

**Deputation by the Vaughan Community Health Centre to the City of Vaughan's  
Committee of the Whole concerning the Vaughan Wellbeing Report.**

**City Hall – November 3, 2015**

Good afternoon Madame Chair and Members of the Committee of the Whole. My name is Isabel Araya and I am the Executive Director of the Vaughan Community Health Centre and the co-chair of the Vaughan Community Wellbeing Coalition.

The occasion for this deputation is the launch of the Vaughan Wellbeing Report created by the Vaughan Community Wellbeing Coalition. The reason for this deputation is to provide a high level overview of the report's findings.

The report was based on the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (or CIW), an internationally recognized tool that measures various determinants of the quality of our lives, allowing us to appreciate the wide range of interconnected factors that ultimately affect our health.

We found that Vaughan is one of Canada's fastest growing municipalities, currently ranking second in terms of percentage population growth.

Evidence demonstrates that Vaughan is a prosperous City and has multiple strengths to build on. For instance, the average Vaughan resident has a higher income, more post-secondary education, and a greater probability of owning his or her own home than the average resident of Ontario or Canada. In addition, a growing number of newcomers from around the world enhance the vibrancy and diversity of this City.

However, in order to ensure sustainable growth and support optimal wellbeing for all residents, attention should be given to early warnings of income inequality reflected in the increasing gap between high and low income residents. For instance, in Vaughan we see an increasing hidden poverty, lack of affordable housing, high shelter costs, as well as the need for more access to services for the care of children and aging parents.

Increase of greenhouse gas emissions--due in large part to our car dependency, traffic congestion and increased commuting times are also worrisome. There is a need for expanded, affordable and improved public transportation.

Data shows that the City of Vaughan's subsidies for leisure and recreation programs have increased steadily. However, existing resources are not meeting the demand for participation in these programs by those with less than average incomes.



In our view, Vaughan's rapid and diversified population growth may be contributing to residents feeling disengaged. This may also be one of the reasons for the low voter election turnout for all levels of government.

The good news is that some of these early warning signals about wellbeing in Vaughan have been flagged and work to address them has commenced. For instance, many social programs highlighted in the report focus on responding to the needs of vulnerable populations. In addition, the City, the Region and the Province have collaborated in bringing to Vaughan two projects that will positively impact wellbeing in Vaughan. Those are: the Mackenzie Health Vaughan Hospital and the Toronto-York-Spadina subway extension.

To inform and guide Vaughan's growth in the best possible way, this Report concludes by making four main recommendations:

- 1) **Increase affordable housing** by adopting policies that promote the supply of safe and legal secondary suites.
- 2) **Improve air quality** by acknowledging and acting upon the connection between long-term growth, car-dependent transportation planning and increased health care costs. As a first step, we recommend that the City introduce emission monitoring devices on its entire fleet of motor vehicles. Then set lower emission targets, and meet them!
- 3) **Increase access to affordable transportation** by increasing public transit subsidies, and
- 4) **Promote a local social economy** by supporting the creation of employment opportunities for marginalized communities. i.e social enterprises in non-profit agencies.

In closing, we ask that Vaughan Council receive this report and direct staff to review its policy recommendations and identify specific opportunities for their implementation. In addition, we ask that Vaughan Council share this report with the York Region Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.