



The Quality of Life Sector in a Re-Creating Society

A “Vision” Discussion Paper

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March, 2003

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The Title

Much has been made in recent years of the changes shaping our society. Globalization of the economy, the explosion in information technology, and worldwide urbanization are commonly included among these forces of change. In wealthy societies, such as Alberta's however, other forces are also at work. These forces have a direct bearing on the future of our economy, environment, and communities. For example, Alberta's growing post-industrial economy enables large numbers of knowledge workers to pursue lucrative careers across a wide range of occupations. These individuals enjoy immense purchasing power which they expend on goods and services beyond the necessities of life.

Demand for these skilled workers in a growing economy allows individuals to choose where and for whom they will work. This combination of high incomes and the power of choice in employment redefines how compensation is defined in today's labour market. No longer are employee benefits confined to pensions or group insurance plans. Rather, benefits in the post-industrial society are often equated by workers with amenities such as the availability of outdoor recreation, access to cultural events, and clean, safe environments. This reality provides the context for the reference to the quality of life sector in the paper's title.

Quality of life is, of course, very much a personal issue for these knowledge workers. To some, access to live theatre, fitness clubs, and speciality coffee shops defines quality of life. To others, access to natural landscapes and uncongested roadways defines quality of life. Workers empowered by the market value of their knowledge/skill base and information technology can often choose between rural and urban locations.

High incomes and highly valued knowledge/skill sets also empower today's workers in other ways. Throughout the course of a working life, today's workers are likely to pursue several different careers. Access to life-long

Empowered by their incomes, knowledge, and access to information, today's knowledge workers are busily engaged in personal re-creation – a process that may be vocational or spiritual (or both) in nature.

“quality of life sector” encompasses stakeholders involved in play, sport, recreation, active living, parks and outdoor activities, libraries, health promotion, arts and cultural agencies, as well as other community services.

learning facilitates these career shifts as well as pursuit of knowledge across diverse topic areas. In fact, personal development has become a huge industry where motivational speakers and self-help gurus offer their guidance for personal transformation. Similarly, a whole industry has grown up around the concern of individuals with their health, fitness, appearance, and general well being. Nutraceuticals, fitness clubs, exercise equipment and personal trainers are the goods and services which are typically associated with this industry. Empowered by their incomes, knowledge, and access to information, today's knowledge workers are busily engaged in personal re-creation – a process that may be vocational or spiritual (or both) in nature. That pursuit of individual re-creation is the context for the second reference in this paper's title.

The Context

This vision paper was produced against a very particular backdrop. Central to that backdrop was the Vision 2015 Symposium on Leisure, Wellness, Prosperity, and Quality of Life hosted by the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA) on May 30-31, 2002. Presentations and discussions at that symposium provided the foundation for the vision outlined in this paper. Subsequent events, such as the report of Alberta's Financial Management Commission complemented this foundation as did current literature and other reports commissioned by ARPA.

The Quality of Life Sector

For purposes of this discussion paper, the “quality of life sector” encompasses stakeholders involved in play, sport, recreation, active living, parks and outdoor activities, libraries, health promotion, arts and cultural agencies, as well as other community services. Generally speaking these areas of interest are categorized by economists as public goods. While private goods are those which are consumed individually, e.g. bottled water or private automobiles, public goods are those which are used jointly by citizens. These include schools, municipal water supplies, parks, arenas, museums, and libraries. In Canadian society the role of government in the public goods of education, public health, and health care has

Although, for the most part, recreational, cultural, and environmental goods and services may not be mandated by legislation, they do define quality of life for the large majority of Albertans.

traditionally been mandated by legislation, e.g. the Canada Health Act. Other public goods such as libraries, museums, parks, and arenas have generally been considered areas of discretionary activity for government. Although, for the most part, recreational, cultural, and environmental goods and services may not be mandated by legislation, they do define quality of life for the large majority of Albertans. In a globally competitive economy where knowledge workers are a key resource this is an important public policy consideration and one that provides the rationale for considering producers of these goods and services to be essential.

A Note on Language

In recent years documents prepared to inform the broader public have embraced “plain language.” A paper such as this one, written to engage a broad community of stakeholders, should obviously avoid specialized language to the greatest degree possible. Hopefully, the paper’s readership will conclude that this objective has been realized.

INTRODUCTION

Vision 2015

On May 30-31, 2002 the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA) hosted the Vision 2015 Symposium on Leisure, Wellness, Prosperity, and Quality of Life. This event coupled plenary presentations by guest speakers with group discussions by participants. Understandably these presentations and discussions did not immediately jell into a well-defined vision. However, the need and opportunity for a new vision was definitely noted. For example Doug Mitchell, Co-chair of Alberta’s Future Summit 2002, reported that quality of life is emerging as a critical issue for Albertans, particularly after September 11, 2001. As well, he reported strong support for wellness initiatives. These two realities alone suggest that a new

vision for Leisure, Wellness, Prosperity, and Quality of Life is timely.

Other presenters confirmed the timeliness for a new vision, speaking to both the need and opportunity to link the benefits of recreation activity to wellness, environmental stewardship, and quality of life. For example, Dr Gerry Predy, Medical Officer of Health for the Capital Health Region, cited an increase in diseases related to inactivity. Dr Guy Swinnerton, of the University of Alberta, expressed concern with the depletion of natural resources and cultural assets in Alberta. On the more optimistic side, Ken Balmer, a principal of ReTHINK (West) Inc., spoke of the high degree of alignment between the opportunities offered by recreation and the stated visions of the Alberta Government and its ministries.

Ruben Nelson, President and C.E.O. of The Alliance for Capitalizing on Change, set the stage for development of a new vision that could integrate these various concerns and opportunities. He specifically challenged participants to imagine “a post-industrial future”. Participants responded to these comments through discussions on topics that included community well-being, personal health, and conserving/enhancing the environment.

Contents of This Paper

A primary objective of this paper is to catalyze continuing dialogue around that agenda. Hopefully, such dialogue will ultimately culminate in a shared vision of Alberta’s future and clarify the role of the quality of life sector in that future.

The paper has three parts. Part I is a situation analysis of Alberta’s current economic, social, and political context. This analysis is essentially a high-level summary of the ideas and insights emerging from the Vision 2015 Symposium and other forums. For example, the Report of the Alberta Future Summit and the Report of Alberta’s Financial Management Commission are reflected here. Such an analysis is critical to identification of major issues and trends against which a vision for Alberta in 2015 can be developed.

Part II begins with a proposed set of core values, fundamental beliefs, and guiding principles, which the

quality of life sector considers appropriate to a vision for Alberta in 2015. Part II continues with a vision titled “A Re-Creating Society.” This vision is built directly upon the ideas and insights presented at the Vision 2015 Symposium.

Part III concludes by outlining a strategy through which different communities of interest and communities of place can participate in the realization of this vision. This implementation strategy also leans on the presentations made at the Vision 2015 Symposium (a summary of the proceedings of the Vision 2015 Symposium is available from ARPA under separate cover).

Throughout the paper numerous series of questions are posed. These are intended to guide the reader’s reflections and catalyze discussion.

PART I: SITUATION ANALYSIS – A “TIME OF OPPORTUNITY”

A NEW ERA

The Post-Debt World

“Society today invests in things that are good for society, and with a clear focus, like getting vandals off the street. Parents really want to pay for social skills, fitness, cooperation. If we market that, then we’re in a business that’s valued. Then we have a future.”

Ken Balmer

ReTHINK (West) Inc.

Russell Carr, a consultant in public policy, presented the thesis at the Vision 2015 Symposium that Alberta has entered a new era. He pointed out that from the early 1990’s until 2002, public policy in Alberta had been dominated by fiscal concerns. In this period, elimination of the deficit, and retirement of the debt, were the overriding preoccupations of the Provincial Government. Reductions in personal and corporate taxes, followed closely behind in priority. In social policy, independence from income support programs was a major objective while in economic development policy, “self-reliant communities” was the primary focus.

However, by the summer of 2002, Carr argued, it was evident that the energy driving the fiscal agenda was largely spent. He predicted that the recommendations of the Financial Management Commission would essentially remove the deficit/debt issue from the public agenda. In fact, the Commission’s report was released a few weeks after the Vision 2015 Symposium. In that report the Commission did recommend (among other things) a long-term strategy to eliminate the debt and a stabilization strategy to provide continuity to the annual budgeting process. Ultimately the government decided to defer elimination of the debt until 2008 and utilize debt financing to fund much needed infrastructure.

A New Context

By the summer of 2002 other realities had also become apparent. Since the “oil boom” of the mid-1970s Alberta has enjoyed rapid economic growth. Much of that economic growth has been based on extraction of natural resources and the production of commodities. However, as

it is increasingly apparent that there are high costs to economic growth predicated on resource extraction and commodity production. The scarcity of water, particularly in southern Alberta, underscores these costs to growth.

Guy Swinnerton noted, it is increasingly apparent that there are high costs to economic growth predicated on resource extraction and commodity production. The scarcity of water, particularly in southern Alberta, underscores these costs to growth. There is insufficient water available to meet the needs of industry, urban centres, and water-based recreation. Throughout the summer of 2002 drought conditions both exacerbated and highlighted this reality. This scarcity of water may signal resource scarcities of a much broader scope.

As the summer of 2002 ended, it was obvious that Alberta had entered a new era. Debate on the Kyoto Accord reflected growing concern with climate change, clean air and related quality of life issues. It also underscored Alberta's continued dependence on the oil/gas industry. Disappearance and degradation of water bodies was commonly referenced in the press throughout the summer and fall of 2002 as was the ongoing saga of health care reform. The report of Alberta's Financial Management Commission called for a new economic vision for the Province, a recommendation, which echoed the Report of the Alberta Future Summit. "Getting Albertans healthy and keeping them healthy" was a major reform tenant of the Premier's Advisory Group on Healthcare. No longer was political debate in Alberta focused on elimination of the deficit, reduction of taxes, and retirement of the debt. A whole new policy context was emerging in Alberta.

New Policy Paradigms

At the Vision 2015 Symposium Russell Carr also pointed out this changing policy context in Alberta finds expression in new policy paradigms. The "human capital" paradigm, for example, recognizes that in the economy of the future the key resource will be the human resource. This paradigm also clarifies that an industrial economy is dependent upon natural resources and investment capital. A knowledge-based economy, on the other hand, is dependent upon "human capital," i.e. the creativity, knowledge, and skills of society's human resources.

Another new paradigm, the "sustainable development" paradigm, focuses attention on the long-term interconnectedness between economic development,

The "human capital" paradigm, for example, recognizes that in the economy of the future the key resource will be the human resource.

“sustainable development” paradigm, focuses attention on the long-term interconnectedness between economic development, social development, and community development.

“wellness” paradigm, distinguishes wellness from the presence (or absence) of disease. Wellness is seen as a composite of physical, economic, social, psychological, emotional and spiritual well being.

social development, and community development. Interdependence within these three policy areas are highlighted under this paradigm, as are the long-term policy implications for sustainability.

Still another new paradigm, the “wellness” paradigm, distinguishes wellness from the presence (or absence) of disease. Wellness is seen as a composite of physical, economic, social, psychological, emotional and spiritual well being.

Challenges / Opportunities

The emergence of these new policy paradigms and the waning of the “fiscal agenda” in Alberta signals a time of opportunity for the quality of life sector, a point emphasized by several presenters at the Vision 2015 Symposium. Development and promotion of a compelling new vision does seem timely. Success in these endeavours, however, is dependent upon many things, including sound analysis of the context just discussed. In this regard, relevant challenges/opportunities identified at the Vision 2015 Symposium included:

Economic Challenges/Opportunities

- ◆ **The limits of an extraction and commodity-based economy are being reached.** Alberta is challenged to develop an economy based upon different values and a different approach to resources. Guy Swinnerton’s comments underscore this challenge.
- ◆ **Quality-of-life considerations are becoming dominant in the locational decisions of mobile “knowledge workers”.** Government policy makers and business policy makers need to recognize this reality in their economic development and human resource strategies. Doug Mitchell’s presentation confirmed the growing importance of this issue.
- ◆ **A new economic development strategy is needed.** The combination of limits on resource extraction/commodity production and the growing importance of quality of life for knowledge workers suggests that Alberta needs a new economic development strategy. Expansion of “value-added” economic activity and

the significance of quality of life to economic development need to be “front and centre” in such a strategy.

- ♦ **An economy based on knowledge workers, value-added development, and quality-of-life considerations requires rethinking of the “Alberta Advantage”.** This conclusion stems directly from the observations of Doug Mitchell. A low tax regime and a streamlined regulatory system may be insufficient to assure competitiveness in a changing economy.

- ♦ **The current health care system may not be sustainable.** Investment in wellness initiatives, the promotion of health, and the prevention of disease are emerging as public policy priorities. This challenge was referenced by both Dr. Gerry Predy and Doug Mitchell. At the same time, sedentary lifestyles and poor nutrition have become major contributors to chronic disease.

Social Challenges/Opportunities

- ♦ **Balanced lifestyles are proving difficult to achieve.** Dr. Gerry Predy noted that those with the financial resources to invest in recreation often lack the leisure time to do so. Conversely, those with adequate leisure time lack the financial resources to pursue recreation.

- ♦ **Alberta has become a highly diverse society.** Several presenters at the Vision 2015 Symposium referenced the diversity issue. Multiculturalism, aging and expanding lifestyle choices are redefining Alberta’s demographics and culture.

- ♦ **Alberta is overwhelmingly an urban society.** Rural areas of the Province are losing population while urban areas are growing rapidly. Guy Swinnerton’s presentation referenced the challenges related to this urban growth.

- ♦ **Traditional models of community in Alberta are changing.** The combination of diversity, urbanization, and de-population of rural Alberta is redefining community in Alberta. Communities of place are being supplanted in importance by communities of interest.

- ♦ **Income polarization is growing between Alberta’s “haves” and “have nots”.** Traditional concepts of equity are challenged by this expanding differentiation. In

referring to this challenge, Ruben Nelson stated at the Vision 2015 Symposium that “unless that future includes a full dose of equity, we’ll never have quality of life”.

- ♦ **Psychosocial costs.** As with any society experiencing rapid change, Albertans are paying high psychosocial costs. Divorce rates and the incidence of single parent families is one indicator of such costs. Mitigating the impact of these stresses upon the health of individuals is a major challenge.

Environmental Challenges/Opportunities

- ♦ **Increasingly human activity related to economic development, urban growth and outdoor recreation is placing unprecedented pressures on Alberta’s land base and water resources.** Guy Swinnerton stressed that conservation and protection of such finite resources need to be priorities.

- ♦ **Urban centres require integration of natural and cultural heritage sites.** Guy Swinnerton also suggested that integrated landscape planning is needed to mitigate urban sprawl and “paving over” of heritage sites.

- ♦ **Environmental health.** Issues such as air pollution, climate change, drought, and the tragedy of Walkerton underscore the need for attention to environmental health issues.

The Change Agenda

Analysis of these challenges and opportunities referenced by the presenters at the Vision 2015 Symposium culminates in the change agenda, which follows and is summarized in Chart I (see page 13).

From Production of Commodities to Value Added Processing

- ♦ **Alberta has reached the limits of growth in its traditional economy based on resource extraction and commodity production.** Finite resources, such as water, demands that economic development strategies focus on adding value to scarce resources. For example, using Alberta’s forest products to build furniture in Alberta is preferable to the continued export of dimensional lumber.

Eco-tourism in the boreal forest is another example. Such value added enterprises place a premium on innovation and creativity. In such a value added economy knowledgeable, highly skilled and creative human resources are the engines of the economy. Their availability, therefore, is essential to continued economic growth.

From Consumption of Resources to Stewardship of Resources

♦ **Resource scarcity, as in the case of water and lumber, also calls for an ethic of stewardship of scarce resources.** Air pollution, resulting from combustion of fossil fuels is similarly prompting a shift from consumption to stewardship of resources. The sustainable development paradigm reinforces this shift to a “culture of stewardship.”

From a Homogenous Society to Diversity in Communities

♦ **Alberta has become a diverse society. Multiculturalism, an aging society, and expanded lifestyle choices are fundamentally altering the complexion of Alberta’s society.** In his book, “The Rise of the Creative Class” Richard Florida speaks to the need for acceptance of such diversity. He points to the emergence of a new class in American society, “the creative class.” Members of the creative class do not celebrate conventionality. Understandably, they prefer living in centres where their eccentricities and/or idiosyncrasies are accepted. Florida’s research suggests that future economic growth in any given location will be directly dependent upon that location's ability to attract members of the creative class. That creative class locates where their non-conformity is accepted and where a range of formal and informal cultural and recreational opportunities are available.

From Communities of Place to Communities of Interest

♦ **Traditional definitions of community are also changing in Alberta.** Historically the word community inferred sharing a residential location, i.e. living in

proximity. Face-to-face interaction was, in fact, a defining characteristic of these “communities of place.” Today, however, groups of individuals around the globe who share common interests and interact on that basis are referred to as “communities of interest.” Traditional communities of place influenced public policy often manifesting the NIMBY (not in my back yard) phenomenon. Today, however, communities of interest play major roles in advocacy irrespective of a local community’s preferences or priorities.

From Recreation as Leisure Activity to Recreation as Wellness

Recreation, on the other hand, is increasingly being viewed as necessary to maintenance of both physical and mental health and wellness. Accordingly, it is also being viewed as a critical component of quality of life.

♦ **The high cost of health care and growing public concerns with quality of life are providing new motivators for recreation.** No longer is recreation seen as equivalent to leisure activity. Recreation, on the other hand, is increasingly being viewed as necessary to maintenance of both physical and mental health and wellness. Accordingly, it is also being viewed as a critical component of quality of life. In fact, for many Albertans leisure, commonly defined as spare time, is a rare commodity. In a similar vein, healthy communities are seen as places where citizens are protected from the threats of contaminated air, water, and land. As well, preservation and conservation of natural resources, which enable recreation, are increasingly viewed as issues vital to public health.

From Health Care to Whole Health

♦ **Public policy debates commonly focus on Alberta’s health care system, a reality that masks a more profound transformation.** Our health care system is essentially a disease treatment system. However, to many Albertans, health is increasingly seen in a holistic context – a composite state of wellness with physical, environmental, social, economic, and spiritual determinants. This holistic context brings together health of the body, mind, and spirit.

From Policy as Envelopes to Policy as Paradigms

♦ **Through the 1970s and 1980s public policy was differentiated into “envelopes.”** The social policy envelope, for example, traditionally included the portfolios

of education, health, and social services. The economic policy envelope traditionally included portfolios such as finance, industry growth, transportation, and trade. In the 1990s, the recreation movement attempted to position itself as a key portfolio within the social policy envelope. Today, however a different strategy seems appropriate. Specifically, the policy paradigms referenced earlier call for the integration of select pieces of a given portfolio into different policy paradigms, e.g. active living into the wellness paradigm or skills training into the human capital paradigm.

From Governing to Governance

♦ **In the 1970s and 1980s governments in Canada expanded their roles in governing.** Throughout the 1990s however, the Alberta government consistently embraced shared governance. Under this concept third parties came to deliver public services, local and regional authorities assumed new roles in managing and delivering public services, while companies and communities entered into partnerships with the Provincial government.

From Quality Service to Quality of Life

♦ **In the 1990s governments enthusiastically adopted the private sector's notions of "total quality" and "customer service."** This led to innovations in delivery of public services including "one-stop shopping" for drivers' licenses, marriage licenses and other registry services. As well, liquor retailing was privatized, leading to an expansion of outlets, product lines, and hours of business. By the close of the 1990s however, the public's concerns had shifted. Quality and choice in public goods had become a major public issue. This is a key theme of Janice Gross-Stein's 2002 Massey Lectures. In those lectures titled "The Cult of Efficiency" (and book of the same name), Stein points to home schooling and charter schools as examples of the growing expectations of citizens that they have the right to both quality and choice in public goods, such as education, health care, and the environment.

Implications for Values and Vision

This change agenda has major implications for the quality of life sector. For example, through the 1980s and 1990s

This shift to shared governance has created new challenges around the respective capacities of communities, and the voluntary sector, as well as the capability of companies to play effective roles in shared governance. It has also raised questions about the appropriate balance between the public, private, and voluntary sectors.

inclusion was a core value of this sector. Barrier-free access, such as paved walkways in parks, exemplifies how that value translated into a guiding principle. However, eliminating barriers within prevailing service delivery models is not the same as developing new service models appropriate to an increasingly diverse population. The demands of a growing cohort of seniors, who enjoy both greater wealth and health than their predecessors, is a case in point.

Linking this change agenda to the quality of life sector's values is an important exercise. Accordingly, Part II of this report discusses the core values, fundamental beliefs, and guiding principles of that sector and then puts forward a vision for Alberta in 2015.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- ♦ *Is the concept of a quality of life sector useful? Why, or why not?*
- ♦ *Has the discussion around the change agenda captured all relevant paradigm shifts? If not, what shifts need to also be included?*

CHART I: THE CHANGE AGENDA

FROM		TO
Production of commodities – Extraction of natural resources	→	Value added processing – Creativity in human resources
Consumption of resources – Resources are infinite	→	Stewardship of scarce resources – Resources are finite
A homogenous society – Conformity is valued	→	Diversity in communities – Non-conformity is respected
Communities of place – Shared location	→	Communities of interest – Shared interests
Recreation as leisure – Recreation is discretionary	→	Recreation as wellness – Recreation is necessary
Health care – Disease focussed	→	Whole health promotion – Wellness focused
Policy as envelopes – Policy is differentiated	→	Policy as paradigms – Policy is integrated
Governing – Government is accountable	→	Governance – Accountability is shared
Quality service – People are customers	→	Quality of life – People are citizens

PART II: VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

THE IMPACT OF VALUES

Values, Beliefs, and Principles

At the Vision 2015, Symposium Ruben Nelson urged participants to develop a vision for Alberta that extended beyond the quality of life sector. Visions, of course reflect values, and values evolve in response to changing circumstances. Given the changing context discussed in the previous section it is essential that the quality of life sector review their values base in the light of this changing context.

Core Values

A review of the presentations and discussions at the Vision 2015 Symposium suggest the following are the core values of the quality of life sector in Alberta.

- ◆ **Enhanced personal health and wellness of Albertans** – Enhanced personal health and wellness of individuals has long been a core value of Alberta's quality of life sector. This value is expressed in the active living component of programs ranging from children's play to seniors' golf. It is also evidenced in the social development of programs such as Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, imagination and creativity through arts and culture and in the support to lifelong learning provided by libraries.
- ◆ **A civic culture** – The development and practice of the duties and responsibilities of citizenship has long been a core value of Alberta's quality of life sector. Voluntarism and civic participation are central to these duties and responsibilities.
- ◆ **Protection/preservation of natural resources, diverse habitats, and cultural assets** – Such protection/preservation is another core value of Alberta's quality of life sector. This value expresses itself in organizations ranging from Ducks Unlimited to local historical societies, museum boards, and park foundations.

"The vision must be not only for this industry, but for Alberta and its role in the planet, and then our place within that and our contribution to it. We need to work at this the next few days, and beyond that the rest of our lives as if our lives depend on it, which indeed they do. This is serious work, more serious than we tend to think."

*Ruben Nelson,
President and CEO*

*The Alliance for
Capitalizing on Change*

- ♦ **A prosperous economy** – Without a prosperous economy quality of life is limited. A prosperous economy enables the philanthropy of individuals such as Carnegie and his support for libraries. As well, a prosperous economy enables municipalities to provide the infrastructure of arenas, art centres and playing fields.
- ♦ **Diversity and inclusive communities** – The quality of life sector has always valued social inclusion and respect for all individuals. This core value has sustained a commitment to diversity in policy and programs. The sector equates community with the “membership of all”.

Fundamental Beliefs

These five core values are supported by the following fundamental beliefs:

- ♦ **Enhancement of the personal health and wellness of Albertans is dependent upon the capacity of individuals to take responsibility for their personal development and well-being.** Albertans must become active participants in their own health and wellness. Lifelong learning and access to health related information are critical aspects of this belief.
- ♦ **Preservation of Alberta’s civic culture is dependent upon maintenance of equity and respect for individual differences.** The impact of growing extremes of wealth in Alberta threatens to erode social trust, social cohesion, and respect for differences.
- ♦ **Protection/preservation of Alberta’s natural resources, diverse habitats, and cultural assets is dependent upon development and maintenance of a culture of stewardship.** Individuals, communities, companies, and government agencies all have roles in stewardship.
- ♦ **A prosperous provincial economy is dependent upon communities that offer a high quality of life.** Such communities welcome diversity, promote creativity, and offer a wide range of quality of life opportunities.

- ♦ **Holistic health.** Health is a composite of physical, environmental, economic, social, and spiritual determinants. The health status of an individual reflects the integration of mind, body, and spirit as well as the impact of the determinants of health.

Guiding Principles and Impact

principles reflect choices and in today's world advocates of particular choices are expected to make such principles and their impact transparent.

As discussed earlier in this paper, core values and fundamental beliefs become expressed through guiding principles. These principles may be overt and therefore transparent, or they may be implicit and not so transparent. However, as discussed earlier, principles reflect choices and in today's world advocates of particular choices are expected to make such principles and their impact transparent. Based on analysis of the proceedings of the Vision 2015 Symposium, guiding principles reflective of the core values and fundamental beliefs of Alberta's quality of life sector seem to be as follows:

- ♦ **Individual responsibility/empowerment** – Under this principle, Albertans would be individually responsible for their health and wellness. As well, Albertans would be empowered to make choices regarding their personal health and wellness. The intended impact of this principle is that public policy would enable Albertans to develop and maintain the capability to make informed choices regarding their health and wellness.
- ♦ **Citizens first** – Under this principle, Albertans would be citizens first and consumers second. Consumption of scarce resources such as water and public goods such as health care would reflect the individual's responsibilities to his/her fellow citizens of local, provincial, national and global communities. This responsibility is owed to both current and future generations. The intended impact of this principle would be allocation of scarce resources and public goods on an equitable basis.
- ♦ **Quality, choice, and accessibility in public goods** – Under this principle, public goods, including education, health care, environmental resources (air, land, water), and cultural assets would be of high quality. As well, following the example of education, where there are options such as

home schooling and charter schools, there would be choices in other public goods. For example, under this principle no child would be denied the choice to participate in sport or perform through arts. Accessibility to such opportunities should be assured regardless of social economic status or the presence of any other disadvantage.

- ♦ **Accountability as outcomes** – Under this principle accountability would be defined as results (not process). As well, results would be defined as ultimate outcomes (not the outputs of programs). The impact of this principle would be that performance in public policy would be synonymous with achievement of desired outcomes.
- ♦ **Shared responsibility** – Under this principle the achievement of desired societal outcomes is recognized as the shared responsibility of governments (at all levels), individuals, companies, and communities. The impact of this principle would be that leadership and governance are appropriately shared and balanced between and among these various stakeholders. As well this principle implies an appropriate balance between the roles of the public, private, and voluntary sector.

Towards a Vision

With the core values, fundamental beliefs, and guiding principles of the quality of life sector now defined, the next challenge is articulation of a new vision for Alberta. That vision, as outlined in the following section reflects the sector's core values, fundamental beliefs, and guiding principles on one hand, and analysis of Alberta's changing context on the other.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- *Who are we (the quality of life sector) as a community?*
- *Do you agree with the core values, fundamental beliefs, and guiding principles?*
- *How would these values, beliefs and principles shape the allocation of scarce resources?*
- *Under these allocations who would (or would not) get what?*

- *What is the quality of life sector's definition of "good," i.e. moral choices in the allocation of scarce resources?*
- *How do such definitions of "good" influence the sector's desired future for Alberta in 2015?*

**CHART II:
SUMMARY OF CORE VALUES, FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS,
GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

CORE VALUES

- Enhanced personal health and wellness of Albertans
- A civic culture
- Protection/preservation of natural resources, diverse habitats, and cultural assets
- A prosperous economy
- Diversity and inclusive communities

FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS

- Enhancement of the personal health and wellness of Albertans is dependent upon the capacity of individuals to take responsibility for their personal development and well-being.
- Preservation of Alberta's civic culture is dependent upon maintenance of equity and respect for differences.
- Protection/preservation of Alberta's natural resources, diverse habitats, and cultural assets is dependent upon development and maintenance of a culture of stewardship.
- A prosperous economy is dependent upon communities that offer a high quality of life.
- Health is a composite of physical, economic, social, environmental, and spiritual determinants.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Individual responsibility/empowerment
- Citizens first
- Quality, choice, and accessibility in public goods
- Accountability as outcomes
- Shared responsibility of stakeholders

PART III: AN EVOLVING VISION

A NEW VISION

A “Re-creating Society”

In the “re-creating society” individual growth and development reflects individual responsibility for enhanced health and wellness. Lifelong learning is the norm and individuals consistently “re-create” themselves through the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

In the “re-creating society” economic growth is sustainable. Such sustainable growth reflects the long term and systemic consequences of resource utilization.

The vision of Alberta, which emerges from the Vision 2015 Symposium, is a vision of a “re-creating society.”

In such a society individual citizens, corporate citizens, and communities are engaged in ongoing growth and development. This growth and development is envisioned in the context of the situation analysis and values, beliefs, and principles discussed previously.

In the “re-creating society” individual growth and development reflects individual responsibility for enhanced health and wellness. Lifelong learning is the norm and individuals consistently “re-create” themselves through the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. This knowledge and skill base reflects a balance between vocational skills and life skills.

In the “re-creating society” economic growth is sustainable. Such sustainable growth reflects the long term and systemic consequences of resource utilization. Water consumption, for example, has as its backdrop, preservation of representative wetlands. Economic development is defined as growth, which adds the highest possible value to scarce resources. For example, under this vision, water bodies would be valued for their ongoing use as recreation resources, not as disposable assets to be expended in the oil extraction process.

In the “re-creating society” three themes are dominant. They are:

- **Stewardship of all resources.**
- **A value-added economy.**
- **Investment in “re-creating.”**

“Stewardship of All Resources”

“Stewardship of all resources” is the dominant theme of a “re-creating society.” As the presenters at the Vision 2015 Symposium emphasized, Albertans are not currently good stewards of environmental resources (air, land, water) or cultural assets. This was a key message from Guy Swinnerton. Albertans are also not good stewards of human resources. For example, Dr. Predy pointed out at the Vision 2015 Symposium that the incidence of low birth weight babies in the Capital Health Region corresponds almost exactly with low income. Low birth weights represent significant disadvantages in human potential and demonstrate poor stewardship of tomorrow’s citizens.

Albertans also face challenges of stewardship of public goods. Doug Mitchell pointed out, for example, that Alberta’s health care system may not be sustainable in its current form.

In the envisioned “re-creating society” Albertans are excellent stewards of:

- ♦ **Human capital** – All Albertans have access to the opportunities and choices, which determine personal health and wellness and overall human potential.
- ♦ **Social capital** – Alberta’s communities are equitable, inclusive, and diverse, featuring high social trust, strong communal meaning, and active volunteerism.
- ♦ **Public goods** – Public goods (health care, education, recreation, and the environment) and the systems, which sustain them, feature quality, choice, and accessibility.
- ♦ **Natural and cultural heritage** – Albertans preserve and protect their natural environments and cultural assets.

A Value-added Economy

A value-added economy is the second theme of a “re-creating society.” Such an economy functions under very different assumptions than an industrial economy, focussed on extraction of resources and production of commodities. A value-added economy pursues economic growth by adding value to basic products and services. A

value-added economy is knowledge based; accordingly central resources are human resources, not natural resources.

In the envisioned value-added economy:

- ◆ **Maximum value is extracted from Alberta's resources** – Scarce resources will be allocated to high-value processing and manufacturing.
- ◆ **Human resources are seen as capital** – Enhancement of knowledge/skills and health/wellness represents an investment in human capital.
- ◆ **Quality of life shapes investment decisions** – Economic development policy recognizes that companies locate where quality of life attracts creative, knowledgeable and skilled human resources.

Investing in Re-Creating

Investing in re-creating is the final theme of the vision of a “re-creating society.” Such a society views public expenditure from a very different perspective than that which has prevailed over the last decade. Throughout the 1990s public expenditure has been viewed largely from the perspective of affordability. Over-dominance of this perspective has contributed to the depreciation of capital assets such as transportation infrastructure and public facilities. The value of environmental resources and recreational and cultural assets has similarly been degraded. As well, debt retirement has taken precedence over increasing the levels of income support programs. This priority has continued despite the reality pointed out by Dr. Predy at the Vision 2015 Symposium, that income is a key determinant of health.

In the envisioned “re-creating society”:

- ◆ **Expenditure on human development is viewed as investment** – The value of society's human capital is enhanced.
- ◆ **The paradigm of sustainable development is applied to natural environment and cultural assets** – The value of these scarce resources appreciates.

- ♦ **Community development focuses on development of sustainable communities** – The social capital of Alberta's communities is enhanced.
- ♦ **Cultural, recreational and natural resource programs/services are valued for their important contribution to quality of life** – Quality of life in Alberta is enhanced.
- ♦ **Funding of the quality of life sector is viewed as investment** – Public expenditure on the physical and organizational infrastructure of the quality of life sector is an investment not a subsidy.
- ♦ **The quality of life sector is recognized as a robust, economic engine of the economy** – The value of goods and services, such as mountain bikes and personal training, as well as the indirect benefits of the sector, such as enhanced population health and wellness, are acknowledged by public policy makers.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- *Is the vision compelling? Why, or why not?*
- *Is the vision realistic? Why, or why not?*
- *How relevant is the vision to the quality of life sector?*

CHART III: SUMMARY OF A RE-CREATING SOCIETY

STEWARDSHIP OF ALL RESOURCES

- Human capital
- Social capital
- Public goods
- Natural and cultural heritage

VALUE ADDED ECONOMY

- Maximum value from Alberta's resources
- Human resources are capital
- Quality of life shapes investment decisions

INVESTING IN RE-CREATING

- Investment in human development
- Sustainable communities
- Sustainable development
- Quality of life is an economic force

PART IV: TOWARDS REALIZING THE VISION

“Creative capital is even more important to regional growth than human capital or high tech industry, since both of these things are shaped by it. There is much to gain economically from being an open, inclusive, and diverse community.”

Creative work is largely intellectual and sedentary; this Creative Class people seek to recharge through physical activity. If you spend your work day in front of a computer screen or an artist’s canvas, you probably are not eager to spend your leisure in front of a TV screen. You are much more likely to want to get out and be active.”

The Rise of the Creative Class: And how it’s transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life.

Richard Florida

MOVING AHEAD

Taking Action

To this point, discussion in this paper has been somewhat abstract. Envisioning the future and articulating values are important exercises. However, practically speaking, they need to lead directly to concrete steps. More specifically, for this discussion paper to be worthwhile it needs to answer two key questions:

- What can the quality of life sector do as a community given the content of this paper?
- What can individual members of the quality of life sector do given the contents of this paper?

The Core Businesses

To begin realization of the vision of a “re-creating society,” the quality of life sector needs to pursue two core businesses. These businesses can be pursued at the sector or at the individual level. These businesses are:

- ♦ **Leadership and advocacy** – Under this core business, member organizations within the quality of life sector will lead through advocacy in support of the vision and values outlined in this discussion paper and influence the political will.
- ♦ **Collaboration and partnership** – Under this core business, member organizations within the quality of life sector will develop collaborative relationships and working partnerships.

Pursuit of these two businesses may require direct delivery of services or it may mean arranging for partners to deliver services.

Responses From the Sector

At the sector level, the quality of life community needs to determine how best to pursue these two businesses and

the agenda for change outlined in this paper. In this regard specific actions could focus on the following:

- ◆ **Development of a new identity for the sector.** Such an identity would subsume professional and programmatic identities related to recreation, sport, libraries, the arts, parks, etc. Integration of these different professional or programmatic identities would hopefully culminate in a new synthesis centred on the quality of life.
- ◆ **Building awareness of the economic importance of the sector.** In the industrial economy policy fields such as housing, transportation, income support, basic education, and health care provided the foundation for economic growth. In the post-industrial economy the quality of life sector will be a major determinant of economic growth. Carrying that message is an important role for the sector.
- ◆ **Development of new partnerships.** Pursuit of new paradigms demands development of new partnerships. Such partnerships may be cross-sectoral, i.e. across the public, private, and voluntary sectors. They may be across portfolio boundaries, e.g. recreation and wellness. They may also be multilevel, ranging from neighbourhoods to government ministries.

Responses from Individual Practitioners

At the individual practitioner level, each member of the quality of life sector has the capacity to push this paper's change agenda "from the bottom up." The components of the vision, i.e. stewardship of all resources, a value-added economy, and investment in re-creating society provide an overall direction for charting such a change agenda. The values, beliefs, and principles outlined earlier provide a further framework to guide the action of individual practitioners.

The following are some potential outcomes to which individual practitioners could dedicate themselves at the level of their local communities:

- ◆ **Individual and family well-being; generative growth and development and life-long learning.** Pursuit of this outcome could involve a wide variety of activities ranging from delivery of play programs for young children to active

living programs for seniors. The key aspect of this consideration lies in demonstrably making the connection between the well being of individuals and families on the one hand and services provided by the quality of life sector on the other. Another pursuit would be towards building community-wide commitment to lifelong learning.

- ◆ **Community vitality, cultural diversity, and civic/provincial pride.** Pursuit of this outcome could also involve a wide range of activities. Services that reach out to individuals or groups who are disadvantaged or at the risk of exclusion clearly contribute to this outcome. Mentorship or coaching programs that link the citizens of today (adults) with the citizens of tomorrow (children) also contribute to this outcome. A key consideration in all of this is recognizing that communities are where the action is!

- ◆ **Citizenship, volunteers, and leadership development.** Pursuit of this outcome could potentially include delivery of leadership programs at the local level, recognition programs for outstanding volunteerism, and awards for outstanding corporate citizens.

- ◆ **Natural resource/environmental protection and community beautification.** Activities which support realization of this outcome could include environmental education, recycling initiatives, and partnerships in flower and tree planting. Support for formation of neighbourhood associations concerned with these issues is another option.

- ◆ **Creativity, economic growth, and sustainability.** The realities of regional economic development laid out in Richard Florida's *"The Rise of the Creative Class"* provide a powerful rationale for propagation of the values and services of the quality of life sector. Educating community stakeholders about the relationships between diversity, creativity, and economic development could prove to be a highly effective endeavour.

Continuing the Dialogue

Whether acting alone at the local level or as part of a larger community, individual practitioners, within the quality of life sector enjoy multiple opportunities to continue the dialogue

which began at the Vision 2015 Symposium in May 2002. Hopefully this discussion paper has provided both a framework to catalyze that continuing dialogue and a “roadmap” for immediate implementation of some of its core ideas.