Attachment 1

Key issues emerging from the external scan

The lists of environmental issues highlighted below have been identified through both background research, and consultation with the joint steering committee, Library staff and initial consultation with the public.

Demographics: Overview

- From 1996-2001 the population of Toronto grew by 4.1% which matches that of Canada as a whole, but is significantly less than the 10% growth rate experienced by the GTA.
- 49% of the population were born outside Canada (an increase of 1% since 1996).
- 43% of the population identified themselves as visible minorities, up from 37% in 1996.
- Although Toronto's overall growth rate is modest, the population experiences high turnover; Toronto gains residents through international immigration and immigration from other provinces, and loses population when people migrate to other parts of the province.
- Between 2001 and 2006 the largest growing age groups will be youth ages 15-24 and adults aged 55-64.

Newcomers

- There is a 40-year trend of less immigration from Europe and England and more from Asian and Southeast Asia; India, Pakistan and China are now the top three countries of origin.
- 80% of newcomers to the GTA arrive in Toronto.
- One in four children between the ages of 5-14 are newcomers who arrived between 1996 and 2001.
- 80% of newcomers have neither English or French as their home languages; compared to 50% in the 70's.
- The top five home languages excluding English and French are Chinese, Italian, Tamil, Portuguese and Spanish.
- Newcomers have higher education levels than five years ago, but have more difficulty in achieving employment and wage parity than they did 10 years ago.
- Some newcomer groups experience higher rates of poverty than others; 62% of Somali families, 70% of Ethiopian families and 87% of Ghanaian families live below the poverty line.

Income Polarization

- Toronto represents 49% of the total population of the GTA, yet 69% of the GTA's low income families and 62% of the GTA's single parent families live in Toronto.
- There is increasing polarization of income levels in the City; the median income of Toronto's wealthiest neighborhoods increased 25% while it fell by 8% in the poorest neighbourhoods.
- Low income neighbourhoods are not all downtown, but are also spread throughout the suburbs.

- Overall rates of child poverty fell in Canada between 1996 and 2001, but increased in Toronto by 2%.

Youth

- Youth is one of the fastest growing age groups in the City; and the group with the most leisure time.
- A substantial number live in poverty; yet many support programs including breakfast programs and afterschool programs end at the age of 12.
- Within Toronto only 66% of high school students pass the high school literacy test; research indicates that reading and literacy are inextricably linked.
- Partly because of the ripple effect of the "double cohort", youth face more competition in obtaining places in post secondary education, and tuition costs are rising.
- Youth are staying at home longer than they did 10 years ago.
- Issues of youth alienation and safety are cited in the media and research.

Seniors

- Between 2001-2006 one of the largest growing groups in Toronto will be older adults age 55-64.
- As a group seniors/youth have the largest proportion of leisure time.
- There is an increasing number of seniors living in poverty in Toronto.
- The population is becoming increasingly diverse in ethnic origin.

Reading and Culture

- Research by Richard Florida has established linkages between a city's "creative and cultural sphere" and its economic competitiveness; arts, culture, ethnic diversity and cultural openness act as a magnet to draw high-technology industries and spur economic growth.
- Within Toronto there is significant public/private investment in cultural facilities, e.g. ROM, AGO. Ontario College of Art, and a *Master Plan for Culture* calls for higher per capita spending on culture.
- A 2003 research report prepared for the *New Yorker* indicates that audiences for cultural events are readers (95%); research also indicates that of all cultural activities, reading has the second highest participation rates suggesting a broader cultural role for the library in the City.
- Research consistently underscores the importance of reading to preschool children as a prerequisite to success in primary education.

Access to on-line information

- In an era of globalization and global movements, universal access to on-line information is increasingly important.
- Government, health, education and career and business information is primarily available on-line.
- Internet access in the home is strongly influenced by income levels; 50-80% of high income households have Internet access compared to 25-40% in low income households.