TORONTO REGION
VISION 2014
BIG IDEAS FOR THE REGION

TRV2014 Report
Hosted by:

CivicAction
Greater Toronto CivicAction Alliance

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CivicAction
CivicAction tackles some of the region’s toughest social, economic and environmental challenges by setting a non-partisan agenda, building strategic partnerships with organizations, and launching campaigns, programs and organizations that transform our region.

Sarah Thomson
Transit Alliance
The Transit Alliance is a non-political membership organization uniting those in the infrastructure and transit industries. The Transit Alliance educates residents about the positive economic impact of infrastructure expansion, and the need for dedicated transit funding.

Geoff Cape
Evergreen
Evergreen is a national not-for-profit that inspires action to green cities. Evergreen’s work is driven by the belief in the power of people to enact positive change and restore the natural health of their communities.
Introduction

On February 6, 2014, over 250 businesses, community leaders, innovators, and young people came together for the Toronto Region Vision 2014 (TRV) event.

Organized by the Transit Alliance, CivicAction, and Evergreen, the TRV’s broad mission was to inspire big, long term ideas to provide a basis for a strong vision for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). The ideas, contributed by a diverse spectrum of stakeholders from across the GTHA, form the primary foundations of a vision for the entire region.

The ideas contributed by participants were based around the themes of jobs, homes, and mobility. These themes were discussed through the lenses of diversity, governance, and innovation.

Ontario Premier, Kathleen Wynne and five other speakers introduced the issues, motivating and inspiring our working sessions participants. Representing a range of interests from across the region, the speakers included leaders in their respective fields of public policy, architecture, urban research, real estate, and innovation.

This report is a summary of the events of the day, and is intended to serve as a first step to developing a collaborative, long-term, comprehensive vision that will help propel the GTHA into a prosperous and productive 21st century.

What We Learned

A diverse group of regional interests were represented at each table with participants focused on one of the three major themes: jobs, homes, and mobility. Through intense discussion, participants contributed a broad range of ideas and collaborated to identify key criteria required in creating the foundations of a strong vision for the GTHA. A summary of their ideas follows.
Keynote

Premier Kathleen Wynne
Kathleen Wynne is Ontario’s 25th Premier. She was elected to the Ontario legislature in 2003 and became the leader of the Ontario Liberal Party in January, 2013. Kathleen is dedicated to building a better province for all the people of Ontario, by providing high quality services in the most efficient manner.

Speakers

Terry Cook
President & CEO – Hamilton Community Foundation
Under his previous community leadership as Chair of the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth, the Region gained recognition as a Canadian leader in the formation of successful public/private partnerships and the primary political champion. Terry is Chair of Northgate Properties and the Canadian Urban Institute. He is also a member of the Board of Advisors of the LPF Infrastructure Fund and the Fengate Greenfield Fund, a member of the Board of Governors of the YMCA of Hamilton and a Director of Horizon Utilities.

Zahra Ebrahim
Founder and Principal - archiTEXT
Zahra started archiTEXT as a place to bring together diverse groups to tackle the intersections of architecture and design with social change, to explore the impact of design and creativity on systems change, and to engage the public in a discourse of design and design thinking as a mechanism for creative problem solving. Zahra teaches at the Ontario College of Art and Design in the Think Tank program, and is the co-lead on the Community. Design. Initiative.

Dan Hoornweg
Professor and Jeff Boyce Research Chair - University of Ontario Institute of Technology (Durham)
Along with his role at the UOIT, Dan is also both Chief Safety and Risk Officer, Province of Ontario and also Advisor and Fellow, Urban Development, Sustainable Development Network at The World Bank. Dan was lead author on Canada’s first municipal Green Plan and started the first local government round table on sustainable development (City of Guelph).
Sunil Johal  
Policy Director- Mowatt Centre  
The Mowat Centre is a public policy think tank at the School of Public Policy and Governance at the University of Toronto. Previously, Sunil was a director with the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, and has also held senior management and policy roles with the Cabinet Office, Ministries of Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs and federal Treasury Board Secretariat. Sunil has been a lecturer with Ryerson University’s Department of Politics and Public Administration since 2009 and holds degrees from the London School of Economics, Osgoode Hall Law School and the University of Western Ontario.

Mary Rowe  
Vice President, Municipal Art Society of New York  
Mary's charge at MAS includes fostering urban livability. Mary coordinated the New Orleans Institute for Resilience and Innovation, a loose alliance of initiatives that emerges in response to the systemic collapses of 2005. Mary is an experienced facilitator, convener and communicator on urban issues and worked for ten years in Toronto as president of Ideas that Matter, a publishing program based on the work of Jane Jacobs.

TRV Summary Report Authors

Mackenzie Keast  
Director, Transit Alliance  
Mackenzie is a city building, master plan making, red tape hating urban designer. Mackenzie helps with conceptualizing neighbourhood and streetscape improvements, developing revitalization strategies, facilitating charrettes and community engagement workshops, planning strategic urban interventions, and assisting with urban design policy.

Matthew Mendelsohn  
Director, Mowatt Centre  
Matthew founded the Mowat Centre at the School of Public Policy & Governance in 2009. It delivers research-driven recommendations on Canada’s most challenging policy problems and serves as Ontario’s independent voice on public policy. He currently serves on Boards of Directors for Civix, the Council of the Great Lakes Region, l’Idée fédérale, and United Way Toronto.
Challenges

JOBS

While the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) is the economic engine for the country and province, we are not functioning as well as we could be. The GTHA continues to face challenges commercializing research, integrating the skills of newcomers into the job market, and matching jobs with those who need them.

While advancement of new technologies accelerates, the opportunities to capitalize on these advances remains sparse in the region. Investors don't look to Toronto for investments although we have a strong financial sector. Our ability to recognize and promote our entrepreneurial talent is limited. The structure of our social assistance systems continues to impede those at the bottom rungs of society from climbing the ladder of prosperity.

HOUSING

With the region's blooming real estate market comes a host of challenges that must be addressed. The cost of housing is becoming unaffordable for many. A lack of coordination of the region's housing development has also led to fragmented and often conflicting policy and regulatory responses. Growth pressure creates friction between developers and long-term residents. New developments must mix many uses in order to support vibrant and thriving communities. Meanwhile, an aging population of residents demands attention to issues of property taxation fairness, housing accommodation, and building accessibility.

TRANSPORTATION

The GTHA has the worst commute times in North America, and must find a way to accommodate an additional 100,000 new residents every year. Congestion is one of the region's top issues, with a lack of necessary infrastructure investment the entire region has fallen behind the pace of population growth. A lack of political courage has prevented commitment to long-term transportation solutions, and hindered the creation of necessary revenue tools. Even when public support for action is strong, politicians feel their ability to proceed is limited by a mistrust of government spending. Metrolinx is the regional transportation authority, yet lacks the revenue generation ability that similar organizations have in other regions.
“The GTHA must work towards a full “mixed-use” development strategy to reduce traffic and pressure on the transit system, and to build stronger communities.”

- TRV 2014 participant
To unlock gridlock we must put the user first and require transit systems across the GTHA to work collaboratively.

- TRV 2014 Participant

We have strong financial, research and educational institutions but we must create a structure that connects local investors with local innovation.

- TRV 2014 participant
Vision for Jobs

What do we do well in the Toronto Region?

The GTHA is Canada’s most populated metropolitan area, and an important source of growth of jobs and wealth for the country. The region emerged from the economic meltdown of 2008 relative unscathed, benefiting from a cautious financial sector, a strong education and research sector, a diverse multicultural population. The region is traditionally risk averse, but the influx of new young and multicultural residents are evolving the labour market to be more diverse and globally competitive.

A strong vision for the GTHA

The GTHA must work towards expanding our core industries:

1. Food and beverage
2. Aerospace
3. Automotive
4. Clean Energy and Environment,
5. Financial Services
6. Information and Communications Technology
7. Interactive Digital Media

We must encourage our key industries to work collaboratively to support and create systems that allow and encourage information sharing, innovation and further growth in these sectors.

With an educated and diverse population the GTHA must create seed funding for our entrepreneurs and a mentorship program that enables access to experienced industry leaders. We must leverage our position as a national engine of growth with a highly-skilled workforce. This leveraging will require an effort to brand a regional identity, and encourage stakeholders to support their regional partners. Our identity as a hub for creative innovation should be a fundamental part of the GTHA brand.
Vision for Homes

What do we do well in the GTHA?

There are 100,000 new residents that arrive in the GHTA every year. With a population slightly over 6 million the region is experiencing rapid growth that surpasses any other city in North America. We have more towers under construction than New York and Chicago combined. A vast network of parks and open spaces keep recreational activities close to where we live. Our diversity creates a regional character that is rich and cosmopolitan. Our citizens are engaged and active members of their communities; they volunteer and participate in social activism.

A vision for homes

Planners from municipalities across the GTHA will work to create a unified system that encourages builders to create magnificent buildings that demonstrate excellence in design, efficiency, and effective environmental and energy saving solutions. The GTHA will strive to create mixed use, mixed income housing across the entire region. The GTHA must realize that increased development charges has a huge impact on house prices as they are always passed on to home buyers and we must look to other revenue streams to fund our infrastructure.

Summary

The future of housing in the region depends heavily upon enhanced collaboration between governments, and upon strong leadership on tough issues. Decisions must not only be made, but followed through with actions. Innovative ideas and creative solutions must be fostered, and risks must be taken. This will lead to improved housing affordability, enhanced public spaces, and the GTHA will be viewed as a world leader in livability.
Vision for Mobility

What do we do well in Toronto?

The GTHA's network of highways and avenues give us the foundations for creating a highly accessible and connected region. Metrolinx and GO Transit are working to provide the inter-connectivity the region needs. And residents are aware of the growing need for more transportation infrastructure. Cycling as a mode of commuting has increased substantially.

Vision for transit across the region

Full connectivity across the region will integrate all modes of transportation from walking, to cycling, driving and commuting by bus, streetcar, subway and train. The GTHA has a transit plan, but Metrolinx lacks the long term funding needed to build it.

Expanding the infrastructure for transportation across the GTHA will require a dedicated transit fund that all regions support. We must come together as a region to form a dedicated transit fund and expand our outlook from 25 years to 100 years.

Mobility Summary

The region has a strong transportation framework in place, with the Metrolinx regional transportation authority working to build the systems the region needs and local transit operators serving the public. But the future of mobility in the region lies in limiting political interference. Both leadership and financial commitment are crucial to accomplishing our regional transit plans. But our outlook must encompass a much longer term and expand to a 100 year vision.
“We must find a way to separate transit expansion from political intervention and allow our transit planners to build what is truly needed in priority.”

– TRV 2014 participant
Visionary Ideas for the GTHA

What are the big ideas which will drive the next 20 years of economic prosperity in the GTHA? What does the economic landscape of the region look like now, and where are we prospering?

• The GTHA could develop non-traditional degree programs that combine elements of separate disciplines, including combining academic and applied subjects. Integrating degree and apprenticeship programs to further broaden student opportunities and develop job-ready skills. In introducing innovation and flexibility to education we would be recognizing the new norms of remote and flexible work culture.

• Labour Market Information must be mapped across the region, following a model used in Germany of distinguishing people, skills, jobs and companies. Using this information, Micro-hubs can be created to allow small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to be more intelligently located. To ensure the global investment community recognizes the GTHA as the next hotbed of innovation, we must become the region the world looks to when it thinks of creating smart, open systems of shared knowledge.

• The GTHA has a strong economic foundation based on its financial, research and educational institutions. This dashboard should inspire cross-investment in innovative technology, and help smaller businesses connect with seed capital, but we must create a structure that connects local investors with local innovation.

• Rental subsidies would allow those currently in community housing to choose where they want to live and work to break up the pockets of poverty that have formed across the region. These subsidies should be combined with legislation requiring that 10% of units in all new developments meet the standard of being affordable housing.

• Take advantage of public construction projects to include mixed-income and affordable housing above libraries, schools, transit stations and other buildings.

• Promote social impact bonds that recognize the dollar value of the work charities and non-profits do in our communities. Invest in these groups and allow them to take on some of the work that governments can not deliver efficiently - for example homeless shelters.

• Require all new housing development to include space for growing food, such as a community garden, as well as comprehensive waste management including composting.
Visionary Ideas for the GTHA

• A new collaborative transit body for the GTHA - a transit commission responsible for all transportation expansion, accountable directly to the public and entirely free from political intervention. With the power to tax, toll or create a fee that all those in the GTHA support.

• Create a dedicated mobility fund. The fund would be tightly guarded from political intervention and abolished once transportation expansion for the region is complete. The fund would support transportation projects in the region, such as bridges, roads and rail, according to an assessment of local needs.

• The GTHA should become the centre for research and development in new transit technology, including entirely new modes of transit. We have the most to gain from innovative solutions. Encourage mobility innovators to come to the region to work on cutting edge technologies and create a test centre where new modes of transit are welcome.

• Pass legislation allowing municipalities to “pre-zone” along all transit corridors, fostering increased densities and moving towards the goal of having all transit funded by users.

• Create hubs at all transit stations across the region. These hubs would combine mixed-income housing with seniors and child care, medical clinics, and educational centres. As well, each hub would have mixed use and mixed income housing above them.

• Develop smart city infrastructure, including solar power on top of all public properties. Encourage businesses to invest in power generation and contribute to the local power grid. Create a GTHA-wide competition that recognizes businesses that contribute to the grid and offer a special community reward.

• Create an ideas competition around making neighbourhoods and communities more independent. Encourage corporate funding of community projects that create autonomy in the areas of garbage collection, recycling, power generation, etc.

• Create a "design for excellence" program that encourages beautiful architecture and design across the GTHA. The more we put into our homes, the greater the stake we have in our communities.
Conclusion

The first Toronto Region Vision 2014 (TRV2014) event brought together a diverse spectrum of leaders, residents, students and advocates from across the GTHA to share ideas for improving the economy, addressing housing issues, and strengthening transit and mobility.

Business leaders, community champions, innovators, heads of industry, non-profit groups, and young people worked collaboratively to generate ideas that recognize we are strongest not individually, but as a region.

This first event allowed us to build the foundations for a broad regional vision. The next TRV event but achieve a strong regional vision formed and supported by all municipalities across the GTHA.

Together, we can will build solutions to the region’s most pressing challenges, and create a future that is livable, accessible, and prosperous.

Collaboration is key to creating a strong regional vision and all municipalities must work toward achieving it. Together we will create a strong dynamic region for our children and their future.