

COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP ON TOUGH ISSUES AND BIG OPPORTUNITIES

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CivicAction is unique. No other organization convenes leaders from across the Greater Toronto region and from every sector to collectively tackle our shared social, economic and environmental issues. CivicAction breaks boundaries between sometimes competing people and groups, bringing them together to agree on and pursue goals that advance us all. We are motivated by the belief that government alone can't solve all of the issues we face: the best solutions to complex civic challenges are created when traditional players as well as the "unusual suspects" are at the table.

When over 1,000 regional leaders from business, government, non-profits, labour and academia came together at CivicAction's Greater Toronto Summit 2011, they were following in the footsteps of thousands of others who, since 2002, have worked together to identify and respond in innovative ways to our region's strengths, challenges and opportunities.

The Summit was an exhilarating two days that included intense discussions on ten pressing issues. These discussions focused on proposals emerging from year-long pre-Summit consultations and were informed by 94 guest speakers and documented by 170 volunteer note-takers and facilitators. Beyond developing ideas on specific issues, the Summit gave people an opportunity to share their hopes for the future of the Greater Toronto region. They described a future in which:

- our economy is strong, having built on our diversity and educational and industrial strengths;
- we have homes and jobs for all, with narrowing income gaps and robust neighbourhoods;
- people and goods move easily, using efficient transit, roads and paths for walking and biking;
- newcomers can fully deploy their talents and skills, are rewarded appropriately and are better represented in the leadership ranks of all aspects of life in the city region;
- the collective value of the arts and culture sector is recognized, supported and celebrated;

- our air, water and lands are clean and healthy, enabling our physical and economic prosperity; and, overarching all of these aspirations,
- we think and act like a region, with each of us recognizing that we have a role to play in our future success.

In keeping with our tradition of collective leadership and our renewed commitment to thinking and acting regionally, we also used the Summit as an opportunity to ask regional leaders what CivicAction and others can do to support and encourage cross-sectoral regional collaboration. The discussions surfaced a number of ideas:

Share what we've learned about collaboration:

Capture what has been learned from CivicAction projects and examine its process of collaboration – from who is invited to participate to what constitutes a successful collaboration. This would serve theoretical research purposes as well as provide practical guidance to others embarking on collective civic leadership activities here, across the country and internationally.

Facilitate opportunities for people to work across sectors:

Explore cross-sectoral exchanges, online matching of interested leaders with collaborative projects, and other potential mechanisms to build relationships between regional leaders and to enhance future sharing and collaboration.

Expand the culture of volunteerism:

Responding to the provincial Partnership Project's recommendation that social media, recognition awards and other mechanisms be used to encourage volunteerism, Summit participants proposed a tax credit tied to volunteerism and a business version of the high school 40-hour community service program in which employees would get paid leave to meet a similar mandate. This would also allow for more knowledge exchange between businesses and non-profit organizations.

Embed CivicAction across the region:

Continue to build CivicAction's regional network. One idea was to incubate satellites (i.e. CivicAction Peel, CivicAction Etobicoke) or to partner with regional organizations that could host their own Summits, building a regional process that would feed into a larger Summit.

This document is a summary of the social, economic and environmental issues discussed at the Summit and the key recommendations that it produced. For each issue, we have noted relevant challenges and strengths and the specific actions that should be taken by governments, business, non-profits and others – either acting alone or in collaboration with other sectors – to help us all make progress.

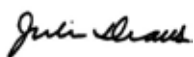
As the summary of recommendations and next steps, or “civic actions”, on the next five pages show, CivicAction is committed to helping drive progress on all of these issues. Where existing organizations have the mandate and capacity to lead, CivicAction will inform and support their work, using our networks and convening experience to help incubate new efforts where that is desirable. Where there is an unresolved issue with no obvious home, we will work with partners to create needed initiatives.

We should be proud of the many great things happening in the Greater Toronto region, but recognize that there is much more to do. We must each look for our own opportunities to be part of a collective leadership that thinks and acts regionally in advancing the region. In the words of our founding Chair, David Pecaut:

“A city [region] that is filled with civic entrepreneurs practicing collective leadership will be able to face any challenge and do all kinds of great things on economic issues, social issues, education, the arts, the environment, leveraging the richness of our diversity and much, much more.”¹



John Tory, Chair



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