

# BIG IDEAS

What happens when 300 Mississauga residents gather in a room?  
The birth of five “Big Ideas” to help shape the future of our city.

Words by Carol Kotacka

Every city has its challenge and ours is no different. Increasing poverty, unemployment, questions on environmental sustainability - these are all issues requiring creative, collaborative solutions. At the same time, we face an equal amount of opportunity - are we making the most of our natural assets?

The Mississauga Summit is a volunteer organization designed to bring together people from all backgrounds and ask these questions - consult with all interested parties on a common vision for Mississauga and strategize on key “Big Ideas” to address the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities facing our city.

On October 25th the Mississauga Summit will launch these ideas to the community.

Shelley White, Summit Co-Chair and CEO and President of the United Way of Peel Region is looking forward to the launch. “I am ecstatic about the Mississauga Summit that is taking place on October 25th. On that day, we will be announcing the 5 BIG IDEAS that task forces have been working on for the past two years. The ideas are bold. They are strategic. They have been developed by a cross section of people who live and work in Mississauga. They will have a positive impact on Mississauga’s future.”

The best ideas start with a conversation and it was no different when it came to the Summit. A conversation began between Mayor Hazel McCallion, Shelley White and Brian Crombie, a local business consultant. The discussion evolved into creating a volunteer organization dedicated exclusively to engaging residents, business owners and stakeholders in brainstorming critical issues facing the city. Thus the Mississauga Summit was born.

The Summit now brings together over 300 leaders from the corporate, non-profit, government, education and labour sectors to consider a vision of what Mississauga could and should be. The value is in the diversity of the participants. The conversations bring together intelligence and experience from all walks of life and gives equal voice to all.

175 active volunteers, five different task forces, 14 months of work and research allowed each task force

strategize and come to consensus on one “Big Idea” with the potential to create historical change.

## THE BIG IDEAS ARE FOCUSED ON FIVE MAJOR AREAS:

### 1. Post-Secondary Education:

- **Issue:** Canada awards 30% fewer doctoral degrees and 50% fewer Masters degrees per capita than the USA. Research and innovation is critical to participating in the global market place. Countries around the world are investing in talent through advanced education in order to remain competitive. Mississauga must do the same.
- **Big Idea: “Mississauga Innovation Network”**  
- a network designed to bring together industry, community and education to develop a post secondary offering that teaches innovation and ensures students are ready for the jobs of tomorrow. This network will also establish Mississauga’s global position as the “home of innovation.”

“Our students appreciate the educational relevance offered by experiential learning. Well beyond job knowledge, experiential learning helps young people develop skills in communications and human relations, and insight into various work environments. The Mississauga Innovation Network will promote a culture that embraces experiential learning as a two-way process - providing opportunities for companies and agencies to attract relevant talent with bright ideas, energy and a strong work ethic; and providing opportunities for trainees that encourage them to strive to be at their most productive and innovative as contributors and team members.”

### Professor Ulrich Krull,

Department of Chemical and Physical Sciences,  
Vice-Principal, Research  
AstraZeneca Chair in Biotechnology  
University of Toronto Mississauga



## 2. Lack of Social and Community Health Services:

- **Issue:** Social and community health funding has not kept pace with our rapid population growth. This lack of services is directly affecting our quality of life. Issues like poverty are becoming a major concern. Mississauga's child poverty rate is currently at 21% - higher than both provincial and national averages.
- **Big Idea: "Neighbourhood Development Task Force"** - a community task force designed to strengthen our city - one neighbourhood at a time. By systematically building on neighbourhood assets and channelling supports where necessary, opportunities for economic prosperity and civic participation will be increased in all communities.

**Brian Crombie**, Summit Co-Chair, is excited by the potential of the neighbourhood work. "Community engagement, leadership and helpful neighbours are the keys to successful at risk neighbourhood renewal, according to the case studies from across North America we were presented. People want to be involved in the decisions of what their communities need, not to have well intentioned agency or government bureaucrats tell them they need. They need a leader, a champion, someone with vision to rally support and engagement. And finally, it's fascinating that so many of the successful renewals were dependent on neighbouring communities, faith groups, resident organizations or social clubs to execute their renewals. Neighbours brought advice, manpower, money and most importantly support. Our conclusion, it's up to all of us to improve our City's neighbourhoods that are currently experiencing the greatest challenges."

## 3. Ensuring Mississauga is a Centre of Excellence for Diversity and Immigration:

- **Issue:** Our residents come from many different backgrounds and cultures. Unfortunately system inequities across the city present barriers for a large percentage of our residents. Unemployment rates for persons with disabilities and a 51% poverty rate among newcomers identified as a visible minority are just two issues that must be addressed.
- **Big Idea: "Mississauga Council for Diversity and Inclusion":** designed to ensure our city capitalizes on the potential of its global citizens and establish Mississauga as an international example of lived diversity and inclusion. This Council will be the "place to go to" for the

development and implementation of diversity policies, procedures and systems.

**Ram Dhanjal** is new to the Summit. The work of this task force intrigued her so much that she is the new volunteer Co-Chair of the implementation committee. "Studies have shown that diversity has an economic dimension that contributes to overall prosperity. Mississauga is a very diverse city along several dimensions (ethnicity, economic, political etc). One of the goals of the COE is to facilitate integration and inclusion by providing opportunities for its residents to participate/contribute to their full potential so we can all benefit from the diversity dividend."

## 4. Waterfront Development and Sustainability:

- **Issue:** Our waterfront and Credit River Valley are the city's hidden gems. Most residents aren't fully aware of the vastness, beauty and opportunity that our waterfront and river valley offers.
- **Big Idea: "Mississauga Waterfront Development Corporation"** - charged with ensuring our city has a waterfront that is a vibrant place for families, business and tourists to enjoy as well as contributing to the environmental, economic, social and physical wellbeing of all residents.

## 5. Mississauga Works:

- **The issue:** In this last recession, the people of Mississauga were particularly hard hit by the economic downturn. Unemployment rates soared from 6.6 percent in 2008 to 10.8 percent - higher than the GTA, the province and the country as a whole. Youth, newcomers and middle career transitioning workers are disproportionately affected.
- **Big Ideas:**
  - **Mayor's Youth Summer Job Challenge** - Mayor McCallion challenges all organizations to hire two more people.
  - **Business Accelerator** - a hub to support and nurture entrepreneurs.
  - Collaborate with all sectors to develop concrete strategies to support mid-career transitioning workers and newcomers in finding employment.

On October 25th, the Summit will launch these big ideas to the community and present concrete action plans to make each a reality. The vision, ideas and hard work of each volunteer will be realized—and the potential of communitywide brainstorming has just begun to be explored.