METRO VANCOUVER FUTURE OF THE REGION SUSTAINABILITY DIALOGUES

BUILDING COMMUNITY—SOCIAL CONNECTIONS MATTER
June 27, 2012, WOSK CENTRE

The Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues are a series of discussions intended to assist decision makers shape the future of the region by inviting a range of views that challenge conventional wisdom and stimulate fresh thought on regional issues. The sessions explore topics such as housing, industry, labour and immigration, drugs and crime, the regional economy, transportation, energy and agriculture. The "issues summary notes," below, provide an overview of unique points raised in the June 27, 2012, dialogue on building community. Summary notes from each regional dialogue and related board reports are available on the Metro Vancouver website www.metrovancouver.org.

Issues Summary Notes

ABOUT THE TOPIC:
BUILDING COMMUNITY—SOCIAL CONNECTIONS MATTER

- We are here to explore the topic of building community, particularly what this might mean in the face of an emerging trend of community disconnection and individual isolation in our Metro Vancouver region.
- The Metro Vancouver region is on the fast track to sustainability, renowned for being green, embracing diversity and scoring high with respect to liveability. And yet, new research by the Vancouver Foundation suggests that people may be feeling a sense of isolation, a lack of connectedness to their neighbours, to their community and, by extension, to their city and their whole region.
- Today we hope to consider the different facets to this discussion.
  - What is actually contributing to this trend?
  - Is our growing and perhaps increasingly multicultural population one of the causes?
  - Is it our planning approaches, or transition to a digital age? Or is it entirely something else?
  - Is this what you, as residents of the region, are experiencing with your own communities?
  - What can each of us in our respective roles do to build the social connections that support the development of a strong and healthy community?
- Arguably, a strong sense of connection to our neighbours, our community and our region is important if building a sustainable region is to succeed.

THE DIALOGUE

1.0   Context

1.1   Sustainability requires strong human relationships

- Human relationships must take an important place at the sustainability table.
- Last week, [the Vancouver Foundation] released a top-line finding of a major survey of 3,800 people in our region to examine how connected and engaged residents were at

the levels of personal friendships, neighbourhood relationships and larger community experiences.

- Neighbourhood relationships are cordial but shallow.
  - We know our neighbours' names, but that's about it.
  - Most of us have not done a favour for a neighbour, and few of us have actually ever had a neighbour over or visited one of our neighbours.
  - About half of us do not trust our neighbours or don't know if we trust our neighbours.

1.2 Knowing our neighbours increases our feeling of safety

- In neighbourhoods where people know each other's names, there's a higher level of safety.
  - The more interaction there is between neighbours, the greater the benefits to the people who live there. Trust increases and optimism increases.
  - Knowing names matters, but interactions matter more.

1.3 Diversity puts a strain on our neighbourhoods

- Diversity puts a strain on our neighbourhoods that we as communities have yet to address.
  - The more languages spoken in a neighbourhood, the more people said they don't trust each other, that they don't feel welcome or that they belong, and the more likely they were to believe that it would be difficult to rally their neighbours to solve a local problem.
  - It's a reminder that we haven't focused on the challenges of diversity and the need to build bridges between different ethnic groups.
- Residents are tolerant of diversity, but also a little impatient with it. Most people prefer to stick with their own.
  - Almost half of the respondents feel that those who do not speak English are not trying hard enough.
  - One-third of us do not have friends outside our own ethnic group, and about a third of us easily identify who would not be welcome in our neighbourhood.

1.4 Social disconnection is rooted in a belief that we have nothing to offer our communities

- The biggest barrier to participation is that people feel they have nothing to offer.
  - Those 25 to 34 years old and people living in apartments, condos or suites and houses are experiencing the most disconnection.
  - We're concerned that so many of our younger adults are feeling disconnected and are retreating from participation in civic life, and this, in turn, is affecting their optimism and their attitudes towards others in our community.

1.5 Bonds between ethnic and cultural groups are difficult to make but necessary

- In [our] pluralist society, [we need more] bonding between different ethnic and cultural groups, but [these are the] hardest types of connections to make. We need to make an effort for this to happen.
  - We need to ensure that everyone feels we are part of one community, that we all have a stake in it [and] that we're all in the same boat.
  - We can't solve larger issues in our community [such as] environmental challenges, affordability [and] poverty if we have large groups of residents sitting on the sidelines.

– A sustainable community is home to residents who feel and are connected and engaged. [The Vancouver Foundation is] already working on projects that help us achieve this.
– We can't build bridges until we know where the bridge is needed. We can't fix things if we don't really know what needs to be repaired.

2.0   Building community

2.1   The importance of social relationships

• Positive social relationships are the most powerful correlate of happiness.
– [They matter more than] that new car you hope to buy, that big house and that single relationship.

2.2   Established strategies for building community

• Years ago, with the Centre for Dialogue, Joanna Ashworth created [the] Imagine BC series of dialogues [on how to build resilient communities. It's left us with some key understandings].
– Thomas Homer-Dixon, who wrote the book *The Upside of Down*, recommends that people link together who have skillsets in vastly disparate organizations so that the intelligence and energies can be harnessed from wide-ranging groups.
– Lynne McTaggart, who wrote the book *The Field*, [talked] about the bond and how to bond around communities. She's a wonderful resource on the web.
– Robert Putnam was at the Chan Centre, and he talked about the key threads from his book *Bowling Alone*. Those were about bonding first in groups, which is the very first step, and then building bridges between each of these groups as an activity that was done consciously.
– Malcolm Gladwell's *Tipping Point* [says] that "compassion is the way to change a community."
– The Greater Vancouver Compassion Network has just been formed with an intention of building lenses of compassion for our agencies and civic governance and individual people to use as they march through their lives with a commitment to action on a compassionate way.

2.3   Creating opportunities for community involvement

• If we need to make that effort for connectedness to happen, and we cannot sit on the sidelines, where are we going to sit to make things connect?
• [We have to] create environments and opportunities for people to get off the sidelines, and that will look very differently for different people.
– One solution [won't] work for everybody on this issue, and for all of us who are working in different ways across the community, it calls for us to understand how to engage people at different levels.
– Much like the dance metaphor we heard, people are comfortable in the dance steps and experiencing those in different ways.
– [We have] to identify where people can become engaged, where it feels comfortable for them to begin. That evolution of engagement begins often with a very small thing at a neighbourhood or block level.
– When people begin to feel safe and comfortable in having taken that action and in the relationships that evolve, they're often willing to take the next steps and continue on with that engagement.

- [During the Olympics], we had people going into Vancouver every night, meeting friends, going out, enjoying themselves. People were happy [and] having cross-cultural exchanges every day [on] every street corner.
  – We need to create more opportunities where people from all walks of life come together and take pride in their own ethnic identity as well as feel Canadian.

2.4 Connecting groups with similar interests

- How do we harness energy from wide-ranging groups? [It may be] somewhere [on the] social media side.
- One of the attractions of the broader Internet is that it allows immediate connections across the globe to find birds of a feather.
  – If you consider social networks and mobile networks at a city scale, Greater Vancouver is brilliantly diverse, rich and full. No matter what interest you have, you can build a community around that.
  – There are probably hundreds of different ways of finding people in that community [both digitally and in person]. Nobody has to feel like they're shy. There are so many ways [to] reach out, whatever your interest is, and do something together to create meaning and belongingness in your community.

2.5 Welcoming and encouraging the participation of community members

- It's not that people don't have anything to offer in society; it's that [our] society doesn't give them the sense [that] what they do have to offer is welcome.
  – [That relates to] the kinds of rules we have and the kind of top-down authority on things.

2.6 The need for community leadership and developing new leaders

- Even on the scale of a block or the floor of a condo, [leaders] are the ones that initiate the connections. [How do we mobilize current leaders, but also develop new leaders?]
- I'm a part of the South Asian Community Coalition Against Youth Violence. Our focus is looking at gang violence prevention strategies and so on.
  – As leaders in the community, about 20 of us have been sitting around [a] table. Each time we come to [a] meeting, we say we need to have youth there. After all, it is a youth initiative.
  – Two years later, we find ourselves still sitting there without youth at the table and a bunch of us old farts talking about what's impacting youth.
  – Sometimes we need to look inside ourselves and see if we're willing to give up our power and privilege in a leadership place to include individuals and develop their capacity to become leaders.
- The Vancouver Foundation [runs] a program called Neighbourhood Small Grants, which is a project in which we give small amounts of money to neighbours to start up a project that builds community.
  – In that process of actually connecting to people by name, [leaders emerge] in a way we haven't had a lot of other experience with.
  – When we work with a coordinator at a local neighbourhood house and they take the effort to get to know someone and invite them, that process of inviting someone by name is a hugely powerful tool.
  – Emerging leaders come forward and subsequently take on amazing leadership roles, not only on their block, but subsequently in their neighbourhood and their communities.

2.7 Shop locally and buy less to build relationships and eat better

• Shop very locally and wilfully constrain your amount of purchases.
  – Have a very small fridge, like a person living in Paris. A little bitty thing under the bar, like a bar fridge in a hotel.
  – You shop every day. You're getting something fresh. You're buying it from somebody you probably get to know by name, and they are probably one step away from the farm, if not the farmer him or herself.

2.8 "Bucket lists" foster activity in the community

• Create your own bucket list, like those boards that [say], "I want to do blank before I die." How would you do that?
  – You have to volunteer, you have to join a choir, you have to build a community garden, you have to speak up positively at a public hearing.
  – Try to stand up. Be brave enough and stand up for something you really want to see happen in your city. It's a daring thing, because people will boo you if you speak in favour of something sometimes.
  – Those kinds of moves in creating social capital, as well as building and designing the fabric of our communities and cities, will hopefully lead us to the fabric that I would like to see as a social concept.

2.9 Public message boards encourage community building

• Community messages boards where people at their condos can put up posters about things they're organizing [seem to have gone away].
  – That's a simple thing that can cause community building to happen.
  – Politicians [and] organizations like big, flashy planning processes, [but] sometimes it's the simple things that can cause the most change.

2.10 Community gardens produce good relationships and good food

• Help your neighbourhood build a community garden.
  – You'll get to know people, you'll be out there, and you'll grow food that'll be worth having.

2.11 The Vancouver Foundation invests in small projects that create high levels of community engagement

• As a funder of many projects and different organizations, [the Vancouver Foundation is] looking at how we measure the impact of our contributions at the community level. We often consider our work in terms of the ripples we produce, and often a very small investment produces the biggest ripples.
  – That often has to do with the amount of engagement that results.
  – The amount of money that's provided for a project [doesn't negatively affect engagement levels]. We've seen amazing things happen at the community level with a $50 grant that then ripples out right across the entire neighbourhood.
  – Vancouver Foundation [is] looking at that model. We are quantifying our investment and trying to demonstrate the value of those ripples as they spread out across the community.

2.12 The I Share: Pre-launch Volunteer Extravaganza

• I wanted to invite everyone to join us this evening at an event at the HiVE called the "I Share: Pre-launch Volunteer Extravaganza." [It will strategize] some of the issues we're talking about here [and] create a campaign to promote sharing.

- It is a not-for-profit operation. It's a sign that people would put on their doors, on a button or on their car, and it's meant to initiate contact [with others]—your coworkers, your neighbours—and to talk about sharing. The root of it is community building.

3.0 The immigrant experience of social connection

3.1 Immigrants encounter preconceived notions of who they are after moving to Canada

• The newcomer into Canada [encounters] headlines that focus on immigrants, newcomers and refugees.
  - [Headlines such as] "The Boat People," "Refugees Detained," "Another South Asian Gangster" and "Muslim Men: Culture of Violence" tend to attract attention and engagement in public dialogue.
  - Almost everyone that you would talk to has an opinion about new immigrants.

• [Some] think immigrants are great for the country, are great for the economy and sustain growth. Others believe they're taking our jobs away and [threatening] our security.
  - People are not always saying what they really think or feel about immigrants [for] fear of being politically incorrect. I wonder if we really know what the public opinion is on this issue.

3.2 Many non-immigrants choose ignorance over knowledge exchange and learning

• The discourse on tolerance and acceptance often makes us afraid to engage in a cross-cultural knowledge exchange.
  - We don't want to disrespect another culture or appear to be insensitive, so we often choose to be ignorant.
  - It's acceptable for a newcomer to ask questions when they come to Canada [regarding transit/police/health care/school systems, greetings and food].
  - We are much more reluctant to ask newcomers questions about where they grew up, their core values, and how they live those values out in a day-to-day life.

• We often engage in telling immigrants what they should do, where they should go and what it means to be a Canadian. We are often teaching and very reluctant to learn from newcomers.
  - We are divided [into "us and them" categories]. All newcomers to Canada know they are "them."
  - How long it takes them to truly feel that they're Canadian depends on their experience and sense of belonging.

3.3 Immigrants tend to cluster together in their own communities

• It's not surprising that immigrants cluster together and choose to live in areas with each other.
  - Chinatown, Little Italy [and] Punjabi Market are examples of immigrant geographical settlement that create a sense of belonging, sense of security, sense of familiarity and a community and family support.
  - Communities with strong identities often play a major role in providing support to newcomers.
  - [This results in] a lack of English-language learning and integration into [the] larger community.

6

- When it comes to the issue [of] ethnic groups and feelings of inclusion or exclusion, there are times [when they don't feel] they have the confidence to engage in the dominant culture. Quite often they will stay isolated inside their own communities.

3.4   The immigrant's need for connectedness

- Even moving from one city to the other is a type of immigration, and when I moved from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, I really enjoyed the sense of isolation and independence.
  – When I came to Canada, I really enjoyed the sense of being in a new place and connecting to people other than Jews [and] Israelis. I didn't really rush to connect with [them], although I do have some connections in that sense.
  – It is a matter of time that each of us is growing into a certain life and growing out of a certain life that leads our need for connectedness in all sorts of ways.

3.5   Immigrant questions about how to connect with neighbours

- There's always those questions of what [to] do when a neighbour leaves their dog poop on your lawn, and what [to] do when you see a paper rolling on the sidewalk.
  – What do you do, or how do you deal with a cyclist falling off the street when a car is almost running over that cyclist? Those questions are scenarios that we all have in a city.
  – A city is very condensed, so there's lot of things happening and you can prepare for those events. What do you do with those events? That's a question you can ask yourself.

3.6   Struggles with communication

- Communication is obviously a very important aspect of community.
  – A stat was mentioned about a lot of people who think those who don't speak English aren't trying hard enough. That's related to communication.

3.7   Ways in which immigrants make Canada their home

- Newcomers make Canada their new home [in several ways].
  – A colleague of mine said that [she didn't] connect to her community until she had her second child, started to attend parent/child classes and took her boys to hockey, [where she] would connect with the hockey moms.
  – Newcomers want to work when they're here. They need to find meaningful employment. This would make them feel more connected.
  – Positive experiences with social systems—health care, financial systems, justice systems, etc.—lead [newcomers] to have a stronger sense of belonging and feel cared for.
- [Employment is the most important thing for immigrants].
  – A lot of us come from countries [where] we have jobs, [but here] we have no jobs and a family to feed.

3.8   Opportunities at the neighbourhood level to integrate new Canadians and immigrants

- The integration of new Canadians and immigrants into the region [was a big potential crisis that came out of the Vancouver Foundation report].
  – There's this incredible opportunity at the neighbourhood level. We are placed-based beings at some level.
  – Where do you see [opportunities] within the neighbourhood to create cross-cultural connections and design those kinds of services that might be provided?

- How might [that] contribute to some of the solutions around better integration of new Canadians?
- Definitely it's about city design. It's about creating opportunities, whether they're cultural events or [the] ability for neighbours to come together.
  - [I gave the example of] the hockey moms coming together and talking about things.
  - The Chinatown Parade and the Vaisakhi Parade are two events that come to mind in Vancouver where [ethnic groups] invite the larger community.
  - There's much more diversity [in the Chinatown Parade]. The Vaisakhi Parade [is a fantastic event], but only the odd local non-South Asian will attend.
  - The opportunities are there, but we have to really think through how [to] create cross-cultural dialogue and engagement.

3.9 Immigrants should be welcome to Canada and regarded as a benefit
- [Immigration] should be a two-way street.
  - Immigrants are assets to this country. Unless we identify as aboriginal, we are all descendants of immigrants.
  - It's essential that we use media, public policy and other means to ensure that newcomers feel welcome [and] engaged in society and the economy.
  - We [must move away from the "us and them" categories] and acknowledge that Canada is the land of first nation, settled by immigrants from all over the world.

3.10 Planning ahead for a surge in the immigrant population
- The population of Vancouver is projected to increase by 800,000 to a million by 2031. Larger cities are great to visit, but their rating goes down as a place to live because of pressure on housing and other services and commute times.
  - Immigration's made Canada a lot more interesting place than it used to be. But just how much do we need?
  - A survey last year showed [that 93% of people in Vancouver] thought the Vancouver population was either too big or big enough. That doesn't match an increase of 800,000 very comfortably.
  - Robert Putnam, the Harvard sociologist, was a supporter of high immigration and diversity, but he said immigration and ethnic diversity tend to reduce social solidarity and social capital.
  - Should we be looking at what we should be doing now to improve the situation [as well as] looking ahead [to] see whether [we'll] make it even more difficult?
  - Do we need these levels of immigration? My research shows we can use some, but nowhere near what we're doing.
  - That's what will drive the continued increase of the population here and problems of integration. We should be looking ahead as well as looking at what we can do right now.
- There already is a fair bit of dialogue and planning that's going into exploring the new future that we'll have to navigate. [The] increase in immigration [is not a surprise to planners].
  - As a community foundation and as a very significant supporter of the non-profit sector in this entire province, [the Vancouver Foundation] is very much keeping abreast of these changes and trends.
  - We're here today because we understand that we need to grapple with these issues in a very significant way. These issues are being discussed.

- This won't be a surprise. What will be a surprise is the level of action and courage we will need to exercise in dealing with this issue.
- [We're being asked] to re-examine our norms and the way we've become accustomed to thinking about who we are and how we deal with each other. Those are not easy things to talk about and plan for.

3.11 The importance of compassion for the immigrant experience

- Most people, when they speak about immigrants, talk about people of colour as opposed to my colour.
  - It's quite clear that people are trying to be polite or hiding their particular orientation about that.
  - Lidia mentioned public engagement and awareness. People need to be aware of the [immigrant] situation in order to develop compassion.

4.0 Diversity

4.1 Overcoming diversity barriers

- Increasing or achieving higher connectivity in Metro Vancouver relates to [our] very high cultural diversity. Some people are coming from backgrounds that push them [to congregate] only with their own people.
  - It may be a language barrier. [People's high mobility also makes it] not worthwhile for them to really connect with their neighbours.
  - We should also, as a society, promote more authentic human beings and encourage people to be courageous and venture out of their comfort zones.
- How can we activate people [in] those circumstances and focus their energy on positive things? It's easy to activate people for negative causes, but [we need to activate them for positive causes].

4.2 Creating diversity-friendly media

- Is a diversity-friendly media possible, bearing in mind [the] diversity of different abilities, ages and physical, mental and language abilities? How and where we can start?
- Making media accessible—the Internet, [etc.]—is still a huge problem [in terms of creating identity]. But as tough a problem as that is, people are finding it easier to connect online than they are in the real world.
  - For every problem [involved with] finding something on the Internet, in many cases, the problem in the real world is better.
  - The real world has things to learn [about how things] are working on the Internet. The two of them merging together is something we can look forward to.

4.3 The mosaic metaphor

- MOSAIC is a great metaphor. The idea of a mosaic weaving itself and becoming stronger by that interweaving or connectivity—a tapestry—is really important.

5.0 Social media

5.1 Social media as a cure for disconnectedness

- [Do] things like Facebook and social media actually make us lonelier? Social media [may] cause disconnectedness, but it could also be part of the cure that we're looking for.

- Economics, multicultural [issues], demographic shifts and the pace of society are many pressures that are causing this disconnect. You can't point to any single place as a cause for our disconnectedness.
    - Mobile Muse [develops] new forms of social interaction, cultural expression and community development, using new media technologies that come forward.
- The global popularity of Facebook is directly tied to the fact that people [are deeply hungry to connect and socialize].
    - That hunger is something that's innately human. It's rampant on the Internet and on people's mobile phones because it's easier there.

5.2 Communication skills should be broadened through the use of many technologies

- [A friend of mine] went for dinner with his mother and his daughter. His daughter texted him across the table: "Can you order me the chicken Caesar salad?"
    - [My] 18-year-old daughter sits with friends on the sofa watching TV, both of them with their heads on their iPhone.
    - [Will the next generation] even know how to talk to each other?
- Human beings have developed so many forms of communication through the ages that we can't consider any given one as going to last or predominate. We'll always be learning new ways.
    - The fact that some people are spending too much time in one form of communication is probably a point where we want to nudge them into others, because the best human beings can communicate on a dozen different platforms at once.
    - If all you can do is tweet, you're not much useful to humanity. If all you can do is text, you're not very useful.
    - The broader your communication skills, whether it be standing up and orating or dancing or performing in different modes, that's where you become useful. It's your diversity of communication modes.
    - That's what we need to encourage. When you see somebody that only has one mode of communication, try to encourage them in new directions.

5.3 Connecting groups with similar interests

- How do we harness energy from wide-ranging groups? [It may be] somewhere [on the] social media side.
- One of the attractions of the broader Internet is that it allows immediate connections across the globe to find birds of a feather.
    - If you consider social networks and mobile networks at a city scale, Greater Vancouver is brilliantly diverse, rich and full. No matter what interest you have, you can build a community around that.
    - There are probably hundreds of different ways of finding people in that community [both digitally and in person]. Nobody has to feel like they're shy. There are so many ways [to] reach out, whatever your interest is, and do something together to create meaning and belongingness in your community.

5.4 Technology creates electronic subcultures

- Circumstance is really important to focus on, because that's the tremendous advantage we have in this age of electricity.
    - Now that we don't necessarily feel confined to the geographic area that we're in, we're able to connect with people all around the world who share our values.

– Subcultures are a great example of this. This can be seen in something like punk rock culture. [It's] founded on individuality and antiauthoritarianism, and still there's a great deal of conformity. There's a lot of community developing out of that.

5.5   Social media as part of a healthy communication diet

• [In terms of] social health and community health, people are [connecting] through Facebook and Twitter and so on, but it's like the junk food of a healthy diet.
  – [A healthy social-connectedness diet includes] real, tangible connections with real people.
  – How do we move people from a diet that is predominantly on one side to a diet that is much broader?
• Social media is kind of easy and enables connectedness, but it's [also] like fast food. On one hand it's a good thing, but it's also a bad thing and we need to embrace it.
  – Are you encouraging people to embrace more fast food diet in their life? How do we keep that balance to enhance community without taking the disadvantages of it as well?
• The way we use social media now is like fast food, meaning it's a replacement and not high nutrition in terms of social connectedness for what we really want to achieve in communities.
  – Social media is [just starting to meet mobile media. They're weaving ideas of place and doing things in places and understanding people's contexts—who I am, where I am, who I'm friends with, the places I care about].
  – The media we're working with will finally be one of the best fertilizers, animators and energizers of community. I don't think we're seeing a lot of that yet.
  – [Programs like PlaceSpeak and Park Quest] are the first media in over a century where we'll see a very dynamic positive social effect rather than an antisocial effect, which is what's happened with all of our preceding media.

5.6   Geographical location is still highly relevant in mobile communication

• Facebook communication, tweets and mobile media communication are actually geographically focused. We tend to like or message or tweet to people who are fairly close to us.
  – Place still matters. If we are close to each other and the [type of media enables us to meet] each other face to face, it's good for you.
  – One kid I follow on Twitter is at [a conference on the other side of town] and he just tweeted, "Hey, who's free for lunch?" He wasn't tweeting to his friends; he was tweeting to the entire world, and somebody will meet him for lunch.

5.7   Creating diversity-friendly media

• Is a diversity-friendly media possible, bearing in mind [the] diversity of different abilities, ages and physical, mental and language abilities? How and where we can start?
• Making media accessible—the Internet, [etc.]—is still a huge problem [in terms of creating identity]. But as tough a problem as that is, people are finding it easier to connect online than they are in the real world.
  – For every problem [involved with] finding something on the Internet, in many cases, the problem in the real world is better.
  – The real world has things to learn [about how things] are working on the Internet. The two of them merging together is something we can look forward to.

5.8   PlaceSpeak

• PlaceSpeak [allows] people to assert and manage their voice based on where they live and register their place and the places they love as places where they ought to be able to socially connect.
  – It's a social web that's tied to the places where you exist.
• [Programs like PlaceSpeak and Park Quest] are the first media in over a century where we'll see a very dynamic positive social effect rather than an antisocial effect, which is what's happened with all of our preceding media.

5.9   Park Quest

• Park Quest [lays] out opportunities for people to contribute to our parks, such as species audits, removing invasive species and cleaning up streams.
  – It crowdsources [activities] beyond the complexity of our governments and [offers] social and academic points.
  – It gamifies the opportunity to become a bigger part of society.
• Metro Parks really wants to move forward on this Park Quest initiative on allowing people to do things in the park, to help the park.
  – Your mobile phone lays out a lesson plan and all the pieces and then gathers your points and allows you to do all of those things.
  – [Metro Parks is] crowdsourcing all of this out to the park and the community can do it. Only one rule: They can't go off the paths. They can do all of these things for the park, but they can't go off the paths while they're doing it.
  – We want this to happen, but it has to be within such a narrow confine that we don't feel like we're allowed to participate. [It's] one of the [reasons] why time can't be made more valuable for us doing community-based activities and why we don't think we can leap out.
• [Programs like PlaceSpeak and Park Quest] are the first media in over a century where we'll see a very dynamic positive social effect rather than an antisocial effect, which is what's happened with all of our preceding media.

5.10   Technology requires a willingness in our institutions and neighbourhoods to move forward

• The Internet is moving at light speed [globally], whereas many of our civic institutions and much of what we do in our neighbourhoods are not.
  – Not moving forward [and] not changing makes you exclusive. [It's] very much like the other kinds of exclusionary pressures such as economics, multiculturalism [and] demographic shifts.
  – If you aren't moving forward [and finding new ways to embrace culture and help people connect and participate], you are part of the problem.

5.11   A bottom-up social media is required to balance a diminishing top-down government approach

• The complexities of living together are increasing dramatically, exactly at the same point when the capacity of government is diminishing.
  – The size of government is shrinking, the size of corporate administration is shrinking and the size of every top-down form is shrinking.
  – We have to have something on the bottom up to match that—not to replace it, but to balance that tension.

- It's very much like the John F. Kennedy assertion of almost 50 years ago: Ask not what your city can do for you, but really seek how you can find meaning in your own contribution to your city.
  – [It's] that notion of opening up [and] finding ways to participate, but also convincing all of our civic institutions to embrace new ways [for citizens] to contribute.

6.0   Anonymity and privacy

6.1   The value of anonymity

- Knowing your neighbour [has been presented as a positive idea], and I wanted to give a bit of a contrarian perspective in the sense [that] we should be valuing [anonymity].
  – [I've] been galvanized in community development in the last year, but I actually enjoy being able to come back to my home and not necessarily knowing my neighbours and having them feel entitled to my time or having expectations of me.
  – There's something to be said about just having a place of your own. There's some tranquility there.
- [The issue of] whether place matters to people anymore—a sense of community, a sense of belonging to a physical location—is important.
  – There are an awful lot of people who move from small towns, where everybody knows everything whether you like it or not, or rural areas to cities so they can be anonymous.
  – The trick is to prevent that from slipping into apathy or ennui, that condition where you don't care about anything.

6.2   Community building should allow for privacy

- [We need to overcome the] contradictions between the need for privacy and individual development and preferences and how we build community.
  – Going back to the dancing, it's okay to touch, but we have to be able to back away.
  – We have to be able to be free to become part of the group, but also to maintain our identity.

7.0   Urban planning and design

7.1   Urban design influences how we feel about each other and ourselves

- The city that can solve some of our greatest pressing challenges, whether it's concerns about climate change or resource scarcity and social connections, is a city that will make life easier and will make us happier.
- Urban systems and architecture influence how we feel, how we feel about each other and how we behave towards each other.
  – They're [not] the only thing—we need to be careful about architectural determinism—but they really do matter.

7.2   Social interactions create a necessary balance for communities that has been lost

- Interacting with other people is a bit like a dance: It's good for us to get close to each other and to touch, but we also need the freedom to back away. This balance is very important. On the distant edge of suburban sprawl, the balance has been lost.
  – Super commuters in California who [travel] from San Francisco to California's Central Valley four hours a day [don't] know or like their neighbours. Their neighbours [are] fine people, but they [have] no contact with them.

- People who live in completely car-dependent communities on the edge are less likely to volunteer, have dinner with their family, know their neighbours and engage politically.
- This problem also exists at the other end of the spectrum, here in the [central part of Vancouver].

7.3 Our neighbourhoods instigate personal feelings that carry over into our daily lives

- Residents and neighbourhoods can [either] nudge us together [and] give us those opportunities or pull us apart.
  - [We export] the relationships and feelings we have towards other people in our home [and] neighbourhoods to the rest of our lives.
  - Studies have shown that people who have a certain feeling of helpfulness or irritation towards their neighbours take that feeling with them when they go to work.
  - [In discussing] engagement between communities across this city and with people from various cultures, we need to think of the neighbourhood unit [as an] important mechanism for building or breaking the possibility of relationships.

7.4 Effective urban planning should consider both design and social capital

- There are very important and powerful nuggets within the City of Vancouver's affordability task force report. There are places where we can act on this intersection of design and social capital.
- [Our environment is shaped by] urban planning, urban design, architecture and development, landscape architecture, civil engineering and traffic engineering.
  - They come together and make a world we want to live in and hopefully want to love.
  - Place making is the core of these kinds of things.

7.5 Warming up a culture via urban planning decisions

- Cities have culture. [From an immigrant's perspective], Vancouver was a cool culture in the '70s, very hard to warm up to. People were not easy to embrace or to metaphorically embrace a newcomer.
  - I would encourage us to be a lot warmer as individuals. It's very small steps.
  - Just smile at somebody, say something to somebody.
  - We can do a lot of small things as well as these larger things.
- Portland has a civic-minded culture that they've built over 20, 30, 40 years. [Whether] you take engineering or art or planning or any other curriculum at Portland State University, the value system and the ethos of the city is about the public good.
  - Vancouver is incredibly well known for private development and high-value buildings and architecture. We're not as well known for our public realm.
  - Portland doesn't have particularly good architecture, but it has an amazing public realm and streetscape and streetcars and the like. Their courthouse square is a world model for using a block in the city for the common good and gathering.

7.6 Proximity planning

- The core of all planning today is proximity planning. Things have to be close to each other.
  - Service transit has to serve people where they want to go. It has to be convenient, stores and services and those sorts of things, and density arranged accordingly.

- If we think place doesn't matter, is proximity planning [a valid] notion anymore? I don't know the alternative to place-based planning and proximity planning other than what has been termed here as sprawl, [which involves placing less].
- Maybe that's [a] good pattern for people who want to live only on their devices. I don't know.

7.7 Catering to public demand for organic planning and building processes

- Planning for social connectedness is just another prescription. People will say, "Please don't tell us what to do. Let this stuff happen organically."
  - Let's make sure people [have opportunities] to do the things they want to do. If you want to have a block party, you don't have to have a permit; you can just have it. You don't have to ask [for] insurance.
  - Can we not have it a bit more organic? Why do we have to professionalize everything? Look what we're doing to planning. We now have to have planning institutes.
  - How do you deal with people who [won't be told what their] neighbourhood needs to look like?
  - How do you deal with people who will not engage because they don't want your engagement? [How can we engage with them on their level]?
- The city in its current state was the result of a planning process last year or a hundred years ago. Buildings have the form they have because of planning processes.
  - We need to break down some of those processes to empower [and] give more freedom [to] regular people who might want to do something different with their small hunk of land.
  - We don't yet have that, and the more we can advocate for such a city, the better off we'll all be, with some restrictions of course.

7.8 Common areas are essential to community building

- Having a commons is really, really important.
  - 30% of the landmass of Vancouver is dedicated road space. We are fundamentally challenging that, and it's uncomfortable to challenge patterns that you're used to.
  - [The days of driving everywhere and parking for free are gone]. It's a wrenching experience for people, but it's an important moment for so many reasons.
  - Having short-term or long-term closures of streets for all kinds of events is really important for place making and sense of community.
  - If we can build places that we love and can control with our friends and neighbours, we will want to stay here and it'll be stronger socially for everybody.

7.9 Governments need to recognize and utilize the benefits of common areas

- The best thing [governments] can do is consider the commons as a place where experimentation can happen, coming from the people that use those common areas.
  - Large governments are a thing of the past. We may see them again sometime in the future, but their capacity to control has made us somewhat inert [and] afraid to go out and take [roles in society].
  - One of the best things our governments can do is recognize their responsibility to govern the responsiveness [and] experimental nature of the commons.

8.0   Portland

8.1   Portland's public realm is a world model

• Portland has a civic-minded culture that they've built over 20, 30, 40 years. [Whether] you take engineering or art or planning or any other curriculum at Portland State University, the value system and the ethos of the city is about the public good.
  – Vancouver is incredibly well known for private development and high-value buildings and architecture. We're not as well known for our public realm.
  – Portland doesn't have particularly good architecture, but it has an amazing public realm and streetscape and streetcars and the like. Their courthouse square is a world model for using a block in the city for the common good and gathering.

8.2   Changing existing institutional structures has empowered Portland's citizens

• I saw a neighbourhood [in Portland where] a bunch of neighbours had decided to turn their intersection into a piazza, and they painted it up. The kids were involved [and] made the design.
  – Everybody loved it until a city traffic engineer said, "The street is a public place, so that means nobody can use it," and threatened to sandblast [it] off the intersection. They failed, and this neighbourhood activity actually became a movement, where citizens begin to hack their own city.
  – Every time they came together to do this, they built stronger, more connected neighbourhoods, empowering individuals to express themselves, but also to connect with each other.

9.0   False Creek

9.1   False Creek's courtyard arrangement model

• There isn't one size fits all. If you can develop a courtyard arrangement where the houses can face each other, you have some sense of community within that finite group.
  – You can't be connected to everybody, but you can be connected to a finite number of people if you see them regularly and share interests, including that place.
  – That model also exists in the enclave form of south False Creek. It's sort of a medieval model where things are arranged around a common area.

9.2   False Creek residents living in proximity to co-ops and family housing are happier and more connected

• I was really excited to see a call for more three-bedroom apartments. Why is this important?
  – We know that the West End was first developed as a neighbourhood for single professionals. Why has it been allowed to go on that way?
  – The post-occupancy surveys of north False Creek that Larry Beasley and his students did [showed] that when people living in towers were close to housing co-ops [and] to family housing, even if they didn't have kids, they were happier and more connected.

9.3   False Creek needs more commitment to community street functions

• [We have] community street functions and other functions, but we need to create awareness and education [programs] in order to be able to connect and to start from there.

– [People in] the False Creek community stay there because of the combination of the fabulous location and the low rent. But that community has been planning to have a lunch get-together for the last 15 years and they haven't been able to do it yet.

10.0 Small town connectedness

10.1 Small towns provide an invaluable opportunity for integration

• The sense of community in a small town or island is profound.
  – The kids grow up as free-range children—like free-range chickens and everything else that's healthy—and they get to be vertically integrated.
  – They know older people, and the older people know them, which is equally important.

11.0 Architectural design

11.1 Buildings are being designed in ways that don't encourage interaction

• Winston Churchill said, "We shape our buildings and then our buildings shape us." He meant it in terms of parliament, with adversaries on the government and opposition sides, and that fosters a certain kind of interaction.
  – We see it in our own parliament, and it's not necessarily the best thing in the world.
  – This centre and this circle was designed with another intent, and that gesture I just made is one of those shapes that you can have in a community to try to encourage—not force, not create, but encourage—interaction amongst people.
  – Unless you have interactions amongst people, they won't get to know each other.

11.2 The neighbourhood houses model

• For those who live in communities or neighbourhoods where there isn't an easy opportunity to meet, we have this fantastic [regional] model of neighbourhood houses that provide a place for people to come.
  – Many of [the houses] have living rooms where people can join together and meet each other.
  – The Association of Neighbourhood Houses [is] an incredible resource for many people to come together in their neighbourhoods and communities.

11.3 Common areas in buildings need greater emphasis

• We can have an awful lot more emphasis on the common areas in buildings—vertical as well as horizontal circulation, for example.
  – We have pretty mean and midgey hallways. Can they be a couple of feet wider? Can there be a lighted little lounge on every floor next to a window near the elevator on each and every floor?
  – We're doing the opposite. We're locking off every floor in a condo tower nowadays. You can't visit somebody on another floor unless they [allow you access]. They're vertical gated communities.

11.4 Benefits of the WISHS Wave common room

• The Lower Mainland Network for Affordable Housing recently did a case study of WISHS Wave, which is that inlet centre in Port Moody. It's a Metro Vancouver project.
  – The common room has a kitchen and a place to watch TV and a place to do work around [a] table.
  – For 23 women, there will usually be five to 10 people. Sometimes [the room will] be filled with a party with 30 to 50 people. They all have a key to it, [and] that really becomes the fabric of the community.

12.0   Townhouses

12.1   The townhouse model is beneficial for social connectedness

- [A friend of mine moved into a deluxe apartment building called the 501 in Downtown South]. He never connected with any of [the other tenants], and he couldn't figure out why.
    - The City of Vancouver forced the 501 to build a row of townhouses at the base of the tower. All of these townhouses had access to a third-floor rooftop garden, which was shared [by] the entire building.
    - [The townhouse residents] always seemed to be hanging out, having drinks in the garden, playing volleyball together.
    - [My friend] sold his tower apartment [and] moved to one of the townhouses. Within a couple of weeks, he was one of those people having drinks on Friday night and joining in the volleyball.
    - Maybe 20 [to] 25 people lived in those townhouses, and he could control [his interactions with them] by retreating into his home or back and forth across the deck space.
    - Within two years of moving, he knew and liked all [of the townhouse residents and considered a dozen of them close friends.] He loves six of his neighbours like they're family.
- The affordability task force is pointing towards that missing piece between the high-rise condo and the single-family house. [This includes] townhouse forms of development, including ones at the base of towers, but also those that stand alone.
- The people fortunate to live in [townhouses] will have some semblance of a single-family lifestyle, but in a more dense and hopefully more affordable arrangement. They will probably have more common interests because some of them will have kids.
    - Unless you have a kid, you probably won't get to know your neighbours very well, because the kids will be out there and doing stuff with other kids.
    - If you don't have a kid, have a dog. [If] you're out three times a day with your dog, you get to know what's happening in the neighbourhood. You're the eyes on the street.

12.2   The benefits of a townhouse courtyard arrangement

- There isn't one size fits all. If you can develop a courtyard arrangement where the houses can face each other, you have some sense of community within that finite group.
    - You can't be connected to everybody, but you can be connected to a finite number of people if you see them regularly and share interests, including that place.
    - That model also exists in the enclave form of south False Creek. It's sort of a medieval model where things are arranged around a common area.
    - This might be a cul-de-sac, it doesn't matter, but some kind of finite number of townhouses [with doors that] face each other.
    - It was an experiment in the day, but it proved its social sustainability by people not wanting to leave.
    - It has a very stable intergenerational pattern, where people raise kids and yet they stay on and they're close in. There are many ways to build places, but that's a particularly good one.

12.3   Common areas in townhouses

- [Townhouses give you] the touch of the land, plus you've got people close by.
  - Where I live now I don't have a common area, so there's not really that chance to have that passive opportunity to build community close to home. All of Vancouver and especially Granville Island is my community.

13.0   Housing affordability

13.1   The challenge of housing affordability

- Housing affordability is a unique challenge to Vancouver. It is creating barriers to long-term neighbourhood development.
  - People in my cohort are moving in great numbers, especially when [they] are thinking of starting families.

13.2   The youth will not be able to afford our houses

- If we lose our younger people in this city, we won't have [the] green economy or service-oriented economy that we're trying to build. It would be a poorer life for everybody.
  - I think Gordon Price [said], "Don't count on the kids to buy your house." It will just be too expensive, and they won't necessarily want the kind of house that's there.
  - [They'll have a more active lifestyle, and they'll want to hire somebody to mow the yard].

13.3   Capacity and location are driving up housing costs

- It comes back to this affordability question and the choices that are put forward. The development community will go where zoning or possibilities are.
  - They have been in downtown and they have been in industrial areas that have been converted and so forth. Those are all used up, pretty much.
  - There's a lot of capacity still, but do you want to live on a very busy street? No, most people don't. It's the piece just behind that busy street near where the school is, where the parks are and so forth, yet within walking distance of transit so you don't have to own a car.
  - The biggest single obstacle to affordability is that parking space underground, which might cost $50,000.

13.4   Pay scales are negatively affecting our ability to afford high mortgages

- The $1.5 million mortgage connects back to affordability. Affordability's an equation. It's not a number. It's the cost of something divided by your ability to pay.
  - We have very low pay scales around here. Teachers get paid less than they do in other provinces and so do plumbers.
  - If we could have 10% more income, it would be equal to the 10% reduction in the house cost. That's a good thing.

13.5   Housing prices are encouraging us to disinvest in community

- We're being encouraged to disinvest in community.
  - The way prices are going up, you only get the benefit of your investment in your home when you sell it rather than being able to be in your home and be rewarded for enjoying living there and encouraging people.

13.6 Opportunities for different kinds of housing

- Various forms of townhouses and courtyard apartments and stacked townhouses are in that housing affordability report, and I hope to see advocates for that.
  – When I mentioned speaking positively for change in the community, those ideas will come forward. They will cause some angst, but they're moving in the right direction.
- There's a lot of hope in [that report]. Frank mentioned more opportunities for different kinds of housing.
  – What we see in the report are more townhouses, density on the ground, transition zones, so more opportunities for housing in that block leading away from the arterial.
- I was really excited to see a call for more three-bedroom apartments. Why is this important?
  – We know that the West End was first developed as a neighbourhood for single professionals. Why has it been allowed to go on that way?
  – The post-occupancy surveys of north False Creek that Larry Beasley and his students did [showed] that when people living in towers were close to housing co-ops [and] to family housing, even if they didn't have kids, they were happier and more connected.
  – People talk about [buying] dogs to get more connected. No, we should keep the people who have kids closer to all of us.

14.0 Family

14.1 Families as a substitute for neighbours

- To what extent can we substitute one sort of community for another? To what extent are our close friends a substitute for close neighbours? Are they a substitute?
- In some ways we don't have a choice. Family structures are changing.
  – There's many more single parents.
  – People are connecting outside of their extended family units, so they're creating different types of families.
  – We are much more open to gay/lesbian families.
  – That discourse, that openness and where our society is heading will inevitably lead us to think [redefine] our concept of family and those who will support us. When I'm sick, who will come and make soup for me? Those kinds of things.

14.2 Children as a social benefit

- The people fortunate to live in [townhouses] will have some semblance of a single-family lifestyle, but in a more dense and hopefully more affordable arrangement. They will probably have more common interests because some of them will have kids.
  – Unless you have a kid, you probably won't get to know your neighbours very well, because the kids will be out there and doing stuff with other kids.
  – If you don't have a kid, have a dog. [If] you're out three times a day with your dog, you get to know what's happening in the neighbourhood. You're the eyes on the street.

15.0   Youth roles in improving social connectedness

15.1   Applying the immigrant experience to the youth

• Could we apply a lot of [the immigrant experience] to the youth? Consider expectations of how we're meant to act and what we're supposed to be valuing in society.

• [There is a] lack of concern for [immigrants'] experiences and where they come from in life. That really rings true with our institutions and what's expected of us as we grow up.
  – As information becomes available to people very easily, we're becoming very alienated and disillusioned without having a healthy discussion on sexuality, drug use, expectations of what we need in our educations and debt burdens.
  – People are finding that these institutions are becoming irrelevant. It's not so much apathy, but it's being left in the dust.

• [There are] dichotomies of perception. Either we have a very positive view of immigrants—they contribute to society—or people feel fear and apprehension about that.
  – That really speaks to me in the sense that we tend to idealize the youth in our society and we speak less to people's experience.

15.2   Developing new leaders in the community

• I'm a part of the South Asian Community Coalition Against Youth Violence. Our focus is looking at gang violence prevention strategies and so on.
  – As leaders in the community, about 20 of us have been sitting around [a] table. Each time we come to [a] meeting, we say we need to have youth there. After all, it is a youth initiative.
  – Two years later, we find ourselves still sitting there without youth at the table and a bunch of us old farts talking about what's impacting youth.
  – Sometimes we need to look inside ourselves and see if we're willing to give up our power and privilege in a leadership place to include individuals and develop their capacity to become leaders.

15.3   The youth will not be able to afford our houses

• If we lose our younger people in this city, we won't have [the] green economy or service-oriented economy that we're trying to build. It would be a poorer life for everybody.
  – I think Gordon Price [said], "Don't count on the kids to buy your house." It will just be too expensive, and they won't necessarily want the kind of house that's there.
  – [They'll have a more active lifestyle, and they'll want to hire somebody to mow the yard].

15.4   More youth should consider landscape architecture as a career

• [For] people who are young enough and thinking about where they want to go, landscape architecture is really on the ascendant.
  – It emphasizes the horizontal network of things: how water falls and runs off and collects, how spaces interweave with each other, how habitats connect and let wildlife find their way, birds and so forth, food, that [whole] network of things.
  – Think about urban landscape as well as building design and we'll be a happier community.

15.5 Youth-led programs empower youth

- We at MOSAIC have been developing strategies [to] develop youth-led programs. In fact, we had a conference and I was not allowed to go to it. Those kinds of strategies seem to empower youth.

16.0 Employment

16.1 Employment is important for immigrants to feel connected

- [Employment is the most important thing for immigrants].
  – A lot of us come from countries [where] we have jobs, [but here] we have no jobs and a family to feed.

16.2 New opportunities will necessitate career reinventions

- The fundamental thing that's changed since I was 20 is how [agile, nimble and responsive] somebody has to be in today's world. The world is changing very quickly, and there are so many opportunities out there.
  – When people are working hard, they're actually consuming those opportunities. They are speeding after them.
  – Peter and I are kind of strange in that we've been reinventing ourselves every three or four years in terms of our career. We love doing that, but that will be much more common for everybody.
  – The changing world [will not force people, but oblige, encourage and incent them] to reinvent themselves much more continuously. That's part of that equation.

16.3 More youth should consider landscape architecture as a career

- [For] people who are young enough and thinking about where they want to go, landscape architecture is really on the ascendant.
  – It emphasizes the horizontal network of things: how water falls and runs off and collects, how spaces interweave with each other, how habitats connect and let wildlife find their way, birds and so forth, food, that [whole] network of things.
  – Think about urban landscape as well as building design and we'll be a happier community.

17.0 Time scarcity

17.1 People need to reclaim their time

- Despite the obstacles to [certain] kinds of interactions—language, newness in the community, age, physical infirmity [and] the economy—your time is also important.
  – People are much more busy now than they used to be, and that's usually because everybody in the household of a certain age is working.
  – When I was growing up, there was one person in the household who wasn't working. Communities always had somebody who knew who was supposed to be there [and] who wasn't supposed to be there.
  – We don't have that world anymore. I hope we can get some kind of life like that back, where people reclaim their time.

17.2 Time scarcity affects social and neighbourhood development

- Time scarcity is a big issue in this kind of social and neighbourhood development. [Something must] be done to circumvent this.
  – People I know [have] tried to start social movements in our neighbourhoods, and it seems like [they] are so busy doing these kinds of things.

- We seem to fill our lives with so much that neighbourhood can take a backseat. This ties into electronic media quite closely.
- Scarcity of time is a barrier for people's ability to connect and engage in their communities.
  - There are more people that need to work.
  - There are commuting challenges and all kinds of things about the realities people face that significantly impact their ability to find free time.
  - People are dissatisfied with the time issue. Everyone's busy. They're busy all the time, but they don't like the way that that has impacted the quality of their lives.
  - People are longing and searching for a different way forward, and it is precisely these types of conversations that will begin to shift people's thinking around where their priorities need to go.

17.3 Time scarcity's effect on youth gang violence

- I'm bringing an ethnic lens to this piece, but I mentioned earlier about this youth gang violence issue that we've been trying to address.
  - A lot of the literature on this says that young people are vulnerable and at risk of joining gangs if they don't feel connected to their family, if they don't feel they can come home to mom and dad and that kind of thing.
  - Well, that's really related to this time scarcity issue, because the argument [is that] as new immigrants, we come, we hold two jobs and we have to work so hard, and therefore we've had to leave the kids at home and all of this stuff.
  - I don't buy that argument, because the men find time to drink together, go to the temple and come together at a group of friends' home and be together when their children [are at] home.

17.4 The Neighbourhood Small Grants program changes perceptions of time scarcity

- The Neighbourhood Small Grants project happens in many communities where people are just as time crunched as all of us are.
  - When they experience what it's like to be with a group of people where they feel accepted and engaged and with whom they have a deep sense of connection, they're willing to give up other things on their itinerary.

17.5 Busyness is incorrectly perceived as a way to make more money

- I have progressively been noticing the [increasing] amount of busyness. My friends tend to take on more things [and work] way more. One of them just took out a $1.5 million mortgage for their house with one kid.
  - [It made me think back to] when we first started to work. The goal was to work the least so we [could] hang out with our friends the most. "We've got to figure out a way to make money so we can go have fun."
  - [Are there] any information or studies that consider [the] connections or correlations between the lack of meaningful social connections, the factors in busyness and the desire to keep busy all the time?
  - It seems like it's almost perceived as good to keep busy.
- The $1.5 million mortgage connects back to affordability. Affordability's an equation. It's not a number. It's the cost of something divided by your ability to pay.
  - We have very low pay scales around here. Teachers get paid less than they do in other provinces and so do plumbers.

– If we could have 10% more income, it would be equal to the 10% reduction in the house cost. That's a good thing.

17.6   We must learn to prioritize our time

• [We are all] being called to first challenge ourselves around our sense of what our priorities are and what we do with our time.
  – We are being called on as representatives of our organizations to do the same and to begin to engage people in a dialogue to challenge the status quo.
• People have time. People make choices as to where they want to spend that time.
• Time is a relative concept. We make our choices. We make our sense of what's important or not.
  – We all know just from the basic statistics that people spend [a working week] in front of the TV and the Internet. They find the time for that, and they could find the time for other things if they felt it was as attractive.

18.0   Education

18.1   Ignorance prevents action, trust, comfort and access to information

• A word that kept coming up today is "not knowing." It's a real key word to all of us.
  – We don't act because we don't know. We don't trust, we don't know. We don't feel comfortable because we don't know. We don't access information because we don't know.

18.2   Creating community awareness and education programs

• [We have] community street functions and other functions, but we need to create awareness and education [programs] in order to be able to connect and to start from there.
  – [People in] the False Creek community stay there because of the combination of the fabulous location and the low rent. But that community has been planning to have a lunch get-together for the last 15 years and they haven't been able to do it yet.
  – Steps [need] to be taken in terms of creating awareness, for people to get to know each other as a community.

19.0   Changes at the institutional level

19.1   Government support for community building is diminishing

• Governments have a diminished capacity to support many of the institutions and supports that have traditionally built a sense of belonging for our communities and us. We're facing unprecedented global and local challenges.
  – Who will take care of us, and how can we make people care about community issues if their concerns stop at their front yard?
  – This is why this issue is so important. Our future rests on our courage to tackle what may emerge as one of our greatest community challenges of the future.

19.2   Making changes to existing institutional structures can empower citizens

• Ninu talked about giving up some of our power as adults. I would extend that to civic leaders or even institutions so that individuals might be more empowered to be creative, to reach out and to do things together.
• I saw a neighbourhood [in Portland where] a bunch of neighbours had decided to turn their intersection into a piazza, and they painted it up. The kids were involved [and] made the design.

- Everybody loved it until a city traffic engineer said, "The street is a public place, so that means nobody can use it," and threatened to sandblast [it] off the intersection. They failed, and this neighbourhood activity actually became a movement, where citizens begin to hack their own city.
- Every time they came together to do this, they built stronger, more connected neighbourhoods, empowering individuals to express themselves, but also to connect with each other.

- Every year around the world, they have something called "parking day," where people are encouraged to take parking spots and do something to them, turn them into mini parks or something.
  - This occurred on Davie Street. By the time I got there, I was five minutes late. The traffic department had come along and said, "It's a great idea, but you didn't get a permit."
  - In some ways, our institutions, rules and cities are so static, we need to find ways to break some of those structures to empower us more.

19.3   Building social capital through government policy

- We can build social capital through deliberate policies. The Metro Vancouver city government has the power to put in policies.
- I'm also looking at housing and zoning. Immigrants live in [areas] like East Vancouver. When you walk along Fraser Street, it's all the Asian community and so on.
  - I'm not saying that's deliberate, but [such things] should be looked at to build social capital.
- Are there any deliberate policies in place by the city government to build social capital? It's synonymous [with] making room for bicycles on the roads.
  - A person in charge in the city was talking about how difficult it was to make room for bicycles on the roads. They did it, and the bicycles and the cars were able to share the roads.
  - It's just like making room [for] immigrants and the rest of the people that have been here.
- We need our governments to be aware of these kinds of issues.

19.4   Governments need to recognize and utilize the benefits of common areas

- The best thing [governments] can do is consider the commons as a place where experimentation can happen, coming from the people that use those common areas.
  - Large governments are a thing of the past. We may see them again sometime in the future, but their capacity to control has made us somewhat inert [and] afraid to go out and take [roles in society].
  - One of the best things our governments can do is recognize their responsibility to govern the responsiveness [and] experimental nature of the commons.

20.0   The Vancouver Foundation

20.1   The Vancouver Foundation's approach

- [The Vancouver Foundation has] been investing in communities since 1943.
  - We do this by taking a complex approach to our work, recognizing that communities are complex and that many things are needed to make our communities into places where people feel content and healthy.
  - Every year with our donors, we fund hundreds of innovative projects large and small.

– Recently we've made a concerted effort to better understand and quantify how our lives and experiences as residents are changing so that we can better understand where to focus our work and resources.

20.2   The Neighbourhood Small Grants program

• The Vancouver Foundation [runs] a program called Neighbourhood Small Grants, which is a project in which we give small amounts of money to neighbours to start up a project that builds community.

– In that process of actually connecting to people by name, [leaders emerge] in a way we haven't had a lot of other experience with.

– When we work with a coordinator at a local neighbourhood house and they take the effort to get to know someone and invite them, that process of inviting someone by name is a hugely powerful tool.

– Emerging leaders come forward and subsequently take on amazing leadership roles, not only on their block, but subsequently in their neighbourhood and their communities.

• The Neighbourhood Small Grants project happens in many communities where people are just as time crunched as all of us are.

– When they experience what it's like to be with a group of people where they feel accepted and engaged and with whom they have a deep sense of connection, they're willing to give up other things on their itinerary.