



**Metropolitan Action Committee on
Violence Against Women and Children**

Safety Audit Report Card

Date: Thursday April 24, 2008, 5:30-6:45pm

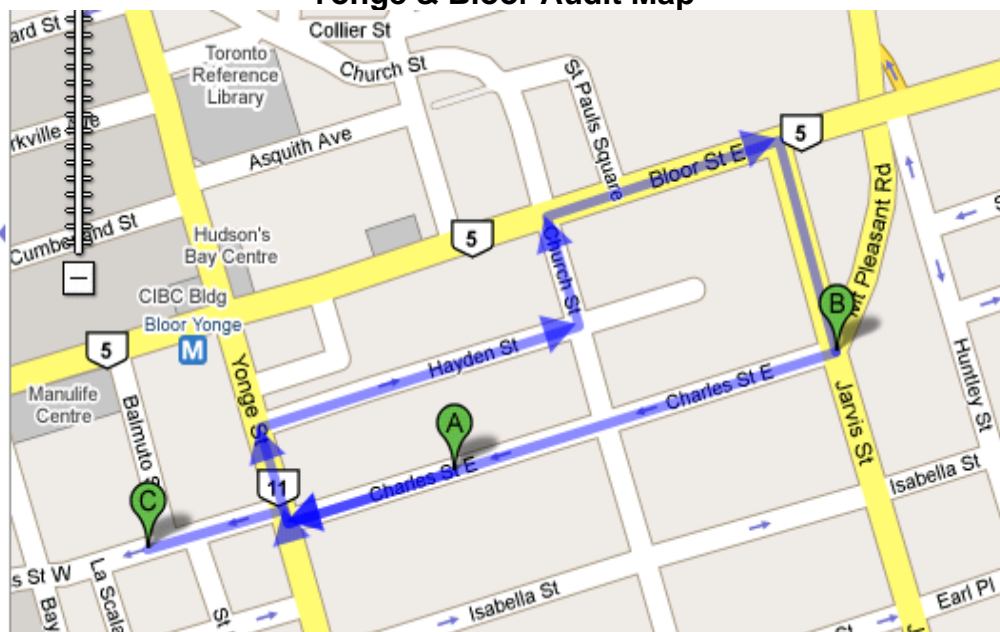
Area Audited: Yonge and Bloor – Ward 27

A.OVERVIEW OF SAFETY AUDIT RESULTS – Physical Environment

METRAC's Safety Audit looks at how social and physical environments can make an area safe or unsafe. METRAC defines safety as *'freedom from the threat, fear, and experience of all kinds of violence, oppression, and discrimination.'* The physical environment includes lighting, signs, sightlines and the isolation of an area. These features are so common that people usually don't notice them. But the design of streets, parks, and buildings can impact how safe people feel in their neighbourhoods. Small changes in the physical environment can increase peoples' sense of safety.

Suree Roschan, a Newcomer Youth Specialist, organized a group from the YMCA of Greater Toronto Newcomer Youth Leadership Development Program to conduct a safety audit of the Yonge and Bloor area. Approximately 35 people participated in the safety audit walkabout on the 24th of April 2008 from 5:30 to 6:45pm. The group consisted of a group of newcomer youth, ages 14-20, as well as three YMCA youth workers and two METRAC representatives. Suree organized and led the audit. It is important to note that due to the nature of the group, this audit was conducted in daylight. All comments on lighting are based on participant's experience in the area at night and observations of physical items such as number of light posts in any given area.

Yonge & Bloor Audit Map



Residents in the Yonge and Bloor area come from a myriad of different backgrounds, and span the entire spectrum of the socio-economic scale. There are a large number of rental accommodations in this neighborhood. This reflects the mobility of the population, which is comprised mostly of singles and young couples. This is a mixed use neighborhood, as some of the retail shops are very upscale and some are very low-end (i.e. Holt Renfrew/Yorkville and Dollarama/McDonald's). This highly populated area serves not only those looking to find a bargain at the many retailers in the area, but also acts as a major meeting point in the heart of the city.

The average rating for each area of the audit is in the table below. The Yonge and Bloor area was generally seen as satisfactory in terms of safety; however there were several areas in urgent need of improvement.

1. Poor	2. Substandard	3. Ok	4. Good	5. Very good
---------	----------------	-------	---------	--------------

Safety Audit Report Card	Scale			
OVERVIEW – overall sense of safety in the area.			3.1	
LIGHTING – the ability to see and be seen clearly.		2.6		
SIGNS AND MAPS - knowing where you are reduces fear of being attacked or getting lost.		2.6		
ISOLATION - people tend to feel safer when others are around.			3.2	
SIGHTLINES - clear views ahead and all around, not blocked by bushes, walls or fences.			3.2	
MAINTENANCE - dirty and untidy areas make people feel no one cares and no one will come if they need help.		2.4		
ACCESSIBILITY - it is easy to move around the area.			4.2	
SECURITY – presence of security systems in place that work and security staff treat everyone the same way.		2.3		

There were several areas for safety enhancements with regards to physical features, which are:

- a) George Hislop Park
- b) Layout of streets/ Competing interests of Cars and Pedestrians
- c) Abundance of Construction in Area
- d) Roy Square

George Hislop Park (20 Isabella Street)

- Mainly used as a pass through for local residents, no designated usage/activities in park
- Physically limited space, substandard lighting, no activities for children

- No clear distinction of property lines, visitors of The Sanctuary merge into parkette

Physical Layout of Streets/Competing Interest of Cars and Pedestrians

- Streets are too narrow to accommodate shared space for people, cars and cyclists
- Parking on one side of street only with lighting on opposite side limits view
- Overall condition of sidewalks along Hayden and Isabella substandard and dangerous

Abundance of Construction in Area

- YMCA of Greater Toronto at 42 Charles Street is surrounded by construction on all sides
- Individuals must walk on street, around construction vehicles to get around in area
- Excessive noise limits peoples' ability to judge what is around them and limits their enjoyment of the space

Roy Square

- Isolated access point into Yonge-Bloor subway station
- Closed in space off the beaten path, in area that is deserted due to construction (all business in area are no longer operational)
- Space offers no escape routes for individuals; subway is token/metropass access only
- Lack of clear signage indicating where to go (both inside and outside of the building)
- No security guards patrolling the location

B. OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT SURVEY

As the second component of the safety audit, participants filled out the Social Environment Survey. Here are the results:

Incidents of discrimination and harassment have occurred in the area - on the streets, in parks, at school and in local stores. They are targeted towards newcomers with accents, people of colour, and those of particular religious and/or immigration status.

While **100%** of participants have witnessed or heard about incidents of violence and or harassment in this community, **67%** of participants disclosed personal experiences of discrimination and or harassment. These statistics demonstrate the fear and isolation that is experienced by the youth who are regular users of the Yonge and Bloor area. This lack of community also prevents them from discussing their commonly experienced safety issues. It also highlights the overwhelming number of incidents that are occurring in this particular area.

The acts of discrimination/harassment were in the following forms: glances/staring, verbal comments, physical assault or injury and being discriminated against in a job, housing or services. The most common form of harassment reported was glances and stares.

Of those who told of their personal experience of harassment/discrimination, **100%** told both family/friends. Many of the youth indicated that they would never report an incident to the police and would only tell a teacher or community worker if the incident was very

serious. This is a concern because it demonstrates the lack of trust that the youth have towards both the police and other authority figures and puts them at greater risk for future violence.

Participants identified a number of key services that they felt were lacking in the Yonge and Bloor area. They included health care centres, youth services, libraries, and services in other languages. While there are services that do exist in the area (please see list of community contacts page nine) it is important to note that the youth who participated in the walkabout were not aware that they existed. The participants noted that there are very few activities for youth in the area, aside from retail stores and that many only attend programs at the YMCA of Greater Toronto and travel back to their area of residence. There are few open spaces in the area and use of the green space is limited due to construction in the area.

The place that the majority of participants felt uncomfortable entering was local shops and businesses as well as George Hislop Park. While on the walkabout, the group observed many people loitering in the park and were approached by a man who questioned what the group was doing. This act of perceived intimidation was noted by the group in the discussion and contributes to their overall fear and concern for personal safety in the area.

C. KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Comments from participants:

- *I would not report discrimination or harassment to the police EVER.*
- *I would only report discrimination/harassment to a community worker or teacher if it was very serious.*
- *Some people were drinking and it is dangerous for other people.*

In public spaces, the safety needs of different groups sometimes overlap and can seem to conflict. For example, youth using a park next to a community centre see it as a safe place to hang out. But homeowners may think the park is unsafe because the youth go there. Dog owners may see the park as a safe area where their pets can run free and get exercise. Parents with young children might not want to go to the park because of potential dog poop and the fear that their kids might get bitten.

But it is important to examine these different safety concerns and see where they are coming from. It's important to remember that all the groups using the park are a part of the neighbourhood and should feel free and safe to use the space. The Safety Audit is a tool that can help people communicate amongst their differences to come to a common place of understanding where everybody's voices are heard and everybody feels safe. A space should not be made 'safer' for some at the expense of others, and safety for the most vulnerable, marginalized people is just as important as safety for the more powerful people.

Concerns identified for both the physical and social environment in the area have impacted people's feeling of safety in the overall area. The physical layout and overall maintenance

of the area, combined with the presence of people both on the streets and in the park, has increased people's feeling of isolation.

Experiences of racism and discrimination were commonplace for newcomers and those of perceived "different" religious and immigration status.

Possible means to address these issues include:

- Contacting social service agencies in the area to discuss possible resolutions;
 - The Sanctuary
 - Church of the Redeemer
 - LOFT Community Services
 - Covenant House
- 24 hour social services in the immediate area;
- Homeless drop-in with food (coffee, snack packs, vitamins, etc.), basic items (tampons, toothpaste, etc.), showers, laundry, clothing;
 - Sherbourne Health Centre
 - Covenant House
- Harm Reduction services need extended hours;
 - Street Health Community Nursing
- Education/sensitivity training for police

It is important to note that there is a "Green P" Parking structure in the area that is both a positive addition to a troubled area and also a cause for concern for its residents. The Green P parking structure was noted by the participants as a possible entrapment site. However, upon speaking with the attendant, participants discovered that it is staffed 24 hours a day with a booth attendant, multiple cameras and patrol officers. This was noted to be a benefit to the community as it acts as a safe space where an individual could go in case of emergency.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for enhancing the safety features of the Yonge and Bloor Area based on the safety audit results include the top 4 priority concerns expressed by the participants:

TOP SAFETY CONCERNS	IDEAS FOR CHANGE/ACTION	FOLLOW-UP
<p>Priority 1: George Hislop Park</p> <p>a) Physical Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No designated purpose or activities in park (limited lighting/benches or play equipment) <p>b) Social Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of people loitering/congregating in the park Evidence of drinking and smoking observed on walkabout 	<p>Increase lighting/benches and create area for children to play</p> <p>Contact The Sanctuary to discuss types of services offered and to inquire about possible ways to work collaboratively around common concerns</p> <p>Increase types of recreation services to serve a broad range of individuals in the area</p>	<p>City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Phone: (416) 392-8565 Email: parks@toronto.ca Service Improvement and Co-ordination Manager Diane Stevenson. (416) 392-0098</p> <p>Contact Social Services in the area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> YMCA of Greater Toronto The Sanctuary Church of the Redeemer Street Health Community Nursing
<p>Priority 2: Physical layout of roads and sidewalks/ Competing Interest of Cars and Pedestrians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streets are too narrow to accommodate cars, bikes and people Cars parked on one side of street block view/ability to identify objects from a distance Lighting on one side of Charles, Hayden and Isabella Streets 	<p>Create bike lane to discourage cyclists from riding on sidewalks</p> <p>Investigate options for addressing parking issue</p> <p>Increase lighting in area</p>	<p>City of Toronto Transportation Services Phone: (416) 338-9999 Website: www.toronto.ca/transportation City of Toronto Parking Enforcement Phone: (416) 808-6600 Website: www.toronto.ca/transportation</p> <p>Toronto Hydro at 416-542-3195</p>

TOP SAFETY CONCERNS	IDEAS FOR CHANGE/ACTION	FOLLOW-UP
<p>Priority 3: Abundance of Construction in Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People must walk on road around construction vehicles • Noise limits ability to hear what is going on around • Limited to no security at multiple sites 	<p>Contact Bloor Yorkville BIA to express concerns over personal safety due to excessive construction</p> <p>Attempt to brainstorm ways community can get involved in redevelopment of area</p> <p>Contact developers and inform them of safety concerns due to redevelopment Inquire about security policies and procedures</p> <p>Contact City Councilor to discuss overall changes to the Yonge and Bloor area</p>	<p>Bloor-Yorkville BIA Phone: (416) 928-3553 Fax: (416) 928-2034 Email: bybia@bloor-yorkville.com</p> <p>Bazis International Phone: (905) 532-0435 Email: info@bazisinternational.com</p> <p>City Councillor Name: Kyle Rae (Ward 27) Phone: 416-392-7903 Fax: 416-696-4300 Email: councillor_rae@toronto.ca</p>
<p>Priority 4: Roy Square</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides access to Subway • Isolated area with limited activity • Physically closed in space with limited escape routes (Metropass and Token access only) 	<p>Increase security in area, especially early morning and after dark</p> <p>Display sign indicating Metropass and token access only</p> <p>Install intercom security system/panic button to connect to TTC collector booth in emergency</p> <p>Contact Bazis International developer regarding planned use of Roy Square</p>	<p>Toronto Transit Commission Phone: (416) 393-3030 Website: www.toronto.ca/ttc</p> <p>Bazis International Phone: (905) 532-0435 Email: info@bazisinternational.com</p>

CONTACT INFORMATION

Appendix A lists other contact information for city repairs.

1. City Contacts

City Councillor Name: Kyle Rae (Ward 27)

Address: 100 Queen Street West, Suite A5 Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Phone: 416-392-7903

Fax: 416-696-4300

Email: councillor_rae@toronto.ca

Toronto Police Services 52 Division

Address: 255 Dundas Street West Toronto ON

Phone: 416-808-5200

Fax: 416-808-5202

Email: 52division@torontopolice.on.ca

Community Relations Officer: Constable Michael Moffatt (416) 808-5291

City of Toronto Parks and Recreation

Address: 8th Floor 100 Queen St. W. Toronto ON M5H 2N2

Phone: (416) 392-8565

Email: parks@toronto.ca

Service Improvement and Co-ordination Manager

Diane Stevenson. (416) 392-0098

Parks Supervisor (Ward 20 & 27)

Mark Emslie (416) 392-1759

Toronto Transit Commission

Address: 1900 Yonge Street Toronto ON M4S 1Z2

Phone: (416) 393-3030

Website: www.toronto.ca/ttc

Special Constable Services (416) 393-3111

TTC Main Info Line (416) 393-INFO

TTC Chair Adam Giambrone chair@ttc.ca

City of Toronto Transportation Services

Phone: (416) 338-9999

Website: www.toronto.ca/transportation

If you see a traffic signal light that does not work, an unsafe road condition or anything that needs immediate attention.

City of Toronto Parking Enforcement

Phone: (416) 808-6600

Website: www.toronto.ca/transportation/parking

2. Local Community Services

YMCA of Greater Toronto

42 Charles Street E Toronto, ON M4Y 1T4

Phone (416) 413-1020 ext. 4074

Email memberservices@ymcagta.org

YMCA of Greater Toronto offers health and social services for all members of the community. Through employment programs, counseling and youth services, the goal of the YMCA is to connect people, connect with youth and connect with our community. We aim to foster an inclusive society that welcomes everyone – regardless of background, circumstances, or abilities. Programs include: YMCA Child Care, YMCA Health, Fitness and Recreation, YMCA Employment Services, YMCA Newcomer Services, and YMCA Volunteer.

The Sanctuary

25 Charles Street E Toronto ON

Phone: (416) 922-0628

Sanctuary is a Christian charitable organization that seeks to establish and develop Holistic, inclusive and healthy community. We welcome people who have, for the most part, known only rejection and abuse. Our core community includes people who are homeless, squeegee kids, university students and hardened street people. Sharing our lives and our resources, we reach out to a downtown neighborhood plagued with homelessness, drugs, prostitution, unemployment and AIDS. We offer dignity, support and direction to people who want to reclaim healthy, meaningful lives. Through drop-ins, street outreach and one-to-one relationships, we offer food, clothing and basic health care. Our staff helps individual family members access welfare, housing, legal counsel, medical care, counseling, therapy or drug rehabilitation.

Church of the Redeemer

Address: 162 Bloor Street West Toronto ON M5S 1M4

Phone: (416) 922-4948

In the early 1990's, the Church secretary provided sandwiches for street guests who came to the Church looking for a bite to eat. By the mid-1990's, the Outreach committee developed a lunch program to help feed the downtown poor who live in our neighborhood. A nurse provides a basic health care clinic two days per week. Haircuts are also offered, and referrals are arranged to agencies (detox, mental health etc.) around the city. A part-time outreach worker helps to keep the volunteers coordinated, the meals served and the guests welcomed.

LOFT Community Services

Address: 205 Richmond Street W. Toronto ON M5V 1V3

Phone: (416) 979-1994

Fax: (416) 979-3028

Email: info@loftcs.org
Website: www.loftcs.org

LOFT (Leap of Faith, Together) is a Community Service organization which offers permanent housing, community outreach and supportive housing services to nearly 4,000 vulnerable and homeless people at over 60 sites in the Greater Toronto area and York Region. We accept people on their own terms, providing the necessary resources to support them as they recover their health, dignity, and self-esteem.

Central Toronto Youth Services

65 Wellesley Street E. Toronto ON M4Y 1G7
Phone: (416) 924-2100
Fax: (416) 924-2930
Email: mail@ctys.org
Website: www.ctys.org

Central Toronto Youth Services (CTYS) is a community-based, accredited Children's Mental Health Centre with locations on Wellesley Street, Adelaide Street and in York Region. Since 1973, CTYS has been on the forefront of serving at-risk youth. We give youth a chance to recreate their lives in an environment where they are engaged, then challenged and nurtured to take control of their own destiny.

Turning Point Youth Services

95 Wellesley St E, Toronto, ON, M4Y 2X9
Phone: (416) 925-9250
Fax: (416) 925-9926
Email: info@turningpoint.ca
Website: www.turningpoint.ca

Turning Point Youth Services is a multi-service accredited children's mental health centre. We are located in Toronto's downtown core and provide a range of mental health, counseling and support services to at-risk and vulnerable youth 12-24 and their families. Based on a service philosophy that highlights the importance of the individual, family and community, Turning Point responds to the life difficulties faced by our clients. We support our client's ability to cope and make better life choices through the availability of a comprehensive network of community based and residential programs and services.

Culture Link

160 Springhurst Ave, Ste 300, Toronto, ON, M6K 1C2
Phone: (416) 588-6288
Fax: (416) 588-2435
Email: iabsiye@culturelink.net
Website: www.culturelink.net

Newcomer Youth Centre: including newcomer youth settlement services, counseling, support groups, referrals and orientation. Services include homework help for ESL students, leadership training including cross cultural peer mediation and job search and

resume assistance. Refugee and Newcomer Girls Group, Newcomer Pride Program for LGBTTIQ youth and recreation opportunities. Services available in Afrikaans ; Arabic ; Bengali ; Bhojpuri ; Chinese (Cantonese) ; Chinese (Mandarin) ; Czech ; English ; Farsi ; Filipino ; French ; German ; Gujurati ; Guyanese Creole English ; Hindi ; Italian ; Japanese ; Pashto ; Portuguese ; Punjabi ; Russian ; Sinhala ; Somali ; Spanish ; Swahili ; Tamil ; Tibetan ; Urdu and West Indian dialects.

Bloor-Yorkville BIA

55 Bloor St. W, Suite 220 Toronto, ON M4W 1A5

Phone: (416) 928-3553

Fax: (416) 928-2034

Email: bybia@bloor-yorkville.com

As part of a continued effort to enhance the neighborhood, the Bloor-Yorkville BIA has designed an exciting project to completely transform Bloor-Yorkville. Upon completion, the new Bloor Street will boast extensive tree plantings, widened sidewalks and elegant granite. The corridor will be reshaped by cutting edge architecture and lush landscaping. The result will be a vibrant commercial street, which is pedestrian friendly and provides a stimulating oasis. Bloor Street will re-brand itself by looking to the future, as well as the past. In doing so, it will establish itself as one of the most exciting streets in the world.

Access Toronto: (for information on who to contact for any service needs)

Phone: 416-338-0338

Email: accesstoronto@toronto.ca

Bazis International

Phone: (905) 532-0435

Email: info@bazisinternational.com

Sherbourne Health Centre

Address: 333 Sherbourne St, Toronto, ON, M5A 2S5

Phone: 416- 324-4170

Email: amele@sherbourne.on.ca

Website: www.sherbourne.on.ca

Sherbourne Health Centre provides innovative primary health care, counselling, support, outreach, health promotion, and education programs to our clients – the many individuals who reflect the diverse and vibrant communities of southeast Toronto. Since 2003, we have focused on building connections and building health in the local community – by developing programs and services to fill gaps in service and address your unique health care needs and requirements. In 2005, we delivered over 47,000 health care visits to new immigrants, children, seniors, the lesbian and gay community and many more clients who come from the diverse communities we serve.

Covenant House

Address: 20 Gerrard St E Toronto ON M5B 2P3

Phone: 416-598-4898

Website: www.covenanthouse.on.ca

Canada's largest youth shelter provides a range of programs to help homeless and runaway youth build independent lives. Programs include Crisis Care, including nutritious meals, medical attention, clean clothes, safety from the streets, and structure to help rebuild lives. Open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, Longer-Term Housing, a longer-term transitional housing program for young people. Community Support Services offered for young people not living at Covenant House who can visit the Community Support Services (CSS) for a meal, a shower and clean clothes. Youth also can seek counseling, recreational activities, and connect with other Covenant House programs for assistance. A small food bank, baby food, diapers, and household items like dishes are also available for lower income families in the community.

**Street Health Community Nursing Foundation
AIDS Prevention and Harm Reduction Outreach Program**

Address: 338 Dundas St E. Toronto ON M5A 2A1

Phone: 416-921-8668

Fax: 416-921-5233

Website: www.streethealth.ca

Street Health is an innovative, community-based health care organization providing services to address a wide range of physical, mental and emotional needs in those who are homeless, poor and socially marginalized. Support, education and advocacy are key components of our services. We provide our services on the street, in alleys, along the lakeshore, in parks and ravines, and in homeless shelters and drop-ins. The people we work with have lives characterized by extreme poverty, chronic unemployment, insecurity in housing, poor nutrition, high stress and loneliness; they also have more frequent and serious illnesses, and die younger on average than the general population. Our services include outreach nursing, mental health support and case management, HIV/AIDS prevention, a secure mail service, identification replacement, clothing and sleeping bag distribution, and support for those with Hepatitis C and prevention strategies for those at risk for the disease. We adhere to a harm reduction model in our programs.

E. STRATEGIES FOR FOLLOWING UP ON RESULTS

Here is a list of possible follow-up actions in response to the Safety Audit results:

- **Local Politician** – Because the audit was done on public property, following up with the local City Councillors should be done. A copy of this report card will be sent to Kyle Ray (Ward 27). It may be a good idea to hold a meeting and invite them to discuss the results. Let them know what needs to be done to make the area safe for everyone.
- **Municipal Services** – If your group has identified things that need fixing in your neighbourhood, try contacting your municipal office.
 - Lights and litter in park: contact Parks, Forestry and Recreation at 416 392-1111.
 - For streetlights, contact Toronto Hydro at 416-542-3195.
 - Contact your local City Councillor to advocate on your behalf.
 - Toronto Municipal office: 416-338-0338
 - If your complaints go unheard, then you can consider contacting the Toronto Star's The Fixer Column. They are interested in hearing about what's broken and damaged in your neighbourhood. Go to www.thestar.com/thefixer, and click on the Submit a Problem link. Or call them at 416-869-4823.
- **Other strategies** – if the safety issues are important enough, then the community group may have to take matters into their own hands. The group may have to do whatever it takes to make sure that their safety issues are heard. Here are some possible actions:
 - Starting a safety committee in your area
 - Contacting the media
 - Making presentations at governments-initiated consultations
 - Holding community forums
 - Organizing workshops in the community
 - Holding community events
 - Surveys and opinion polls

APPENDIX A: City of Toronto Contact Information for Community Repairs

http://www.toronto.ca/services/pdf/whose_job_is_it.pdf

Whose Job Is It?

To report:

- Litter and debris
- A-frame signs and portable signs
- Abandoned appliances
- Property in general disrepair or hazardous condition

→ **call the local Municipal Licensing and Standards (ML&S) Office:**

- North York District: 416-395-7011
- Toronto and East York District: 416-338-0338
- Scarborough District: 416-396-7071
- Etobicoke District: 416-394-2535

- Traffic signals broken
416-397-8723
- Broken or missing traffic signs
416-338-9999
- Street lights out
416-542-3195
- Decorative lighting
Contact Local BIA*
- Broken Phone booth
6-1-1
- Hanging baskets
Contact Local BIA*
- Damage to bus shelter
416-338-9999
- Remove A-frame and portable signs
See ML&S box
- Sidewalk Repairs
416-338-9999
- Leaking fire hydrant
416-338-8888
- Graffiti
416-39-CLEAN (416-392-5326)
- Broken/damaged streetlight
416-542-3195
- Street banner
Contact Local BIA*
- Broken/damaged mail box
1-800-267-1177
- Broken parking meter
416-393-7275
- Broken/damaged newspaper boxes
416-338-9999
- Litter on street/sidewalk or overflowing garbage bin
416-39-CLEAN (416-392-5326)
- Request new bike posts, report damaged posts or abandoned bikes
416-392-9253
- Damaged Eco-Media
416-259-3200
- Water main breaks
416-338-8888

TORONTO **Clean City Beautiful City** **tabia** Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas

*For the Business Improvement Area (BIA) in your community, visit www.toronto-bia.com