overcome with just simple, creative thinking. There is a lot of good will in this room and a lot of good will in this city. Confronting some of these challenges is going to mean policy changes and new funding and demonstrations of political will, but other solutions, not so much. For example, the divide between areas accessible to the able bodied and the disabled can be bridged with a simple wooden ramp. A non-profit organization called StopGap builds these lovely colourful custom ramps for storefronts in the region, at no cost to businesses.

Similarly, the divide between cyclists and car commuters can be made worse or made better with a single painted line on the street. That sounds too simple and I know there's a big debate around that, but it is a simple idea. It doesn't take a lot; it only takes some good will. It may be that Toronto doesn't need more subways, only more openness to creative solutions.

The Star, in our reporting, cares deeply about the residents of our region and their future. Through this partnership with the Ryerson City Building Institute, we're building on our coverage of the divides in our region and developing together some solutions to bridge them, and we're proud of this partnership.

I want to express my sincere hope that the ideas and solutions presented here will become a reality. Some of them you may disagree with, but I think most of them are going to get applause and some people, I hope, are going to be taking notes. Moving the best of these ideas forward would be a great step forward towards uniting our divided cities. Thank you.



From left to right:

Anne Golden, External Director, Ryerson City Building Institute
Mayor Steve Parish, Ajax
Mayor Bonnie Crombie, Mississauga
Mayor John Tory, Toronto
Sheldon Levy, Presidents, Ryerson University

Photo by Netkhat Ahmed

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS AND MODERATED MAYORAL DISCUSSION



ACCESS TO SERVICES

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

IMMIGRATION AND IDENTITY

INCOME POLARIZATION

POLITICAL CULTURE

TRANSPORTATION DEFICIT

ACCESS TO SERVICES



The pitch

Far too often, accessing social, health or community support services in our region is unnecessarily complicated. It requires users to navigate through a scattered array of service providers, with competing or even contradictory advice, and invisible and often unintelligible eligibility criteria that can change depending on where one lives. Dr. Sinha, who presented the group's ideas, noted that he regularly gives out several different information phone numbers to his patients, and that they all vary in terms of what information they provide, to whom, and in what languages. He urged the Mayors to put all municipal support behind one information line, 211, which exists throughout Ontario, and to stop funding and supporting services that compete with 211 and create confusion for those seeking information. Second, the group urged the mayors to support the creation of more community hubs where health, social and community services are concentrated in one place. These hubs can offer more than health and social services; they can also provide access to housing and legal services. The group suggested that the mayors work with the Province to identify sites for more community hubs such as underused schools and support the creation of more hubs where they are needed most.



The political pulse

The three mayors responded positively to the ideas from this group. Mayor Tory noted that Toronto already has community hubs that work well, and he supported the creation of more. Mayor Crombie also acknowledged the good work being done at community hubs in Mississauga. On the question of creating one information portal for all services, Mayor Tory was enthusiastic, saying that he intended to create a Service Toronto line to make it easier to access information about permits for parks, businesses and social services. He said he would go a step further and encourage service offices to co-locate by offering free rent to services that should be located within municipal buildings to ease access for residents.

Mayor Tory also commented that chronic underinvestment in technology within the city has caused access to services to suffer. Many services could be delivered online, he said. If technology were used more effectively, it could dramatically improve issues of access.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY



The pitch

The Housing Affordability team focused on steps that municipalities can take to facilitate the development of more affordable rental and ownership housing on underutilized urban land throughout the region. The first idea was to encourage the revitalization of lands around apartment towers through facilitating partnerships with developers. Second, the group called on cities to re-zone lands along transit corridors with minimum densities and reduced parking requirements that would allow for as-of-right mid-rise development. Third, the group called on the city to act as facilitator between developers and non-profit land owners who may hold underutilized land but lack development experience or expertise.



The political pulse

Mayor Parish was very impressed with the presentation from the housing group, noting that permissions around housing is one area that municipalities do have considerable control. He mentioned Ajax's two Community Improvement Plan areas where, once designated, the city can apply tools to encourage development such as reducing development charges and fees. Those tools have led to significant high-rise and some mid-rise development in Ajax. Mayor Tory confirmed that he is committed to the tower renewal project and is working to bring non-profit partnerships for ownership options. He mentioned the possibility of using city-owned parking lots for other uses, including affordable housing. He also remarked that neighbourhood opposition to mid-rise development is a tremendous challenge that needs to be overcome. Mayor Crombie announced that Mississauga has pre-zoned lands along its anticipated light rail corridor for higher density development and has lessened parking requirements downtown in anticipation of new transit infrastructure.

IMMIGRATION AND IDENTITY



The pitch

The Immigration and Identity group identified three solutions to bridge divides. First, they called on the mayors to declare the GTHA a sanctuary urban region, so that illegalized residents in the entire region would benefit from equal access to municipal services. Toronto and Hamilton have already taken the lead and other municipalities should follow. Second, they called on municipalities to extend voting rights to permanent residents, arguing that voting is a powerful expression of inclusion, both real and symbolic. Third, to address the lack of access to sites that promote social and cultural belonging, the group called on cities to focus more on developing competitive and recreational sports that reflect the interests of new Canadians, including building a cricket stadium and supporting recreational leagues. These steps would foster a sense of belonging and connection among newcomers and second and third generation Canadians.



The political pulse

The discussion on this theme focused on the suggestion to use sports and recreation as a unifying tool. Mayor Tory said that sports, arts and cultural programming are invaluable in creating social cohesion and bringing people together. He acknowledged that in Toronto, sports and cultural facilities are least concentrated in the northwest and northeast parts of the city where they are needed most. He rose to the idea of having better cricket facilities in the city, noting that there are hundreds of thousands of people in the city who grew up playing cricket and that this is something the city could do better. Mayor Crombie agreed, mentioning that Mississauga has three cricket pitches and would be interested in building more. The idea of using sports and culture to bridge divides resonated with all the mayors.

INCOME POLARIZATION



The pitch

The Toronto city region has become the income polarization capital of Canada. Focusing on the gap in opportunity as it relates to employment, the Income Polarization team proposed three ideas to the Mayors' panel. First, to address the high rates of youth unemployment in the region, the group proposed that community benefits agreements—formal agreements that secure public benefits, such as providing local jobs and training, as a condition of a contract—be made a standard part of all major municipal infrastructure projects. Second, the group called on the mayors to make childcare an ongoing priority by, for example, increasing the number of childcare spaces. Third, in order for all elected officials to have a deep understanding of what it means to live in poverty, the group proposed that every politician be required to live for one month of his or her inaugural term in the poorest neighbourhood of their ward, on a poverty-line budget.



The political pulse

In response, the panel of mayors shared the group's concern with the economic and social consequences of rising income inequality. Mayor Parish called on federal and provincial governments to do a better job of income redistribution and argued that we need a minimum guaranteed annual income for all residents. In response to the idea of using community benefits agreements to create employment, Mayor Tory said yes, he would continue to support using them, as did Mayor Crombie. Mayor Tory added that he would want to be careful to ensure that adding such conditions wouldn't drive up costs, but acknowledged that they have been proven to work in Toronto and elsewhere. Both Mayor Tory and Mayor Crombie maintained that the best way to address income polarization is by attracting more and better jobs, particularly to the areas of the city where employment is low.

On childcare, all three mayors agreed that it is a crucial issue, as it will help support full participation in the labour force. However, they argued that municipalities are not the right level of government to be funding childcare, and cities' ability to expand childcare offerings is limited.

While the mayors acknowledged that it is important to connect with all constituents and to understand their needs and challenges, Mayor Tory and Mayor Crombie were concerned that the proposal to spend a month living on a low income might be devalued as a media stunt. They noted the idea's symbolic merit and said that they would consider shorter-term options for connecting with their most vulnerable constituents' realities.



The pitch

The political landscape, the team argued, is divided into insiders and outsiders. People don't see themselves reflected in the political structures; they feel left out of the process and they feel cynical. To combat political apathy, exclusion and cynicism, the group proposed five interventions: extend municipal voting rights to permanent residents, create new neighbourhood levels of representation, expand the use of participatory budgeting, create a progressive property tax, and embrace ranked ballots and runoff voting in municipal elections.

The group also suggested that cities celebrate the unsung heroes in our communities as a way of working toward a positive political culture, bringing under-represented voices to the table, and embracing a "culture of Yes." These suggestions are aimed at addressing the anti-government mentality that has been bred over decades of chronic public underinvestment.



The political pulse

The panel of mayors embraced many of this group's ideas. Both Mayor Crombie and Mayor Tory support moving to a ranked ballot system. Mayor Parish remained unconvinced, but noted that Ajax has moved its voting online, which increased the voter turnout (although he noted it is still too low). On celebrating the work of everyday political citizens, Mayor Crombie announced that her council passed a motion that day to participate in Samara's Everyday Citizens project and Mayor Parish added that Ajax has a dynamic program of recognizing its volunteers and community organizers.

All three mayors said that they already do some participatory budgeting. Mayor Tory remarked that it is being piloted in Toronto in this budget cycle and the city hopes to learn from that experience.

The mayors were reluctant to embrace the idea of creating a neighbourhood level of local government. Mayor Parish said that it is not really needed in Ajax, a town of 125,000. Mayor Crombie was reluctant to devolve powers with which her council has been entrusted and remarked that Mississauga has very vibrant and active residents associations. Mayor Tory echoed her concern and said that Toronto is already divided into community councils. He remained skeptical that additional elected local representatives would improve representative governance, but did note that he would be willing to look at mechanisms for more community involvement.

Both Mayors Parish and Crombie supported extending voting rights to permanent residents. Mayor Parish added that if people have the experience voting in municipal elections they may be encouraged to apply for citizenship and that extending voting rights may help address the striking lack of diversity on municipal councils. Mayor Tory, however, did not support extending voting rights. He argued that citizenship carries with it certain privileges that should be reserved for citizens as incentives to complete the citizenship process. He acknowledged that the lack of visible minority representation on councils is a disgrace, but proposed that more educational outreach programs, such as CivicAction's School for Civics project, which helps to simplify the campaign process to under-represented groups, can help to address that problem.

TRANSPORTATION DEFICIT



The pitch

The Transportation Deficit team urged the mayors to get moving on fare integration across the region. While the PRESTO card is a start, the team asserted that the “border tax” paid by transit users who move across municipal borders makes inter-regional transit cumbersome and unaffordable. They called for mayors to give greater priority to creating an integrated fare system with zoned fares. Second, the group asked the mayors to consider making transit free before 7 a.m. This would relieve stress during the peak travel period, attract more transit users to the system who would pay for their return journey, and extend the life of the overly-stretched elements of our transit system by shifting some of the pressure off the morning peak period.



The political pulse

On the issue of fare integration, all three mayors bemoaned the fact that it is taking so long to roll this out throughout the region. All three agreed that it needed to happen, and happen faster. Mayor Crombie noted that ridership in Mississauga increased with the introduction of the PRESTO card. Mayor Parish called for one regional transit system, while Mayor Tory remarked that people don't care what system they use as long as they can pay one fare. All expressed their intentions to facilitate fare integration as quickly as possible.

When considering the idea of making transit free before 7 a.m., the mayors were prepared to explore it, but were concerned about the cost. Mayor Tory said he would be willing to pilot the idea, while Mayor Crombie said that she would like to see the business case first. She was concerned that travel patterns would simply shift to the earlier hours of the morning. Mayor Parish emphasized that any solution that increases transit access to those who need it most—particularly marginally employed, minimum wage workers—is worth serious thought.



Photo by Netkhat Ahmed

A group of approximately 12 diverse people, including men and women of various ages, are smiling and posing for a photo in a modern building hallway. The hallway features large glass windows on the right side, allowing natural light to fill the space. The people are dressed in business casual attire. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

APPENDIX: 20 IDEAS ON 6 THEMES

ACCESS TO SERVICES

MICHELE LUPA, MOTHERCRAFT

I propose that a city...

Create the GTA-ship (Greater Toronto Area Service Hub & Information Portal) to streamline access to social services through one online portal.

#MYCITYWILL...

Let me access public services through one online portal.

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

All service providers maintain their own client records. This means that individuals have to repeat their basic information every time they access a new service. It's one of the things that service users complain about most often. An online portal like GTA-ship would allow basic information to be shared with appropriate service providers.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- GTA-ship would provide a single client record that shifts the paradigm away from multiple service providers gathering, holding and releasing information about their clients/service users, to an approach that places the clients at the centre of the services.
-

DETAIL/RATIONALE

- Cities manage and administer various service systems to meet the social, emotional and health needs of its citizens. GTA-ship is aimed at streamlining access to services. It's a data management system, albeit unlike any other that currently exists.
- GTA-ship would leverage existing information and referral services, like 211 Ontario, streamline access to services, and improve the integration of services, especially across service sectors. This would result in improved outcomes and experiences for users.
- As an information portal, details about available services would be organized by sector, using plain language and user-friendly

navigation so that visitors can readily find what they're looking for, regardless of where they live or work in the GTA.

- The service hub component of GTA-ship would involve a more complex technology approach, but would reduce duplication and make navigation through the complex web of social and health services easier.
- GTA-ship is like the first drawer of a filing cabinet. Once a person has decided to access a service, a profile is created, either through the online tool or over the phone. For individuals requiring more intensive interventions and/or multiple services, GTA-ship would have additional “drawers” available for more detailed record keeping, service planning and assessment.
- GTA-ship could also capture and analyze—at a population level, not by individual—various data to inform public policy and new investments, thereby improving access to services in every way imaginable.

MICHELE LUPA is the Executive Director of Mothercraft, a multi-service charity that delivers internationally recognized programs to families with children under the age of six. During her 20-year career, Michele has held various roles in the community services sector, including family support, social housing, community development and mental health. Michele is an active member of local, municipal and provincial committees and networks and is passionate about finding ways to make systems and services work better for children and families. She is the proud mom of Mitchell and Matthew who inspire her every day to think big and do bigger.

ACCESS TO SERVICES

SAMIR SINHA, MOUNT SINAI HOSPITAL

I propose that a city...

End the “postal code lottery of care,” where one’s address determines the quality of health and home care services that one receives.

#MYCITYWILL...

Provide access to services based on our needs + not where we live.
@DrSamirSinha

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

We are resource rich but access poor, as many of the services in the GTA are defined and governed through varying municipal and provincial entities whose work, priorities and fiscal rules often don’t align. This silos care and services. Meanwhile, our collective accountability to citizens and caregivers is forgotten.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- Health, home and community services are overseen by a different set of agencies with differing funding levels and therefore differing abilities to provide similar services.
-

DETAIL/RATIONALE

- When it comes to navigating and accessing services, we are a sea of Torontonians navigating in the dark.
- The sad reality for too many of my patients and those that care for and about them is that, while we live in a region with the unifying name of the Greater Toronto Area, the concept of smooth sailing when it comes to navigating and accessing services remains exactly that: a concept.
- Consider this example from a non-descript intersection in Etobicoke: while everyone living around it rightfully sees themselves as equal neighbours, the residents living in each corner are subject to the “postal code lottery of care.” The health, home and community

services available within each corner is overseen by a different set of agencies with different funding levels and, therefore, differing abilities to provide similar services. Even if you had the same needs, the services you would receive would differ depending upon on which corner you live on. And that is, of course, only if you know how to access the available services in the first place.

- I see too many patients and caregivers across the GTA fall victim to our silos that, in my view, are fully within our power to organize into a system that will truly be there to support and not frustrate us when we need it most. My big idea is really applied common sense: let's agree to create a single point of access for information about health, home and community services in the GTA, with standardized and transparent eligibility criteria to a core basket of services. This is doable, so let's get started.

SAMIR SINHA is a passionate and respected advocate for the needs of older adults. He currently serves as the Director of Geriatrics at Mount Sinai and the University Health Network Hospitals and as an Assistant Professor of Medicine at the University of Toronto. He is the expert lead for Ontario's Seniors Strategy, an author of the City of Toronto's Seniors Strategy, and one of Toronto's Best Doctors according to Toronto Life.

ACCESS TO SERVICES

SHAHIL THOMAS, UNITED WAY TORONTO

I propose that a city...

Create a network of multi-service hubs that are interconnected and responsive to community and regional needs.

#MYCITYWILL...

Take services to the people through a well-planned network of hubs.

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

We need a planned effort to efficiently take services to all parts of the region and provide equal access to all. Through hubs that house multiple services, economies of scale are achieved for the service providers, services are more accessible, transportation costs are minimized and a broader range of needs can be met through links between service providers.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- With increased growth, there will be an increase in demand for services. How can we efficiently provide necessary services, in spite of the infrastructure struggles?
-

DETAIL/RATIONALE

- We need a coordinated and proactive approach to get services to everyone. Community hubs and other multi-service hubs can offer a solution.
- A homeless person would need a shelter (or a safe place to sleep at night), a food bank, educational programs, employment opportunities, health services, etc. If these services are in multiple locations, it creates enormous stress on the individual to meet their basic needs. Through a multi-service model, the service is taken to the client, thereby meeting his needs and providing him with more resources to succeed.
- There is a lot of momentum around creating hubs that combine social services and health care, such as the United Way Hub model.

But hubs for economic development, housing and the creative industry are also necessary.

- There needs to be a coordinated strategy to ensure hubs don't operate in silos. A framework for the coordination of multi-purpose hubs, system-level thinking and funding mechanisms need to be developed. Extensive use of technical expertise and sharing of best practices are also needed.
- A good place to start is with underutilized civic institutions. School buildings that are underutilized could serve as a good pilot. There are challenges with municipal zoning and provincial legislation. But with the Province trying to reduce the cost of underutilized schools and community hubs, this is an opportunity for various levels of government to work together. Repurposing schools to provide varied services would be a better outcome than closing them or selling off valuable public assets.

SHAHIL THOMAS is the Manager of the Toronto Enterprise Fund, which seeks to support the growing social entrepreneur community. He organizes the yearly Business Plan Competition and is also responsible for rolling out a new financing program for non-profit social entrepreneurs. Prior to this, he was with the Metcalf Foundation, where he worked as a Local Economies Developer, focusing on the Thorncliffe and Kingston Galloway neighbourhoods.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

CHERISE BURDA, PEMBINA INSTITUTE

I propose that a city...

Fix the rules and regulations to make family-friendly, medium-density buildings—like mid-rise—more cost-effective for developers and more affordable for homebuyers.

#MYCITYWILL...

Build mid-rise housing options for families in walkable neighbourhoods.

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

- 80% of GTA residents would give up a big yard and house to live in walkable, “location efficient” neighbourhoods that have access to rapid transit and are closer to work. Most homebuyers are priced out of these locations.
 - In 2002, Toronto’s chief planner estimated that developing six-storey mid-rises along just 10% of land parcels along the city’s avenues could build more than 120,000 homes.
-

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- Families are faced with a divide, not a choice: tower condos in downtown, million dollar houses in established neighbourhoods or “drive till they qualify” cheaper houses in car-dependent neighbourhoods with long commutes.
- The costs of commuting can negate the sticker price of a cheaper house.
- Medium-density buildings are more expensive to build per square foot in urban centres than high-rises that make a better return on investment by selling more units. Other developers opt to build houses out in greenfields where land and infrastructure is less expensive.

DETAIL/RATIONALE

- Pembina Institute and Ontario Home Builders Association recently released Make Way for Mid-rise, which offers five actions for cities and the Province to help make family-friendly, medium-density buildings more cost-effective for developers and more affordable to homebuyers.
- Our proposed actions include eliminating minimum parking requirements, pre-zoning main streets for mid-rise and mandating minimum densities for development along rapid transit lines, thereby making the most of billion-dollar investments in transit.
- One or a suite of these actions could help create more options for more families to live in neighbourhoods that are walkable and have access to rapid transit, reduce congestion and take pressure off of our farmland that feeds us.

CHERISE BURDA is the Ontario Director for the Pembina Institute, Canada's leading clean energy "think and do" tank. She leads a team of experts conducting research, advocacy and communications strategies for transportation, urban sustainability and clean energy solutions in Ontario. Before moving back to Toronto in 2007, Cherise worked on resource policy and legislation in British Columbia for over a decade. She holds an MA in environmental legislation and policy, a BSc in environmental science, and a BEd. Cherise grew up in the 905, where much of her family still lives.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

JOHN BRODHEAD, EVERGREEN CITYWORKS

I propose that a city...

Unlock the trapped land assets around Toronto's residential towers to invigorate neighbourhoods.

#MYCITYWILL...

Bring new life to the land around residential towers.

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

Most of the city's affordable family housing units are in towers that need to be re-invigorated, making them more livable and energy efficient, while bringing new community amenities to the sites.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- Twelve hundred concrete apartment towers rise over Toronto's landscape, thanks to a rental tower boom in the inner suburbs after the Second World War. These towers are one of Toronto's defining characteristics and house nearly one million people across the region.
- 77% of these towers are located in communities of high need and the towers are often in need of repair. 80% are private rentals and account for most of the affordable family units in the city.
- To address these issues, Evergreen CityWorks and the Centre for Urban Growth and Renewal have initiated the Tower Renewal Showcase project. The goal of the Tower Renewal Showcase is to unlock trapped land assets around these towers, building new units and bringing in new private capital to re-invest in the existing towers while building new community amenities.

DETAIL/RATIONALE

- By bringing new housing units and commercial development onto these sites, we are hoping to bring new vitality, and new revenue from that development that can be re-invested into the sites.
- We have a number of great private and public tower owners committed to this vision who have offered their properties as potential showcase sites.
- We have been working closely with the City to make these showcase sites a reality and to learn what it will take to scale this model across the city. As these sites are not currently zoned for redevelopment, the City could help drive this transformation by requiring a community renewal package in order to proceed.

JOHN BRODHEAD is the first Executive Director of Evergreen CityWorks, a new initiative focused on building more livable and resilient cities. Prior to joining CityWorks, John was Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and Cabinet Affairs for Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty. John was also Vice President for Strategy and Communications for Metrolinx. Previously, John served in the federal government as an advisor for the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Infrastructure.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

STEVEN WEBBER, RYERSON UNIVERSITY

I propose that a city...

Maximize the potential for building rental housing on underutilized sites throughout the region.

#MYCITYWILL...

Make new rental housing possible through innovative partnerships.

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

- Purpose-built rental construction is not keeping up with demand across the region and actions need to be taken to increase supply and improve access to affordable housing.
-

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- Rental is an important affordable housing option for young adults, families, newcomers and seniors. The lack of supply in the GTA limits the availability of decent and affordable housing choices in locations that provide access to employment opportunities, social services and community amenities.
- The Toronto census metropolitan area has a rental vacancy rate of 1.9%, and the market is not addressing this shortfall. As an example, in 2012, 10,570 housing units were built in York Region and only 33 units were purpose-built rental housing, resulting in a 1.6% vacancy rate.
- Lack of access to reasonably-priced land is a major contributor to higher housing costs.

DETAIL/RATIONALE

- An increase in land supply could help promote the construction of rental projects with affordable and market rate components on underutilized non-profit owned properties, such as places of worship, cultural institutions, union halls and Royal Canadian Legions.
- Cities would act as facilitators by proactively identifying appropriate non-profit owned sites for housing using a criteria based on location, lot size and current use. Additionally, the city would actively provide the support necessary to establish mutually beneficial partnerships between non-profit landowners and developers.
- Cities could adopt pre-approved zoning designations with appropriate density levels and an expedited approval process to incentivize developer participation.
- Participating non-profits would have a distinct community focus, thus developments resulting from this initiative should include funds to upgrade existing facilities and provide new neighbourhood amenities.

STEVEN WEBBER, MCIP, RPP is an Assistant Professor in the School of Urban and Regional Planning at Ryerson University. His professional and academic interests focus on land use planning policies with an emphasis on the integration of housing and employment into smart growth strategies. Dr. Webber holds a master's degree in urban planning from UCLA and a PhD in urban planning from the University of Southern California.

IMMIGRATION AND IDENTITY

HARALD BAUDER, RYERSON UNIVERSITY

I propose that a city...

Declare the entire GTHA a sanctuary urban region so that illegalized residents in the entire region would benefit from equal access to municipal services.

#MYCITYWILL...

Declare GTHA a Sanctuary Region providing access to services to all residents. @RC15

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

The residents of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) are deeply divided by their legal status: while citizens and permanent residents formally enjoy equal access to education, police, housing, health care and other important services, residents who do not possess legal status documents face barriers to accessing many essential services.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- Up to 500,000 residents in Canada lack full status; many of these residents live in the GTHA.
- The “illegalization” of residents is a result of increasingly restrictive federal immigration policies. Yet, due to no fault of their own, cities struggle to provide equal access to municipal services to all their residents. In response to this situation, the city councils of two cities in the GTHA, Toronto and Hamilton, have declared their municipalities “sanctuary cities.” In this way, the cities commit to provide equal access to municipal services to illegalized residents.
- Many illegalized residents in the GTHA, however, are still excluded from equal access to municipal services, including health clinics, schools, emergency shelters, and recreational programs for youths and adults, because the cities in which they live are not sanctuary cities.

DETAIL/RATIONALE

- The municipalities of the GTHA now have a unique opportunity to declare the entire GTHA a sanctuary urban region.
- If all municipalities of the GTHA adopted sanctuary policies, illegalized residents in the entire region would benefit from equal access to municipal services.
- This action would assert the GTHA's leadership role as the main immigrant-welcoming region in Canada. It would also send a strong message to municipalities elsewhere in Canada to pass similar policies, and to the Province of Ontario to explore sanctuary policies at the provincial level.

HARALD BAUDER is the Academic Director of the Ryerson Centre for Immigration and Settlement and a Professor of Geography at Ryerson University. His research critically examines immigration policy and debate, and the equitable integration of immigrants in labour markets and their communities. His latest books include *Immigration Policy and Practice: Interventions and Solutions* (forthcoming, Palgrave Macmillan) and *Immigration Experiences in North America* (Canadian Scholars' Press).

IMMIGRATION AND IDENTITY

PARTHI KANDAVEL,
TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

I propose that a city...

Invest in its underserved suburbs by building high-quality sports facilities, like a cricket stadium.

#MYCITYWILL...

Invest in suburban communities to build bridges with second and third generation Canadians.

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

Second generation Canadians are acutely aware of the lack of investment and positive change in their neighbourhoods, resulting in anti-establishment sentiments. The Toronto area suburbs need to feel the joy and pride of being communities of choice once again.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- Last year's mayoral election not only resulted in a new Mayor, but also revealed—or perhaps to some re-confirmed—a stark reality facing Toronto: a tale of two cities. It has been broadly observed that Mayor Tory gained support along the subway lines and not in the inner suburbs of Etobicoke and Scarborough. This pattern should not only be viewed through a geographic lens, but also one of immigration or race.
- For decades, substantive parts of Etobicoke and Scarborough have received waves of immigration to Canada, and these waves continue. However, the often-overlooked reality is that these new and second generation residents are establishing their own communities and identities, disconnected from the larger city and civic life.
- Evidence suggests that some of these same groups experience a double disconnect: one of class and one of race.

DETAIL/RATIONALE

- Coupled with the immigration explosion in these neighbourhoods, we have seen the middle class significantly diminish as well. Change has not only been restricted to these suburbs. The Yonge Street corridor and the downtown core have seen tremendous change as well, with increased prosperity. This fortune of expansion and development in Toronto has influenced our desire to become a world class city. However, this affluence and success should be felt and made real throughout Toronto.
- Real world-class cities include all parts of their city. In London, the multicultural suburbs of Wimbledon and Wembley host the Wimbledon Tennis Championships and the beautiful Wembley Stadium is used for soccer and concerts. Brooklyn, a once downtrodden multicultural suburb of New York City is now home to creative types, the Brooklyn Nets, and NYC's second largest public art museum. These examples, among others, demonstrate that cosmopolitan cities across the world understand that cities must be strong and smart throughout their geographies.

PARTHI KANDAVEL is a Trustee at the Toronto District School Board representing Scarborough (Southwest), where he has lived, worked and played for over 27 years. He also sits on the board of the Toronto Lands Corporation and is a Director at the Ontario Public School Boards Association. Parthi holds a master's degree in Education and currently teaches Grade 3 math, Grade 7 and 8 history and geography at an independent school in Scarborough.

IMMIGRATION AND IDENTITY

RATNA OMIDVAR, GLOBAL DIVERSITY EXCHANGE

I propose that a city...

Extend municipal voting rights to permanent residents.

#MYCITYWILL...

Correct the democracy deficit and allow permanent residents to vote.

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

While Canada ranks among the most democratic countries in the world, a lack of political representation among immigrant and visible minorities reveals a growing democracy deficit.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- At last count, 15% of Toronto's population, or more than 380,000 residents, couldn't vote in municipal elections because they are not citizens.
- These residents of Toronto's "lost city" pay municipal taxes through mortgages or rent and contribute to services and programs through user fees, but have no say in electing the mayor, city council and school board trustees.
- Remember "no taxation without representation"?

DETAIL/RATIONALE

- Voting is a powerful expression of inclusion, both real and symbolic. It is important for these residents to feel as welcome to shape community programs and services as any citizen. Between 1991 and 2001, 43% of all immigrants to Canada settled in Toronto. By 2025, 63% of Toronto residents will be foreign born. Low-voting neighbourhoods are disproportionately located in the “arrival cities” of North York, York and Scarborough. Action to address the city’s democracy deficit is essential to future-proofing Toronto for the next generation.
- Should we worry about watering down the value of citizenship by conferring voting rights before it has been obtained? No. Canada has one of the highest rates of naturalization in the world (85%). Yet for the first time, citizenship rates are declining, and it’s taking longer to become a citizen. Can we really afford to sustain an artificial barrier to full participation in civic life and a growing democracy deficit that will hurt us all?
- Extending the vote would empower those who qualify to proudly identify themselves as fully-engaged participants in civic life, not merely ratepayers or service users. This is not a new idea. Jurisdictions in over 30 countries allow non-citizens to vote locally. Having more Torontonians taking up this responsibility would be a good thing.

RATNA OMIDVAR is the founding Executive Director of the Global Diversity Exchange at the Ted Rogers School of Management, Ryerson University. Her career has focused on articulating pathways to inclusion for immigrants and visible minorities in host societies, both in Canada and globally. She is both a Member of the Order of Canada and Order of Ontario, with the honours recognizing her advocacy work on behalf of immigrants and her devotion to reducing inequality in Canada.

INCOME POLARIZATION

SUSAN MCISAAC, UNITED WAY TORONTO

I propose that a city...

Commit to creating Community Benefits Partnerships for all major municipal infrastructure projects that include job opportunities for young people and newcomers.

#MYCITYWILL...

Build our region's infrastructure + create employment opportunities through Community Benefits Partnerships.

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

Community Benefits Partnerships are a win-win: they get maximum value from existing investments while supporting social and economic development.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- Toronto has become the income inequality capital of Canada. We now top all major cities in inequality growth.
- Inequality is dividing neighbourhoods. Household incomes in the poorest neighbourhoods grew by just 2% from 1980-2005, compared to 80% in the most affluent ones.
- Inequality is breeding pessimism about next generation's prospects, which is underscored by Toronto's youth unemployment rate of 22%.

DETAIL/RATIONALE

- Community Benefits Partnerships (also called community benefits agreements) are being piloted with the construction of the Eglinton Crosstown, which will cross five Toronto neighbourhoods with high poverty and unemployment rates.
- This builds on a growing track record of similar initiatives. Significant successful agreements include airport and rail in LA, Port of Oakland, New Haven Hospital, Vancouver Olympic Village and Island Highway, and all San Francisco city projects.
- In Toronto, partners are preparing local residents, particularly younger people, for careers tied to the Eglinton Crosstown project. The partnership is also linking procurement opportunities to social enterprises.
- We need more of these kinds of partnerships that can connect residents from high-unemployment neighbourhoods with in-demand careers.
- The leadership of mayors in creating a Community Benefits Office that embeds this principle in municipal infrastructure projects would be a bold move to tackle poverty and strengthen our region's opportunity equation.
- Taking this approach would also ensure that a skilled labour force is in place to meet growing demand in the trades.

SUSAN MCISAAC became President and CEO of United Way Toronto in 2010. A senior executive with United Way since 1998, Susan was formerly the organization's Chief Development Officer. She is active in the community and was awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee medal in 2012 in recognition of her efforts. She serves on Greater Toronto CivicAction Alliance's Board of Directors and is a steering committee member of the Governor General's Initiative on Volunteerism and Philanthropy. In 2014 she was named by WXN as one of Canada's Top 100 Most Powerful Women.

INCOME POLARIZATION

BRENNAN S. THOMPSON,
RYERSON UNIVERSITY

I propose that a city...

Extend childcare hours and create subsidized childcare spaces for all children from low-income families.

#MYCITYWILL...

Guarantee the availability of subsidized childcare for all low-income families.

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

Access to affordable childcare lets parents in poor households work, increasing their incomes, and provides an enhanced learning environment for children in poor households, improving their own future employment prospects.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- According to the City of Toronto's own figures, there are currently over 16,000 children on the waitlist for subsidized childcare. If the City is truly serious about reducing poverty, it will address this shortage immediately.
- Too much attention has been placed on the share of total income that accrues to those at the top of the income distribution scale. Far more concerning is what is happening to those at the bottom of the scale, particularly within "world-class" cities such as Toronto.
- In 2012, 14.5% of Canadians lived in a poor household. The corresponding figure for Toronto was substantially higher, at 18.4%. More troubling is the fact that 21.7% of children in Toronto (almost 270,000 children) live in poor households.

DETAIL/RATIONALE

- Children growing up in poor households tend to experience sub-standard outcomes in terms of physical and mental health, academic achievement and employment in adulthood.
- This high level of childhood poverty makes it unlikely that the gap between those at the top of the income distribution and those at the bottom will be reduced.

BRENNAN S. THOMPSON, PhD, is an Associate Professor and the Undergraduate Program Director in the Department of Economics at Ryerson University. His research interests are in the areas of inequality/poverty and statistical/econometric methods. He teaches courses in introductory economics and statistics/econometrics, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

INCOME POLARIZATION

ARMINE YALNIZYAN,
CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES

I propose that a city...

Require every politician to live one month of his or her inaugural term in the poorest neighbourhood of their ward.

#MYCITYWILL...

Have politicians experience low-income life the way their constituents do for one month.

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

Democracy is based on representation of the people, by the people, for the people, so let's make sure that elected representatives learn what life is like for all the people they represent.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- For millions of Canadians, rising income inequality means insecurity with respect to food and housing, social isolation and few avenues for change. At the same time, money and opportunity have never been so abundant for some.
- As income polarization turns into spatial polarization over time, these divisions in lived reality are becoming harder to bridge in our communities.

DETAIL/RATIONALE

- One unit of social housing or a hotel that is used by Children's Aid or shelter services could be kept available for this purpose.
- The politician's monthly budget would equal the Low Income Measure: half of the median after-tax income in their riding, adjusted for the size of their household. They could not use a car. Transit, food and other needs, including medications, would come out of this budget.
- Difficult daily choices are guaranteed, as is the case for thousands of their fellow citizens, whose interests they were elected to represent. After a few years, all politicians would know how "the other half" lives: what transit is like, where fresh, nutritious food can be found, the state of repair and affordability of housing, the safety of streets at night, the availability of quality childcare nearby, whether recreational and greenspaces are within walking distance and what kind of condition are they in.
- Nothing would better focus the mind on the challenges faced by our least advantaged fellow citizens. Nothing would better trigger the imagination to develop practical ways to tackle income inequality.

ARMINE YALNIZYAN is one of Canada's leading progressive voices and a senior economist at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. She has a twice weekly business column on CBC Radio's most listened to local morning program, Metro Morning, and appears each Wednesday on Canada's premier business television newscast, CBC's The Exchange with Amanda Lang. Armine is also Vice-President of the Canadian Association for Business Economics.

POLITICAL CULTURE

KENDALL ANDERSON, SAMARA

I propose that a city...

Close the divide between those who make political decisions and citizens who feel like outsiders by identifying active citizens—such as through the Everyday Political Citizen project—and offering them a concrete way to bring the neighbourhood’s concerns to the city level.

#MYCITYWILL...

Champion positive and inclusive politics by finding #EPCitizens.

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

Politics now repels more people than it attracts: trust, participation and satisfaction with politics are all low. Expanding the concept of community leadership beyond elected city councillors to include active citizens could help to change the culture and bridge the divide.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- Our political culture in its current state is divided between insiders and outsiders. Citizens struggle with how to affect change in our political system and how to make themselves heard.
- Government can seem irrelevant. In a recent survey, only 31% of Canadians report that decisions made by elected officials affect them “every day.”
- Government “doesn’t look like me.” People need to see themselves in politics in order to feel empowered. Current elected leaders don’t reflect the diversity of residents, with very few visible minorities, women, indigenous people or youth represented.

DETAIL/RATIONALE

- A cultural divide can only be bridged by a culture change, and culture requires people working to the same purpose.
- In making decisions, cities need to gather information by reaching out beyond elected leaders. Everyday Political Citizens (EPCs) offer insight as local community leaders with specific knowledge of their community.
- In 2014, nearly 90 EPCs from the GTHA were identified and celebrated.
- Representation of the population should be sought. In the meantime, EPCs can fill the gap as role models and local leaders.
- Media has an appetite to go beyond the negativity and tell the stories of diverse political engagement, once an organization or city brings these people and stories to their attention.
- Last year, the City of Edmonton championed this project and found 90 civic leaders to help them make decisions that work for all areas of the city.
- When it comes to bridging divides in political culture, Everyday Political Citizens and the assembly of their stories, talents and spirit are both the bridge and the bridge builders.

KENDALL ANDERSON is the Acting Co-Executive Director and Communications Director for Samara Canada, a charity that is dedicated to reconnecting citizens to politics. She oversees all aspects of Samara's communications including the production of ground-breaking research reports such as Democracy 360, as well as educational materials for schools and universities. In addition, she oversees the Everyday Political Citizen engagement program, which profiles role models of positive politics.

POLITICAL CULTURE

KATHRYN CHURCH & MELANIE PANITCH,
SCHOOL OF DISABILITY STUDIES,
RYERSON UNIVERSITY

I propose that a city...

Think broadly and act boldly on accessibility and the city building capacities of its disabled residents.

#MYCITYWILL...

Build a vibrant civic culture by bringing disabled people, their organizations and their expertise to the table to fully engage in political and civic life.

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

Cities that actively enable all their residents to participate fully in all aspects of civic life are stronger, more economically vibrant and resilient. A city that is fully accessible does much more than meet a set of legislated codes; it ensures that people with disabilities are contributing to all aspects of civic life, public history and cultural production.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- People with disabilities are a heterogeneous group. Much more than clients or consumers of services, people with disabilities are engaged and creative producers of civic life and political culture.
- The strength of cities lies in their capacity to become ethically cosmopolitan through fidelity to a code of universal human rights and through the creation of places and spaces where disabled people genuinely feel at home.

DETAIL/RATIONALE

- Incubate forums and fund projects that will enable the current generation of disability leaders to engage and mentor disabled youth in building the city of the future.
- Accessibility includes professional and public services that are easy to reach, well-coordinated, well-funded and democratically accountable. But becoming a “service user” means risking a new divide marked by telling the stories of our lives only in terms of what we might need and not in terms of what we have to contribute.
- Full access means stoking the political and cultural engagement of under-represented groups with the individual ambitions, talents and skills of people with disabilities for the benefit of all. Failure to achieve this in Toronto leads to what Catherine Frazee describes as “the splintering of a great city, the balkanization of worldviews, and a descent into colonial patterns of contempt and corrosion.”

KATHRYN CHURCH is Director and Associate Professor in the School of Disability Studies at Ryerson University. For the past decade, she has been part of key initiatives that have brought the School’s “vision, passion, action” message to life across the university and in the public eye. She is an arts-informed political ethnographer and a foundational contributor to Mad Studies.

MELANIE PANITCH is an Associate Professor, School of Disability Studies at Ryerson University. She is an activist, advocate, researcher and educator, with strong roots in the community living movement.

POLITICAL CULTURE

DAVE MESLIN, ARTIST AND COMMUNITY CATALYST

I propose that a city...

Put the “local” back in local government by creating a lower tier of Neighbourhood Councils that have delegated authority over local issues.

#MYCITYWILL...

Put the local back in local government, with elected Neighbourhood Councils. We need to break it down!

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

Democracy is more than just elections. As a city, we all benefit from an engaged population. But a century of Toronto amalgamations has resulted in reduced access to local democracy, making people less likely to engage and feel connected to their city.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- Our city is the result of a forced marriage that happened seventeen years ago. Six cities, who were all quite happy being single, were suddenly part of an experiment that’s still unfolding. Bylaws were “harmonized” and departments merged, but the devastating impact of amalgamation on people’s sense of belonging still affects us today.
- 1998 wasn’t our first amalgamation. Throughout Toronto’s history, we’ve dissolved 19 former city councils through amalgamations, and each loss reduced access to local decision-making. City councillors now represent roughly fifty thousand people each—an impossible task. More importantly, Council meetings at Queen and Bay are physically distant from residents—as far as 25 kilometres away.

DETAIL/RATIONALE

- People are more likely to engage and feel connected if opportunities for participation are local. Some have proposed de-amalgamation as a cure, but there are much more practical solutions.
- Large cities across North America have implemented various systems of local decision-making designed to make municipal government more accessible. Montreal's 19 borough councils and New York's 59 community planning boards are both worth looking at. In addition, some cities invest heavily in creating citizen-driven neighbourhood groups, such as Edmonton's system of "community leagues" and Los Angeles' Neighbourhood Councils.

DAVE MESLIN is a writer, community organizer and trainer. Multi-partisan and fiercely optimistic, his work focuses on how we can overcome cynicism and create a culture of participation. His TED talk, *The Antidote to Apathy*, has been viewed over 1.4 million times and translated into 37 languages. Meslin's *Fourth Wall* exhibit proposed 36 reforms to make local government more accessible and participatory. He is currently writing a book, *100 Remedies for a Broken Democracy*, which will be published by Penguin Canada in 2017.

POLITICAL CULTURE

MYER SIEMIATYCKI, RYERSON UNIVERSITY

I propose that a city...

Take proactive steps to promote a more inclusive, participatory urban political culture.

#MYCITYWILL...

City Hall: all-in, building urban citizenship.

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

Too many urban residents and communities are outsiders in municipal decision-making.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

Our political culture produces insiders and outsiders: many residents are denied voting rights, don't see themselves equitably reflected at city council and want a stronger voice on city decisions. This feeds political exclusion, cynicism and division. The GTA should promote wider participation through measures such as:

- Extend municipal voting rights to all urban permanent residents. Cities in 50 other countries now give immigrants voting rights before naturalization and so should one of the world's leading immigrant city-regions, the GTA. At the moment, one in seven Toronto residents and one in eight Mississauga residents have no right to vote in municipal elections as permanent urban residents. More GTA residents are excluded from voting municipally than the entire population of Vancouver. Join the chorus of city councils calling for voting rights for all urban residents!
- Municipal councils in the GTA have the worst record of visible minority members in elected office. Federal MPs, provincial MPPs and school trustees are more reflective of our population diversity. In 2011, visible minorities accounted for over 40% of the GTA population, but only 7% of municipal council seats.

Something is wrong with this picture. Every GTA council should create an “inclusion task force” to recommend steps to promote greater representation of all under-represented groups (visible minorities, Aboriginals, people with disabilities, women and youth) in the electoral process.

- Our cities should promote non-partisan civic literacy learning in local libraries and community centres.
 - We should experiment with mechanisms for direct participatory local democracy, like participatory budgeting and neighbourhood councils.
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DETAIL/RATIONALE

- Make the GTA famous for finding ways to give all urban residents a voice in local decision-making.
- Best of all, there is virtually no budget cost to bridging this divide. The reward? Priceless.

MYER SIEMIATYCKI is a Professor of Politics and Public Administration at Ryerson University. He has published widely on Toronto as a site of political participation, inclusion and exclusion.

POLITICAL CULTURE

ZACK TAYLOR,

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO SCARBOROUGH

I propose that a city...

Generate a culture of Yes by building broad public support—political and fiscal—for infrastructure investments that will improve quality of life for all.

#MYCITYWILL...

End populist pandering and build a culture of Yes. To build infrastructure, leaders must first lead.

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

For two decades, politicians have pitted communities against each other and nurtured a culture of No by framing the prioritization of infrastructure projects in terms of which community is most deserving, rather than what projects will increase the quality of life for the most people and create the most value.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- Politicians have underinvested and lowered our expectations of government, creating a culture of No. As a result, the region now has an annual unmet capital projects investment gap in the order of \$3–4 billion. The gap has real economic and social costs. Transportation congestion produces a lag on the regional economy upwards of \$6 billion. Due to underinvestment in social housing and affordable housing supports, over 92,000 households are now on affordable housing waiting lists in the City of Toronto alone. Underinvestment is felt disproportionately by the less well off, many of whom live in amenity-poor areas.

- Underinvestment encourages wedge politics by feeding a “shrinking pie” mentality. When large investments are rare, local politicians lobby for their piece of the action, leading to the funding of pet projects on a tit-for-tat basis, regardless of technical merit or social benefits.
-

DETAIL/RATIONALE

- To build a sense of common regional purpose, leaders must first level with citizens. There is no free lunch. Efficiencies can always be found, but the savings will never be enough to build big-ticket assets. Public-private financing may reduce risk, but money isn’t free. Governments at all levels have the room to raise revenues to pay for investments. Per capita federal and provincial spending are at generational lows. The City of Toronto has untapped authority to diversify its revenues. Other municipalities have untapped borrowing capacity.
- Residents will put skin in the game—pay additional taxes and, in so doing, become part of the solution—if leaders demonstrate that their taxes will produce concrete benefits. Leaders must build a broad-based culture of Yes.

ZACK TAYLOR is Assistant Professor in the City Studies Program, Department of Human Geography, at the University of Toronto’s Scarborough Campus. He teaches and researches on North American urban politics and governance, public finance, and public policy.

TRANSPORTATION DEFICIT

JOSEPH CHOW, RYERSON UNIVERSITY

I propose that a city...

Employ more tools to monitor travel data across systems and create roles for “city doctors” to accomplish this.

#MYCITYWILL...

Diagnose and treat transportation blockages!

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

Transportation infrastructure is the city’s circulatory system through which the lifeblood flows, so keeping it moving is essential to overall health.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- Transportation policies can have differing effects on different populations, so lessons learned from other cities and jurisdictions alone cannot justify implementing a policy.
- It is difficult to evaluate policies when we lack tools to measure them or when existing tools are based solely on planning data, for example, annual average traffic or surveys of typical travel preferences conducted every five years).
- Operational data allows policymakers to measure realized effects, but much of the data are partitioned into silos (for example, traffic control centres only see traffic data, transit operators only see transit data, etc.)
- As a consequence, when a large-scale event occurs, like a winter storm or the Pan Am Games, we lack a means to quantitatively describe its holistic effects on travel and its subsequent impact on the economy.

DETAIL/RATIONALE

- We should be able to pull up a report at any given time of day that tells us the number of people currently traveling by car, bus, subway, streetcar and bike; where they are generally coming from and going to; and the purpose of those trips.
- When a major incident like a blizzard or storm occurs, we should be able to pinpoint the simultaneous effects that storm has on the different transportation modes and underlying economic activities.
- This kind of monitoring would allow the city to create a role for transportation systems engineers to serve as “city doctors” who monitor this holistic transportation health on a day-to-day basis, with authority to direct operational remedies.

JOSEPH CHOW, PhD is the CRC in Transportation Systems Engineering, with research interests in urban transportation networks, transport economics, and intelligent transportation systems. He heads the Ryerson Urban Transportation Lab, which has over \$1M funding from CRC, NSERC, CFI, among others. Prior to Ryerson, Dr. Chow was a lecturer at University of Southern California and a postdoc at University of California, Irvine, where he obtained his PhD in 2010. He received his MEng ('01) and BS ('00) from Cornell.

TRANSPORTATION DEFICIT

MURTAZA HAIDER, RYERSON UNIVERSITY

I propose that a city...

Integrate transit fares across transit operators and jurisdictions with one searchable information system.

#MYCITYWILL...

Let me pay one fare across city boundaries to get to work.

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

Smart fare integration across transit operators and jurisdictions will help grow transit ridership and improve accessibility and equity in metropolitan areas.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- A growing number of commuters are forced to pay multiple fares to different public transit operators for a single commute that crosses municipal boundaries.
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DETAIL/RATIONALE

- Regional transit operators should accept the same transit card (and preferably integrate with smartphones) for fare collection.
- The fare integration should offer significant discounts to riders. The resulting increase in ridership from fare integration could partially cover the costs associated with discounts.
- Cities should offer a synchronized transit service across jurisdictions with competitive transit travel times relative to private automobiles.
- The GTA should establish a regional transit information system that would allow commuters to search the fastest transit alternatives for trips beginning and ending in different municipalities.

MURTAZA HAIDER, PhD is an associate professor with the Ted Rogers School of Management at Ryerson University. He is also an adjunct professor in the Faculty of Engineering at McGill University. Before coming to Ryerson, Professor Haider taught travel demand forecasting, infrastructure investment analysis, and land development at McGill University. Professor Haider's research focuses on the analysis of housing markets, transport planning, and infrastructure development.

TRANSPORTATION DEFICIT

HILARY HOLDEN, ARUP

I propose that a city...

Makes transit free if you board before 7 a.m.

#MYCITYWILL...

Make transit free for all before 7 a.m. #FreeB47.

WHY IS THIS IDEA IMPORTANT?

Free transit fare before 7 a.m. is a quick and easy way to increase transit equity and get more out of our existing transit infrastructure.

WHAT IS THE DIVIDE + ANY RELEVANT STATS

- Affordability: free fare before 7 a.m. would halve the cost of a return transit trip.
- Access to opportunity: this fare tool would generate new travel opportunities, particularly for those on low incomes.
- Isolated neighbourhoods: this system would support those who travel long distances by transit and need to board transit before 7 a.m.
- Income divide: increased affordability would help to bridge the income divide in access to transit, particularly for the working poor.
- Temporal divide: the need for more capacity is urgent. We can't wait for big projects like the Downtown Relief Line to be built.


DETAIL/RATIONALE

- Free transit before 7 a.m. incentivizes people who can shift to travel before the ridership peak, freeing up space during the peak.
- Early bird pricing is successfully used in two other global cities: in Melbourne, which is very similar to Toronto, they have offered free early travel for seven years. It costs \$6 million a year in lost revenue, but the operator concludes that it saves money, as it has reduced the need for new capacity. Singapore is in the second year of its pilot and initially saw a 7% reduction in travel in the peak and \$7 million per year in lost revenue.
- The impact of lost fare revenue in the morning peak is dampened by new users paying for their return trip.
- The morning peak is targeted as it is the peakiest of the two peaks.
- This proposal would require minimal additional investment. If popular, it may need higher frequency services before 7 a.m.
- It can be easily piloted.
- In advance, the City could estimate lost revenue and potential infrastructure savings, evaluate the benefits to users, and determine at Council if it's worth the investment.
- #FreeB47 could be applied to other modes of travel too, like toll users exiting the Gardiner in downtown Toronto after 7 a.m., to incentivize a shift in travel patterns.

HILARY HOLDEN advises public and private clients on returns on investment. Having studied Geography at Cambridge and Transport Planning at the Leeds Institute for Transport Studies, she always puts users front and centre when evaluating the investment qualities of transit projects. She leads a talented team of consultants at global firm Arup. She's lived a car-less life in Toronto for five years, arriving at the end of the Miller era.

#mycitywill

OUR NEEDS + NOT WHERE WE LIVE. / TAKE
PLANNED NETWORK OF HUBS. / BUILD M
WALKABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS. / MAKE
INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS. / DECLAR
ACCESS TO SERVICES TO ALL RESIDENTS. /
ALLOW PERMANENT RESIDENTS TO VOTE.
CREATE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES THRO
/ GUARANTEE THE AVAILABILITY OF SUB
FAMILIES. / CHAMPION POSITIVE AND INC
BUILD A VIBRANT CIVIC CULTURE BY BRINGIN
AND THEIR EXPERTISE TO THE TABLE TO FULLY
HALL: ALL-IN, BUILDING URBAN CITIZENSHIP.
CULTURE OF YES. TO BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE
AND TREAT TRANSPORTATION BLOCKAGES!
BOUNDARIES TO GET TO WORK. / MAKE TR



Tweets from Ryerson's Bridging Divides panelists:

LET ME ACCESS PUBLIC SERVICES
THROUGH ONE ONLINE PORTAL. /
PROVIDE ACCESS TO SERVICES BASED ON
SERVICES TO THE PEOPLE THROUGH A WELL-
MID-RISE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR FAMILIES IN
NEW RENTAL HOUSING POSSIBLE THROUGH
THE GTHA A SANCTUARY REGION PROVIDING
/ CORRECT THE DEMOCRACY DEFICIT AND
/ BUILD OUR REGION'S INFRASTRUCTURE +
ROUGH COMMUNITY BENEFITS PARTNERSHIPS.
SUBSIDIZED CHILDCARE FOR ALL LOW-INCOME
EXCLUSIVE POLITICS BY FINDING #EPCITIZENS. /
HELPING DISABLED PEOPLE, THEIR ORGANIZATIONS
ENGAGE IN POLITICAL AND CIVIC LIFE. / CITY
/ END POPULIST PANDERING AND BUILD A
LEADERSHIP, LEADERS MUST FIRST LEAD. / DIAGNOSE
/ LET ME PAY ONE FARE ACROSS CITY
TRANSIT FREE FOR ALL BEFORE 7 A.M. #FREEB47.