

## Why a Learning City?

The global urbanization process has clear parallels in Canada. Whereas almost 80% of Canada's population a century ago was living in rural settings; today 80% of Canadians live in cities. The growth of cities – spurred chiefly by economic, technological and social/cultural drivers – has generated profound issues everywhere. In the western world, many movements have recently arisen to meet specific, as well as general, challenges to cities. Hence, an array of movements has developed dedicated to such objectives as “safe cities,” “healthy cities,” “inclusive cities,” “educating cities,” “vibrant cities” and “creative cities.” In the midst of such a cornucopia of perspectives, a global movement of “learning cities” has grown. A recent research study estimated that there were almost 300 learning cities and towns distributed around the world in which lifelong learning is explicitly used as an organizing principle and social/cultural goal to foster safer, healthier, more inclusive, better educated and creative cities.<sup>1</sup>

- Why Learning?

Learning – the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values – is an innate human activity that is based on the universal desire of human beings to make sense and gain meaning of their surroundings. The spur is curiosity – seeking answers to questions such as what is on the other side of the hill, how does a gadget work – or how could it work better, and why the world is as it is? Learning is essentially a complex multi-dimensional social process – most of the learning we acquire is with and from others. Throughout our lifespan, our learning is embedded in the expanding settings of our life course - from the home, the community, the school to the workplace and the wider world. Our learning results in changed behaviour or attitudes of both ourselves as individuals and of the groups within which we function. Learning is often therefore measurable and demonstrable. It is also an historical process through which successive generations have contributed to the gradual accumulation and transfer of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of our species.

Learning occurs in every community, but the explicit use of the concept of lifelong learning as an organizing principle and social/cultural goal that informs the analysis, planning and implementation of sectoral and cross-sectoral partnerships and collaborative strategies is the essential and distinguishing feature of a learning community.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Candy, J., 2005, Town Planning for Learning Towns, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Flinders University, Adelaide.

<sup>2</sup> Candy, J., 2005, Town Planning for Learning Towns, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Flinders University, Adelaide.



Learning Communities: Suffusing Learning into Sectoral Policy and Practice and Mobilizing Learning Resources in a Knowledge-based Economy and Society.