Branding Municipal Employment Within Metro Vancouver to Enhance Appeal to Generation Y Post-Secondary Students

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Abstract

This study uses primary research to examine the attitudes of Generation Y post-secondary students towards municipal employment in the Metro Vancouver region of British Columbia, Canada. Secondary research is used to define the individual elements of the research question; outline the importance of attracting younger workers to the municipal sector; examine what attracts Generation Y to an employer; investigate methods of employer branding; define the value proposition offered by Metro Vancouver municipal employers and; recommend branding strategies that municipal employers can use to enhance their attractiveness as employers to Generation Y.

The research shows that the Generation Y post-secondary students surveyed held both positive and negative perceptions of municipal employment. The final section of the study makes recommendations on how to strengthen the positive perceptions and eliminate the misconceptions through an employer branding campaign.

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Research Question: *How can Metro Vancouver municipalities brand themselves to enhance employer attractiveness to Generation Y post-secondary students?*

Objective: *To recommend how Metro Vancouver municipalities can use employer branding to enhance employer attractiveness to Generation Y post-secondary students.*

1.0 Introduction

This section defines the research question and discusses the aging municipal workforce and attraction and recruitment challenges in the Metro Vancouver municipal sector. It is these factors that have provided the impetus for this study.

1.1 Defining the Research Question

To provide an understanding of the research question, it is essential to first define its individual components.

Metro Vancouver, formerly known as the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), is composed of the following 21 member municipalities:

- Village of Anmore
- Village of Belcarra
- Bowen Island Municipality
- City of Burnaby
- City of Coquitlam

- City of North Vancouver
- District of North Vancouver
- City of Pitt Meadows
- City of Port Coquitlam
- City of Port Moody

- Corporation of Delta
- City of Langley
- Township of Langley
- Village of Lions Bay
- District of Maple Ridge
- City of New Westminster

- City of Richmond
- City of Surrey
- City of Vancouver
- District of West Vancouver
- City of White Rock

Within each of these municipalities there are individual employers such as libraries, recreation centres, municipal halls and parks boards.

I have limited the scope of the research question to this one specific geographic region since, generally speaking, these municipal employers are all subject to the same labour market conditions as they are competing for the same pool of workers against the same set of employers. It would not make sense to include all municipal employers in B.C. or Canada because the realities of their individual labour markets would be different.

Noted employer brand strategist Brett Minchington defines employer branding as "the image of the organization as a 'great place to work' in the minds of current employees and key stakeholders in the external market (active and passive candidates, clients, customers and other key stakeholders)."[1] Careers are a highly significant aspect of individual's perceptions of themselves – they want to work for the organizations that mean the most to them. The value of employment branding is immense. Enhanced employer attractiveness is an outcome of successful employer branding.[2]

The definition of Generation Y varies by plus or minus 5 years depending on the source. For the purpose of this project, it will be defined as people born between the years 1978 to 1995.[3] This cohort is similar to Generation X but most definitely has its own unique dimensions. The scope is limited to Generation Y as this project is intended to be forward looking in nature so that it can serve as a resource to municipal employers in their efforts to position municipal employment as an attractive option for the next generation of workers. Further, studies have shown that there are unique challenges with attracting Generation Y to the public sector, therefore, this cohort requires 'special attention'. With the Baby Boomer generation set to retire en mass within the next 15-20 years and the competition for skilled labour expected to intensify, an attractive employment value proposition will be critical to ensure that municipal employers will be able to attract the best and the brightest.

Focusing on Generation Y will potentially have the greatest impact as the literature suggests that the majority of people make career choices between the ages of 5 – 25.[4] After the age of 25, the potential for changing opinions lessens considerably as impressions have already become crystallized.[5]

1.2 Setting the Stage -- The Aging Workforce.

Canada's population is aging and baby boomers are fast approaching their retirement years. If labour force participation by age remains around the present rates, more seniors will likely mean a shrinking workforce. In fact, the overall participation rate could fall as low as 57% by 2025, a considerable drop from its current level of 67%.[6] In addition, the median retirement age has dropped—from 64 in 1987 to 61 in 2006.[7]
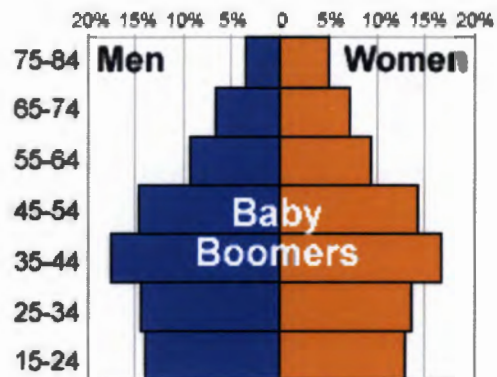
Figure 1

The Aging Population

2001

Canada's population will undergo considerable aging in the 21st century:

- Fertility rate below replacement rate

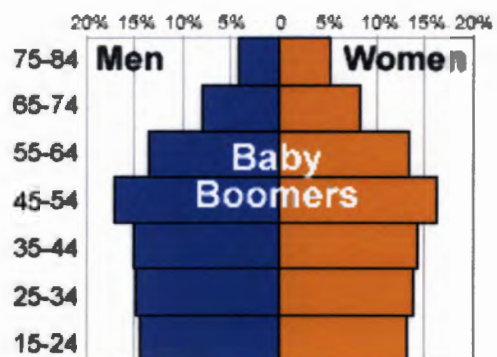- Increased life expectancy due to improvements in public health

2011

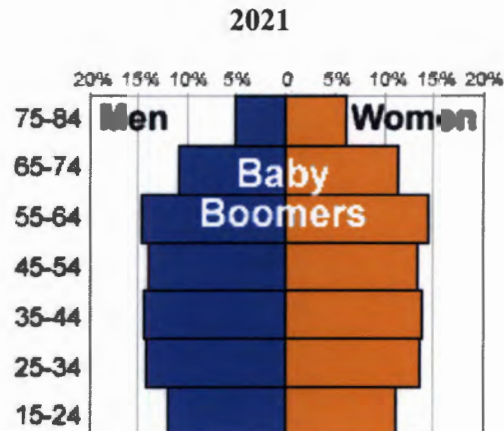**Estimated average annual growth of population from 2001 to 2021:**

- All ages: 0.9%
- 15-44: 0.1%
- 45-64: 1.5

4

2021

Growing percentage of population 65 and over:

- 12.7 % in 2001
- 14.4 % in 2011
- 17.9 % in 2021

Source: Calculation from Statistics Canada's "Population Projections for Canada, Provinces and Territories 2000-2026". Cat. No. 91-520

The aging in the overall British Columbia workforce is a concern but within the public service the problem is more imminent. Employees of the British Columbia government are increasing in average age partly because of the baby boom phenomenon but also due to the incredible growth in government during the late 70's and early 80's, followed by restraint and downsizing in the 1990's. This is most dramatically illustrated by the fact that only 16% of the government's workforce, or one in six, are currently under the age of 35 compared to 37% for the workforce as a whole.[8] In terms of human resources planning, the critical aspect of the age structure is that one half of the British Columbia public service is currently over the age of 45. Virtually all of these employees will have retired, or will be eligible to retire with a pension, 10 years from now.[9] The situation within the Metro Vancouver municipal sector is similar as its workforce demographics are almost identical to those of the British Columbia public service.[10]

1.3 Attraction and Recruitment Challenges

It is recognized that municipal employers face a number of attraction and recruitment challenges which are unique to their sector. In recent years, there has been a growing concern that the municipal sector is not attracting individuals with the skills required to address future challenges.[11] Traditional public stereotypes continue to erode the desirability of municipal work and the media continue to highlight negative stories about public servants rather than their many positive contributions. These factors do little to attract new recruits. Damaging stereotypes of municipal work that make it unattractive to younger workers include: seniority rewarded over merit; lack of decision making power; low pay; bureaucratic; old fashioned culture and work processes; jobs that do not change and a lack of fresh new challenges.

Fierce competition for talent in the market place means that the municipal sector has to ensure that its brand remains a positive and desirable one to entice young Canadians to work in the 'public interest' instead of in the private or not-for-profit sector. The competition for talent is global and is further confounded by the increasing knowledge and skill demands of modern government. The challenge of recruiting high quality employees that will replace retiring municipal staff can only be met, in part, with a strong employer brand which appeals to the new generation of workers.

2.0 Research Methodology

This section outlines the research methodology used to produce this study.

2.1 Research Preparations, Requirements and Scope of Work

To produce this study, the following activities were completed:

➢ *Project Proposal*

A 5 page report describing the research question, a preliminary survey of the literature, an outline of the methodology, expected outcomes and a timetable were submitted to a group of examiners. An oral presentation was also provided and approval was granted in December 2007.

➢ *Review of Internal Documentation*

Background information on Metro Vancouver municipalities including performance plans and succession planning documents, quantitative reports, along with past employee surveys and results were reviewed.

➢ *Development of the Survey*

A 42 question survey was developed with the sole purpose of gauging the attitudes of Generation Y post-secondary students towards municipal employment in Metro Vancouver. Essentially, there are 21 unique questions that each consist of two parts – municipal and private sector. Even though the primary subject of interest is attitudes towards municipal employment, questions pertaining to the private sector were included to allow for comparison

between the two sectors and, thus, quantify the existence of differences in attitudes. The only personal information gathered was to confirm that participants were born between the years 1978 – 1995, and gender.

➢ *Ethics Committee Approval*

Primary research involving human interactions was a component of this study, thus, a proposal to the UNBC Research Ethics Board was required and approval was granted in December 2007. In addition, approval from the University of British Columbia Research Ethics Board was also needed in order to administer the survey on their campus. Approval was granted in January 2008. Simon Fraser University and Kwantlen University-College did not require submissions to their Research Ethics Boards as both of those institutions allow for research to be conducted on their campuses if it has been approved by the originating school.

➢ *Literature Review*

Numerous journal articles, books, research studies, government documents and websites were referenced in this study.

➢ *Administration of Survey*

Field testing began on January 7, 2008 and ended January 9, 2008. The survey was pre-tested with 10 students from Simon Fraser University. In general, the results of the field test resulted in only minor changes in the survey instrument. Full survey administration began on January 10, 2008 and lasted until January 24, 2008. No difficulties were found in comprehension or administration of the survey.

In total, 4 post-secondary institutions within the Metro Vancouver region were targeted for the survey. These particular institutions were chosen in order to ensure a geographically representative sample; moreover, a significant number of graduates from these institutions are employed in the municipal sector. Of the 4 post-secondary institutions initially targeted, the three listed below agreed to participate in the survey.

1. Kwantlen University-College
2. Simon Fraser University
3. University of British Columbia

British Columbia Institute of Technology declined participation as no faculty member would agree to sponsor the study.

Kwantlen University-College

A sample of 50 students with equal gender representation was selected from the Surrey campus. Surveys were administered in different areas of the campus.

Simon Fraser University

A sample of 100 students with equal gender representation was selected from the Burnaby campus. Surveys were administered in different areas of the campus.

University of British Columbia

A sample of 100 students with equal gender representation was selected from the Point Grey Campus. Surveys were administered randomly in different areas of the campus.

In attempt to ensure a high response rate, participants were given a bottle of water and an energy bar for completing the survey. In total, 580 students declined participation.

➤ *Analysis*

Statistical methods utilized in this study include frequency and tabular analysis as well as mean, median, and mode calculations. A more complex statistical analysis was not performed as it was deemed unnecessary. The primary intent of the survey was to assess attitudes of Generation Y post-secondary students regarding municipal employment and to compare them with attitudes on private sector employment. This was achieved using the methods described and, therefore, did not necessitate further analysis.

➤ *Research Limitations*

It should be noted that while the results presented in this report are based on a robust sample of 250 surveys, there are limitations associated with the information obtained. The following are possible caveats associated with the use of information in this study.

Possible Sampling Error. While the data obtained from this survey can be viewed with confidence given the high response rate, there is always a possibility that the data collected is not an exact representation of the population.

<u>Misinterpretation of Survey Questions.</u> Although the survey instrument was tested for applicability and understanding, there remains the possibility that respondents misunderstood some questions and, therefore, certain information provided by respondents may not be entirely accurate.

<u>Data Represents a "Snapshot" of Respondent Input.</u> As the data collection for the survey was undertaken during a single time period, from January 10, 2008 to January 24, 2008, the data only represents a "snapshot" of respondents' situations at that time. Thus, the information obtained might not be reflective of the future circumstances and opinions of participants. For example, the high profile City of Vancouver strike could have been at the forefront of participants' minds and, thus, negatively affected their attitudes towards municipal employment. Had the survey been administered at a time of labour harmony, municipal employment might have been perceived more favorably.

Although there is a possibility that these research limitations could have some influence on the findings, the participation of 250 people in this study indicates that the results can be viewed as a good approximation of Generation Y post-secondary students' attitudes towards employment in Metro Vancouver's municipal public service.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

This section provides an overall framework and academic context in which to understand the research and covers the topics of generational cohorts; employer branding; employer attractiveness and; defines factors Generation Y values in an employment relationship.

3.1 Generational Cohorts

To create an employer branding campaign targeted towards a particular age group, it is essential to validate the premise that indeed there are distinct generational cohorts.

The notion of distinct generational cohorts based on year of birth is one that is important as it allows us to categorize and, thus, make broad generalizations about segments of the population. It provides us with a way of understanding differences between age groups that are widespread in society today. Members of a generation are linked through shared life experiences which create a bond that ties members together in what has been termed cohorts. Thus, generational cohorts are groups of individuals who were born during the same time period and who experienced similar events during their formative years.[12] These common life experiences create cohesiveness in values, attitudes and beliefs that result in a social character distinct to each generational cohort that are formed through socialization and remain relatively stable throughout the cohort's lifetime.[13]

Fundamental to generational theory is that each generation is shaped by a series of events that people with common birth years relate to and develop common beliefs and behaviors around. These commonly held beliefs and behaviors then form the personality of that

generation.[14] For example, ask any Generation Y member where they were on September 11, 2001 and most can tell you, and most will share common perspectives about that event; the same is true for the Baby Boomers in regard to when Kennedy was shot and Generation X in regard to the Challenger disaster.

Feeding into the formation of different generations is the concept that the personality of a generation is cyclical. With that, approximately every third generation will closely emulate the values and beliefs of three generations prior:[15]

1. Each generation breaks with the generation nearest in age to them, whose style no longer functions well in the new era (For example, Gen Y prefers to work in teams whereas Gen X is very independent).[16]

2. Each generation wants to correct what it perceives as the excesses of the current midlife generation (For example, Boomers were active protesters while many members of Generation Y are not politically active, nor do they express a propensity to do so in the future).[17]

3. Each generation fills the social role being vacated by the departing elder generation (Generation Y has a strong connection to the Silent Generation's upbeat and trusting attitude. The Silent Generation is the generation preceding the Baby Boomers).[18]

It is in this way a generation is born.

In their seminal work titled *Generations*, Strauss and Howe observed cyclical trends in people's attitudes concerning religion, government, education, drugs and alcohol, conformity, materialism, occupation, wealth disparity, suicide, self esteem, and others. Of course not all persons share their particular generation's traits, but the claim is that on average the definitions are largely accurate.

Strauss and Howe proposed that the cycle is driven mainly by the desire of parents to overcompensate for the flaws they remember from their own childhood. This is expressed in the raising of their own children and in attitudes towards childrearing by society in general.

One example given by Strauss and Howe would be a father who remembers his childhood (1930's) as being restrictive and smothering. As a parent he might try to provide his Boomer child with a childhood (1960's) that has greater freedom and less supervision than he had. That Boomer child might become a parent who remembers his childhood environment as not controlled enough, and swing back to being a more restrictive parent to his Generation Y child (1990's).

The four cycle model proposed by Strauss and Howe is (1) underprotection, (2) increasing nurture, (3) over protection, and (4) decreasing nurture. After the cycle of open upbringing given to the Boomer generation, a cycle of underprotection was provided to the Generation X youth. Now we see a reversal of those trends in the increased attention being paid to the raising of children today.

Strauss and Howe describe four generational phases of life, each with distinct roles to play in the social scheme.

- Elders - Main role is stewardship and the passing on of values.
- Midlife Adults - Main role is leadership and directing the institutions.
- Rising Adults - Main role is activity serving the institutions.
- Youth - Main role is a dependent one involving learning and acquiring values.

When a major social trauma occurs, such as a war or famine, each of the generational groups reacts to the crisis according to the phase of life they are in. As time passes, the lasting effect of the event tends to mold each group's personality differently. As each group moves into a new phase of life they carry a different perspective from the previous generation and carry on the role in their own distinctive way. This feedback system tends to repeat itself every four generations.

Strauss and Howe's theories present a logical framework in which differences between generational cohorts can be understood. It is important to note that Strauss and Howe do not contend that there are rigid and finite boundaries between generations, which is crucial to the validity of the framework. It would be unrealistic to view the characteristics of each generation as exclusive and absolute. A useful way to look at differences and similarities between generations is in terms of a continuous spectrum (see Figure 2) wherein each generation differs in the level of importance it places on a certain variable.

Figure 2

Variable: Value Ethnic Diversity in the Workplace

Low   High

Baby Boomers   Gen Y
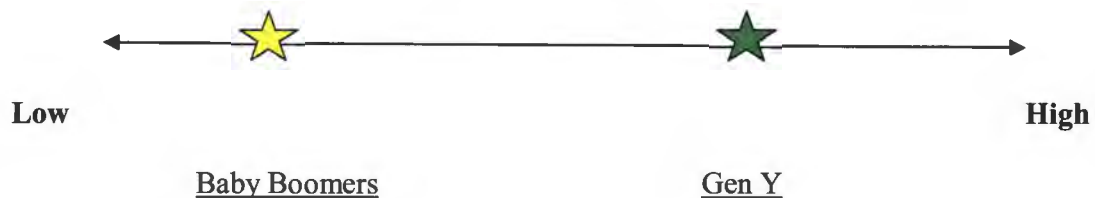
Generational theory states that generational characteristics are generalizations by which one can draw broad conclusions about the collective group, but not necessarily of the individuals. For instance, if there is a large age gap between siblings—one that crosses generations—the younger sibling may relate with many of the events and values of their older brother or sister.

Building on the concept that unique generational cohorts do in fact exist, I will now discuss some of the widely accepted characteristics of the Baby Boom Generation, Generation X and Generation Y. Although the primary cohort of interest is Generation Y, a brief discussion of the others will provide a more complete contextual picture by differentiating between generations.

3.2 Baby Boom Generation

The Baby Boom describes a period of increased birthrates lasting from the early 1950's to about 1965. The Great Depression of the 1930's had prolonged the decline in Canada's birthrate, as it had in most Western countries. The low point in Canada was reached in 1937,

when the gross birthrate (the annual number of live births per 1000 inhabitants) was 20.1.[19] Improved economic conditions caused a recovery that accelerated during World War II. By 1945 the birthrate had risen to 24.3 per 1000 inhabitants; by 1946 it had jumped to 27.2 per 1000 inhabitants and remained between 27 and 28.5 per 1000 until 1959 after which it gradually declined.[20]

Between 1940 and 1965 the annual number of births in Canada rose from 253 000 in 1940 to 479 000 in 1960, but dropped to 419 000 in 1965.[21] Over a period of 25 years, the baby boom produced about 1.5 million more births than would otherwise have occurred (about 8.6 million), an increase of more than 18%.[22]

The Baby Boomers were the first group to be raised with televisions in the home and television has been identified as the institution that solidified the sense of generational identity more than any other. Starting in the 1950's, people in diverse geographic locations could watch the same shows, listen to the same news, and laugh at the same jokes. Television shows such as *Father Knows Best* and *Leave it to Beaver* showed idealized family settings.

One of the contributions made by the Boomer generation appears to be the expansion of individual freedom. Boomers often are associated with the civil rights movement, the feminist cause in the 1970's, gay rights, handicapped rights, and the right to privacy.

Baby boomers presently make up the lion's share of the political, cultural, industrial, and academic leadership class in the world. To date, baby boomers also have the highest median household incomes in North America.[23]

3.3 Generation X

Generation X is a term first made popular by acclaimed Canadian author Douglas Coupland and is used to describe generations in many countries around the world born during the 1960's and 1970's. Although the exact demographic boundaries of Generation X are not well defined, Coupland used it in 1989-1991, when he wrote his book "Generation X", to describe young people like him. Coupland was born in 1961. The term became used in demography, the social sciences, and marketing, though it is most often used in popular culture.

Some of the defining factors used in describing Generation X stem from social transitions resulting from the decline of colonial imperialism to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. Another more prevalent factor is a bell curve bottoming out in Canadian births from 1960 through 1980, after the baby boom. A small, often "invisible generation" in the wake of the socially-reconstructing baby boomers, those born between 1964 and 1978 received the "X" tag for lack of a defining social identity.

As young adults, Generation X drew media attention in the late 1980's and early 1990's, gaining a stereotypical reputation as apathetic, cynical, disaffected, streetwise loners and slackers.

In addition, Generation X is noted as one of the most entrepreneurial and technology friendly generations in Canadian history as it has driven a majority of the Internet's growth and

ingenuity from day one. Google, Yahoo!, MySpace, Dell, YouTube, and other billion-dollar technology companies were founded by people in the Generation X demographic.[24]

Generation X thinking has significant overtones of cynicism against things held dear to the previous generations, mainly the Baby Boomers.[25] Many of those in Generation X tend to be very consumer driven and media savvy. Another cultural hallmark of Generation X was grunge music, which grew out of the frustrations and disenchantment of some teenagers and young adults.

Generation X grew up during the end of the Cold War and the Brian Mulroney/Ronald Reagan eras. As the first of their cohort reached adulthood, they experienced the collapse of the Soviet Union and the United States of America's emergence as the world's lone superpower.

The employment of Generation X is volatile as members grew up in a rapidly deindustrializing Western world, experienced the economic recession of the early 1990's and 2000's, saw traditional permanent job contracts being supplanted with unsecured short-term contracts, experienced off-shoring and outsourcing and often experienced years of unemployment or underemployment at typical jobs in their young adulthood. Many found themselves overeducated and underemployed, leaving a deep sense of insecurity.[26] Generation X does not take any employment for granted as their baby boomer parents did, nor do they consider unemployment a catastrophe.[27]

3.4 Generation Y

Generation Y, born between 1978 and 1995, goes by many names: Millenials, Echo Generation, Internet Generation, Nintendo Generation, Digital Generation, Sunshine Generation, Nexters, and Boomlets.[28]

For a group as large, diverse, and keen at multi-tasking as this one is, having a multitude of names to describe it is not surprising. What might be more surprising is how little Generation Y has in common with its predecessor, Generation X. In fact, Generation Y is more closely aligned with the Silent Generation than any other generation.[29]

Members of Generation Y are very confident in themselves and optimistic about the future. Unlike Generation X, many of whom were latchkey kids and children of divorce, Gen Y'ers were given full attention by their parents. As a result, this generation is strongly family-focused, and shares a fundamental traditionalist view of the importance of family.[30]

Gen Y'ers are sociable, collaborative, and open-minded. Having grown up with more interaction from other ethnicities, cultures, and sexual orientations than any previous generation, they prefer working together for a cause. They are global thinkers, attuned to the 'big picture' and see everything as connected. As would be expected, this group is technically literate like no one else. Technology has always been part of their lives, whether it is computers and the Internet or cell phones and text pagers.

No discussion concerning the characteristics of Generation Y can be complete without reviewing Howe and Strauss's extensive research on the topic that suggests members of

Generation Y are best characterized as optimistic, team players, followers, smart, coddled, and accept authority. They are the most demographically diverse and numerous generation that has ever existed. Academic standards for this generation have sharply risen from when Generation X was in elementary school.[31] Generation Y is much more community-oriented and they desire to do good civic deeds and take advantage of "service learning" opportunities.[32]

3.5 Employer Branding

If governments are both to compete successfully for talented applicants and retain high performing employees, they need to brand government as an employer of choice that provides challenging work, progressive human resource policies, and opportunities for promotion and career development.

Employer branding has been described as the sum of a company's efforts to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work.[33] Advertising is a critical tool in the efforts that firms make to identify, acquire and retain skilled employees. Increasingly, it is likely to also be used to create what has in the popular business press recently been referred to as 'employment brands'[34] – building and sustaining employment propositions that are compelling and different. The moniker 'employer brand' appears to have first been coined by Ambler and Barrow, who defined it as 'the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company'.[35] The authors go on to suggest that, just like a traditional brand, an employer brand has both personality and positioning. Employment branding is therefore

concerned with building an image in the minds of the potential labour market that the company, above all others, is a 'great place to work'.[36]

According to human resources consultants Hewitt Associates, there are five steps to developing a strong employer brand: (i) understand your organization, (ii) create a 'compelling brand promise' for employees that mirrors the brand promise for customers, (iii) develop standards to measure the fulfillment of the brand promise, (iv) 'ruthlessly align' all people practices to support and reinforce the brand promise, and (v) execute and measure.[37] Moreover, it is posited that companies with strong employer brands can potentially reduce the cost of employee acquisition, improve employee relations, increase employee retention and even offer lower salaries for comparable staff of firms with weaker employer brands.[38]

Collins and Stevens, confirming prior research, suggest that early recruitment activities are indirectly related to intentions and decisions through two dimensions of employer brand image: general attitudes towards the company and perceived job attributes.[39] Examples of employer brands, and indeed employer advertising, are becoming increasingly common.

Ewing *et al.* classify existing approaches to employment branding by identifying three basic types of employment advertising strategy, and provide numerous examples of each.[40] While there are numerous examples of 'employer advertising', few are as explicit as a recent DaimlerChrysler ad, which appears to target potential employees as the primary audience. The double-page spread advertisement in Figure 3 shows a number of DaimlerChrysler vehicles, positioning them not as consumer products but as company cars (i.e. a potential

benefit for prospective employees). The messaging is even more direct: 'As a successful car

company there are many things that make working for us an attractive prospect.'

Figure 3

3.6 Employer Attractiveness

A closely related concept to employer branding is the notion of employer attractiveness. This

concept has been broadly discussed in the areas of vocational behaviour, applied psychology,

and marketing. It has also become an increasingly hot topic in contemporary business and

'Best Employer' status is something that more and more organizations are striving for, as attention is drawn to this honor in both the electronic and print media.

Employer attractiveness can be defined as "the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization." [41] The construct may be thought of as an element of the more general concept of employer brand equity. In other words, the more attractive an employer is perceived to be by potential employees, the stronger that particular organization's employer brand equity.

While employer branding can be a highly effective human capital management tool, the *2006/07 Vedior Asia Pacific Employment Trends Survey* found that government sector respondents were much more likely to consider investment in employer branding unimportant. This is surprising not only because of the benefits offered by employer branding, but because the need to change perceptions of government sector employment have long been recognized. Internationally, research has identified the need for public organizations to make a comprehensive investment in building a positive and credible image of their work and working conditions.

3.7 What Does Generation Y Value in an Employment Relationship?
Having defined the general differences between generational cohorts, we will now look specifically at what Generation Y values in an *employment* relationship.

Work values can be defined as generalized beliefs about the desirability of various aspects of work (e.g., pay, autonomy, working conditions), and work-related outcomes (e.g., accomplishment, fulfillment, prestige).[42] Work values are viewed to be hierarchically ordered in the individual's mind in terms of their relative importance. Work values represent cognitive expressions of the various needs or goals that are addressed through one's work and working, including monetary security, social interaction, intellectual stimulation, status, esteem and self-actualization needs.[43] In simple terms, work values answer the question of what is important to the individual in their work. It is critical to note that work values are not evaluations of specific work aspects or outcomes, but are the underlying criteria that are used to make such evaluations.

While a wide variety of work value typologies have been offered, there appears to be relative consensus on at least two fundamental types of work values: intrinsic work values, which pertain to the inherent psychological and cognitive satisfactions of working, such as interesting work, challenge, variety and intellectual stimulation; and extrinsic work values, which relate to material aspects of work, such as pay, benefits and job security.[44] While there is less consensus on other work values, researchers are almost uniform in suggesting the existence of the following: social work values, which pertain to relations with co-workers, supervisors and other people; altruistic work values, which involve the desire to help others and make a contribution to society; and prestige values, which relate to status, influence and power.[45]

A number of popular press publications have emerged in the past decade concerning the issue of generational differences in the workplace. The key supposition of such publications is that

there are fundamental differences between the younger generation of workers and their older colleagues with respect to their expectations and attitudes toward work. These differences, it is argued, have significant implications for the successful recruitment, motivation and retention of employees from different generational cohorts.

Generation Y, has had a formative period characterized by economic prosperity, technological advances and globalization. Many have argued that this generation has been profoundly shaped by the influence of the Internet and other information technology, which has provided them with entirely novel ways of thinking and communicating. While there has been relatively little opportunity to date to observe this young generation in the workforce, a number of stereotypical characterizations have been offered. Zemke et al. argued that Generation Y is highly achievement-oriented and have demonstrated a willingness to work hard and long at the expense of their private lives in order to attain success.[46] Lancaster and Stillman have suggested that members of Generation Y define success largely in materialistic terms and that they are particularly interested in status and prestige in their careers.[47] Generation Y is also said to view frequent change as positive and desirable, which causes them to become easily bored and makes them unwilling to stay in a single job for very long.[48]

A recent research study titled, *What Millennial Workers Want: How to Attract and Retain Gen Y Employees*, conducted by Robert Half International and Yahoo!, examines the professional priorities of the most senior members of Generation Y - those who have already started a career or will soon start

Top Career Concerns:
- **Financial security (33%)**
- Job stability (26%)
- Career satisfaction (23%)

one. The survey was conducted in the second quarter of 2007 by an independent research firm. It includes a total of 1,007 web interviews of people 21 to 28 years old who are employed full-time or part-time and have college degrees or are currently attending college. Among those surveyed, 505 were males, and 502 were females. The majority of respondents (79 percent) were college graduates employed full-time; the rest were employed part-time and/or still attending college.

When asked to rank the importance of 11 factors relating to job opportunities, survey respondents placed salary, benefits (including health insurance and pension plans) and opportunities for professional growth and advancement at the top of the list (see Figure 4). Factors such as the company's leadership, reputation and in-house training programs fell in the middle. Job title, meanwhile, came in seventh. At the bottom was the company's charitable or philanthropic efforts, however, that is not to say that social responsibility programs are not important as they can significantly increase appeal as an employer and boost employee morale. The survey results suggest they cannot compensate for a less-than-desirable paycheck or work environment.

Figure 4

Gen Y respondents ranked the following job considerations on a one-to-10 scale, with 10 being most important, and one least important.

Salary	9.05
Benefits (health insurance, 401(k), etc.)	8.86
Opportunities for career growth/advancement	8.74
The company's location	8.44
Company leadership	7.95
The company's reputation/brand recognition	7.56
Job title	7.19
In-house training programs	6.95
Tuition reimbursement programs	6.44
The diversity of the company's staff	6.07
The company's charitable/philanthropic efforts	6.06

Gen Y respondents ranked benefits as they pertain to their overall job satisfaction on a one-to-10 scale, with 10 being most important, and one least important.

Healthcare coverage	9.02
Vacation (paid time off)	8.82
Dental care coverage	8.80
401 (k) program	8.58
Bonuses	8.25
Flexible working hours/telecommuting	8.06
Profit-sharing plans	7.52
Subsidized training/education	7.51
Mentoring programs	6.41
Housing or relocation assistance	6.38
Free/subsidized snacks or lunch	6.02
Subsidized transportation	5.73
On-site perks (such as dry cleaning, fitness center)	5.59
Subsidized gym membership	5.59
Matching-gifts programs for charitable contributions	5.33
Sabbaticals	5.26
On-site childcare	4.92
Adoption assistance	4.05

Gen Y respondents ranked how much the following factors would influence them to leave one job for another on a one-to-five scale, with five having the most influence, and one the least.

Higher pay	4.63
Better perks and benefits	4.44
More opportunities for advancement	4.22
More interesting work	4.14
Better work environment	3.99
Shorter commute	3.51
More prestigious job title	3.39

Gen Y respondents ranked the following aspects of their work environment on a one-to-10 scale, with 10 being the most important, and one least important.

Working with a manager I can respect and learn from	8.74
Working with people I enjoy	8.69
Having work/life balance	8.63
Having a short commute	7.55
Working for a socially responsible company	7.42
Having a nice office space	7.14
Working with state-of-the-art technology	6.89

Some interesting and useful recommendations stemming from this study include:

1. Showcase perks such as in-house training programs, tuition reimbursement, paid time off to attend professional development events, and reimbursement of membership fees for professional associations. During recruiting events and job interviews, provide concrete examples of employees who have taken advantage of these opportunities so prospective hires know that capitalizing on these offerings is encouraged.

2. This group is attracted to corporate images and brand names. Even if your company is not well-known, you can provide information that speaks to your firm's reputation and what you stand for, including industry awards or accolades.

3. Website, recruitment advertising and corporate literature should communicate your firm's commitment to providing competitive salaries, top-notch benefits and career growth and describe your programs in vivid detail.

Much like the generations before them, Generation Y employees bring specific values and ideals to the business world. Creating an attractive environment for this generation will be particularly important in the coming years, as more baby boomers retire and firms look to new generations of workers to replace them.

4.0 Municipal Employment Value Proposition

Now that we have established what Generation Y wants in an employment relationship, we will look at what municipal employment offers prospective employees.

A sustainable employer brand must reflect the realities of the workplace. Though Metro Vancouver consists of 21 separate municipalities and an even greater number of individual workplaces, it is important to develop a consistent municipal employment value proposition. Despite the presence of many negative stereotypes and misinformation, municipal employment offers a very attractive "deal" to Generation Y and the public in general.

A wide variety of roles is available in the public sector

Though many do not realize it, the range of jobs offered by municipal employers is just as broad and varied as within the private sector. Municipal employers offer challenging and interesting jobs to graduates of almost all disciplines. Librarian, scientist, recreation worker, marketing professional, engineer, accountant, IT specialist, construction worker, human resource officer, and public relations officer are just a few of the roles available within Metro Vancouver's municipal sector. In total, over 30,000 workers are employed in 46 different occupational groups so there is a great diversity of work.

Work/life balance

In today's fast-paced society, more and more people struggle to maintain a healthy balance between work, family and a social life. Fortunately, municipal employers recognize that there is more to life than work and therefore make it a priority to create and emphasize a healthy

work/life balance for all staff, and, as such, promote flexible working arrangements and family-friendly policies. Municipal sector employees have the option of flexible working hours, part-time work, job sharing, home-based work and a range of other flexible working arrangements. Support is also provided to parents returning to work, and to those with school commitments. Further, normal hours worked per week are generally less than in the private sector and overtime and weekend work is virtually non-existent. These features of municipal work are an attractive element of its employment value proposition.

Professional development

Unlike many smaller employers in the private sector where employees may not be given much opportunity for training and development or for growth and progression within the company, municipal employers are committed to providing individual training and development opportunities. Training and development policies and guidelines are in place to ensure the development and growth of all staff. Individuals are given training plans and specific training opportunities such as attending conferences, workshops and seminars, on-the-job training and secondments to help meet training objectives. In addition, municipal employers support study towards further qualifications and offer study leave entitlements for approved study.

Make a difference

Many people enter the public sector out of a desire to make a difference. Rather than feathering the nest of a private corporation, public sector employees get a chance to contribute to making their local community stronger.

Diverse workforce

Public sector employers face a certain expectation to be "pace-setters" in terms of providing equitable employment opportunities. Concern with maintaining governments' appearance to be a "fair" employer works to the advantage of more vulnerable public sector workers. In part, because of such normative pressures, the public sector has outpaced the private in the implementation of anti-discrimination initiatives.[49] In British Columbia, female workers in the public sector, crown corporations, and education have benefited from both employment equity initiatives and a pay equity framework introduced in 1995, the *Public Sector Employers Council on Pay Equity Policy Framework*. This framework was designed to address the historic devaluation of female dominated work in the public sector. It requires the sectors covered to develop pay equity plans, file them with the government and pay adjustments for pay equity.

Competitive salaries and generous leave entitlements

Jobs in the municipal sector offer highly competitive salaries that are often well above the starting salaries graduates can expect from roles in the private sector.[50] Positions in the municipal sector are generally categorized according to a graded career structure that rewards performance, which means that employees are able to progress up the career ladder to higher salary grades. Comprehensive leave provisions including sick leave, annual vacation leave, maternity and paternity leave, long service leave, study leave and special leave (which may include compassionate leave and a range of others) are among the generous leave entitlements offered by most municipal employers.

Figure 5

Group	Men Hourly Wage ($) Private	Men Hourly Wage ($) Public	Private Sector Wages as % of Public	Women Hourly Wage ($) Private	Women Hourly Wage ($) Public	Private Sector Wages as % of Public
All	20.29	26.27	77.2	15.11	23.65	63.9
Age						
15–24	12.01	16.22	74.0	10.59	16.90	62.6
25–49	21.01	25.22	83.3	16.18	23.26	69.5
50–64	23.56	28.84	81.7	15.81	25.29	62.5
Education						
< = Highschool	17.86	21.70	82.3	13.57	19.75	68.7
Postseconday Diploma	21.54	23.65	91.1	15.97	22.81	70.0
Undergraduate Degree	25.12	27.46	91.5	19.13	26.07	73.4
MA, PhD.	26.10	30.24	86.3	23.55	28.99	81.2
Work hours						
Part-time	14.29	26.13	54.7	13.45	23.85	56.4
Full-time	20.78	26.29	79.0	16.09	23.73	67.8
Employment status						
Permanent	20.74	26.71	77.7	15.64	24.09	64.9
Seasonal or Casual	15.42	24.48	63.0	11.84	21.13	56.0
Contract	17.68	21.25	83.2	15.32	21.86	70.1
Tenure (Years)						
< 1	15.74	21.18	74.3	12.61	21.45	58.8
1–5	18.75	25.64	73.1	14.24	23.03	61.8
6–10	21.58	24.24	89.0	17.14	22.50	76.2
> 10	25.04	28.68	87.3	18.85	25.04	75.3
Place in Sector's Wage Distribution						
95%	38.46	43.27	38.5	34.62	38.46	34.6
90%	32.00	38.46	83.2	29.00	34.62	83.8
75%	25.00	31.25	80.0	23.00	29.49	78.0
50%	19.71	24.73	79.7	16.48	22.58	73.0
25%	13.00	20.00	65.0	11.00	19.00	57.9
10%	9.23	17.18	53.7	8.60	16.80	51.2
5%	8.24	15.00	54.9	8.00	14.10	56.7

Figure 5 is from a 2005 study commissioned by the B.C. Government that examined the disparity between public and private sector wages in B.C. Looking at the table, several things stand out. First, both men and women in the public sector do earn considerably more than private sector workers overall. The second finding of note is that a gap between public and

private sector wages remains even when workers with similar characteristics are compared. Differences in any one kind of characteristic, such as education or unionization, cannot account for all of the wage difference between workers in the two sectors.

Job security

This feature of municipal employment and of the public sector in general can be explained by the presence of unions and the stable nature of the public service. Very low employee turnover and attrition and a great number of long-service employees serve to quantify the high level of job security that exists in the municipal workforce.[51]

5.0 The Problem: Negative Perceptions of Public Sector Employment

One of the most significant issues affecting the competitiveness of the public sector is its general reputation. Public opinion regarding the work of all levels of government has been tracked over much of the last decade by EKOS Research Associates. While serving the public interest remains a significant but secondary consideration in career choices, a survey conducted in May 2007 suggests that the Public Service at all levels (federal, provincial and municipal) suffers from a negative image.[52]

In October 1997, 2537 Canadian university students from 17 universities completed a survey about their career aspirations, and their perceptions and attitudes regarding the job market they were about to enter. The exercise was part of a study undertaken by the Public Management Research Centre, a division of the Public Policy Forum, on behalf of the public Service Commission of Canada.

Though the majority of the participants in this study are unlikely to identify as members of Generation Y and the focus was on the Federal Public Service, the findings are still highly relevant for two important reasons. First, like the research in this report, the study examines recruitment issues with university students *prior* to their graduating. Second, as it states in the study, the majority of the findings apply equally across the broader public sector – including municipal.

The majority of students indicated a belief that the most opportunities for employment following graduation would be found in the private sector. This is not surprising given that the private sector employs approximately 70% of the total Canadian labour force.[53]

The large majority of participants viewed the private sector as the engine driving future job creation. Interestingly, a number of individuals who would be looking for employment in the private sector actually preferred to work for the federal government. In fact, twice as many of the student respondents preferred to work for the federal government than actually expected to find employment there.

Findings of the study that are most relevant to this report are:

- Approximately 18% of the students sampled said they would prefer to work for the federal government, with 65% preferring the private sector, followed by 7% who indicated provincial government, 4% a not-for-profit organization, and only 2% municipal government.

- Not surprisingly, students who preferred to work for the federal government had more positive impressions of the federal Public Service compared to the remainder of the student sample. Most notably, students with a preference for the federal government were more inclined to agree that the Public Service is committed to the betterment of Canada, and that public servants are committed to serving Canadians. As well, they were less inclined to believe that the federal Public Service is disconnected from the average citizen.

In September 2000, the BC Public Service Employee Relations Commission (PSERC) conducted a research study titled Opinion Research on Employment in the Public Service. The research is based on the views and opinions of more than 1,200 individuals who participated in focus group and/or telephone survey activities. The purpose of the study was to elicit opinions about the most and least attractive features of employment in the BC Public

Service and specifically, perceptions of the BC Government as an employer and the extent to which it meets the criteria of an employer of choice. Highlights of this study follow:

Focus group participants felt that the BC government is seen to provide job security, good pay and benefits, particularly for entry level jobs. However, it is not seen as rewarding "good employees", nor does it offer a dynamic work environment that provides challenging and interesting work. Many also noted that the Public Service was not conducive to quick decision making nor was it thought to promote autonomy. Most participants felt that the Public Service based promotions on seniority rather than personal merit.

Overall, survey results suggest that while the majority (approximately 60%) of current employees have a positive perception of government work, this perception is not shared by members of the general public. Common perceptions of public sector employment were that it was stifling, frustrating, bureaucratic and limiting.

Most participants believed that the BC public sector does a poor job of attracting potential new employees.

Although participants generally had a negative impression of the government, most would consider working there, nonetheless. Factors that prevent respondents from applying included the belief that their application would be rejected given the hundreds of applicants competing for a limited number of positions. Extensive requirements on job postings that included minimum experience often prevented recent graduates from applying for positions.

Highlighted in discussions in several focus groups was the need for government to consider programs/communications strategies that could influence public perception of the BC

Government as an employer. Many participants noted that they had very little idea as to what government did or what jobs were available. Communications issues discussed included the following:

- The need to enhance awareness of the "positive" jobs done by government employees, such as: protection of the environment/environmental stewardship; enforcement of justice/social/environmental regulations; contributions to economic growth/development.
- The need to publicize the range and availability of public service jobs. Many public participants did not know what kinds of jobs were available or how they could access such jobs/careers (limited knowledge of website).
- A communications strategy highlighting the accomplishments of government employees.

Participants from the general population were asked whether they felt that the government would be able to meet the requirements of the most important selection criteria chosen by the group. Overall, government was thought to meet pay and benefits requirements, and partially meet meaningful work and job security requirements. Independent work and intellectually stimulating work were requirements that the government was deemed unlikely to meet.

To summarize this study, the BC Public Service has a poor image among the general public as it feels that the red tape, bureaucracy and lack of creativity/initiative are major negatives associated with working in the BC Public Service. Very few participants felt that the BC Public Service offered a dynamic work environment in which hard work and initiative are rewarded. Rather, many felt that the Public Service sheltered too many employees who were

not "pulling their weight". Once again, as the report states, these findings can equally be applied to the municipal sector.

Although these studies are relevant to the subject matter, there are some important differences that necessitated further research. First, the two studies cited in this section are specifically concerned with the federal and British Columbia public sectors, not municipal. Second, the studies are more than five years old and, thus, are not current. Due to these factors, primary research was also conducted.

6.0 Survey Analysis

To quantify Generation Y's attitudes towards municipal employment in Metro Vancouver, a survey was administered at 3 post-secondary institutions in the Metro Vancouver region. 250 students took part in the survey and their responses reinforced many commonly held stereotypes of public sector employment.

In total, there were 21 two-part questions which asked each respondent to indicate on a 7 point Likert scale to what extent they agreed with the statement made. To simplify survey analysis, each point on the scale has been attached to a numerical value (see Table 1).

Table 1

Each question surveyed the respondent on their attitude towards the question's subject in both municipal and private sector settings. The purpose of introducing questions related to the private sector was to provide a basis for comparison.

1	Strongly Agree
2	Agree
3	Somewhat Agree
4	Neutral
5	Somewhat Disagree
6	Disagree
7	Strongly Disagree

The following section will discuss the survey results using frequency and tabular analysis as well as mean, median and mode calculations. The first part of this discussion will focus on the aspects of municipal employment that garnered the most positive responses.

Pay – 71% of participants responded in the range 'Somewhat Agree' to 'Agree' to the statement "Municipal employers in Metro Vancouver pay well." There was no significant difference in perceptions of pay between the municipal and private sectors in terms of mean and median calculations. The mode response was 'Somewhat Agree' while the most frequent response to the corresponding private sector question was 'Agree'. The response to this question is surprising and should be interpreted positively in light of the common stereotype that municipal employers offer lower wages than their private sector counterparts.

Figure 6
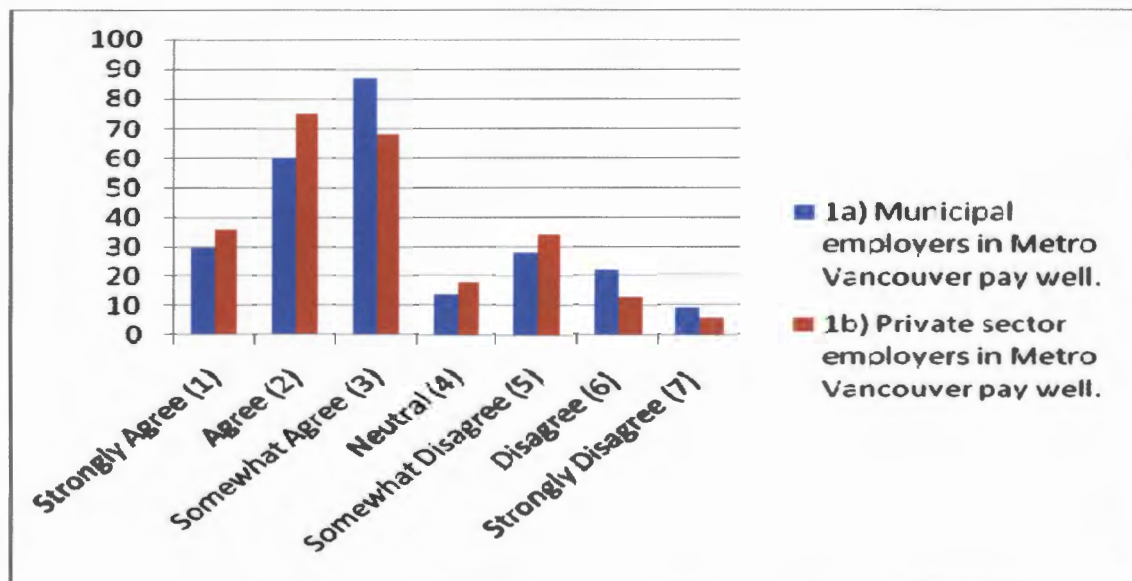
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	3.21	3	3
Private	3.01	3	2

Benefits – Municipal employers were perceived to offer better benefits than private sector employers. The most popular response to the statement "Metro Vancouver municipal employers offer good benefits packages" was 'Agree' and, overall, 71% of responses ranged between 'Somewhat Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'.

Figure 7
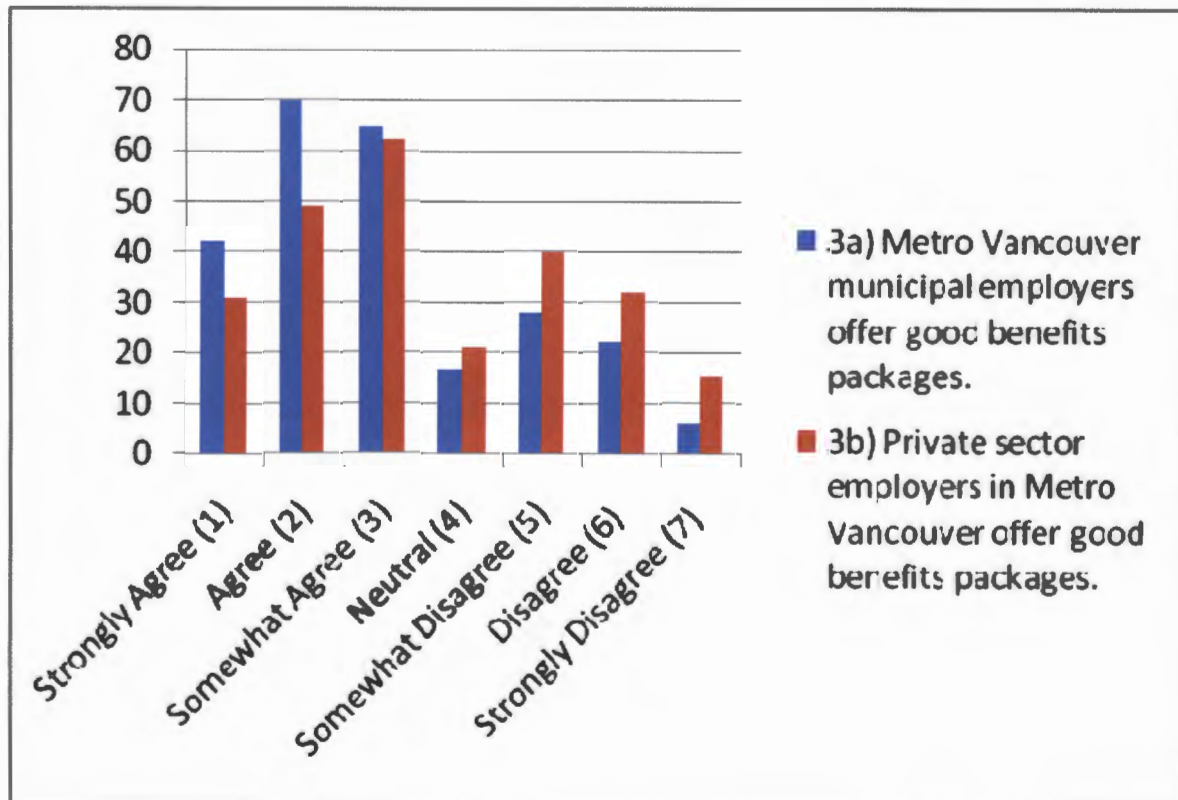
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	3.04	3	2
Private	3.58	3	3

Work that Makes a Positive Contribution – Municipal employment was perceived to make

a greater contribution to society than private sector employment. 78% of responses ranged

between 'Somewhat Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' to the statement "The work of Metro

Vancouver municipalities makes a positive contribution to my community and the betterment

of society." Though the median and mode responses were 'Somewhat Agree' for both

municipal and private sector, municipal employers were perceived more favorably on

average as the mean score was better.

Figure 8
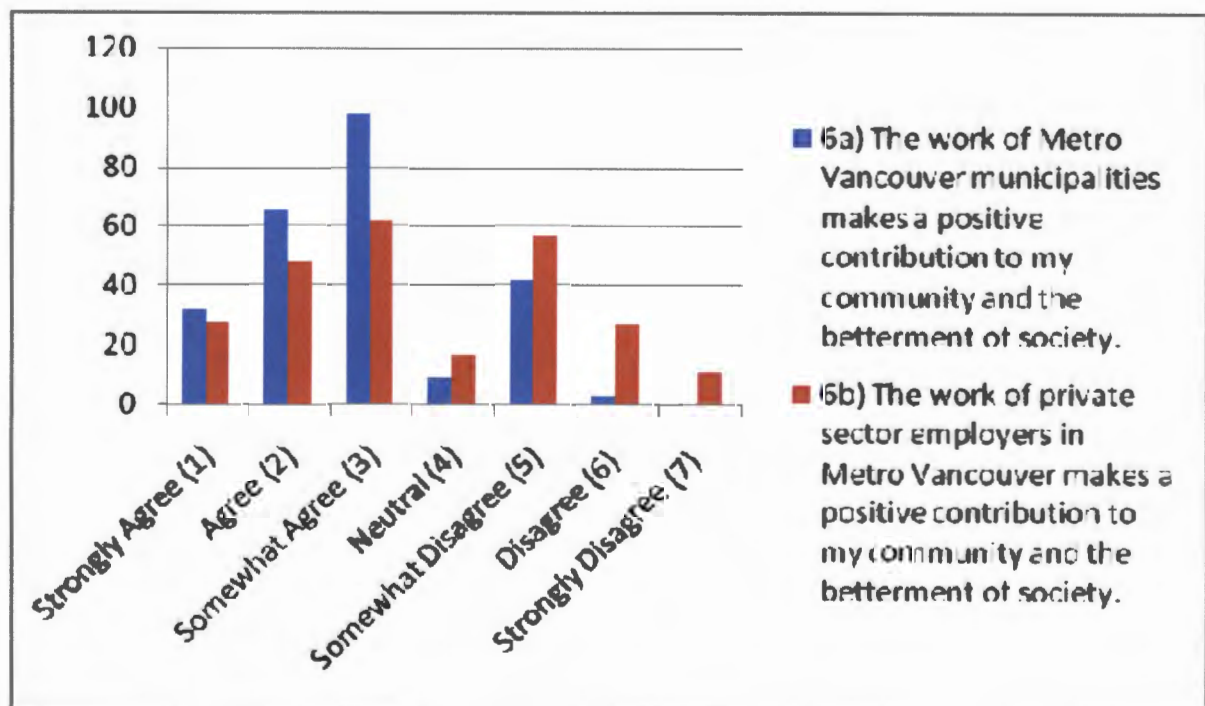
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	2.89	3	3
Private	3.61	3	3

Work-Life Balance – 73% of responses ranged between 'Somewhat Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' to the statement "Municipal employment in Metro Vancouver allows for a favorable work/life balance", as compared to only 49% for the corresponding statement concerning private sector employment. Median and mode responses were 'Somewhat Agree' and the mean response was also in that range.

Figure 9
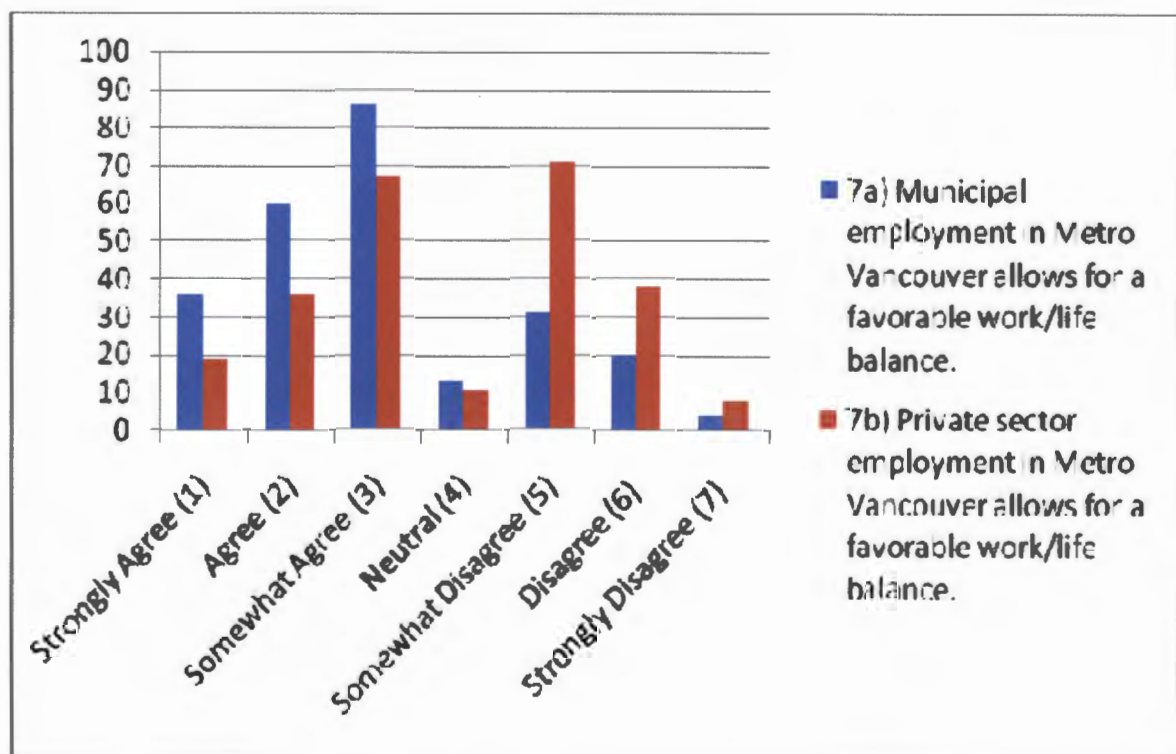
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	3.08	3	3
Private	3.90	4	5

Job Security – As would be expected given the predominance of Unions in municipal workplaces, perceptions of job security rated very high as 82% of responses ranged between 'Somewhat Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' to the statement "Municipal employment in Metro Vancouver offers a high level of job security." Perceptions of job security in the private sector were far worse as 66% of responses ranged between 'Somewhat Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' to the corresponding statement concerning private sector employment.

Figure 10
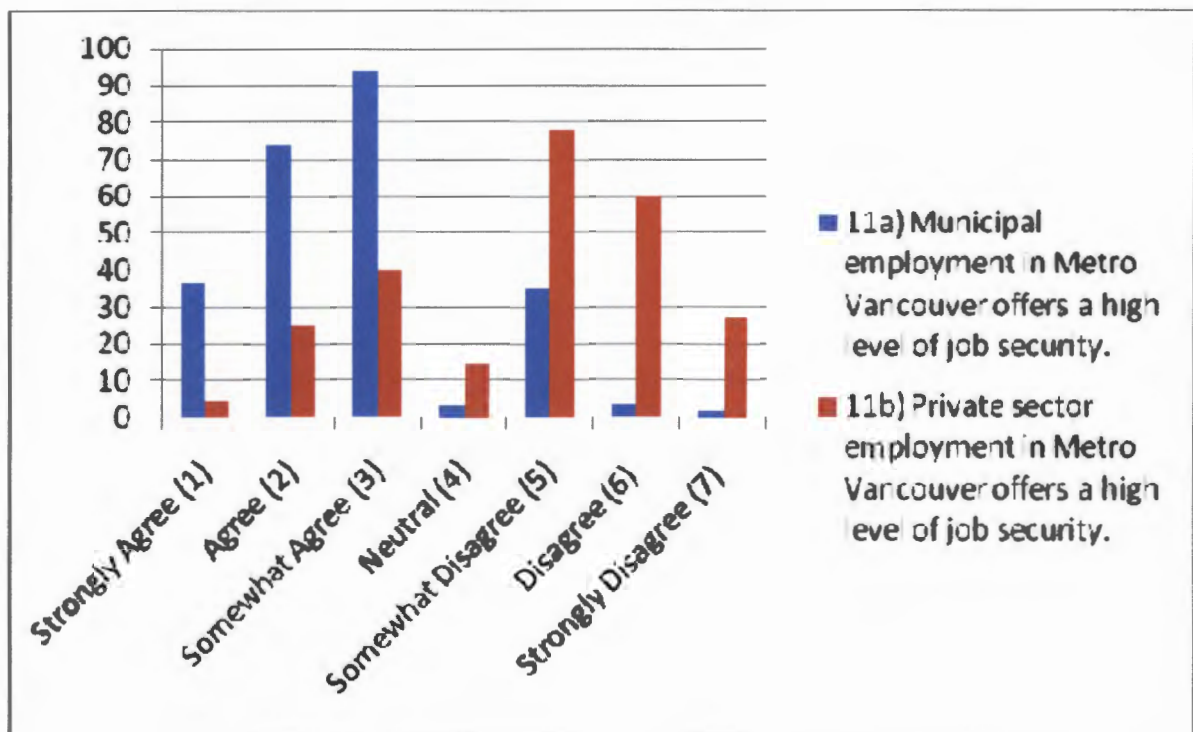
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	2.78	3	3
Private	4.70	5	5

Low Stress – The overwhelming majority of respondents perceived municipal employment to be low in stress as 78% of respondents answered in the range 'Somewhat Agree' to 'Strongly Agree' to the statement "Careers with Metro Vancouver municipal employers are generally low stress." The mean, median and mode responses were significantly more favorable for municipal employers. To illustrate this point, for the corresponding private sector question, the most frequent response was 'Strongly Disagree' while the most frequent response for the municipal sector was 'Somewhat Agree.

Figure 11
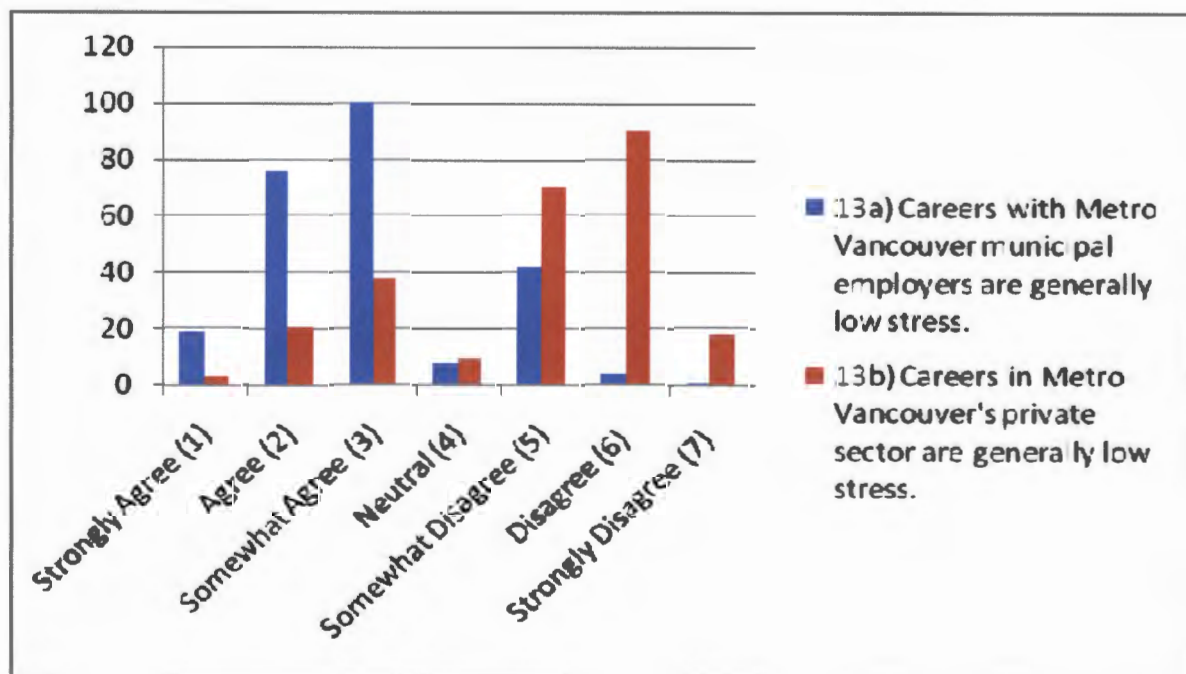
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	2.98	3	3
Private	4.86	5	6

Good Workplace Relationships – Responses to this question indicate that there is only a small, rather insignificant, difference in perceptions between municipal and private sector employment. Mean, median and mode responses were 'Somewhat Agree' to the statement "Good relationships with bosses and co-workers are characteristic of municipal employment in Metro Vancouver." The mean, median and mode responses were also 'Somewhat Agree' to the corresponding statement pertaining to the private sector.

Figure 12
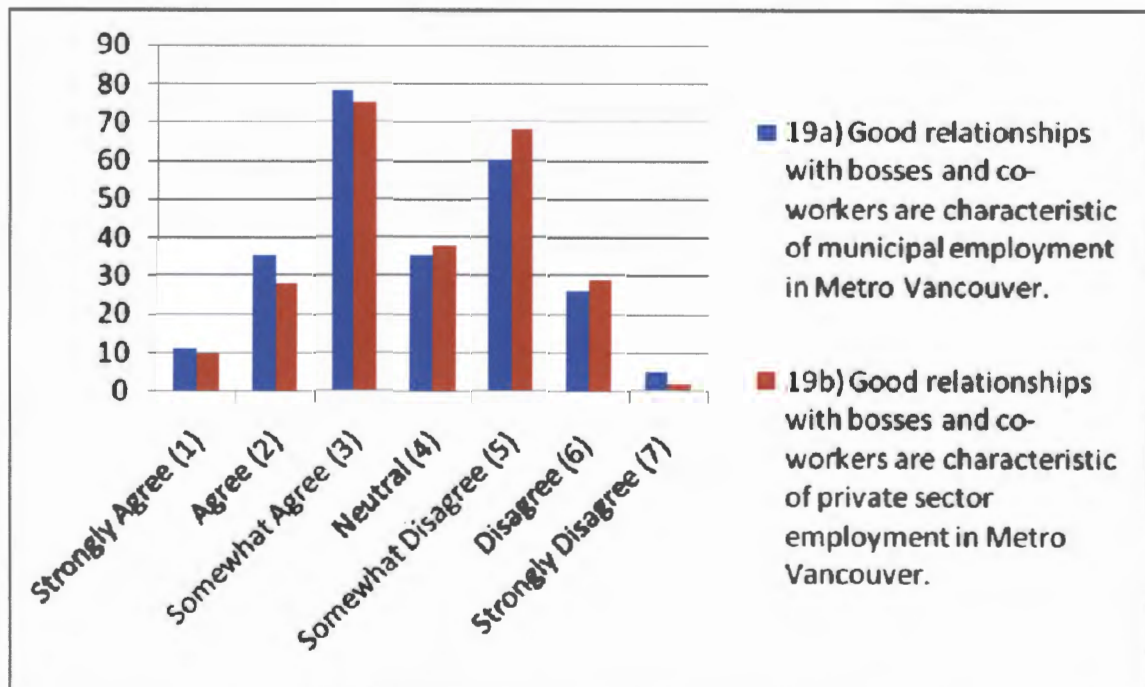
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	3.78	3	3
Private	3.88	3	3

Though Generation Y post-secondary students hold several favorable perceptions of municipal employment in Metro Vancouver, there are a far greater number of negative perceptions. The next section will discuss these unfavorable attitudes.
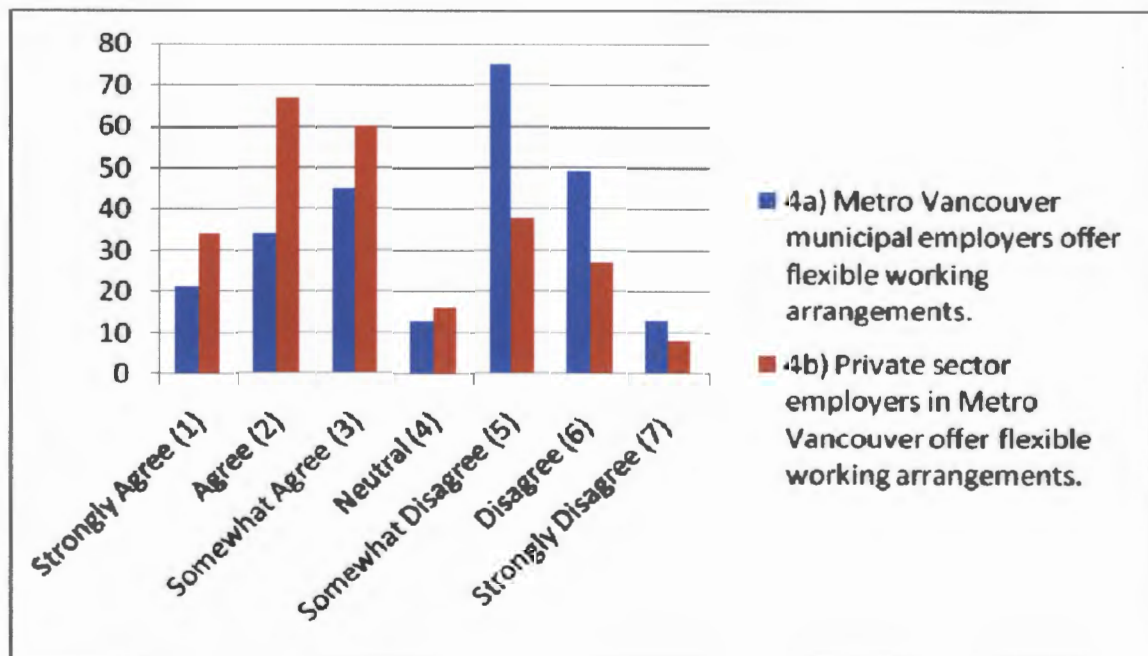
6.2 Negative Perceptions of Municipal Employment

Ability to Achieve Financial Goals – Less than half (44%) of respondents answered in the range 'Somewhat Agree' to 'Strongly Agree' to the statement "Working for a Metro Vancouver municipality will allow me to achieve my financial goals." Comparing mean, median and mode calculations indicates that the majority of respondents believe they would be more likely to achieve their financial goals, whatever those may be, through private sector employment.

Figure 13

	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	4.24	4	3
Private	2.85	2	2
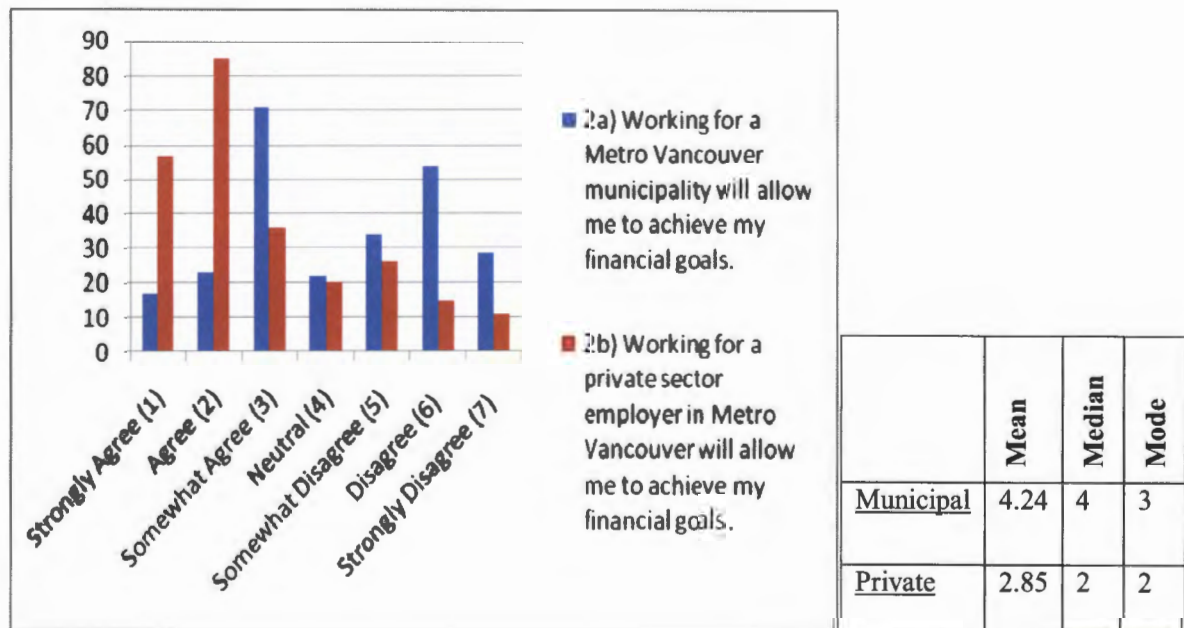
Flexible Work Arrangements – In response to the statement "Metro Vancouver municipal employers offer flexible work arrangements", the mean and median responses were in the 'Netural' range (4). The most popular response was 'Somewhat Disagree'. Fewer than half (40%) of the respondents answered in the 'Somewhat Agree' to 'Strongly Agree' range. The general perception was that private sector employers offered more flexibility in work arrangements than municipal employers.

Figure 14

	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	4.14	4	5
Private	3.30	3	2

Career Development and Training – The mean, median and mode calculations were very similar to those for the previous question concerning 'Flexible Work Arrangements'. Once again, less than half (44%) of respondents answered in the positive range of 'Somewhat Agree' to 'Strongly Agree' to the statement "Metro Vancouver municipal employers offer a high availability of career development and training activities." Private sector employment was perceived more favorably as 71% of respondents answered in the positive range and the most common response was 'Agree'.

Figure 15
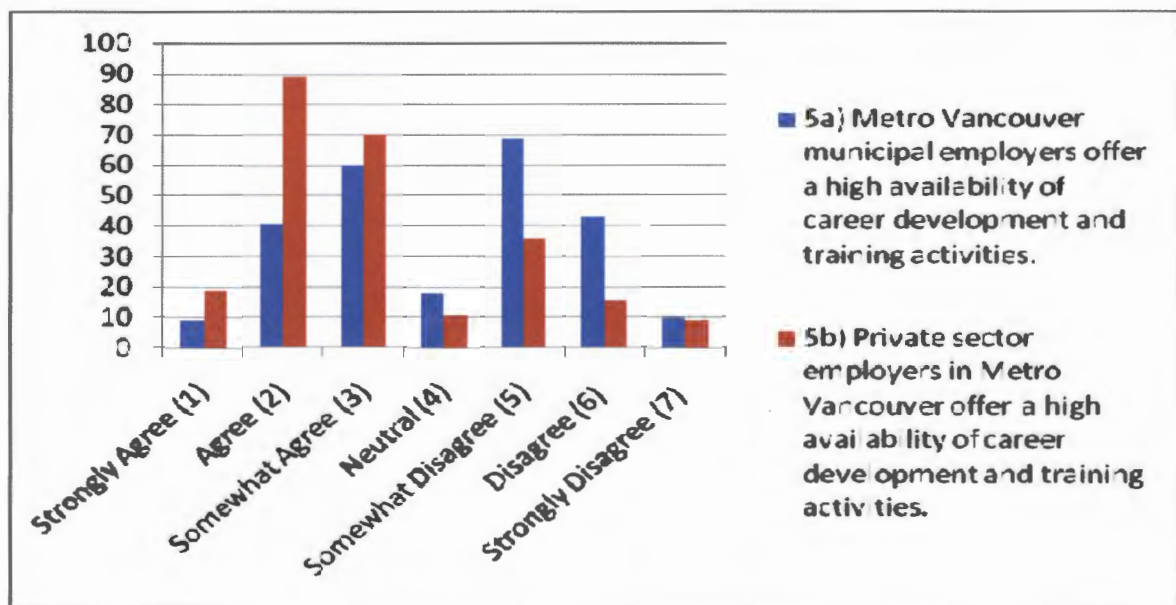
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	4.10	4	5
Private	3.16	3	2

Promotion Based on Merit – The most popular response to the statement "Municipal employers in Metro Vancouver promote their employees based on individual merit" was 'Disagree'. Only 40% of respondents answered in the positive range as opposed to 80% who answered in the positive range when asked if they thought private sector employers promoted their employees based on individual merit. The mean score for the private sector was also much better at 2.79 compared to 4.49 for municipal employers.

Figure 16
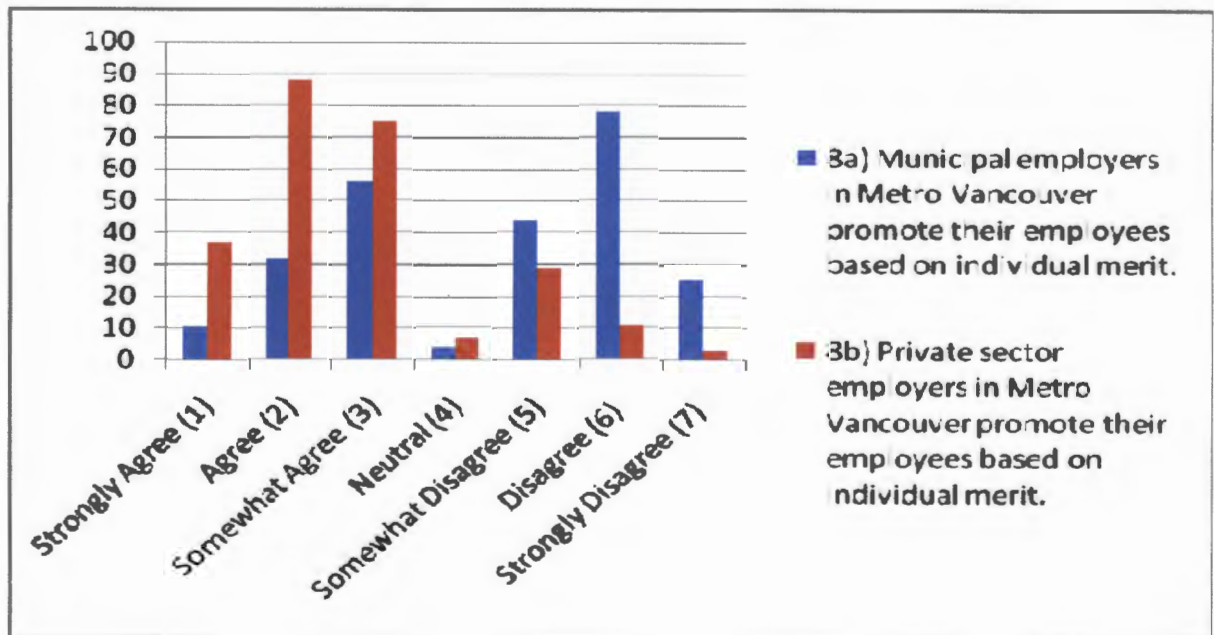
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	4.49	5	6
Private	2.79	2	2

Intellectually Stimulating/Challenging Work – Just over a third (38%) of respondents answered in the positive range to the statement "Municipal employment in Metro Vancouver offers intellectually challenging/interesting work." This compares unfavorably to 76% of respondents who answered positively to the corresponding statement pertaining to private sector employment. Naturally, mean, median and mode calculations were far better for the private sector as well.

Figure 17
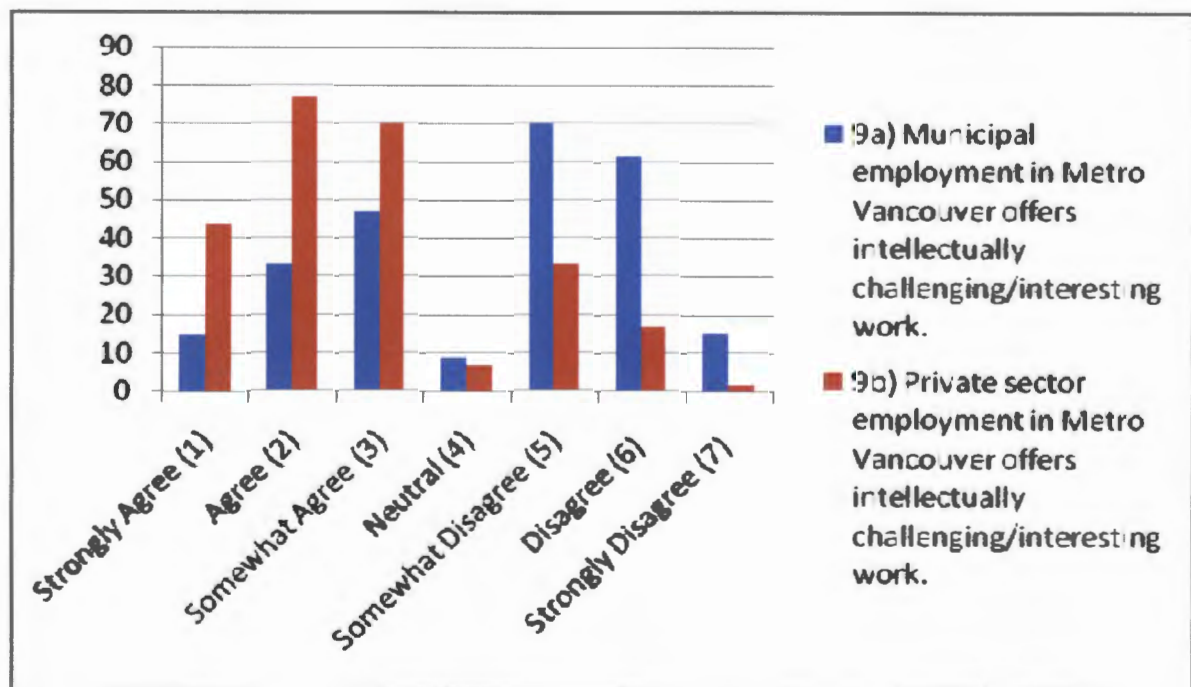
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	4.32	5	5
Private	2.87	3	2

Work is Positively Perceived by Peers – Approximately one third (33%) of respondents answered in the positive range to the statement "Working for a municipal employer in Metro Vancouver is positively perceived by my peers." Both the median and the mode responses were 'Somewhat Disagree' so, overall, it appears that municipal employment is not very positively perceived by the majority of respondents' peers.

Figure 18
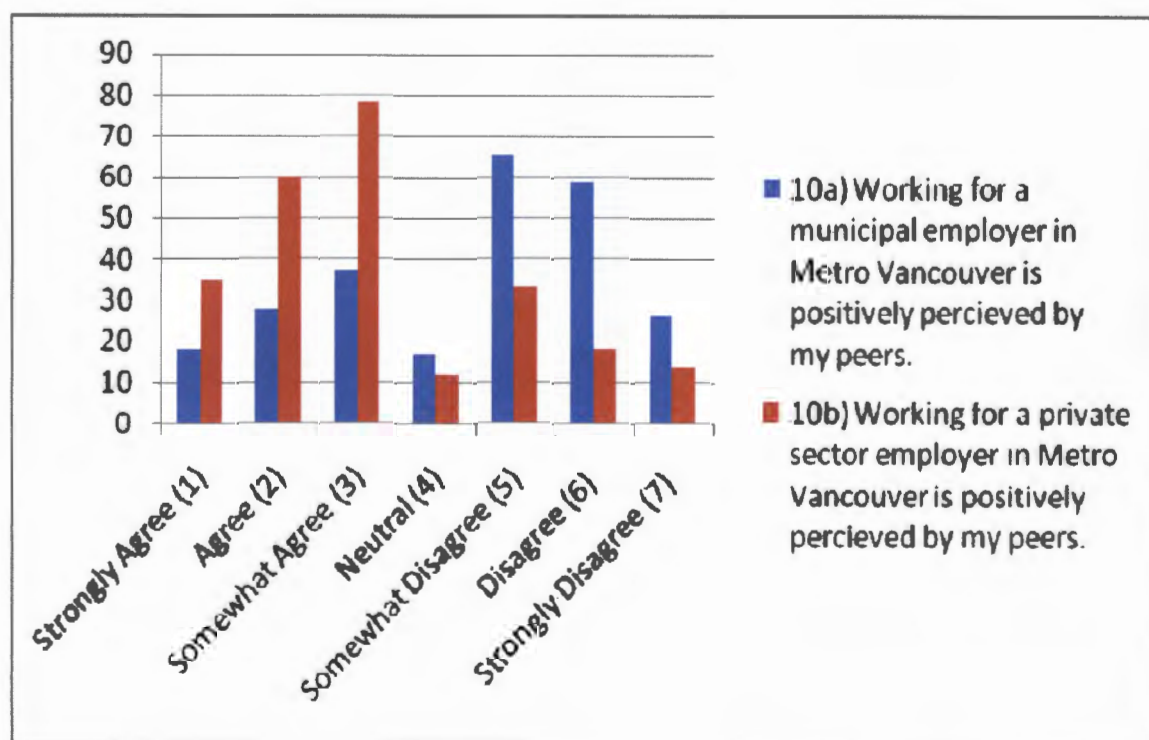
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	4.46	5	5
Private	3.23	3	3

Reward for Creativity and Initiative – Responses to this question showed a considerable difference between perceptions of municipal and private sector employment. Only 25% of respondents answered in the positive range to the statement "Metro Vancouver municipal employers recognize and reward their employee's creativity and initiative", whereas 74% answered within the positive range to the corresponding question pertaining to the private sector. The mode was 'Disagree' and the mean calculation was 4.84, which is very close to 'Somewhat Disagree'.

Figure 19
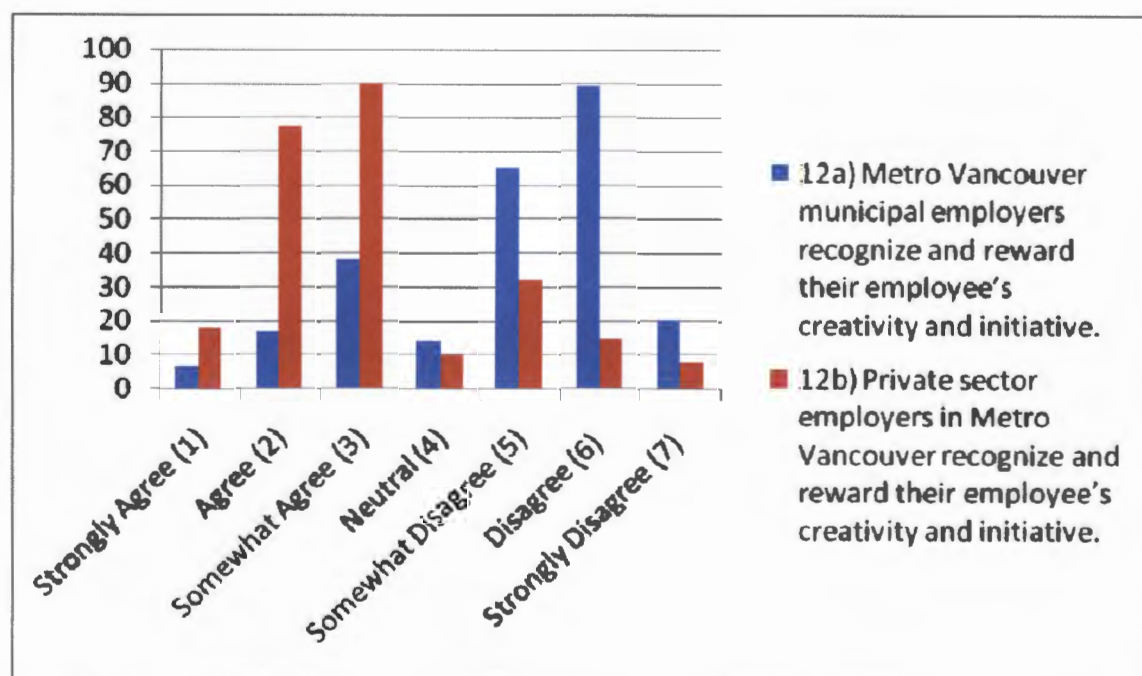
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	4.84	5	6
Private	3.15	3	3

Racially and Ethnically Diverse – Relatively speaking, respondents did not perceive municipal employers to be much less ethnically and racially diverse than private sector employers, however, the result was still quite poor as only 40% answered in the positive range . The most popular response to the statement "Municipal employers in Metro Vancouver are racially and ethnically diverse" was 'Somewhat Disagree', which was also the case for the corresponding statement pertaining to the private sector.

Figure 20
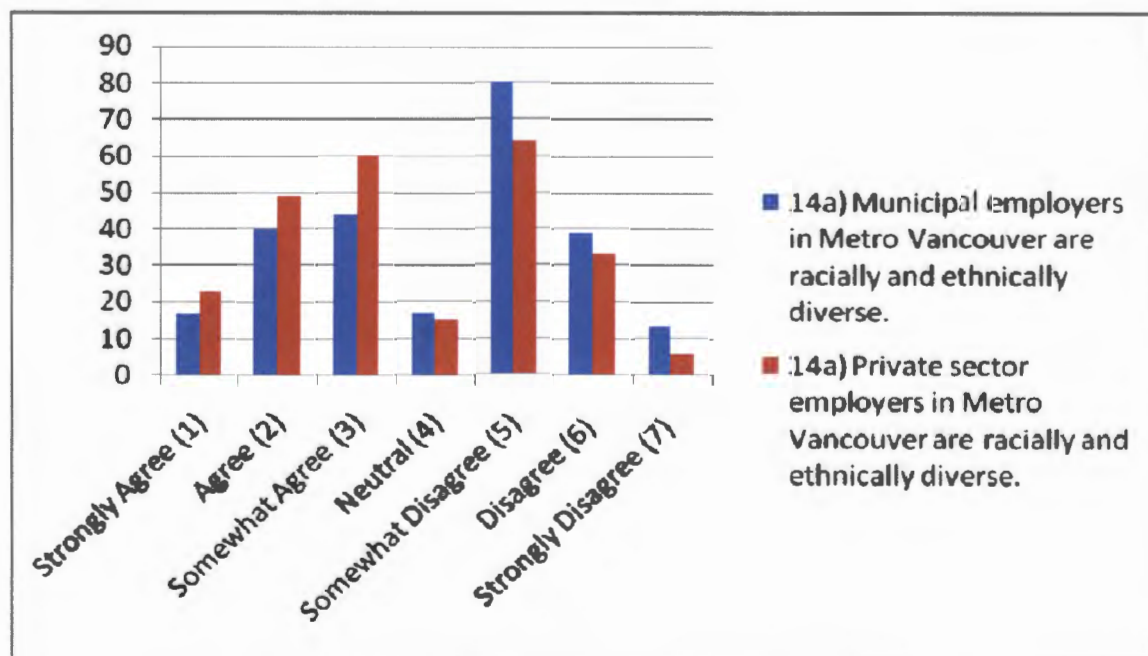
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	4.09	5	5
Private	3.68	3	5

Use of Latest Technologies – The dominating perception is unfavorable as 63% responded in the negative range of 'Somewhat Disagree' to 'Strongly Disagree' to the statement "Metro Vancouver municipal employers typically use the latest technologies." 94 respondents chose the mode response of 'Disagree'. Mean, median and mode responses were 'Somewhat Agree' for the corresponding statement pertaining to private sector employers.

Figure 21
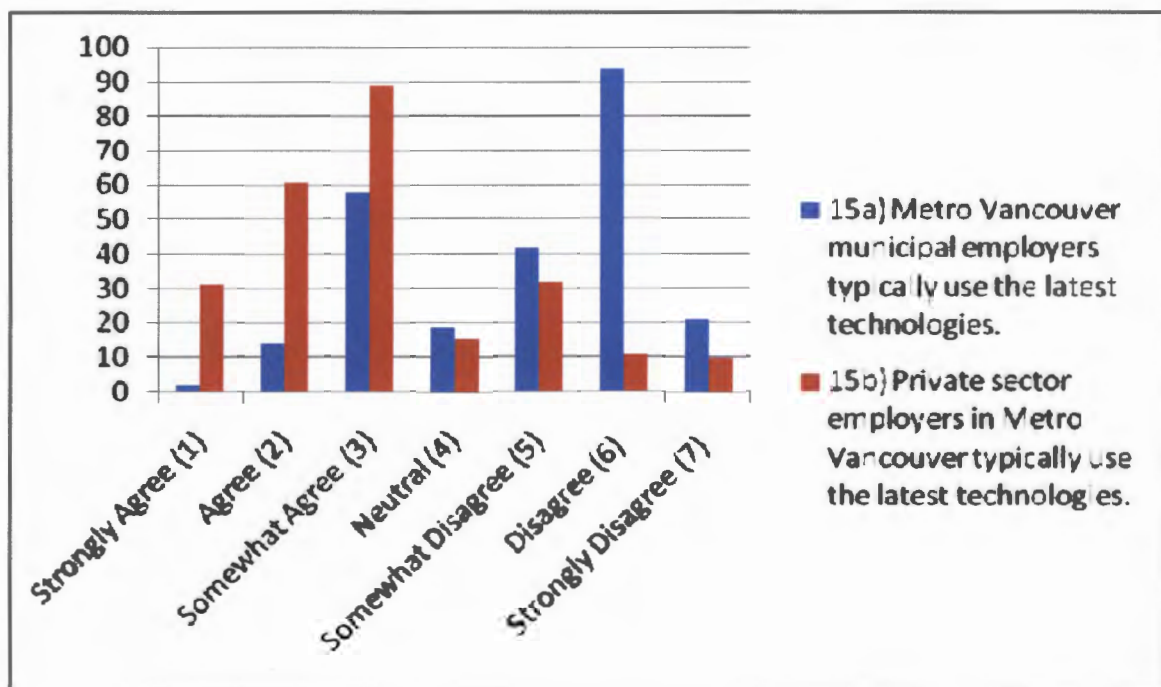
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	4.80	5	6
Private	3.12	3	3

Ability to Quickly Move up the Career Ladder – There was a large discrepancy in
perceptions of career mobility between municipal and private sector employers. 32% of
respondents answered in the positive range to the statement "Working for a Metro Vancouver
municipal employer will allow me to quickly move up the career ladder", while 77%
answered in the same range to the corresponding statement pertaining to the private sector.
Median and mode calculations were both in the negative range while the mean response was
4.64.

Figure 22
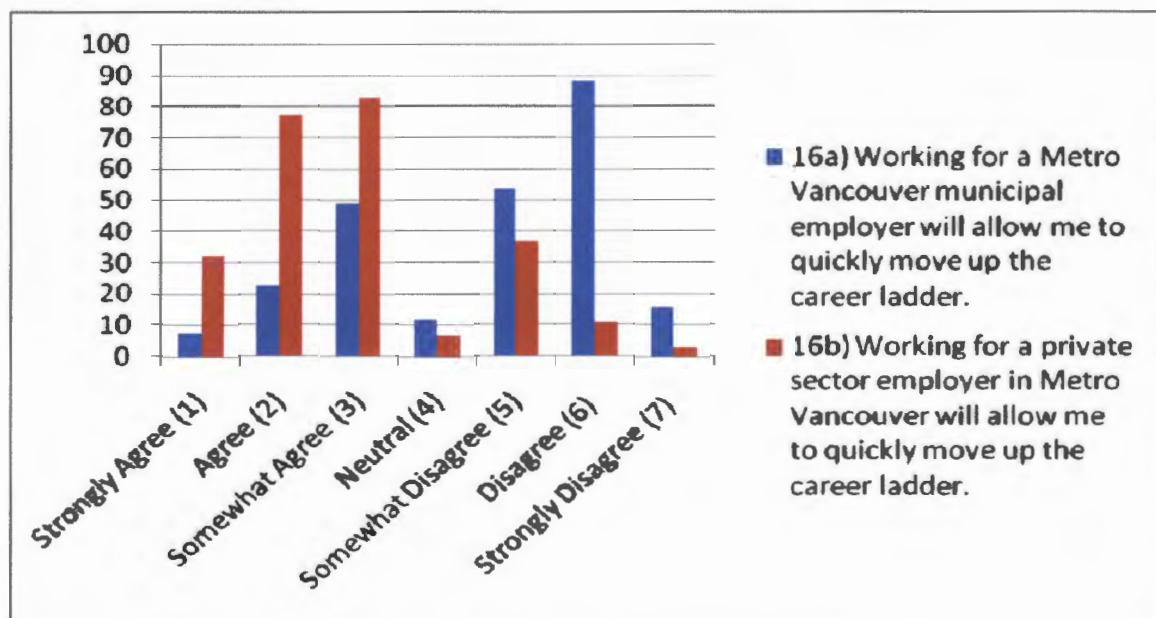
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	4.64	5	6
Private	2.94	3	3

Variety of Employment Opportunities – Only 39% responded in the positive range when asked if they believed "Metro Vancouver municipal employers offer a wide variety of employment opportunities", compared to 83% who responded in the positive range for the corresponding question pertaining to the private sector. The mode and median responses were 'Somewhat Disagree'. Given the responses, it can be said that there is a general perception that Metro Vancouver municipal employers do not offer a wide range of employment opportunities.

Figure 23
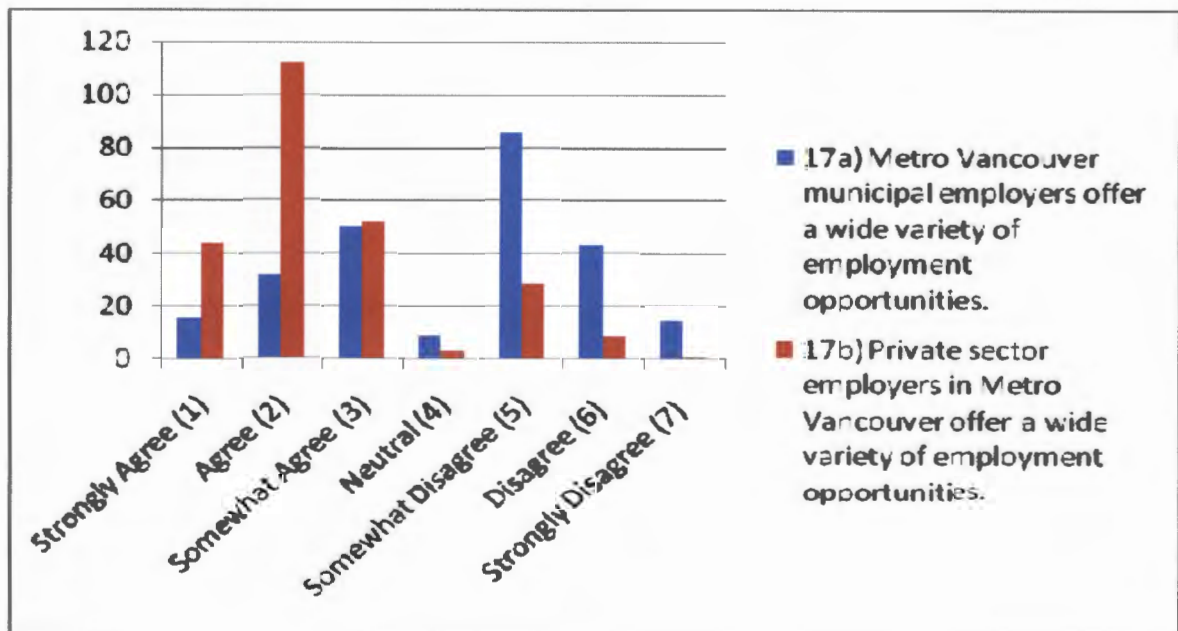
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	4.21	5	5
Private	2.57	2	2

Opportunity to Work in a Variety of Jobs – The results for this question were neither positively nor negatively compelling. The mean response was 3.72 and the median and mode responses were 'Somewhat Agree' to the statement "Metro Vancouver municipal employers provide abundant opportunity to work in a variety of jobs throughout the organization." For the corresponding statement pertaining to the private sector, the median and mode responses were also 'Somewhat Agree' and the mean was slightly better at 3.42.

Figure 24
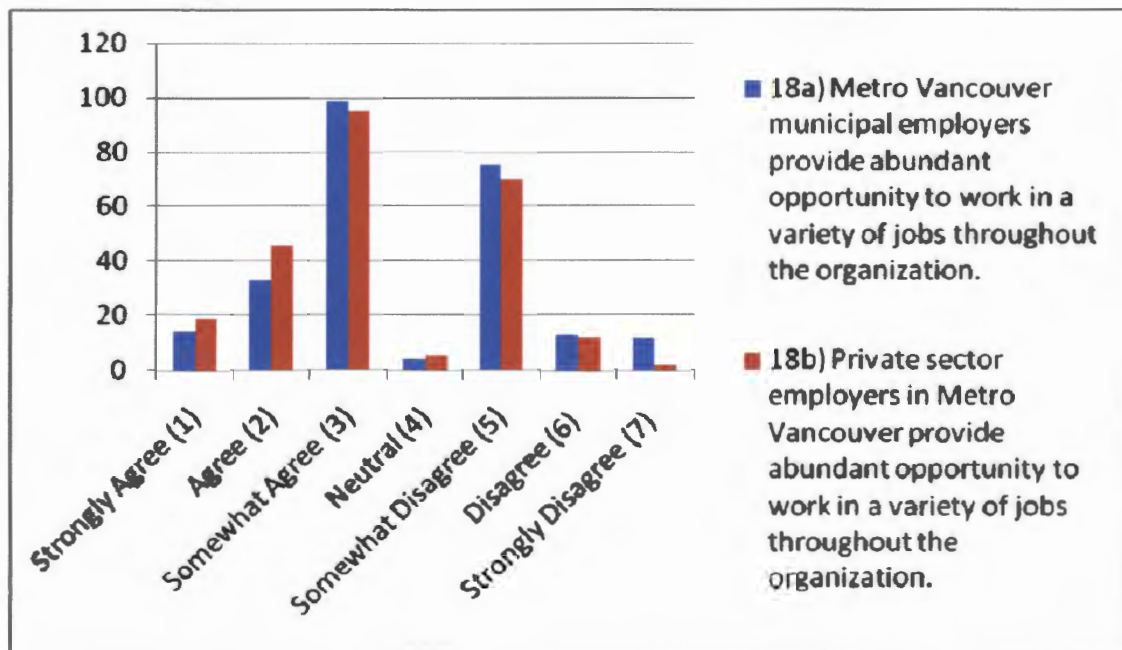
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	3.72	3	3
Private	3.42	3	3

Utilization of Knowledge, Skills and Abilities – Generally, the respondents felt that

municipal work would not allow them to utilize a broad range of their knowledge, skills and

abilities. The median and mode responses were 'Somewhat Disagree' to the statement

"Municipal employment in Metro Vancouver will allow me to utilize a broad range of my

knowledge, skills and abilities." Only 30% of respondents answered in the positive range

while 68% answered in the negative range. This breakdown is virtually the inverse of the

responses to the corresponding statement pertaining to the private sector.

Figure 25
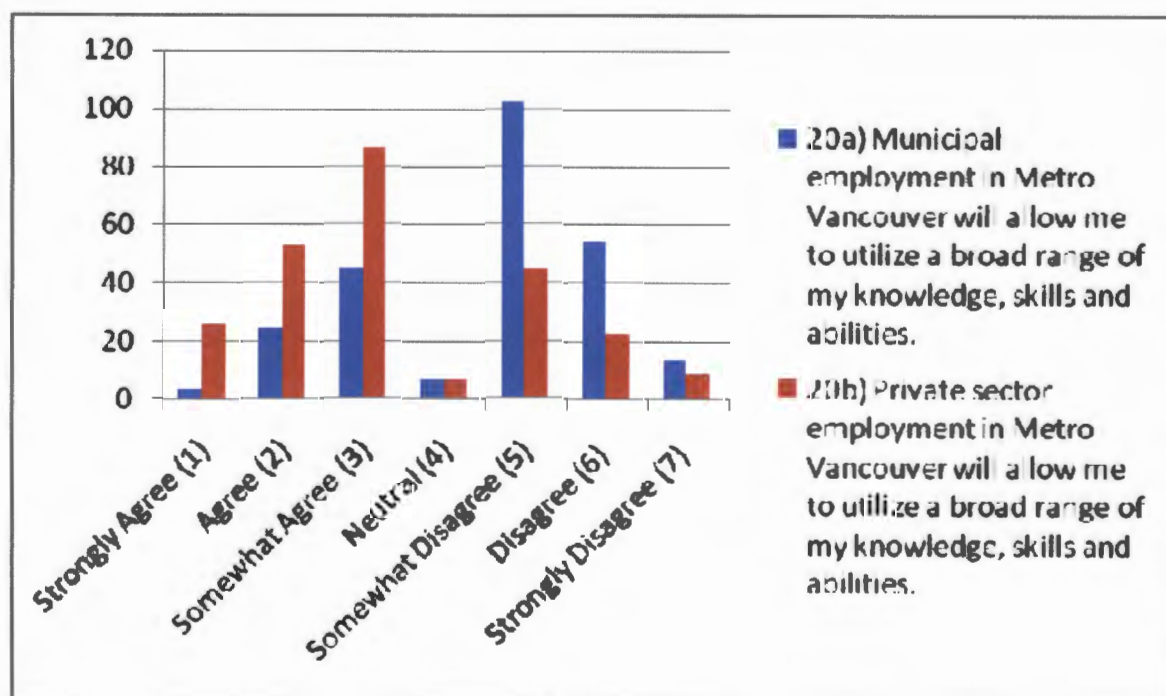
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	4.57	5	5
Private	3.39	3	3

Highly Visible Recruitment Activities – This question garnered one of the most
unfavorable set of responses as only 29% answered positively to the statement "Recruitment
activities conducted by municipal employers are highly visible." Median and mode responses
were 'Somewhat Disagree' and the mean was 4.63. All of these statistics compare very
poorly to those for the corresponding statement pertaining to the private sector.

Figure 26
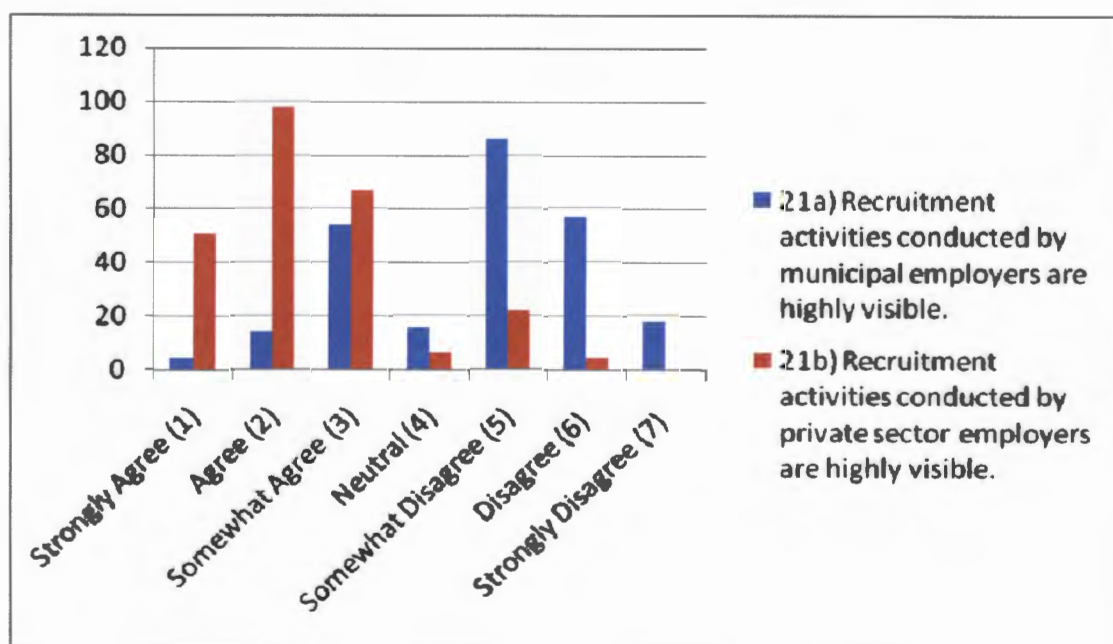
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	4.62	5	5
Private	2.45	2	2

Overall Appeal – This question is perhaps the most telling and strongest indicator of overall appeal. 34% of respondents answered in the positive range to the statement "Overall, working for a Metro Vancouver municipal employer appeals to me", while 62% answered in the negative range. This compares unfavorably to 74% of respondents who answered in the positive range to the corresponding statement pertaining to the private sector while only 25% answered in the negative range. There were also marked differences in mean, median and mode calculations which clearly indicate a preference amongst the respondents to work in Metro Vancouver's private sector.

Figure 27
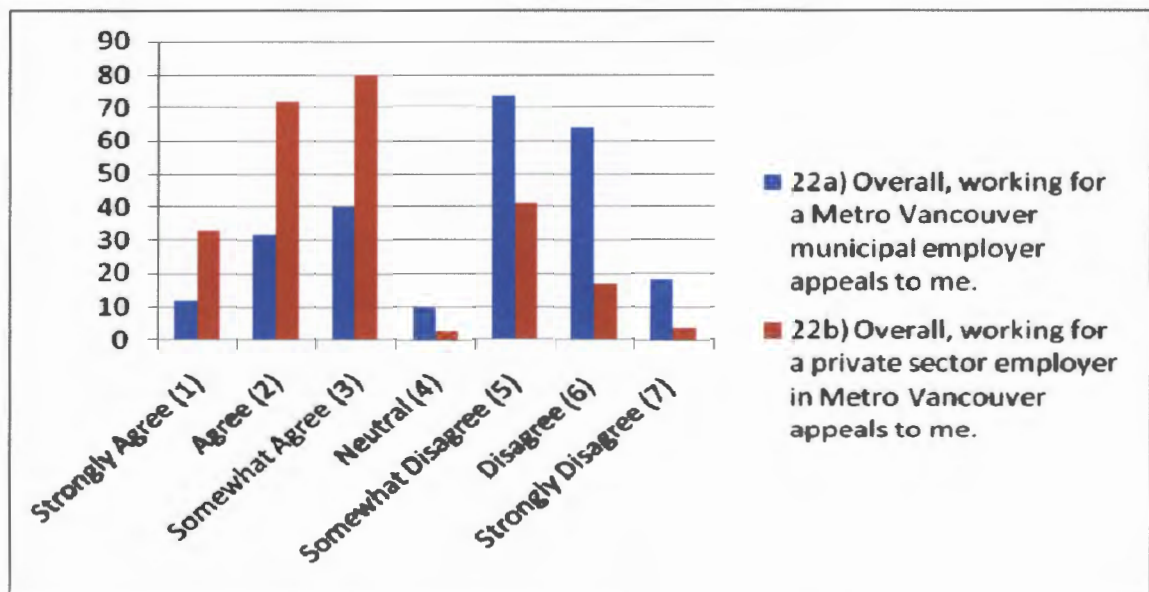
	Mean	Median	Mode
Municipal	4.46	5	5
Private	3.06	3	3

The following table summarizes this section.

Table 2

Positive Perceptions	Negative Perceptions
Pay	Ability to achieve financial goals
Benefits package	Flexible working arrangements
Work makes a positive contribution	Career development and training
Work-Life balance	Promotion based on merit
Job security	Intellectually challenging/stimulating work
Low stress	Work is positively perceived by peers
Good workplace relationships	Reward for creativity and initiative
	Racially and ethnically diverse
	Use of latest technologies
	Ability to quickly move up the career ladder
	Variety of Employment Opportunities
	Will allow me to utilize a broad range of my knowledge, skills and abilities
	Recruitment activities highly visible
	Overall appeal

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 What Features of Municipal Employment Should be Branded?

As previously referred to in section 3.5, Hewitt and Associates define five steps to developing a strong employer brand: (i) understand your organization, (ii) create a 'compelling brand promise' for employees that mirrors the brand promise for customers, (iii) develop standards to measure the fulfillment of the brand promise, (iv) 'ruthlessly align' all people practices to support and reinforce the brand promise, and (v) execute and measure. Only the first 2 steps are within the scope of this report.

The first step, (i) *understand your organization*, has been addressed by defining the employment value proposition. The proposition is a generalization as there are 21 separate municipal employers within Metro Vancouver and as such, each has its own specific employment value proposition. However, the employment value proposition defined in this report captures the strongest elements present throughout all Metro Vancouver municipal employers.

Step two, (ii) *creating a compelling brand promise*, will be the area that commands the most attention in this section. To create a strong brand that will appeal to Generation Y, it is important to revisit the research previously discussed in this report that defines the features of employment that are most attractive to Generation Y. We can then look at the results of the survey and identify positive perceptions upon which we can build and important negative perceptions that can be helped through employer branding.

Process: Define what attracts Gen Y → Identify perceptions that can be enhanced or corrected → Create branding campaign using municipal employment value proposition.

The most important considerations for Generation Y can be separated into those that are more tangible and those that are work environment related. In order of importance, top tangible motivators are salary, benefits, opportunities for career growth, company location, company leadership, reputation, job title, training, tuition reimbursement, diversity of staff and philanthropic efforts (see Figure 28).

Figure 28

Gen Y respondents ranked the following job considerations on a one-to-10 scale, with 10 being most important, and one least important.

Salary	9.05
Benefits (health insurance, 401(k), etc.)	8.86
Opportunities for career growth/advancement	8.74
The company's location	8.44
Company leadership	7.95
The company's reputation/brand recognition	7.56
Job title	7.19
In-house training programs	6.95
Tuition reimbursement programs	6.44
The diversity of the company's staff	6.07
The company's charitable/philanthropic efforts	6.06

Gen Y respondents ranked benefits as they pertain to their overall job satisfaction on a one-to-10 scale, with 10 being most important, and one least important.

Healthcare coverage	9.02
Vacation (paid time off)	8.82
Dental care coverage	8.80
401 (k) program	8.58
Bonuses	8.25
Flexible working hours/telecommuting	8.06
Profit-sharing plans	7.52
Subsidized training/education	7.51
Mentoring programs	6.41
Housing or relocation assistance	6.38
Free/subsidized snacks or lunch	6.02
Subsidized transportation	5.73
On-site perks (such as dry cleaning, fitness center)	5.59
Subsidized gym membership	5.59
Matching-gifts programs for charitable contributions	5.33
Sabbaticals	5.26
On-site childcare	4.92
Adoption assistance	4.05

Top features related to the work environment are: working with a good manager, working with enjoyable people, work/life balance, a short commute, working for a socially responsible company, a nice office space and working with state-of-the-art technology (see Figure 29).

Figure 29

Gen Y respondents ranked the following aspects of their work environment on a one-to-10 scale, with 10 being the most important, and one least important.

Working with a manager I can respect and learn from	8.74
Working with people I enjoy	8.69
Having work/life balance	8.63
Having a short commute	7.55
Working for a socially responsible company	7.42
Having a nice office space	7.14
Working with state-of-the-art technology	6.89

Since certain features of employment are more important than others to Generation Y post-secondary students, how does this cohort perceive municipal employment to measure up in those important areas? To answer this question, we can use the survey results that pertain to those important features of municipal employment (see Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3: Tangible Features

Feature	General Perception	Perception vs. Private Sector
Salary	Overall positive, but not very strong	Worse
Benefits	Overall positive, but not very strong	Better
Opportunities for Career Growth	Unfavorable	Worse
Reputation	Unfavorable	Worse
Diversity of Staff	Overall unfavorable, but not very strong	Worse

Table 4: Work Environment Features

Feature	General Perception	Perception vs. Private Sector
Relationships	Overall positive, but not very strong	Better
Work/Life Balance	Overall positive, but not very strong	Better
Socially Responsible	Favorable	Better
Work With State of the Art Technology	Unfavorable	Worse

Now, we can add a fourth column that indicates whether the Work Feature is a strong component of the municipal employment value proposition outlined in section 4.0 (see Table 5).

Table 5

Feature	General Perception	Perception vs. Private Sector	Part of Municipal EVP?
Salary	Overall positive, but not very strong	Worse	Yes
Benefits	Overall positive, but not very strong	Better	Yes
Opportunities for Career Growth	Unfavorable	Worse	Yes
Reputation	Unfavorable	Worse	No
Diversity of Staff	Overall unfavorable, but not very strong	Worse	Yes
Relationships	Overall positive, but not very strong	Better	No
Work/Life Balance	Overall positive, but not very strong	Better	Yes
Socially Responsible	Favorable	Better	Yes
Work With State of the Art Technology	Unfavorable	Worse	No

We have now constructed a table that communicates (i) employment features which research suggests are important to Generation Y post-secondary students (column 1); (ii) the perceptions of Generation Y post-secondary students in Metro Vancouver towards those important employment features (column 2) and; (iv) whether or not each feature is included in the municipal employment value proposition outlined in section. The inclusion of a feature in the municipal EVP means that it is a true and positive feature of municipal employment.

As the intent of this report is to recommend actions that will create a strong municipal employer brand from the existing employment value proposition, the next table will exclude those features attractive to Generation Y that are not part of the existing EVP (see Table 6). It will only communicate the features that should be focused on in a municipal employer branding campaign.

Table 6: Features to Focus on in a Branding Campaign and Actions

	Feature of EVP	**General Perception**	**Action**
1)	Salary	Overall positive, but not very strong	Strengthen Perception
2)	Benefits	Overall positive, but not very strong	Strengthen Perception
3)	Opportunities for Career Growth	Unfavorable	Correct Misperception
4)	Diversity of Staff	Overall unfavorable, but not very strong	Correct Misperception
5)	Work/Life Balance	Overall positive, but not very strong	Strengthen Perception
6)	Socially Responsible	Favorable	Maintain & Strengthen Perception

Recommendation I

Design and implement one municipal employment careers website for the entire Metro Vancouver region.

The Federal government has a central agency called the Public Service Commission which has a website dedicated to promoting careers within the Federal government. This website contains job postings, job opportunities for students, job opportunities for graduates, information about working for the federal public service, FAQ's, a calendar of job events and more.

The BC Provincial government has a similar website that promotes careers within the BC public service which is comprised of numerous disparate agencies. This website contains job postings, employer awards, information on compensation and benefits, leadership and learning programs available to new employees, career mobility, community involvement, green initiatives, information on the structure of the BC public sector, and a large student recruitment section.

In order to deliver one consistent message and create a uniform municipal employer brand, municipal employers should give consideration to setting up a single careers website that would include much of the same type of information found on the aforementioned federal and provincial websites. A single municipal employer website would raise the profile of municipal employment, allow job seekers to conveniently search job opportunities throughout the Metro Vancouver region on one website rather than going to 21 individual

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sites, increase the pool of applicants, and foster communication and cooperation amongst municipalities in regards to their human resource needs. Further, career pages on individual municipality websites should redirect visitors to the new central careers website.

The cost of setting up the website would be minimal for each individual municipality while the benefits would be considerable. The internet is the most popular method by which Generation Y seeks career related information, therefore, a high quality municipal employment website is essential to creating a strong municipal brand.

The website should particularly emphasize and seek to brand those elements of employment that are most attractive and important to Generation Y and that are included in the municipal EVP. Some sample content could include:

Compensation and Benefits – Highlight the fact that municipal jobs for new graduates typically pay more, generous vacation and leave provisions, extended health and dental coverage and an excellent defined benefit pension plan. These features apply to all Metro Vancouver municipal employers.

Size of the Municipal Workforce and Diversity of Careers – If we consider the 21 Metro Vancouver municipalities as a single employer, it is easily the largest employer in the region. In addition, there are a wide range of occupations. In the Comments section of the survey, almost 40 respondents stated that they had visions of garbage men and parks workers when they thought of municipal employment. This is simply not reality and profiling a variety of careers on the website would help dispel this misconception.

Diversity of Staff – Public sector employers typically contain higher numbers of visible minorities, females and the disabled within their ranks. This also holds true for Metro Vancouver municipal employers. Generation Y embraces diversity more so than any other generation in history and as such, using members of historically disadvantaged groups in promotional materials should be encouraged. Given Metro Vancouver's diverse ethnic makeup, this could serve to increase the desirability of municipal employers amongst a significant portion of the population.

Work/Life Balance – Profile real Generation Y municipal employees who lead busy work and personal lives but manage to "have it all" with municipal employment.

Socially Responsible – Metro Vancouver municipal employers are involved in numerous green initiatives and provide direct benefit to the communities in which they are located. Highlighting some of these worthy causes as well as any relevant awards or recognition would prove attractive to Generation Y.

What is Important?

It is evident that many of the long-favoured approaches to attracting employees are no longer appropriate for Generation Y. In the past, municipal employers have marketed the fact that they offer structured hours with job stability and an opportunity to work for the community, however, it is clear that those factors are not the most important for Generation Y.

Recommendation II

Municipal employers should move away from marketing the employment factors it traditionally used to attract post-secondary students and develop new recruitment incentives and an employer brand based on the following factors:

1. Competitive wages

2. Excellent benefits

3. Opportunities for career growth and advancement based on the large number of occupations and an expected surge in retirements.

For all recruitment activities, a secondary level of promotion should be included that markets a flexible work-life balance and social responsibility. Further it is recommended that municipal employers use information gathering tools, such as survey instruments and focus groups, to regularly assess and track the evolving interests and needs of students in terms of their employment to ensure that the municipal employer brand remains relevant.

It is recommended that municipal employers segment their branding, marketing and attraction efforts to specifically appeal to age cohorts under the age of 28 given the low level of appeal that municipal employment represents. There is a need to focus on the particular desires of Generation Y and promote the employment factors that would attract that cohort. There are definite benefits for municipal employers in informing students about municipal employment and the many and varied employment opportunities if offers. The more students that municipal employers can reach means that, upon graduation, a greater number of

students will be aware and informed about work in the municipal sector. The targeted students should include those in their graduating high school years. If students are more informed it is likely that career choices and, consequently, their course of program choices will be more suitably selected for a career in the municipal sector. This should translate into more applications from better-informed and more appropriately educated students.

Recommendation III

Municipal employers should develop a more visible presence on university campuses. The survey data showed that most students believed that municipal recruitment efforts were not highly visible. It is also recommended municipal employers begin distributing branded recruitment and employment information to students in their final year of secondary school so that they can make program and course choices with the aim of securing municipal employment upon graduation.

To support the campus branding effort, municipal employers should build relationships with campus career centres and also make better use of job fairs.

Sell the Public Service

It is clear that a number of the post-secondary students sampled were misinformed about the realities of working in the municipal sector and in fact held a number of misconceptions and stereotypes. It is likely that the students form their opinions about municipal employment predominantly from negative images and stories that are prevalent throughout society. At the same time, the students demonstrated a lack of understanding regarding the opportunities

available in the municipal sector, as well as a limited knowledge of the work environment and the values municipal employers support.

Recommendation IV

It is recommended that municipal employers develop a branding and marketing campaign that demonstrates to students in different fields of study that they can apply their skills in a number of different positions throughout the municipal sector.

Municipal employers need to segment their marketing/recruitment campaigns based on field of study, especially in those areas where they are having difficulty recruiting high quality graduates. For instance, posters could target engineers clearly stating the numerous and diverse positions which are available and the factors of the work environment which would be attractive to graduates in that particular discipline.

Such information should be placed throughout campuses in employment centres, faculty bulletin boards and central gathering places of students. This information could also be posted on the recommended central municipal employment careers website.

7.3 Next Steps

1. Given the divergence between the perceptions and realities of municipal employment, it would be interesting to track students' perceptions on a continuing basis. As this survey was just a snapshot in time, is it likely that in two or five years' time, the percentage of students that find municipal employment to be attractive remains constant or will it decline further?

2. Clearly, Generation Y has less of a desire to work in the municipal sector. Is this attributable to their youth and therefore a general naiveté and their being less informed about the opportunities available in the municipal sector? Or, is it a part of a broader trend in which government is becoming less and less relevant to younger Canadians? Municipal employers, in conjunction with the appropriate Federal and Provincial agencies should consider tracking the perceptions and attitudes of youth over the next five to ten years to reach a better understanding of this generation of Canadians.

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