A Report on Tobacco Use in Toronto’s LGBTTQ Communities
January 2007

The Toronto Rainbow Tobacco Survey:
A Report on Tobacco Use in Toronto’s LGBTTQ Communities

This report was prepared by:

Michèle Clarke

Robert Coughlin

The Rainbow Tobacco Intervention Project
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Research Team

Michèle Clarke, Sherbourne Health Centre
Robert Coughlin, Toronto Public Health
Claire Harvey, Toronto Public Health
Cheryl Parsons, Toronto Public Health
Chris Seto, Toronto Public Health

Research Assistants

Shaun Chaimovitz
J. J. Deogracias
Leah Lakshmi Piepza-Samarasinha
charysse robinson

This survey was funded by Toronto Public Health and Sherbourne Health Centre.
Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of Toronto Public Health and Sherbourne Health Centre.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to the latest results from the Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey (CTUMS) for data collected between February and December 2005, 19% of the population aged 15 years and older were current smokers, down from 25% in 1999. There is evidence that lesbian, gay and bisexual people are more likely to smoke than the general population (Greenwood, et al., 2005; Tang, et al., 2004), but most of this research is from the United States as the smoking prevalence of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQQ) communities in Canada is not well documented. The Rainbow Tobacco Intervention Project (RTIP) conducted the Toronto Rainbow Tobacco Survey to determine the prevalence of smoking in Toronto’s LGBTQQ communities and to raise awareness about high smoking rates in this population.

The Toronto Rainbow Tobacco Survey (TRTS) gathered data from over 3,000 members of Toronto’s LGBTQQ communities from April to July 2006, through outreach at LGBTQQ community events and through an online survey.

The survey findings are similar to other data that already exists. Overall, 36% of LGBTQQ participants reported current smoking, compared to 17% of Toronto adults (18+) as reported by Toronto Public Health (RRFSS 2005). Smoking prevalence rates are reported for nine different sexual orientation and gender identity groups, including the first known data reporting on gender queer people.

Recommendations include targeting tobacco control efforts at the LGBTQQ population, expanding treatment resources to address the most at-risk communities and conducting further research on the determinants of tobacco use among LGBTQQ communities.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research team would like to give a special thanks to the members of Toronto’s LGBTTQ communities who took the time to participate in this study.

We wish to thank the members of the Rainbow Tobacco Intervention Project for their assistance and ongoing commitment to addressing LGBTTQ tobacco use in Toronto.

We also thank the numerous LGBTTQ community-based organizations which allowed us to conduct survey outreach at their events and meetings. This project would not have succeeded without your cooperation and enthusiasm.

Finally, we would like to thank Toronto Public Health and Sherbourne Health Centre for funding this research, and Xtra! Magazine for their generous advertising and editorial support.
INTRODUCTION

Although tobacco use has declined in the general population in Canada over the past few decades, 22% of all deaths in Canada in 1998 were attributable to smoking (Makomaski Illing & Kaiserman, 2004). According to the latest results from the Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey (CTUMS) for data collected between February and December 2005, 19% of the population aged 15 years and older were current smokers, down from 25% in 1999.

There is evidence that lesbian, gay and bisexual people are more likely to smoke than the general population (Greenwood, et al., 2005; Tang, et al., 2004). A review of the literature indicated a range of smoking rates from 38-59% for youth and 11-50% for adults (Ryan et. al, 2001). Almost all of this research is from the United States as the smoking prevalence of LGBTTQ communities in Canada is not documented by CTUMS or other Canadian smoking researchers. A 2005 British Columbia survey showed that 36% of LGBTTQ adults smoke compared to 16% of the general population (www.proudtoquit.ca) and a more recent study showed that 54.5% of young MSM smoke compared to 25.9% of the male BC population (Lampinen et. al, 2006). The LGBTTQ population of Toronto is estimated to be between 5-10 % of the 2.5 million people who live in Toronto and as far as we know, there is no research examining the smoking prevalence of these communities.

Moreover, the majority of the research on LGBTTQ smoking prevalence has actually been conducted with gay men and lesbians and few studies have included bisexual people. When bisexual people have been recruited as participants, the sample size is often very small and their results are combined with those of lesbians or gay men. No studies have been done on the prevalence of tobacco use by transsexual and transgender people.

The Rainbow Tobacco Intervention Project (RTIP) conducted the Toronto Rainbow Tobacco Survey to determine the prevalence of smoking in Toronto’s LGBTTQ communities. Additional objectives were to investigate tobacco use in a Canadian LGBTTQ population outside of BC and to address the lack of data on tobacco use among bisexual and trans populations.

The knowledge gained from this survey will help RTIP to raise awareness about high smoking rates in this population and to develop better programs and services to meet the needs of LGBTTQ communities.
METHODS

The Toronto Rainbow Tobacco Survey (TRTS) gathered data from members of Toronto’s LGBTQ communities from April to July 2006. The self-administered survey collected information on the prevalence of smoking as well as very basic demographic information. Participants were recruited through outreach at a diverse range of LGBTQ community events and group meetings including a health fair, a gay and lesbian film festival, a women’s soccer league and Pride Week events. Recruitment outreach was purposefully broad and strategic in an attempt to include as representative a sample as possible. The data collection also avoided relying on recruitment in bars because of the strong relationship between bar attendance and smoking. TRTS researchers described the survey and gave consenting participants a postcard survey to complete. The survey was also available online and advertising outreach was done through email networks and local LGBTQ media. The web survey was implemented to attract a broader base of respondents beyond downtown Toronto and to encourage responses from LGBTQ members who wished to remain anonymous. Eligible participants were self-identified LGBTQ residents of Toronto.

On the survey, the demographic question for sexual orientation included the response categories “Lesbian”, “Gay”, “Bisexual”, “Heterosexual” and “Other” and the demographic question for gender identity included the response categories “Male”, “Female”, “MTF Trans”, “FTM Trans” and “Other”. Participants who chose “Other” were free to specify their self-identity and these responses were coded to create the three additional categories of “Queer Women”, “Queer Men” and “Gender Queer”. A small percentage of responses could not be coded into any of these categories.
RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 4080 LGBTTQ participants completed the questionnaire and 77% of these were residents of Toronto for a final convenience sample of 3140. Postcard surveys were completed by 2548 participants and 542 participants completed the survey online. The median age of the sample was 34 with an age range of 13 to 91 years (see Table 1). The majority of the participants identified as lesbian (30.3%) or gay (41.9%) and the sexual orientation and gender identities of the sample are shown in Table 2. There was great variation in the sample sizes for the different sexual orientation and gender identity groups which limits between-group comparisons, and results for groups with smaller sample sizes should be interpreted with caution. There was similar participation from non-trans women (45.3%) and non-trans men (46.7%) with a smaller group of transgender and transsexual participants (5.6%). The geographic distribution shows a concentration of participants residing in the downtown core of Toronto (see Figure 1).

Table 1: Percentage of TRTS Participants by Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE GROUP</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=3114</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 15</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 – 19</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 24</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 29</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 34</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 – 39</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 – 44</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 49</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 – 54</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 – 59</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1: Geographical Distribution of TRTS Participants by Postal Code

Distribution of Rainbow Tobacco Survey Respondents by FSA

Number of Respondents
- 200 to 499
- 100 to 189
- 50 to 99
- 30 to 49
- 20 to 29
- 10 to 19
- 1 to 9
Table 2: Percentage of TRTS Participants by LGBTTQ Identity Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELF-IDENTIFY AS...</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesbians</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Men</td>
<td>1,316</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual Women</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual Men</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer Women</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer Men</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTF Trans</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTM Trans</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Queer</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot Classify</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=3140

SMOKING PREVALENCE

Overall, 36% of LGBTTQ participants reported current smoking, 25% were past smokers and 39% had never smoked. This compares with Toronto Public Health reports of smoking prevalence in Toronto adults (18+) with 17% reporting current smoking, 22% reporting past smoking and 61% reporting never smoking (RRFSS 2005). A comparison of the smoking status of the TRTS participants and Toronto adults (18+) is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Comparison of TRTS and RRFSS Participants by Smoking Status
The smoking prevalence rates ranged from 24% to 45% across the different sexual orientation and gender identity groups of the sample, with bisexual women and bisexual men reporting the highest smoking rate at 45% (see Figure 3).

There was only one gender difference found in percentages of smokers within the different sexual orientation and gender identity groups of the sample, as lesbians and gay men reported similar rates (33% and 34%), bisexual women and bisexual men reported the same rate (45%) and MTF transpeople and FTM transpeople reported the same rate (34%). Queer women were more likely to be smokers (39%) than queer men (24%), but the small sample size for queer men should be noted. This contrasts with Toronto Public Health reports of smoking prevalence in Toronto adults (18+) where men were more likely to be smokers (20.1%) than women (14.6%), (RRFSS 2005).

**Figure 3: Smoking Prevalence by LGBTTQ Identity Group**

Overall, smoking prevalence declined with age (see Figure 4) with participants in the under 15 age group (50%) and the 15 to 19 age group (57%) more likely to be current smokers compared to participants in the 55 to 59 age group (22%) and the over 60 age group (28%).
SMOKING STATUS

The smoking status rates also varied across the different sexual orientation and gender identity groups of the sample (see Table 3), with gender queers most likely to be daily smokers (40%) and both gender queers and FTM transpeople least likely to report never smoking (27% and 26% respectively).

Table 3: Percentage of TRTS Participants by Smoking Status by LGBTTQ Identity Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELF-IDENTIFY AS...</th>
<th>DAILY</th>
<th>OCCASIONAL</th>
<th>FORMER</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=3118</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbians</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Men</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual Women</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual Men</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer Women</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer Men</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTF Trans</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTM Trans</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Queer</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot Classify</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SMOKING BEHAVIOUR

The average number of cigarettes a day for LGBTQ current smokers was 10.8, and this ranged from 7.5 cigarettes a day for smokers under the age of 15 to 18.5 cigarettes a day for smokers over the age of 60 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Average Number of Cigarettes a Day by Age Group

The average number of cigarettes a day across the different sexual orientation and gender identity groups of the sample is shown in Figure 6. Queer men smoked the greatest number of daily cigarettes (17.9) and bisexual women smoked the least (7.3). A gender difference was found in the average number of cigarettes a day within the different sexual orientation groups of the sample, as gay men smoked more daily cigarettes than lesbians (12.5 vs. 9.5), bisexual men smoked more daily cigarettes than bisexual women (15.2 vs. 7.3) and queer men smoked more daily cigarettes than queer women (17.9 vs. 7.8).
On a daily basis, 49% of smokers were light smokers (<15 cigarettes), 18% were moderate smokers (15-24 cigarettes), and 10% were heavy smokers (25+ cigarettes). The daily cigarette consumption across the different sexual orientation and gender identity groups of the sample is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Percentage of TRTS Participants by Daily Cigarette Consumption by LGBTQ Identity Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELF-IDENTIFY AS...</th>
<th>LIGHT</th>
<th>MODERATE</th>
<th>HEAVY</th>
<th>NONDAILY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=1105</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbians</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Men</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual Women</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual Men</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer Women</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer Men</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTF Trans</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTM Trans</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Queer</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot Classify</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AGE AND GENDER EFFECTS

As previously noted, in the overall LGBTTQ sample, there were no gender differences in smoking prevalence rates within the different sexual orientation and gender identity groups of the sample except that the rates were higher for queer women (39%) compared to queer men (24%). Recent studies have indicated that with younger LGBTTQ smokers, females smoke more than males. For example, in Austin et. al. (2004), 38.7% of adolescent lesbian/bisexual girls smoked at least weekly compared to 9.8% of gay/bisexual boys.

In the current study, a similar gender difference was found for TRTS participants under the age of 25 (see Figure 7). In this age group, lesbians (53%) smoked more vs. gay men (43%), bisexual women (50%) smoked more vs. bisexual men (42%), queer women (55%) smoked more vs. queer men (30%) and FTM transpeople smoked (63%) more vs. MTF transpeople (40%). While young FTM transpeople are not women, at that age they would have had a significant amount of life experience living in female bodies which may explain the direction of the gender difference for this group.

The gender difference seen in the overall LGBTTQ sample between queer women and queer men seems to be a product of the small sample size for queer men and this observed under-25 age/gender effect. The demographics show that 78% of the smokers in the queer men sample are under the age of 39 compared to 95% of the smokers in the queer women sample.

Figure 7: Comparison of Smoking Prevalence by Gender by Age Group
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Toronto tobacco control efforts need to be targeted at the LGBTTQ population including social marketing campaigns to raise awareness and educate LGBTTQ people about this significant health issue in their communities.

2. Treatment resources need to be expanded beyond the current Bent on Quitting program to address the most at-risk communities including youth, bisexual people and gender queer people.

3. The providers of tobacco cessation programs and services need to be educated about LGBTTQ smoking issues and their particular cessation concerns.

4. CTUMS and other Canadian smoking surveys need to include sexual orientation and gender identity demographic items on their questionnaires to produce more information on LGBTTQ smoking prevalence across Canada.

5. Further research needs to be conducted on the determinants of tobacco use among LGBTTQ communities as a better understanding is required to design effective smoking interventions.
THE RAINBOW TOBACCO INTERVENTION PROJECT (RTIP)

In the fall of 2004, a committee of community partners joined forces to begin exploring options for smoking cessation and reduction for the LGBTTQ communities in Toronto, resulting in a coalition called the Rainbow Tobacco Intervention Project (RTIP). Members of RTIP include:

- **Canadian Cancer Society** is a national, community-based organization of volunteers, whose mission is the eradication of cancer and the enhancement of the quality of life of people living with cancer.

- **Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)**
  - *Nicotine Dependence Clinic* - provides services to people who want to quit or reduce tobacco use. The clinic provides services to special populations such as pregnant women and people with psychiatric and other addiction conditions; trains healthcare professionals in the treatment of smoking and conducts research on smoking treatment methods.
  - *Public Education Program* - leads the development of strategies designed to increase public understanding of addiction and mental health problems, improve access and encourage help-seeking using evidence-based best practices, through a range of collaborative partnerships with community organizations, clients, family members, and target communities.
  - *Rainbow Health Services* - provides counselling to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and transsexual people who are concerned about their use of drugs and alcohol. Services are available to individuals with a variety of goals, including those who want to try to quit, cut down, or who would just like to gain more awareness about their drinking or drug use.

- **The Council for a Tobacco Free Toronto (CTFT)** has been an active supporter of Toronto’s Smoke-Free By-law and contributed to its successful passage by writing to and visiting city councilors. Council members distribute information and consult with the public about smoke-free living and cessation in community and workplace events in Toronto. Toronto Public Health acts as the secretariat for the Council.
Rainbow Health Network advocates for the provision of appropriate health services for the LGBTT community in Toronto.

Sherbourne Health Centre is an urban primary health care centre that provides innovative health services and wellness programs to the diverse communities of southeast Toronto, with a special emphasis on local residents, homeless and underhoused individuals, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and transgender communities and new Canadians.

Toronto Public Health’s programs and services promote good health, protect against health hazards and prevent disease in the city of Toronto. Toronto Public Health's vision is to make Toronto the healthiest city possible.

**RTIP PLAN**

Goal of the Project: To reduce tobacco-related morbidity and mortality within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual and Queer (LGBTTQ) communities in Toronto.

Target Groups:
1. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender and queer (LGBTTQ) communities in Toronto.
2. Service providers for the LGBTTQ communities in Toronto.

Objectives:
1. To develop effective smoking cessation/reduction programs tailored to meet the needs of the LGBTTQ communities in Toronto.
2. To educate mainstream tobacco cessation program providers and LGBTTQ service providers about LGBTTQ smoking issues.
3. To promote awareness of smoking issues in the LGBTTQ communities such as targeted tobacco industry marketing practices and to begin to change community norms that support tobacco use.
The Council for a Tobacco-Free Toronto initiated a proposal and was able to secure a small amount of funding from the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network and Toronto Public Health to conduct a literature and program review. Further funding was secured from the Ministry of Health Promotion Smokefree Ontario and the Bent on Quitting program was developed.

Bent on Quitting is an innovative 8-week program for LGBTTQ smokers wishing to quit or reduce the amount they are smoking. The program has been adapted from two successful programs: Queer Tips in San Francisco and Stop Dragging your Butt in Ottawa. It employs best practices and addresses the reasons for smoking, the benefits of quitting, how participants can ready themselves to quit and how they can stick to their plan once they have begun to cut down or quit. The first group was offered in the fall of 2005 and there are currently three groups per year and free individual self-help quit kits are also available.

Next steps for RTIP include developing a Bent on Quitting group specifically for LGBTTQ youth smokers as well as further research into the smoking behaviour of LGBTTQ communities in Toronto.

Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey (CTUMS), (2005).


APPENDIX A - SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey is being carried out by the

Before you complete this survey you should know that it's completely confidential and you can answer as many or as few questions as you wish. There are no risks or harms to you associated with completing this survey.

I have read the above and wish to continue.  □ Yes □ No

1. Have you ever smoked?  □ Yes □ No

2. Have you smoked at least 100 cigarettes in your lifetime?  □ Yes □ No

3. Have you ever smoked daily?
   □ Yes – For how many years? ______ □ No

4. Do you now smoke:
   □ Daily  □ Occasionally  □ Not at all

5. On average, how many cigarettes do you smoke per day? _________ □ Don’t smoke

6. You are: □ Lesbian □ Gay □ Bisexual
   □ Heterosexual □ Other (please specify) ______

7. You are: □ Male □ Female □ MTF Trans
   □ FTM Trans □ Other (please specify) ______

8. Your Age: _______

9. The first 3 letters of your Postal Code: _______

Thank you for participating!
APPENDIX B – GLOSSARY

Bisexual A person who forms physical and emotional relationships with men and women

FTM Trans A female-to-male transman

Gay A man who forms physical and emotional relationships with other men (sometimes used to refer to women)

Gender queer A person who identifies their gender outside the gender binary system of male and female and may be fluid with gender presentation or not conform to gender stereotypes

Lesbian A woman who forms physical and emotional relationships with other women

MTF Trans A male-to-female transwoman

Queer An umbrella term that seeks to encompass a broad range of sexual orientation identities, behaviours and expressions. Sometimes it is used as a short form that includes lesbian, gay, and bisexual.

Transgender A person whose gender expression transgresses gender norms or crosses society’s idea of gender lines

Transsexual A person whose gender identity is different from the biological sex that they were assigned at birth and who may choose to change their sex

ACRONYMS

CTUMS Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey

LGBTQQ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender and queer

MSM Men who have sex with Men

RRFSS Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System

RTIP Rainbow Tobacco Intervention Project

TRTS Toronto Rainbow Tobacco Survey
Additional copies of this document may be obtained from the lead researchers:

Rainbow Tobacco Intervention Project

Michèle Clarke
Address: 333 Sherbourne Street, Toronto, ON M5A 2S5 Canada
Telephone: 416-324-4177
Fax: 416-324-4181
Email: mclarke@sherbourne.on.ca
Internet: www.sherbourne.on.ca

Robert Coughlin
Address: 277 Victoria Street, Toronto, ON Canada
Telephone: 416-338-0910
Fax: 416-392-0635
Email: rcoughl@toronto.ca
Internet: www.toronto.ca