

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This report is designed to answer the following question:

To what extent, if any, have planners responded to ethno-cultural diversity in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)? Further, what over-arching corporate initiatives or programs have been implemented to accommodate increased ethno-cultural diversity?

The data provided in this report are organized into four categories including:

- 1) Needs assessment and service provision;
- 2) Cultural accommodations in land use planning;
- 3) Community engagement initiatives and techniques; and
- 4) A formal policy commitment to the promotion of cultural diversity.

METHOD

The data used in this report were acquired through a series of interviewer-administered questionnaires and subsequent data triangulation. Interviews were held with senior planners using a thirteen-question questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed using a series of ‘best practices’; adapted through an extensive literature review. Recommendations are provided on the basis of the analysis and scholarly publications.

ANALYSIS

The analysis is broken into sections according to the four categories, which are further refined using sub-components of the questionnaire. The data reveals that while many municipalities are providing specialized services to visible minority and foreign-born populations (e.g. cultural festival sponsorship, translation and interpretation services, ethnic business accommodations and inclusive policies for ethnic sporting activities/play fields), few of the selected municipalities are moving beyond their political and legislated mandate to ensure that vulnerable populations are adequately accommodated and engaged in planning and municipal decision-making processes (e.g. cultural sensitivity training, mentoring partnerships, specialized policies that promote cultural diversity, studies and mapping to acknowledge changing ethno-cultural and socio-economic demographics, and extensive public visioning exercises). To summarize the findings of the analysis, Qadeer’s 1997 *Ladder of Planning Principles Supporting Multiculturalism* is applied. The Ladder reveals the extent to which each municipality has responded to ethno-cultural diversity, thereby addressing the research question presented in this report.

CONCLUSION & RECOMENDATIONS

The report provides 15 recommendations that will enable municipal planners to more proactively accommodate the needs of an ethno-culturally diversifying public. The recommendations are broken into the four categories. With respect to the ‘needs assessment and service provision’ category, six recommendations are offered encouraging municipalities to explore the feasibility of employment equity programs, cultural sensitivity training, and extensive analyses of ethnic enclaves and visible minority neighbourhoods. Under the ‘cultural accommodations’ category, four recommendations are provided to see municipal policy adopt a more supportive cultural perspective to replace the current reactive approach to cultural accommodation with a more refined awareness of the diverse religious, cultural, and ethnic needs of foreign-born and visible minority populations. Under the ‘community engagement’ category, three recommendations are provided. Planning practitioners are encouraged to adopt a variety of public engagement techniques to enable vulnerable populations to more actively participate in the public consultation process. Finally, with respect to the ‘formal policy commitment to promoting cultural diversity’ category, two recommendations are offered. It is recommended here, that municipalities investigate the feasibility of creating explicit official plan policies that would have the effect of validating cultural factors as grounds on which to base land use planning decisions. If satisfied, these recommendations will enable municipal officials to respond to diversity in a manner that satisfies the underlying principles of Canada’s multiculturalism policy.

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