

Building on success in Mississauga, Ontario

Hazel McCallion

Currently in her tenth term as Mayor, Hazel McCallion is the longest serving mayor in the City of Mississauga's history with over 25 years in office. Presently, she sits on many boards, panels and committees. She was also Chair of the Central Ontario Smart Growth Panel, a panel which advised the Provincial Government on how to plan for growth in Central Ontario. She has been honored with numerous awards and distinctions including World Mayor 2004 finalist. The University of Toronto at Mississauga has also named the Hazel McCallion Academic Learning Centre in her honor. In 2005, she was appointed Member of the Order of Canada and was runner-up for World Mayor 2005. In 2006, Mayor McCallion was recognized as the CNW Group Communicator of the Year by the Toronto Chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC). The text that follows is an edited version of a paper presented by the author at the Natural City conference – "Success Stories" – organized by the Centre for Environment, University of Toronto from 31 May to 2 June, 2006.

Introduction

Communities are an organic entity, constantly changing and evolving. It is important that this change is positive and increases the overall health of the community. In Mississauga (fig. 1) we are working hard to make our city healthy, active and vibrant. To do this takes looking at the issues and challenges from a different perspective and making innovative choices.

The Healthy Cities Stewardship Centre

In 2002, Mississauga, along with public and private partners, established the Healthy Cities Stewardship Centre. While Mississauga is overall a healthy city, there are growing trends such as obesity, poverty, etc., that cause concern for the future well-being of our city. The Healthy Cities Stewardship Centre's unique partnership will help to focus both public and private action to address these concerns and ultimately benefit the entire city.

The City of Mississauga has partnered with the following organizations (in alphabetical order):

- AstraZeneca;
- Credit Valley Hospital;
- Dixie-Bloor Neighbourhood Centre;
- Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board;
- Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee;
- Peel District School Board;
- Peel Regional Police;
- Peter Fonseca, MPP Mississauga East and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion;
- Region of Peel, Trillium Health Centre;
- United Way of Peel Region; and,
- University of Toronto at Mississauga.

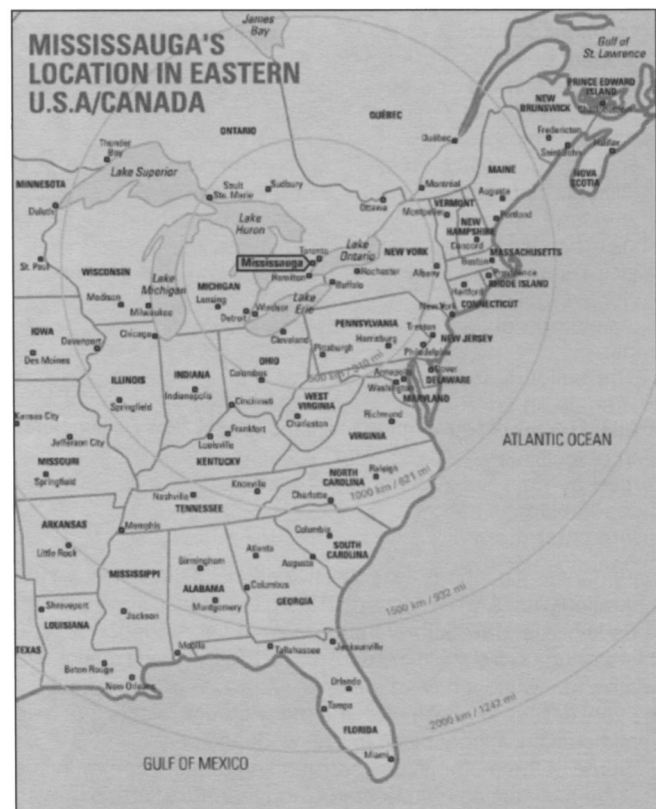


Fig. 1: The city of Mississauga within North America.

The Healthy Mississauga 2010 Plan

These 13 organizations have agreed to work together on local health issues and together have developed the *Healthy Mississauga 2010 Plan*. In developing this plan, the member organizations established a vision: "Mississauga will be a Healthy City of people with optimal physical, mental and spiritual health." Five goals of the 2010 Plan were established as follows:

- All people in Mississauga will value and strive for optimal health;
- All people in Mississauga will feel safe in their communities;
- All people in Mississauga will have equal access to information and services;
- All people in Mississauga will live in and contribute to a clean and sustainable environment;
- All people in Mississauga will feel part of a larger community and will know that they will be cared for in times of need.

All of the work undertaken in the future, no matter how small, is

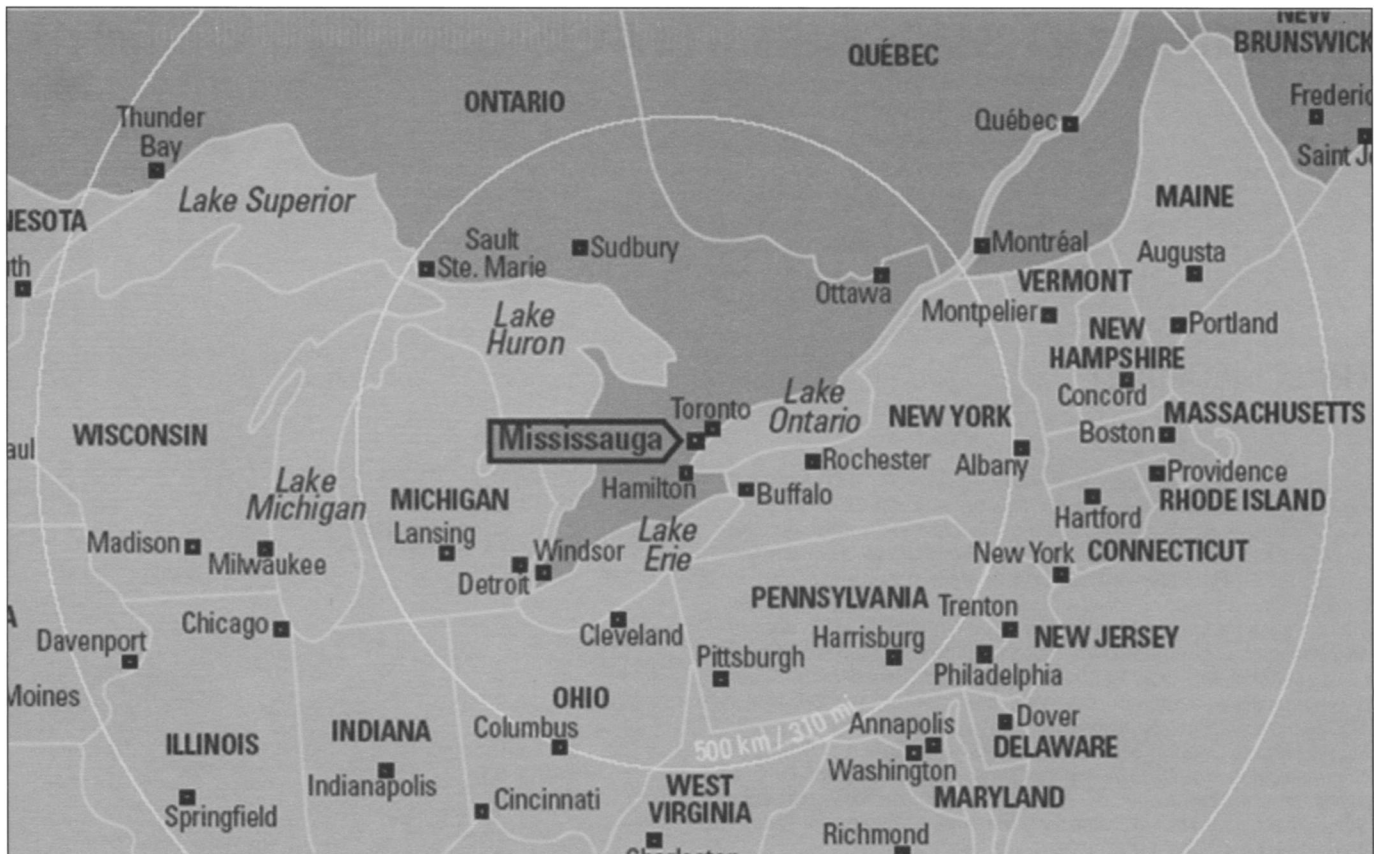


Fig. 2: The city of Mississauga within the Great Lakes Region bordering Canada and America.

important as it supports the collective efforts of the vision. At the operational level, we work hard to keep our great City healthy on a daily basis, particularly in the area of fiscal responsibility. Mississauga is a city with no debt and a Triple A credit rating. We realize that without having our financial house in order, it would be very difficult to accomplish the many other projects that help make our City a great place to live, work and play.

Some of the major issues surrounding healthy communities include maintaining natural areas, and managing urban growth and transportation (figs. 2 and 3).

● **Natural areas:** In total, 6 percent of Mississauga's land consists of natural areas, which are one of the City's greatest treasures. Careful management is needed for these fragile areas, as they affect the quality of life of residents and visitors alike. Through partnerships and community stewardship, these natural areas can be preserved for future generations. Every year we update our Natural Areas Survey, which helps to define and protect our natural areas within the Official Plan.

Each year approximately 2,300 volunteers commit over 7,000 hours in maintaining Mississauga's natural areas. The City facilitates 40-45 community events involving naturalization each year. Annually, over 3,000 trees are planted. We have also begun to partner with private properties to assist them in naturalization. As well, the opening of Riverwood Park in the heart of Mississauga is an excellent example of stewardship and preservation. These initiatives and the important relationships established with companies, communities, service clubs and stewardship groups have allowed Mississauga to protect and enhance our natural environment.

● **Urban growth and development:** While Mississauga is traditionally known as a suburb, it has recently been identified as an Urban Growth Centre in the Province of Ontario's Growth Plan. As a result, we have identified the City Centre as a place of redevelopment and infill. In fact, in the past three years the City Centre has seen the largest share of residential development in the City.

In the next five years, 9,000 apartments, 15,000 jobs, and more than 20,000 residents will call City Centre home. Indeed the City will meet and exceed the provincial targets as an Urban Centre.

In light of this urban growth, we recognize that our downtown needs to be more than buildings. In response to this challenge, we took the time and consulted with residents, community groups and professionals on what could make our downtown area a vibrant one. We called this exercise "Placemaking."

Our inaugural season created out of our Placemaking exercise will be very exciting. Community activities have been incorporated into the fabric of everyday life in our downtown areas. We have moved the Lion's Club Farmers Market closer to the City Centre. We are planning outdoor concerts featuring bands that appeal to today's youth as well as Carassauga Marketplace, which features crafts and foods from the many cultural groups that make up Mississauga. Family activities include storytime, children's entertainment, children's crafts. In our Civic Square we will be hosting live entertainers, the Rotary Club's 4th Annual Ribfest along with sports activities, a concert series and much more. Our goal is to have a vibrant downtown and to grow upon these exciting initiatives. Once again our partners and local communities groups make this all possible. We cannot do it alone.

