

Providing Services for Vulnerable Populations in Canadian Suburbs

Abstract: Population growth in Canadian cities is increasingly concentrated in the suburbs. A low density and car-oriented environment in which residential and nonresidential land uses are strictly separated and infrastructure is limited accentuates accessibility problems for its vulnerable populations such as immigrants and refugees who need specialized information and support services, the poor who lack financial resources, and the elderly who often have limited mobility. Infrastructure needs are increasing quickly in suburbs where rapid population growth is outstripping the capacity of existing infrastructure. This uneven geography of public infrastructure is neither clearly articulated in the policy discourse nor attended to in current academic research which still employs the traditional focus on central locations of cities. This roundtable aims to engage provincial and municipal policy makers, representative from NGO's serving immigrants and academics to compare and contrast current situation of human service provision in Canadian suburbs, and explore innovative human service strategies and policy plans that promote social sustainability in the suburbs. The focus is on the need to improve local and timely access to human services, and strategies to maintain strong and vibrant communities. This roundtable is organized by the York Region Infrastructure Project based at York University and affiliated with CERIS – the Ontario Centre.