



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

Safety Audit Report Card

Date: January 29th, 2008

Area Audited: Gerrard Street East and Parliament Street
Ward 27 Toronto Centre Rosedale

A.OVERVIEW OF SAFETY AUDIT RESULTS – Physical Environment

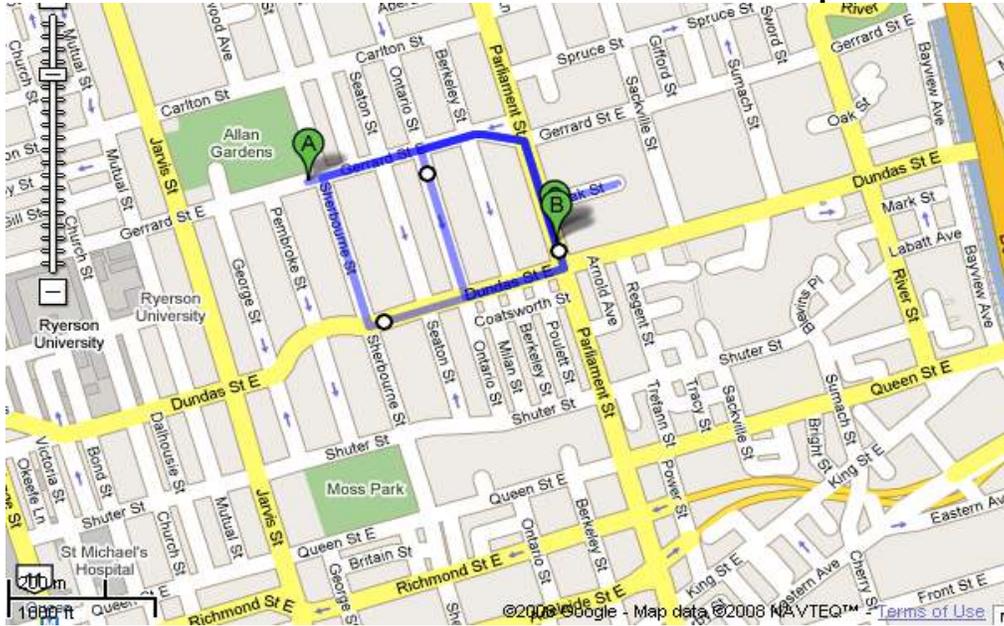
METRAC's Safety Audit looks at how social and physical environments can make an area safe or unsafe. METRAC defines safety as *'freedom from the threat, fear, and experience of all kinds of violence, oppression, and discrimination.'* The physical environment includes streets, lighting, and the isolation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

The Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto organized a group of women to conduct a safety audit of the Gerrard and Parliament area. Approximately 11 women, ranging in age from 18-60 years participated in the safety audit walkabout on January 29th, 2008. The group consisted of eight members of the community, two METRAC representatives, as well as one placement student from George Brown College. Lana Jackson organized and led the audit as a way for women in the Native community to express their distinct concerns around personal safety. It was noted that several incidents have occurred in the area around the Native Women's Resource Centre and the audit was thought to be a practical tool to facilitate communication on the subject of violence against marginalized communities.

The Gerrard and Parliament neighborhood, located near Dundas and Sherbourne Streets, has the largest concentration of homeless shelters and drop-in centres in Canada. The area is also distinguished by a large number of rooming houses and other forms of low income housing.¹ The physical and social layout of the neighborhood has an impact of people's feelings of safety and contributes to their experiences of violence, harassment and discrimination in that particular community.

¹ www.streethealth.ca

Gerrard St. East & Parliament St. Audit Map



The average rating for each area of the audit is in the table below. The area was generally seen as okay in terms of safety; however there were several areas in need of improvement. The main areas of concern for the group were the bus stop at the corner of Sherbourne Street and Gerrard Street East, the area in and around the Regent Park Reconstruction Project, the condition of the sidewalks/streets and alleyways in the area and the absence of adequate pay phones and lighting.

1. Poor	2. Substandard	3. Ok	4. Good	5. Very good
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Safety Audit Report Card	Scale			
OVERVIEW – overall sense of safety in the area.	2.4			
LIGHTING – the ability to see and be seen clearly.	2.8			
SIGNS AND MAPS - knowing where you are reduces fear of being attacked or getting lost.	3.1			
ISOLATION - people tend to feel safer when others are around.	2.7			
SIGHTLINES - clear views ahead and all around, not blocked by bushes, walls or fences.	2.6			
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.	2.0			
SECURITY – presence of security systems in place that work and security staff treat everyone the same way.	2.3			

Bus Stop at the Corner of Sherbourne Street and Gerrard Street East

- No bus shelter: women are forced to stand on the street and wait for the bus
- TTC scheduled service is irregular and unreliable
- Exposed to elements and constant harassment from pedestrians and drivers and “johns”

The Regent Park Reconstruction Project (Dundas Street & Parliament Street)

- Isolated buildings next to construction site
- No evidence of security
- Construction site as possible entrapment site

Overall Condition of the Sidewalks/Streets and Alleyways (Dundas & Ontario Streets)

- Sidewalks are not wide enough to accommodate pedestrians, motorized scooters and people with mobility devices; many people are forced to walk on streets
- Parking along one side of Ontario Street only, blocks view from opposite side
- Participants noted uneven pavement, large potholes and cracked sidewalks along majority of route audited

Absence of Adequate Payphones and Lighting

- Observed 3 payphones along audit route located on main streets only
- Limited business in area, many have shut down or are closed after dusk; nowhere for people to go and seek help
- Lighting along Ontario Street limited to one side of the street only, many abandoned lots and buildings without lighting pose possible entrapment sites

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, at school and in local stores/bars. These incidents are targeted at women and racialized people.

While **67%** of participants have witnessed or heard about incidents of violence and or harassment in their communities, **50%** of participants disclosed personal experiences of discrimination and or harassment. All of the participants live and/or work in the immediate area and are frequent users of the space. The acts of discrimination/harassment experienced were in the following forms: glances/staring, verbal comments, and being chased or followed. The most common form of harassment reported was glances and stares.

Of the **50%** of participants who told of their personal experience of harassment/discrimination, **100%** told both family/friends. It was noted by the group that

many of the participants felt that their experiences of harassment/violence were common for many of the people living and/or working in the area and that it is an experience that has been overlooked by those with the power to make change in the community. Many participants felt that the Gerrard and Parliament area has been pushed aside and forgotten.

The audit participants noted that there is a need in the area for housing services, including affordable housing solutions, as well as more recreational spaces and activities. The participants also noted that the Gerrard and Parliament area has been neglected in many ways and the existing services are either crisis response services or are drop-ins that encourage people to conjugate in the area which increases their experiences of harassment.

The majority of respondents noted that the public spaces in and around the Native Women's Resource Centre were the most troubling. They found that simply standing on the street, waiting for a bus for example, often means that they are harassed on a continual and persistent basis.

C. KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Comments from participants:

- *"I belong to the most marginalized group in Canadian society: I am an Aboriginal woman"*
- *"Due to the vigorous sex trade in the area, men look at me like I am a piece of meat"*
- *"I feel de-sensitized"*
- *"I feel like I have been forgotten and that I do not matter"*

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.

Concern over both the physical and social environment in the area has 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 on the streets has increased people's fear and feelings of isolation.

Experiences of racism and discrimination were commonplace for women.

Possible means to address these issues include:

1. Contacting social service agencies in the area to discuss possible resolutions:
 - Toronto Council Native Fire Cultural Centre
 - 416 Community Support Program for Women
 - Neighbourhood Information Post
2. 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:
 - Covenant House
 - Street Haven at the Crossroads Drop In
 - Anishnawbe Health Toronto (Gerrard Site)
3. Late night drop in (till 6 a.m.) for women:
 - Sherbourne Health Centre (Health Bus)
4. Harm Reduction services need extended hours:
 - Street Health Community Nursing

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for enhancing the safety features of the 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: Bus stop at Corner of Sherbourne and Gerrard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No bus shelter: women are forced to stand on the street and wait for the bus ➤ TTC scheduled service is irregular and unreliable ➤ Exposed to elements and constant harassment from pedestrians and drivers and “johns” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact TTC to discuss status of bus shelter, request glass shelter with exposed sides is installed. • Contact TTC customer complaint department to express dissatisfaction with service wait times • Contact social service providers and city officials to discuss possible programming for individuals that offer skill building and social opportunities 	<p>Toronto Transit Commission Phone: 416-393-INFO Website: www.toronto.ca/ttc Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments Line or Online Form Phone: (416) 393-3030 Social Services in the area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Street Health Community Nursing ▪ St Luke’s Church ▪ City of Toronto Parks and Recreation
<p>Priority 2: Regent Park Reconstruction Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Isolated buildings next to construction site ➤ No evidence of security ➤ Construction site as possible entrapment site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact TCHC to discuss the safety concerns of residents as the result of reconstruction project • Inquire about the status of security on site • Contact City Councillor Kyle Rae to discuss the participants’ safety concerns 	<p>Toronto Community Housing Phone: (416) 981-5500 Email: generalinquiries@torontohousing.ca</p> <p>CHU 27 –Regent Park Representative Ade Davis CHU 13-Sherbourne and Dundas Representative Brian Davis Phone: (416) 981-5500 Website: http://www.torontohousing.ca/contact_chu</p> <p>City Councillor Name: Kyle Rae (Ward 27) Phone: 416-392-7903 Fax: 416-696-4300 Email: councillor_rae@toronto.ca</p>

TOP SAFETY CONCERNS	IDEAS FOR CHANGE/ACTION	FOLLOW-UP
<p>Priority 3: Condition of Sidewalks/Streets and Alleyways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sidewalks are not wide enough to accommodate pedestrians, motorized scooters and people with mobility devices; many people are forced to walk on streets ➤ Parking along one side of Ontario Street only, blocks view from opposite side ➤ Participants noted uneven pavement, large potholes and cracked sidewalks along majority of route audited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact City of Toronto Transportation Services to discuss concerns over conditions of roadways and sidewalks; Inquire about planned road repairs in the area • Investigate options for addressing the parking issue • Contact City Councilor to express concerns over physical conditions in the area 	<p>City of Toronto Transportation Services Phone: (416) 338-9999 Website: www.toronto.ca/transportation</p> <p>City of Toronto Parking Enforcement Phone: (416) 808-6600 Website: www.toronto.ca/transportation</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: Pay Phones and Lighting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Observed 3 payphones along audit route located on main streets only ➤ Limited business in area, many have shut down or are closed after dusk; nowhere for people to go and seek help ➤ Lighting along Ontario Street limited to one side of the street only, many abandoned lots and buildings without lighting pose possible entrapment sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Bell Canada to inquire about the lack of payphones in the area and make suggestions for locations where payphones would be beneficial • Contact Local BIA to discuss ways to revitalize local businesses and shops to encourage people in the area • Contact Toronto Hydro to discuss ways to improve lighting in the immediate area 	<p>Bell Canada Telecommunications www.bell.ca</p> <p>Cabbage Town BIA http://www.oldcabbagetown.com/ doug@oldcabbagetown.com Toronto Hydro at 416-542-3195 Don Vale Cabbage town Residents Association info@donvalecra.ca</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

TTC Complaints/Suggestions Phone: (416) 393-3030

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/parking

Toronto Community Housing

Address: 931 Yonge Street Toronto, ON M4W 2H2

Phone: (416) 981-5500

Email: generalinquiries@torontohousing.ca

Website: www.torontohousing.ca

2. Local Community Services

Native Women's Resource Centre

Address: 191 Gerrard St. East, Toronto, ON, M5A 2E5

Phone: (416) 963-9963

Fax: (416) 963-9573

E-Mail: jtaylor@nativewomenscentre.org

Website: www.nativewomenscentre.org

The Native Women's Resource Centre provides services for women of Aboriginal ancestry (Status, Non-Status, Métis, Inuit) or women with children of Aboriginal ancestry. They provide crisis intervention, information and referral services, advocacy, urban orientation and community outreach. In addition to their free daily programming, they also provide housing services, job links and a food bank.

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 their clients – the many individuals who reflect the diverse and vibrant communities of southeast Toronto. Since 2003, they 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, they 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.

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.

416 Community Support Program for Women

Address: 416 Dundas St, East, Toronto ON, M5A 2A8

Phone: 416-928-3334

Fax: 416-964-2815

Website: www.416dropincentre.com

Email: info@bellnet.ca

The 416 Community Support for Women offers various services to women who are coping with abuse, isolation, addiction and/or mental health issues. The 416 provides a variety of formal and informal support programs to some of the hardest to reach women in the community. Services include daily meals, weekly food bank, social/recreational programs, life skills training, medical clinic and mental health and addiction case management services.

Toronto Council Native Fire Cultural Centre

Address: 439 Dundas St, East, Toronto ON, M5A 2B1

Phone: 416-360-4350

Website: www.councilfire.ca

Email: info@councilfire.ca

Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre is an autonomous, vibrant cultural agency that serves the Indigenous community with confidence for and commitment to their well-being.

Their mandate is to provide counseling, material assistance and other direct services to First Nations people and to encourage and enhance spiritual and personal growth.

**Neighborhood Information Post
Parliament Street Public Library**

Address: 269 Gerrard St E, 2nd Fl, Toronto, ON, M5A 2G3

Phone: 416-924-2543

Website: www.nipost.org

Email: nipost@nipost.org

Neighborhood Information Post is a community information and referral service that help support those in the community with a variety of tasks, including filling out forms, income tax preparation, phone and email services as well as case management, advocacy and settlement services. They offer computer and telephone use and internet access and training for people who are homeless or low income.

Anishnawbe Health Toronto Gerrard Site

Address: 179 Gerrard St E, Toronto, ON, M5A 2E5

Phone: 416-920-2605

Website: www.aht.ca

Anishnawbe Health Toronto has and continues to grow to meet the needs of the community it serves. As a fully accredited community health centre, AHT offers access to health care practitioners from many disciplines including Traditional Healers, Elders and Medicine People. Ancient ceremonies and traditions, intrinsic to our health care model are available. Our work with the homeless has evolved from early directions of crisis intervention to our current efforts of working with those who seek to escape homelessness. Training programs offer community members the opportunity to learn and grow in a culture based setting. Through our Mission, Vision, Beliefs and Principles, we continue to honor and respect the hopes and dreams of those who first envisioned a healing centre for the Aboriginal Community of Toronto.

Street Haven at the Crossroads Drop In

Address: 87 Pembroke St, Toronto, ON, M5A 2N9

Phone: 416-967-6060

Website: www.streethaven.com

Email: info@streethaven.com

Street Haven at the Crossroads' goal is to innovate and establish an integrated continuum of services which will improve the quality of life of women in need and bring creative solutions to their problems. This continuum of services includes immediate support for women who come to Street Haven at the Crossroads off the street, the provision of meals and a place to sleep, a place to heal, a place to grow and a place to live independently, in accordance with what each individual woman is ready to handle and in recognition of the varied potential of each woman. This goal is achieved through a range of programs designed to meet the changing needs of women by addressing issues in areas such as culture, mental health, addictions, violence, poverty and homelessness.

All Saints Church-Community Centre Drop In

Address: 315 Dundas St E, Toronto, ON, M5A 2A2

Phone: 416-368-7768

Website: www.allsaintstoronto.com

Email: dropin@allsaintstoronto.com

All Saints Church and Community Centre and drop-in offers a wide variety of services including harm reduction and addiction information/education, a community kitchen, seniors programming and legal advice. Through their advocacy and referral system they offer members of the community a needle exchange and condom distribution program, access to pastoral counseling as well as a clothing bank.

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

Phone: 416-338-0338

Email: accesstoronto@toronto.ca

E. STRATEGIES FOR FOLLOWING UP ON RESULTS

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

1. **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 Rae (Ward 27). It may be a good idea to hold a meeting and invite them to discuss the results. Let your councilor know what needs to be done to make the area safe for everyone.
2. **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.
3. **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
 - Starting a violence prevention group at your agency
 - Circulating petitions
 - Conducting letter writing campaigns
 - Town Hall Meetings
 - Contacting the media
 - Making presentations at governments-initiated consultations
 - Holding community forums & events
 - 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

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