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Dialogues

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CITIES



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A leading source of strategic insight, conducting and communicating non-partisan economic and public policy research of importance to the four western provinces, the territories, and all Canadians.

In 1970, the **One Prairie Province? A Question for Canada** Conference was held in Lethbridge, Alberta. Sponsored by the University of Lethbridge and the *Lethbridge Herald*, the conference received considerable attention from concerned citizens and community leaders. The consensus at the time was that research on the West (including British Columbia and the Canadian North) should be expanded by a new organization.

To fill this need, the Canada West Foundation was established under letters patent on December 31, 1970. The first Canada West Council was elected in June 1973.

Since that time, the Canada West Foundation has established itself as one of Canada's premier research institutes. Non-partisan, accessible research and active citizen engagement are hallmarks of the Canada West Foundation's past, present, and future endeavours. These efforts are rooted in the belief that a strong West makes for a strong Canada.

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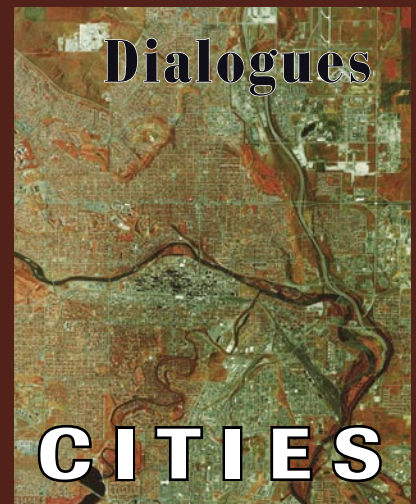
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Address correspondence to:

Robert Roach, Editor
Dialogues Magazine
Canada West Foundation
900, 1202 Centre Street SE
Calgary, AB T2G 5A5
Tel: 403.264.9535
roach@cwf.ca

Publisher: Canada West Foundation

Editor: Robert Roach
Special Editor: Karen Wilkie

Layout + Design: Robert Roach

Advertising Enquiries:

403.264.9535
roach@cwf.ca

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a note from the editor

robert roach, director of research
canada west foundation

bright lights, big cities

Jane Jacobs writes about them, most Canadians live in one, and many of them are growing, but what exactly are cities? As with many other concepts, a single definition is not in the cards. For some, a city is simply a large town. In the UK, having a cathedral used to be one way for a town to be elevated to city status. For others, a city may refer to an area that has been incorporated as a city (e.g., the City of Vancouver or the City of Burnaby) or it may refer to a group of communities that form a contiguous urban (a.k.a. metropolitan) area to which it is useful to give a single name. For example, many people consider "Vancouver" to include not just the City of Vancouver, but the Cities of Burnaby, Coquitlam, North Vancouver, Richmond, Surrey, and other neighbouring communities as well.

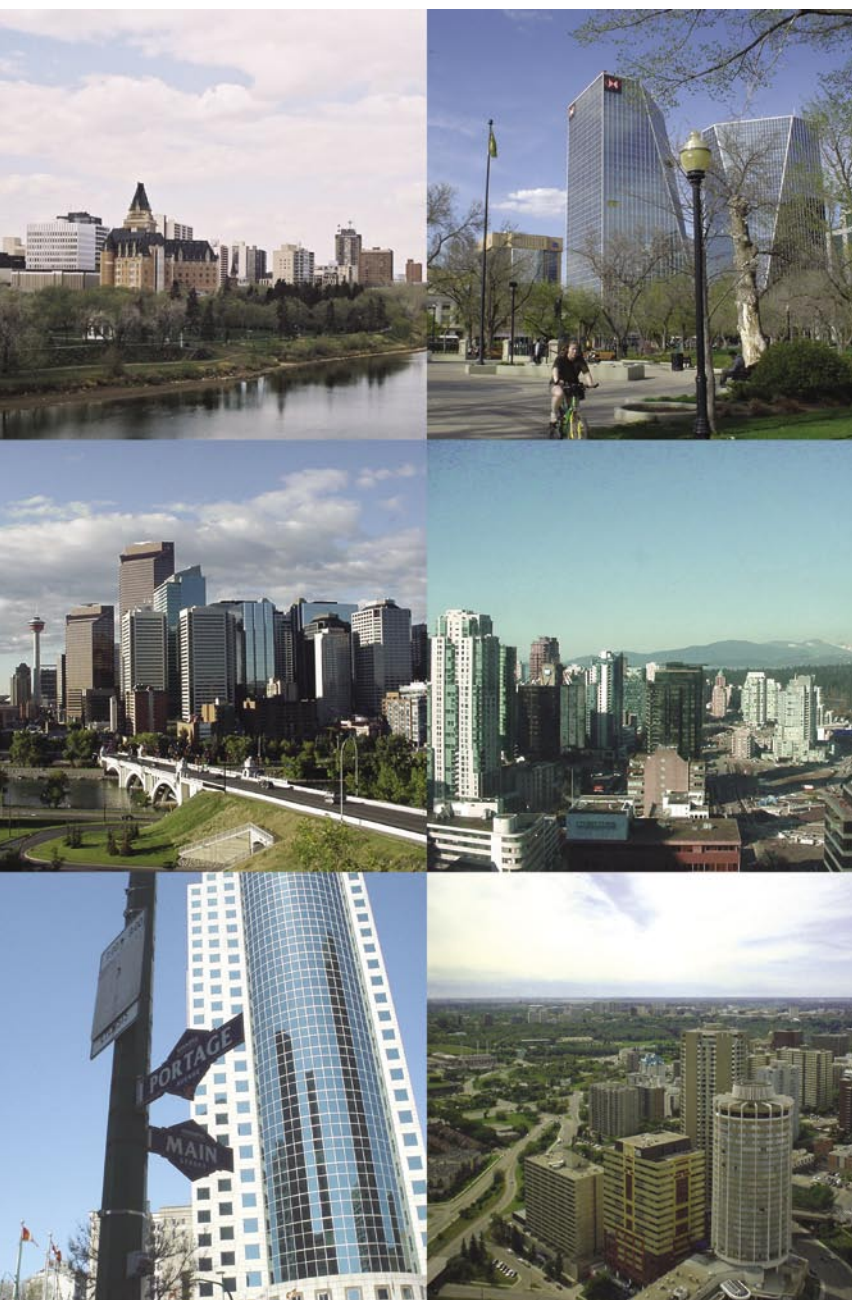
The differences among these definitions are important. The mayor of Vancouver, for example, is not the mayor of the urban area commonly referred to as Vancouver. Indeed, urban areas typically encompass numerous municipal governments.

The City of Vancouver has a population of about 583,000, whereas the urban area commonly referred to as Vancouver has a population of over 2.1 million (2004 data). This 2.1 million figure is based on what Statistics Canada calls the Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area or CMA. The US Census Bureau does something similar such that the Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area of New York has a population of over 20 million, whereas the City of New York (which is comprised of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island) has a population of about 8 million.

It is important to note that the definitions developed by statistical agencies do not necessarily match with how local residents define an urban area. For example, Calgarians would likely see the nearby Town of Okotoks as part of the greater Calgary area, but Statistics Canada does not currently include it in the official Calgary Census Metropolitan Area. Similarly, urban institutions often do not match perfectly with statistical entities. The list of municipalities that belong to the Calgary Regional Partnership, for example, is not the same as the list of municipalities included in the Calgary CMA.

The conceptual waters get even muddier when we consider the idea of big cities (where big refers to population). How big does an urban area have to be for it to be considered a big city? Is the cut-off 10,000 people, 100,000, or 1 million? Compared to the Toronto CMA, a city of 1 million people is not all that big.

Can Saskatoon and Regina be considered big cities when they are dwarfed by urban areas such as Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa and Calgary? As with the word city, defining what constitutes a big city is a subjective matter. A useful approach is to consider the percentage of the provincial population living in a particular urban area. If the percentage is significant (itself an arbitrary decision)—say 20%—this provides a good basis for considering a city big in at least some sense. Using this approach, the CMAs of Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg all belong to the big city camp.



No matter how you slice and dice what constitutes a big city, one thing is clear: western Canada's big cities, like those in other parts of Canada and around the world, are fundamentally important as population magnets, service hubs, economic engines, and cultural centres. The attention paid to our big cities, however, is not in keeping with this. Health care tends to top the list of public policy issues that worry Canadians. And yet, how we address the social, political, and economic opportunities and challenges of our big cities is absolutely vital to the future quality of life and economic prosperity of western Canada and the country as a whole. If we fumble this public policy football, Canadians—and not just those who live in big cities—will suffer.

A second thing is equally clear: this emphasis on big cities will irritate a lot of people living in smaller communities. This, however, is not the intention. Big cities are important, and big city issues require special attention, but this does not mean that smaller centres and rural areas are unimportant. With that said, it is a mistake to view all municipalities as the same, and it is a mistake to pursue a one-size-fits-all approach. There is value in research, debate, and policy that zeros-in on the issues of big cities, if for no other reason than most western Canadians live in or near one. In addition, as the world becomes more and more urban, western Canada has the opportunity to be a global leader in terms of having some of the best cities in the world and in terms of showing others how to create and sustain them.

Recognizing this, the Canada West Foundation launched its **Western Cities Project** six years ago. Since that time, our work has provided the public and policy-makers with timely, objective, and practical information on urban issues—from infrastructure and the environment to intergovernmental relations and urban Aboriginals. With the generous support of the Cities of Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg, we have embarked on a new phase of the project that runs until the end of 2008. This new phase will include groundbreaking work on street level social problems, innovative options for funding urban

infrastructure, the economies of western Canada's big cities, public transit, the connections between inner city areas and suburban areas, and the intergovernmental relationships that cut across these and other issues.

This issue of **Dialogues** is part of this exciting project and will help spur informed debate on how and why to take action on improving our cities. Big cities are the touchstone of this issue, but the information in the various articles often applies more broadly.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the contributors to this issue for their insightful articles and the time and effort they volunteered putting them together. I would also like to thank Canada West Foundation Senior Policy Analyst Karen Wilkie for her role as Special Editor of this edition. Her hard work and energy were the keys to this issue. Enjoy!

Comments and questions can be directed to Robert Roach via email (roach@cwf.ca).



Byron Miller

Policy Shapes Cities More Than You Might Think

“We have a cultural preference for low density.”

“You can’t force people to take public transit.”

“Our housing supply is a response to market forces.”

“Urban poverty is a fact of life.”

These commonly heard statements all contain elements of truth, but unfortunately they hide as much truth as they reveal. These statements are partially true in that they describe everyday life in contemporary Canadian cities. What they hide, however, are the causes of the contemporary urban condition. In particular, these statements portray everyday life in our cities as a natural and immutable order, when in fact they are anything but. The forces that shape cities are dynamic and strongly influenced by public policy.

Culture and economics are usually considered to be the primary forces that shape our cities. These forces are typically portrayed as independent and outside our control. Why do Europeans use public transit in much higher proportions than North Americans? They have a transit-oriented culture, so the common answer goes. Why does housing in North America most commonly take the form of the single-family detached dwelling? We have a cultural preference for space to which the market responds, so the common answer goes. But are the forces that shape our cities really so simple? Yes, we have cultural preferences, but where do those preferences come from? Yes, the market responds to our preferences, but is that all it responds to?

I first started to question the notion that the differences among European and North American cities were attributable to fundamentally different cultural preferences when I was a graduate student at Arizona State University. Arizona State University is located in the Phoenix metropolitan area, one of the most sprawling and automobile-dependent metropolitan areas in North America. I fell in with a crowd of Europeans there and will never forget one European friend who intended to live in Phoenix without a car. He had been able to travel easily around his home town in northern Italy with public transit and intended to do the same in Phoenix. But within a couple of weeks of his arrival he became so frustrated with Phoenix’s poor transit system that he gave up and bought a car, never to use public transit in Phoenix again. My friend, supposedly with a deep cultural preference for all things public, had switched to the private automobile.

A few years later I moved to Freiburg, Germany and fell in with a crowd of Americans and Canadians. Many of these friends intended to purchase an automobile shortly after their arrival, but after experiencing Freiburg’s wonderful public transit system, decided they did not need an automobile. These friends, supposedly with a deep cultural preference for all things private, had switched to public transportation.

Cultural “preferences” are frequently more malleable than we think and, in fact, often tell us more about the choices being offered than any inherent cultural predilection. Most people make rational choices, choosing the option available that best meets their needs from the standpoint of efficiency and cost-effectiveness. The key phrase here is “option available.” People cannot choose an option that is not available. If an option is inefficient or costly, they will steer clear of it whenever possible—as my friends in both Phoenix and Freiburg did.

What people cannot choose, however, is the set of options from which they choose. This is where public policy comes into play: public policy can encourage, create, suppress, or preclude options. In most North American cities, public policies have favoured road construction and the private automobile. In most European cities, public policies have favoured public transportation. It is in this context that cultural preferences for different modes of transportation have developed.



The role of public policy in shaping options, choices, and preferences extends to most realms of everyday life in the city. The Dominion Housing Act of 1935 and the National Housing Act of 1938, for example, created federal mortgage insurance that particularly benefited the middle class. The policy-driven growth of middle class housing demand, coupled with building codes that could more easily be met in new construction, stimulated the rapid growth of the Canadian suburbs. Municipal policies, as well, favoured suburban growth through subsidies for new suburban infrastructure and advantageous property tax regimes. Moreover, failure to reinvest in inner-cities to make them more family-friendly magnified the comparative advantage of suburban living for young families. It is in this policy context that Canadian families have, quite understandably, flocked to low density, automobile-dependent suburbs. Preferences for suburban living have not developed in a vacuum, but in a policy context that favours some options (and places) over others.

Today, building more environmentally, socially, and fiscally sustainable cities is one of our greatest challenges, not least because many of our policies work in the opposite direction. We know, for instance, that well-designed, dense, transit and pedestrian-oriented cities consume less energy, produce less greenhouse gas emissions, foster more social interaction, and cost less to maintain over the long run.

But a number of policies present barriers to creating more sustainable cities: segregated land-use zoning increases the need for travel among different use zones; overly wide road standards favour automobile travel while increasing danger to pedestrians; infrastructure subsidies and property tax advantages favour distant suburbs; failure to adopt a comprehensive affordable housing strategy leaves suburban sprawl as our de facto affordable housing strategy; lack of coordination between land use planning and transit planning results in poorer transit service; lack of alternative development standards puts sustainability-oriented developers at a distinct disadvantage and reduces consumer options.

In short, if we want to build a more sustainable future, we cannot rely exclusively on individual consumer decisions. Consumer decisions are always made in a policy context, and policies frequently shape options, preferences, and choices. Instead, we need a broad democratic dialogue about the future we want and the policies we need to achieve it. Policy shapes our cities—and our lives—more than you might think.

Bryon Miller, Ph.D., is an urban geographer and former urban planner. He teaches in the Department of Geography at the University of Calgary and directs the University of Calgary's Urban Studies Program.

Cultural “preferences” are frequently more malleable than we think and, in fact, often tell us more about the choices being offered than any inherent cultural predilection.



The Sustainability Paradigm

Susan M. Gardner

"The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found, but made, and the activity of making them, changes both the maker and the destination."

— John Schaar

Over the last two decades, we've been experiencing a subtle but distinctive shift in the municipal sector across Canada—a movement toward recognizing "sustainability planning" as one of the key challenges and mandates of local governments. This has been particularly true in our fastest growing urban areas.

There is a great deal of discussion about global sustainability, national sustainability, and even regional sustainability. But, as important as all those things are, none of it happens without sustainable cities. Sustainability is a grassroots movement; it must start at the community level—where people live, work, consume goods, and use services. For Canada's local governments, it is already changing the way decisions are made in a very significant way.

The goal of this article is to define and explore some of the key concepts related to cities, and to discuss sustainability as the new paradigm for urban decision-making.

Defining Sustainability

As intuitive as the terminology might seem, "sustainability" is a relatively new concept. In 1987, the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development (the Bruntland Commission) drew attention to the fact that economic development often leads to the deterioration, not improvement, of quality of life.

The Commission called for "a form of sustainable development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." This recognizes that we need to think beyond economic development and take into consideration the impact our activities have upon the environment and quality of life; there is a sense that we need to act in ways that protect quality of life for future generations.

Although environmental considerations are clearly central to the thinking behind sustainability, we err if we view it as purely an environmental movement (or perhaps worse, as a movement of environmentalists against business interests).

Sustainability theories are much broader and encourage an "ecosystem" approach to thinking about the future of our communities. Economic considerations still play an important role, but so do other policy areas that have a significant impact upon quality of life.

Sustainability for Cities: The Melbourne Principles

For cities, a major piece of the sustainability framework emerged in April 2002 when an international group of experts—including representation from Canada—came together to develop the Melbourne Principles for Sustainable Cities. The principles call for cities to adopt an approach that will:

1. Provide a long-term vision for cities based on sustainability; intergenerational, social, economic and political equity; and their individuality.
2. Achieve long-term economic and social security.
3. Recognize the intrinsic value of biodiversity and natural ecosystems, and protect and restore them.
4. Enable communities to minimize their ecological footprint.
5. Build on the characteristics of ecosystems in the development and nurturing of healthy and sustainable cities.
6. Recognize and build on the distinctive characteristics of cities including their human and cultural values, history, and natural systems.
7. Empower people and foster participation.
8. Expand and enable cooperative networks to work toward a common, sustainable future.
9. Promote sustainable production and consumption through appropriate use of environmentally sound technologies and effective demand management.
10. Enable continual improvement based on accountability, transparency, and good governance.

The Melbourne Principles are intended as a guide to thinking and a strategic framework for action that citizens and decision-makers can use to work together to transform their communities.

The Pillars Approach

Since Melbourne, we have observed a growing dialogue about the "pillars" of sustainability and how they relate to sustainable communities. A "triple bottom line" model has emerged that involves the evaluation of public policy in terms of being economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable. A more comprehensive approach is evolving, though, that includes a consideration of "cultural" sustainability as well. This "four pillared" approach forms a foundation for much of the current theory.

The last element—cultural sustainability—is widely understood to include things like the arts, history, and heritage. But its scope is actually much greater than that. Culture is perhaps most accurately described as our community value system.

It has been suggested that, if we don't consider our culture as an integral part of the sustainability equation by determining and defining our community values, we will be unable to understand and address the sustainability issues around the other three pillars. If we don't know what the community values, we don't know what is worth sustaining.

Urban Environmental Accords

One of the more recent developments for municipalities occurred last summer, when city leaders from across the globe met in San Francisco for the United Nations World Environment Day 2005 and signed the Urban Environmental Accords.

The Accords include a list of 21 specific actions for sustainable urban living. These actions address the seven environmental areas common to the world's large cities: water, energy, waste, urban design, transportation, urban nature, and environmental health.

Cities from around the world are taking the lead on this initiative, and are committing to make measurable changes in their communities.

Paradigm for the Future

Taking the “big picture view” offered by sustainability theory, it is evident that there has been an evolution of thinking from viewing policy issues in isolation to considering all of them as interconnected (i.e., as an ecosystem in which changes contemplated for one area must take into consideration effects in other areas). According to this view, when even just one area is weakened, the whole structure is compromised.

Discrete economic, social, environmental, and cultural policies are important and have a place on the local government agenda. Indeed, Canada's cities have been leaders in developing model policies in these areas. But distinct policies are not enough. Today's sustainability theory supports a more holistic approach. As shown in Figure 1, the four pillars must be viewed as a multi-faceted lens through which all policy must be filtered. The issues facing cities today are complex, and cannot be conveniently compartmentalized in neat boxes. As well, decisions made today have implications for the future that cannot be ignored.

Sustainability is not just about surviving; it's about thriving. This requires a paradigm shift and a re-evaluation of how the business of public policy-making is conducted at every level. Perhaps most importantly, it requires urban decision-makers to involve the community actively and authentically in defining how that re-evaluation will occur and in the development of a vision for the future.

Figure 1



What kind of community will be passed on to future generations? Is this direction economically sustainable? Socially sustainable? Environmentally sustainable? Culturally sustainable? These are the questions that must be asked in every undertaking. Taken together, it is hoped that the answers will yield enduring quality of life in our cities both now and for generations to come.

Susan M. Gardner is Executive Editor of *Municipal World*, Canada's municipal magazine.

Sustainability Resources

ICLEI—Local Governments for Sustainability
(www.iclei.org)

The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability: Culture's Essential Role in Public Planning by Jon Hawkes

Melbourne Principles for Sustainable Cities
www.unep.or.jp/ietc/Focus/MelbournePrinciples/English.pdf.

The Natural Step Canada
(www.naturalstep.ca/framework.html)

The Sustainability Revolution: Portrait of a Paradigm Shift by Andres R. Edwards

Urban Environmental Accords
(www.wed2005.org/pdfs/Accords_11x17.pdf)

Canada's Big Cities Take Centre Stage

Karen Wilkie



Canadian cities are dynamic and vibrant places that are becoming increasingly important on the national and international stage. Cities are hubs of cultural activities, international events, employment and learning opportunities, public services, and economic exchange.

The distribution of population in Canada has seen drastic change over the past 100 years. It was not that long ago that 80% of Canada's population lived in rural areas. This has been reversed with most Canadians now living in urban areas and half in just four large urban regions.

Across Canada, metro population growth has been fuelled by the arrival of new immigrants and by internal migration patterns. Most Canadian cities are growing, with some experiencing population booms. Specifically, Toronto and Calgary have recorded the largest population increases, each with an 8% jump in residents since 2001.

Smaller metro areas such as Regina, Victoria, and Winnipeg, experienced more modest, but still significant, population increases of 1%, 3%, and 2% respectively over the same period. There is no question that metro Canada is growing in terms of population, but it appears that the economic, social, and environmental importance of cities is growing as well.

What is metro Canada? This is an important question to explore because when we think about major cities, metro areas such as Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal likely come to mind. But there are smaller cities that serve as major urban centres and the hub of economic, social, and environmental activity for a large area. These cities include Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg in western Canada and cities such as Halifax in eastern Canada.

In many ways, each of Canada's large cities is distinct and faces unique pressures and policy challenges. It is difficult to compare, for example, the transportation demands of Regina to those of Toronto. Nonetheless, the underlying issues and the drive to find solutions are similar.

For the most part, major cities in Canada have been viewed through "rose coloured glasses" since Canadian cities have avoided the downturn and the severity of the problems plaguing large American cities. But what does the future hold? Will metro Canada's future be as "rosy?"

Major urban centres in Canada are faced with increasing social problems such as homelessness, poverty, addiction, and crime. They are also experiencing mounting economic challenges and fiscal limitations. City governments are struggling with a mismatch between infrastructure demands and the availability of revenue, while at the same time trying to keep property taxes and user fees at acceptable levels. And environmental challenges are becoming prominent concerns for residents and administrations

in the major cities. These issues are diverse and include, for example, drinking water quality, smog, pesticide use, water and energy conservation, and reducing the urban ecological footprint.

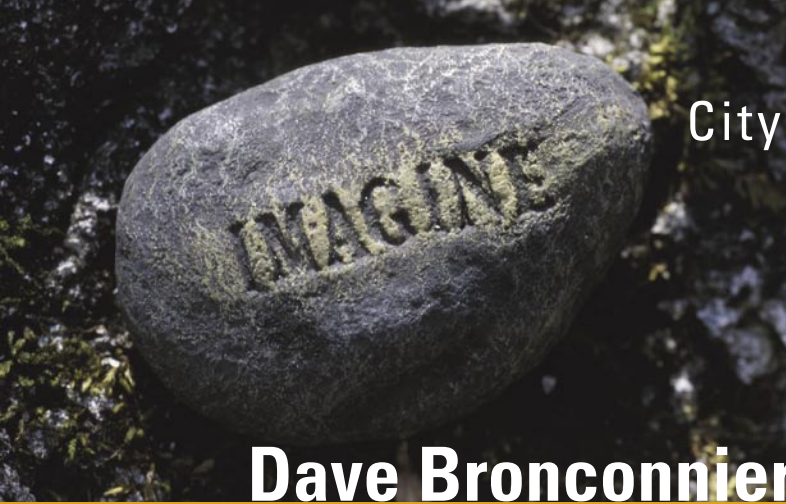
Increasingly, metro Canada is struggling with intergovernmental relationships both horizontally and vertically. Horizontally, major cities are working to find ways to coordinate and establish partnerships with surrounding municipalities. And vertically, cities are trying to improve relations and establish a stronger voice with other levels of government. Cities are fighting for "a seat at the table" because, for too long, they have had no voice in the development of policies that directly affect their residents and the quality of their communities.

When considered individually, each one of these issues would be difficult to address. When considered collectively, the challenges are daunting, if not overwhelming. Needless to say, metro Canada has its hands full.

As the challenges facing cities continue to mount, the need for cities to work together and learn from each other is critical if Canadians are to move forward on proactive solutions. This issue of *Dialogues* and its focus on metro Canada draws attention to Canada's big city policy challenges and options for meeting them head-on.

Metro Canada can no longer be overlooked in provincial and national debates. The future of Canada's major cities is open; by identifying and addressing urban issues, it may be possible to protect the idyllic image of Canadian cities and ensure their "rosy future." With a nod to the bestselling author Jim Collins, Canada's big cities have the chance to move from "good to great." To do this, we have to think through the issues, assess our options, and take bold steps to ensure that metro Canada has what it needs to compete against cities such as New York, Paris, London, Tokyo, Sydney, and Shanghai. Failing to take action, moreover, is a quick way to move from good to bad. The first step is to pay more attention to the needs and potential of our metro areas.

Karen Wilkie is a Senior Policy Analyst with the Canada West Foundation and the Special Editor of this edition of *Dialogues*.



City Building In The 21st Century

Dave Bronconnier

The 21st Century is no doubt going to be a remarkable one for Calgary. From a small settlement at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow rivers, Calgary has grown over the past 100 years to become a vibrant city of one million people. In the last decade alone, we've welcomed over 200,000 new residents. By the middle of the 21st century, we are likely to be a city of two million.

As Calgary grows, we will continue to flourish. That's because our prosperity as a city has always come out of challenges and opportunities. The present challenges—including growing pressure on municipal services and city infrastructure, an aging population, labour shortages, increasing levels of immigration, and pressures on our natural environment—are expected to continue. But with each of these challenges comes the opportunity to capitalize on the entrepreneurial approach, the generosity of spirit, and the extraordinary creativity of Calgarians.

The next 100 years cannot help but be an exciting time to live in Calgary. And The City of Calgary is now laying the foundation for the future by undertaking a unique project to develop a long range urban sustainability plan.

The City of Calgary is a founding member of the Sustainable Cities PLUS Network, an international consortium of cities focusing on long range planning for urban sustainability. At the group's official launch in 2004, I found myself sharing the podium with the CEO of Alcan, a corporate sponsor. Strange, I thought. Why was the CEO of a large company like Alcan interested in the future of cities? Doesn't Alcan's business rely on the extraction and refining of a natural resource a long way away from any urban centres? Alcan's CEO went on to explain how his company recognizes cities as the place where business and trade patterns are set, and as such, as the economic engines of the world. That is why Alcan is so interested in the future of cities. That is also why municipal governments need to look to new ways to engage all sectors of their communities—business, public, and not-for-profit—in dialogue and action about their future.

In any given week, 1.3 million people are leaving the rural setting to take up life in the world's cities. Like so many cities worldwide, Calgary is experiencing the global trend toward increased urbanization. And with that growth comes the all too familiar pressures on municipal infrastructure, urban housing, and transportation networks. As cities grow, and particularly as they grow quickly, these problems become increasingly challenging and complex. So, municipal governments around the world

are looking for new ways to respond to the challenges and to capitalize on the opportunities prompted by growth, and working collaboratively with the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors to ensure the economic, social, and environmental prosperity—the sustainability—of our cities into the future.

In January 2005, The City of Calgary launched **imagineCALGARY**—a City-led and community-owned initiative to develop a long range sustainability plan for Calgary. This 18-month project is focused on creating a shared vision for Calgary, targets and strategies identifying how the vision will be achieved, and a legacy to ensure implementation. We know that the success of **imagineCALGARY** will rely, in large part, on engagement and collaboration with the broader community. To that end, I convened the Mayor's Panel on Urban Sustainability and the **imagineCALGARY** Round Table. The **imagineCALGARY** initiative now has 150 actively engaged stakeholders from across all sectors of the Calgary community.

It is impossible to imagine a modern day, successful company working in the absence of a vision shared by the corporate leadership as well as the employees throughout the organization. Likewise, a city needs to have a shared vision to inspire and motivate its many constituent organizations, institutions, and individual citizens. The vision for Calgary's future has to embrace the values of its citizens. People are motivated when they see their personal visions represented in the shared vision. To date, 18,000 citizens have invested in the vision for Calgary by sharing their ideas.

The **imagineCALGARY** urban sustainability plan is looking 100 years ahead and articulating 30-year targets along with strategies for achieving them. The plan will be holistic—embracing the city and its people as a whole system—and will recognize that the city's social, economic, and environmental well-being are all connected. And finally, in order to succeed, the plan will enjoy wide ownership by the many institutions, agencies, and organizations across the city supporting its implementation. The City of Calgary has already stated a firm commitment to align its policies and programs with the recommendations of the **imagineCALGARY** project.

Calgary is breaking new ground with this project and we are committed to sharing our experience and learning with others. Since the launch of the Sustainable Cities PLUS Network, other Canadian municipalities have joined Calgary in the Network, including Edmonton, Halifax, Saint John, Ottawa/Gatineau, and the Niagara Region. We all still have a lot to learn, and a lot to share.

Dave Bronconnier has been the Mayor of Calgary since October 2001. He was first elected to Calgary City Council in 1992 where he served as Alderman for three consecutive terms.





What Can We Learn From Other Cities? **Enid Slack**



We are often tempted to look to other cities around the world for ideas about how to finance and govern our own cities. Each city is unique, however, in terms of its history and culture, its constitution, and the intergovernmental context in which it operates. London, England, for example, is part of a unitary state (a central government and local governments but no provincial governments) and receives more than 80% of its funding from central government grants. Although it levies a residential property tax (the council tax), London has very little local fiscal autonomy. New York City, on the other hand, is part of a federal system (comprising federal, state, and local governments) and receives a much larger part of its revenues from local taxation than does London. New York levies property taxes but also has access to income, sales, and several other local taxes. Everyone would agree that these are both highly successful cities; yet they are financed in very different ways.

Although cities around the world are different, international experience does give us some general guidelines about what works best when it comes to municipal finance and governance. We know, for example, that local governments are more successful when there is a clear assignment of expenditure responsibilities between the provincial (or state) and local governments. Simply put, everybody needs to be clear on who does what.

We also know that local governments need adequate resources and that their financial tools need to be commensurate with their expenditure responsibilities.¹ Cities cannot carry out their responsibilities properly if they do not have the right fiscal tools. For example, we know that the property tax is not appropriate to pay for social services because these are services that redistribute income. Moreover, because cities generally cannot borrow to meet operating expenditures, an economic downturn means that they have to raise local taxes or cut back services when social service expenditures increase. This is wrong in principle and can be financially disastrous.

International experience also tells us that cities are most efficient and accountable when those who make spending decisions, those who enjoy the benefits, and those who pay the taxes are the same people. When the level of government making the spending decisions (municipalities) is not the same as that raising the money (provincial or federal governments), accountability is blurred. Whenever possible, therefore, local governments should not be given money but the chance and the challenge to raise their own revenues. They should be fully accountable to their citizens for the taxes and fees they impose to finance the services they provide.

Although it seems easier to receive funding from another level of government, such largesse is seldom reliable (how often have we seen federal or provincial governments reduce or change their transfers to municipalities?) or free (as grants tend to reflect the priorities of the donor government, which do not necessarily reflect the priorities of cities). Local fiscal autonomy requires that cities raise most of their own revenues and that they set the tax rates for at least some of those revenues.

We also know that cities benefit from having a mix of taxes. The property tax is, in many ways, well suited to local governments because of the connection between many of the services typically funded at the local level and the benefit to property values. Property is immovable—it is unable to shift location in response to the tax—making the tax relatively easy to collect. Property tax revenues are fairly stable and predictable over time.

1. These principles are contained within the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

Nevertheless, the property tax does have some shortcomings. It does not tax commuters and visitors who use municipal services, such as roads and policing, but who do not pay property taxes. The tax on non-residential property, as it is generally applied in most countries, over-taxes businesses relative to the benefits they receive from municipal services. The property tax is not an “elastic” source of revenue, meaning that the tax base does not increase automatically as the economy grows. Revenues from a mix of taxes give cities more flexibility to respond to changes in local conditions, such as changes in the economy, evolving demographics, and growing expenditure needs.

Increasingly, the issues faced by large cities—economic competitiveness, transportation gridlock, loss of agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas, urban sprawl, air and water pollution, social polarization, and inadequate fiscal resources—can only be solved at a regional level. We know from international experience that the strong inter-dependencies and externalities among local jurisdictions characterizing all these issues need to be tackled on a coordinated and region-wide basis.

Cases in which the boundaries of formal government structures correspond to the scale of city-regions are rare, however. Most metropolitan regions around the world are characterized by political fragmentation. Some models of local governance, such as one-tier or two-tier government models and voluntary cooperation among municipalities, have been tried successfully in different cities at different times. More important than the precise model of governance is that some effective form of governance is in place for the entire city-region.

The Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance at the Munk Centre for International Studies at the University of Toronto was established in December 2004 to collect data on and analyze the fiscal condition of large Canadian cities so that we can not only compare them to each other but also to other cities around the world. This information and analysis will provide the opportunity for cities to learn from a variety of experiences.

Enid Slack is the Director of the Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance at the Munk Centre for International Studies at the University of Toronto.



Harper Government Needs An Urban Agenda – And Soon

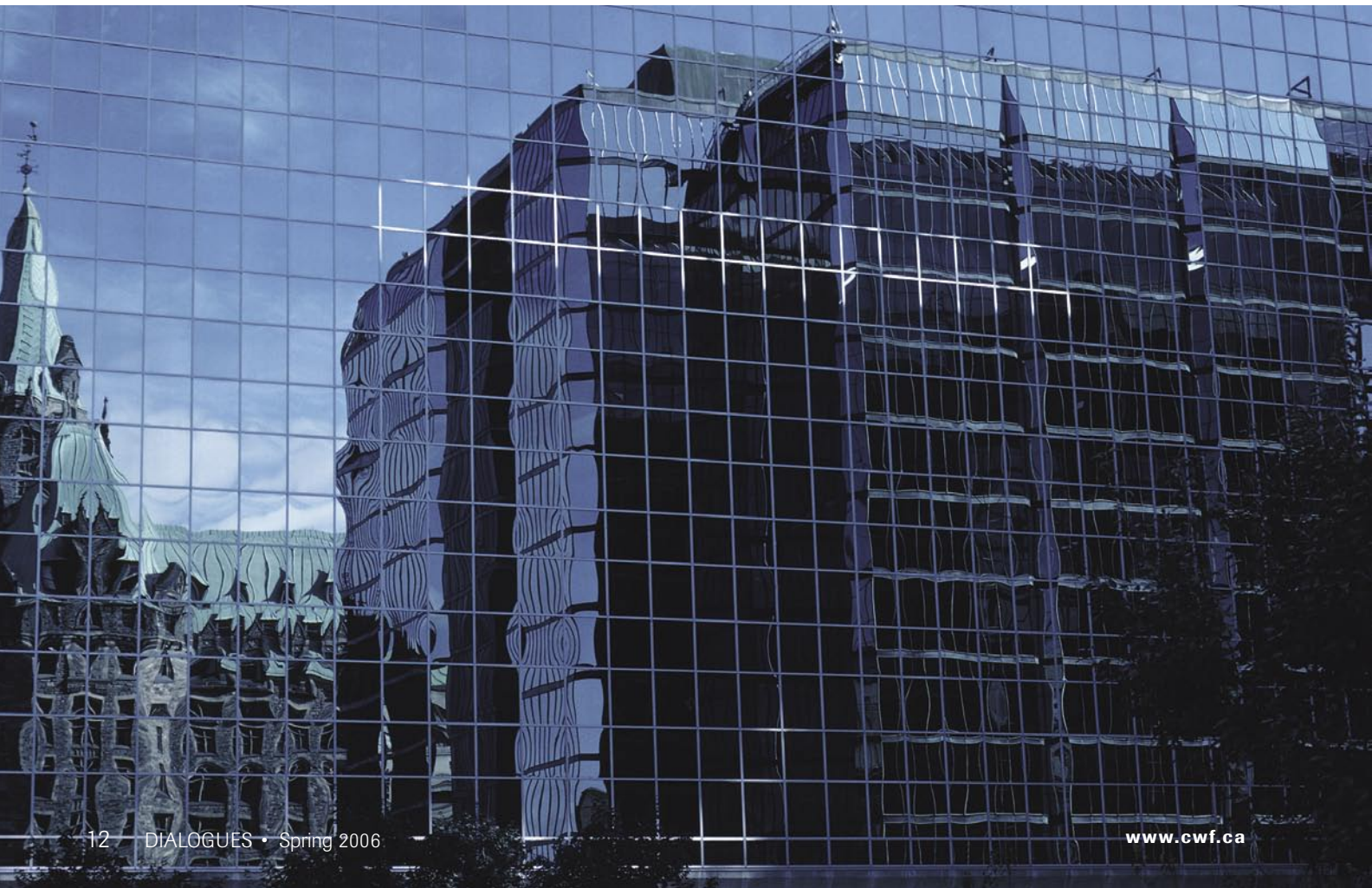
Loleen Berdahl




In the public eye, the Conservative Party of Canada is not seen as an “urban” party. Like its ancestral parties, the Progressive Conservative Party, the Reform Party, and the Canadian Alliance, many big city residents dismiss the Conservatives as appealing only to rural and suburban interests. The January 2006 electoral returns reinforced this notion.

As newspapers across the country trumpeted on January 24, the Harper minority government failed to achieve breakthroughs in Canada’s three largest cities: Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Without a single elected seat from the “big three” (Vancouver’s David Emerson, of course, was elected as a Liberal), the minority Conservatives can easily be rejected by big city residents as being the party for rural Canada, with no interest in, or appeal to, the big cities. While residents of Calgary and Edmonton might disagree (it is difficult to sit through Calgary traffic and consider the city “rural”), the myth of rural Conservatism will be hard for the Harper government to dispel.

One could argue that the Liberals suffer from equal imbalance. To wit, on March 14, 2006, *Globe and Mail* columnist Jeffrey Simpson wrote that the Liberals “should change the party’s name from the Liberal Party of Canada to the Liberal Party of Greater Toronto (and elsewhere).” But, given Canada’s new urban realities, to be branded as too urban is hardly the same admonishment as being branded





as too rural. Urbanization is the present and future of Canada; rural Canada represents Canada's past. Being seen as the party of rural Canada is, in the long run, a kiss of death.

Simply put, the Conservative Party of Canada needs an urban agenda, and quickly. This urban agenda must be clearly established before Prime Minister Harper leads his party into the next federal election. To move from a minority to a majority government, the Conservatives need to gain seats in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Any political party seeking to form a majority government that truly reflects Canada must be successful in these cities.

Would establishing an urban agenda risk the Conservative Party's support in its loyal electoral strongholds: rural Canada and the urban prairie? In a word, no. With respect to rural Canada, there is little chance that the Liberals or the New Democrats will move their platforms to appeal to these areas; both parties are clearly focused on the cities. While all three national political parties must continue to assure rural voters that their interests will not be ignored, all three must also focus their attention on urban issues.

With respect to the urban prairie, the Conservative Party could only increase its appeal to voters by establishing an urban agenda. Residents of Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Regina, and Winnipeg very much see themselves as urbanites, and their cities face many of the same urban issues as do Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver—albeit on a smaller scale.

Electurally speaking, the Conservatives have nothing to lose and a lot to gain by establishing and articulating an urban agenda. However, one political barrier to federal articulation of an urban agenda is the widespread and inaccurate belief that “urban issues” are entirely within provincial jurisdiction. Given the Harper government's preference to strictly respect the jurisdiction of provinces, this myth of “urban equals municipal (and therefore provincial)” could serve as the excuse rural interests in the party may be looking for to keep the Conservatives from adopting an urban agenda.

It is certainly true that matters concerning municipal governments and institutions are solely within provincial jurisdiction. But, even with the strictest respect of jurisdictional lines, it is difficult for anyone to argue that federal actions are of little consequence to cities. There are areas of exclusive or concurrent federal jurisdiction and activity that, although applicable to the entire country, are of particular importance to the big cities. Key policy areas here include immigration, Aboriginal policy, the environment, housing, and transportation and urban transit funding. A “federal urban agenda” need not mean an expansion of federal activity; it could be as simple as the federal government doing a better job at its current “urban” activities, with its efforts being made in a cooperative manner with the provincial governments.

How could the Conservatives establish an urban agenda and—perhaps more importantly for their electoral future—use this agenda to demonstrate the party's commitment to, and understanding of, urban Canada? I suggest that Prime Minister Harper be very bold and public on this issue by appointing a Big Cities Task Force. The Big Cities Task Force should be explicitly focused exclusively on the big cities—at a bare minimum, those areas of at least 100,000 residents that are classified as Census Metropolitan Areas by Statistics Canada.

To assuage critics who worry that a federal urban agenda would mean federal engagement in municipal affairs, and to ensure that the emerging recommendations are consistent with the guiding philosophies of the Harper Conservative government, the Big Cities Task Force should focus on what the federal government can do to positively impact upon big cities in its areas of exclusive or concurrent jurisdiction. This should by no means be pursued as an end run around the provincial governments, but rather as an opportunity to identify ways in which the federal government can work in a collaborative and coordinated fashion with the provinces.

The membership of the Big Cities Task Force is critical. There is certainly talent that can be drawn upon within the Conservative caucus, particularly among the backbenchers from Calgary and Edmonton, and this talent should be utilized. However, for the Big Cities Task Force's findings to truly appeal to Canada's big cities, it must have significant membership from Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, and this will necessitate going beyond the government caucus. Prime Minister Harper could certainly draw upon the many capable people who have been involved in the Toronto New Deal movement.

Appointing a Big Cities Task Force has a number of advantages to the Harper Conservatives and to Canada's big cities alike. For the Harper government, the advantages are increased understanding of federal urban policy issues; the opportunity to build bridges, good will and, ultimately, electoral support in Canada's big cities; and the ability to make use of the considerable untapped backbench talent. For cities, the advantages are keeping big city issues on the national policy agenda and, one would hope, the creation of federal policies that improve quality of life in Canada's big cities.

Loleen Berdahl, Ph.D., is a Senior Researcher with the Canada West Foundation. Her particular research interests include urban policy, regionalism, federalism, and public opinion.

Why Canada's Cities Are Ottawa's Business



Anne Golden

At this point in the debate over how best to address urban challenges, it is safe to assume general agreement that our major cities cannot continue on their present course without compromising our quality of life and economic prosperity. Even a recent report arguing that Canadian municipalities in general should look to themselves rather than other levels of government to solve their funding woes acknowledges that municipalities in Alberta and Ontario are special cases requiring additional taxing flexibility to make ends meet.

The dispute over where cities should look for financial and policy relief, however, is far from settled. In light of the recent federal election, it appears that the argument might be tilting toward the “anyone-but-Ottawa” side of the debate, as the new government promotes its vision of a decentralized and open federalism that leaves provinces more autonomous within their constitutional spheres of jurisdiction and narrows the federal government’s role in managing the nation’s affairs.

However federalism evolves in the years ahead, I believe that Canada’s cities must remain on the federal agenda.

Consider the strongest argument against this thesis, advanced by many thoughtful observers: in the words of columnist Jeffrey Simpson, “There are responsibilities Canada’s Constitution gives to Ottawa, and others to the provinces. By statute and practice, cities are creatures of provinces, not the federal government. If cities need help, and they do, then provinces should come to their rescue.” If this current arrangement is truly dysfunctional, such observers continue, there are two alternatives: either reform provincial electoral systems to eliminate the rural bias in their legislatures that sidelines city issues, or rewrite the Constitution to give cities their own power and authority.

This argument has all the virtues of purity and none of realism on its side. As everyone knows, reopening the Constitution would cause Canada untold agonies of time and effort—and we might well hope that the country doesn’t go through this in our lifetimes. Nor is the worthy aim of adjusting electoral ridings to ensure representation by population likely to be realized any time soon. For the foreseeable future, therefore, we are stuck with a system in which cities are under the thumb of provincial governments whose electoral composition sustains a strong rural bias in policy-making. We don’t have time to wait for utopia to arrive before finding systemic solutions to the problems facing cities today.

The fact of the matter is that both the expectations of our cities and the problems they face are of national scope. Cities are where Canadians increasingly live and where immigrants overwhelmingly choose to settle—and also where, in recent decades, these newcomers are failing to achieve the same degree of economic success as their predecessors. Cities are where the Canadian economy will thrive or flag in the face of international competition to provide the high quality of life attractive to talented and highly mobile knowledge workers. Cities are where the transportation corridors run that will either choke on congestion, to the detriment of regional trade and quality of life, or be extended and intelligently integrated with land use planning to attract business investment.

And on the expectations side, the range of cities’ responsibilities today is vastly greater than the parochial services and law and order set of responsibilities envisioned by the Constitution. Today, cities must manage security concerns such as terrorism and pandemic readiness; they are the testing grounds for making diversity work through education, housing, and other social services; they are where many environmental problems in decades ahead will both originate and have an impact on Canadians.

What about the well-being of the (shrinking) group of Canadians who live outside our urban areas? Would a sustained federal focus on cities work to their detriment? In fact, forthcoming research by The Conference Board of Canada will show that economic growth in the nine major cities that lead country-wide economic performance helps smaller communities in their respective provinces or region to grow at an even faster pace. In other words, helping our big cities thrive is a win-win for all Canadians.

Many of the challenges facing cities—from immigrant settlement to transit and housing infrastructure—already intersect with areas of federal responsibility. What we need is for the federal government to continue to manage these spheres, but with a heightened awareness of how its actions affect the country’s urban future. Given that the fate of Canada’s cities is a matter of truly

national importance, even if the country does move toward a more decentralized federalism, we still need a federal government whose attention and policy agenda are gripped by the vital role of cities in the nation's prosperity. After all, it is a two-way street: flourishing cities help Ottawa achieve its overall economic and social objectives for the country.

We were starting to see progress on fiscal issues with the so-called New Deal in the last federal budget; and at the provincial level, we have seen progress recently in Ontario through empowering measures such as the new City of Toronto Act and the latest budget strategically focused on the Toronto region's transit and infrastructure needs. All levels of government need to be involved to ensure successful cities—decentralization does not get the national government off the hook.

In summary, we need to maintain a clear-sighted grasp of the “givens” facing us: the vital role our big cities play in driving regional and national economic performance; an outdated Constitution that we're stuck with for the foreseeable future; the reluctance of many provincial governments to make cities' needs a fiscal and policy priority; and the ongoing federal involvement in many of the areas affecting cities' fates. Given this, it is no exaggeration to say that this country's future is at stake in Ottawa's decision to step up to the plate, or step aside, on a national urban agenda.

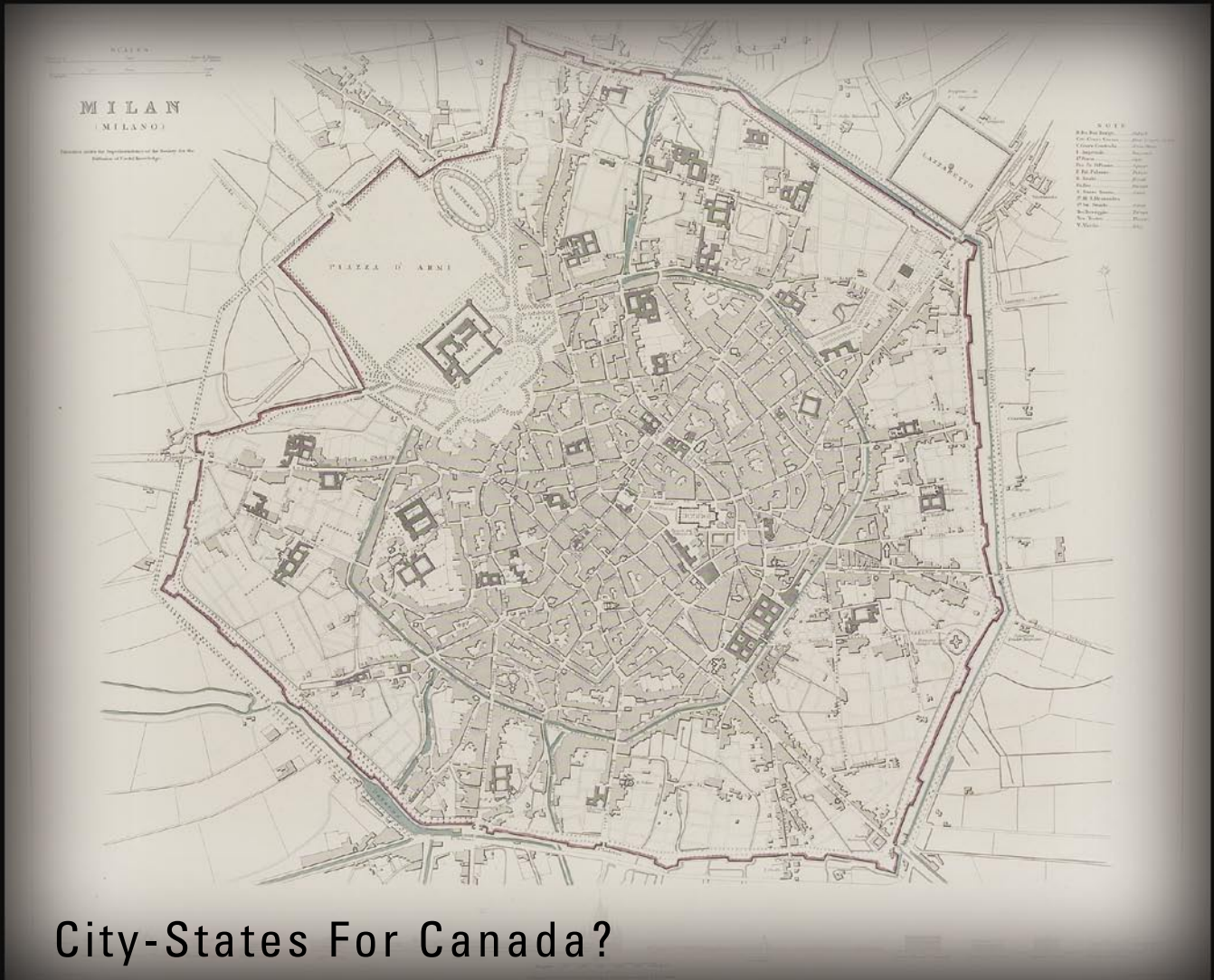
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Anne Golden, Ph.D., C.M., has been President and Chief Executive Officer of The Conference Board of Canada since October 2001. Prior to joining The Conference Board, Dr. Golden served with the United Way of Greater Toronto for 19 years—the last 14 years as President.





City-States For Canada?

Andrew Sancton

Are city-states the wave of the future? Anyone reading the work of such varied authors as Jane Jacobs, Kenichi Ohmae, Neil Peirce, and Tom Courchene might think so. Even the well-known Canadian historian, Michael Bliss has recently wondered about the country evolving “into a league of provinces, and perhaps a sprinkling of city-states, some of these jurisdictions effectively independent.”

Speculating in this way has its value. But it is time to subject such thinking to some serious analysis before we all get carried away with futuristic fantasies—or romantic nostalgia for the Italian city-states of the Fifteenth Century. In the Canadian context, a city-state must surely be a city that has seceded from a province and that has the same constitutional status as a province. If a city-state is not to be as important as a province, then there is no purpose in using the term.

My argument is that, in Canada and other western liberal democracies, cities will generally not become city-states. This kind of self-government requires that there be a territory delimited by official boundaries. For cities, the boundaries will never be static, never be acceptable to all, and will always be contested. Boundaries fatally limit the capacity of cities to be self-governing.

It should be apparent already that, in using the word “cities,” I am not referring to central-city municipalities that carry the name of their “city-region.” This distinction is the source of much confusion and difficulty. There are examples of populous city-regions comprising only one municipality but, for fast-growing city-regions at least, the boundaries of such a municipality will always be problematic. The much more common pattern, especially in North America, is for city-regions to comprise dozens, or even hundreds, of municipalities.

Making central-city municipalities—and perhaps also their surrounding suburbs—more autonomous does nothing except reify existing boundaries that are invariably seen as arbitrary, outdated, discriminatory, and irrelevant; but to focus on economic and social reality of a city means focussing on the city-region as a whole—and determining its territorial extent for the purposes of self-government is not a practical proposition.

An article about why cities cannot be self-governing might seem unnecessary. A much more common concern is that cities are hardly self-governing at all, and need release from the dead hand of central regulation. I am highly sympathetic to such a concern, but have become worried about the implications—and confusions—relating to many of the arguments, and inflated rhetoric, about more autonomy for cities. They take us down a path that, in my view, can ultimately be damaging for cities, if for no other reason that they divert valuable resources to fruitless undertakings, much like searching for the end of a rainbow.

Residents of Calgary, Winnipeg, Regina, and Saskatoon can point out that their municipalities actually do include almost all the residents of their respective city-regions, as such regions are defined by Statistics Canada. But the fastest growing of these cities is Calgary and it is clearly facing territorial problems. Calgary has been annexing contiguous areas for decades to insure a steady stream of new developable land. But the City of Calgary is also surrounded by non-contiguous urban municipalities. Such places as Airdrie, Crossfield, Cochrane, Chestermere, and Okotoks are growing even faster than Calgary itself. The more Calgary grows, the more these places will grow and the more they will become integrated into the urban area that is focused on Calgary as the central city. The strategic choice that the City of Calgary faces is whether it will work co-operatively with these urban governments or whether its ultimate objective will be to absorb them as part of an ongoing commitment to a rigid model of continuing annexation.

All the great, growing cities of the world eventually expand in such a way that their influence starts to impinge on neighbouring communities that were once quite distinct. But there are no central governments in the western world that, as a matter of consistent, ongoing policy, provide for central cities to absorb systematically their urban-based municipal neighbours. Even Ontario, one of the most interventionist jurisdictions with respect to municipal boundaries and structures, has not followed such a policy for Toronto (hence the continued existence of Mississauga, 2001 population of 613,000).

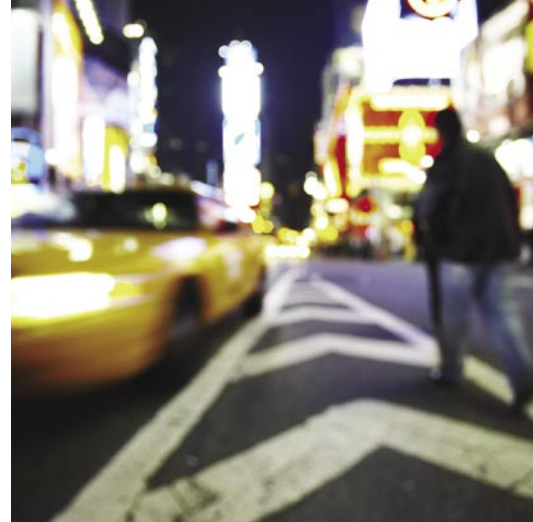
Toronto is Canada's most likely candidate for city-state status. Precisely because the city does have a large territory, a substantial population, and significant fiscal resources, it is at least possible to imagine a disgruntled, charismatic mayor convincing his or her constituents that secession from Ontario would be a good idea. In financial terms, city taxpayers would probably be better off than they are now. The city's population would make it the third largest province in Canada, behind the rest of Ontario and Quebec.

The main problem with such a plan is that it would bifurcate the Toronto city-region. The city's boundaries run through densely-populated areas. Turning them into provincial boundaries would surely create more problems than it would solve. But deciding on the "real" boundaries of the Toronto city-region is a nightmare. Even Statistics Canada is unsure. It now refers to an area it calls the "Extended Golden Horseshoe" which includes 6.7 million people (59% of Ontario's population), stretching from Barrie to Niagara Falls and Kitchener to Clarington.

In Alberta, Statistics Canada, uses a similar area it calls the "Calgary-Edmonton Corridor, whose population is 2.15 million, which includes 72% of the province's population. In British Columbia, there is the "Lower Mainland and Southern Vancouver Island," with a population of 2.7 million or 69% of the province's population.

Rather than wasting time worrying about the emergence of city-states, it is time to recognize that the provinces containing our largest city-regions have in fact become city-states themselves. It is true that they contain vast, sparsely-populated territories, but their political centres of gravity are increasingly located in Canada's largest cities. We have city-states in Canada; they are called provinces.

Andrew Sancton is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Western Ontario. Dr. Sancton specializes in urban politics and municipal government.



Edd LeSage

Cities, City-Regions & Willing the Future Through Inclusiveness



When we discuss cities, we almost always discuss something larger and more complex than a municipality. Most analysis of cities at the international, national, or sub-national level is a contemplation of the social constructions (with their economics and politics) of a metropolitan/city region, or what columnist Neil Peirce calls a *citistate*. Metro areas, city-regions, and *citistates* are all names for regional settlement complexes having one or more historic central cities surrounded by other cities and towns. The communities are socially, economically, and environmentally interdependent—this is why they are dubbed a complex. They also share some form of common identification, although its strength may vary considerably. Beyond the complex, there is a larger zone referenced to the complex for trade, commerce, and communication.

Owing to the social, economic, and ecological character of the city-region (a name of convenience), governance of these complexes necessarily involves collaboration, cooperation, or coordination across the region. Here, regional leadership extends beyond the municipal leadership. Government, private, and third sector leaders necessarily engage one another owing to the interdependent character of the city-region's social, economic, and ecological aspects. This engagement normally occurs in punctuated, partial and parallel, or isolated fashion, even though governmental and other institutions seek to press some form of order on them.

Broad involvement across the spectrum of regional leadership is important to achieve a willed future for the city-region. Across the West, the good news is that a willed future is possible if the governance cards are played right. This is because of the scale, nascence, and progressive nature of our major western Canadian city-regions provide opportunities to collectively imagine and act on a broad future. All of this is possible because these Canadian cities are not the overly complex, history-bound, and even ungovernable, entities that exist elsewhere.

British Columbia's efforts to address regional governance challenges through a flexible and adaptable regional district model has been much discussed. The province has aided its two largest city-regions to successfully address significant regional issues. In recent years, the municipal leadership of the major prairie city-regions have launched their own initiatives to tackle regional governance. Regional partnerships have been fashioned in the greater Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, and Regina regions. Those in the first three city-regions are appropriately described as councils of municipal governments, or COGs. The Alberta partnerships—the Alberta Capital Region Alliance (Edmonton), and the Calgary Regional Partnership—bring together municipal governments of the respective regions and have focused on promoting such major initiatives as regional transportation planning and the establishment of regional geographic information systems.

Winnipeg's COG—the Mayors and Reeves of Manitoba's Capital Region—has a similar membership that has defined similar regional objectives. Regina's Regional Economic Development Authority differs from the prairie COGs with an economic development agenda, and is of particular interest since its membership extends beyond municipal corporations.

Smoke is pouring from the stacks in the Alberta and Regina partnerships with constructive work being done on selected initiatives. Nevertheless, problems that plague municipal relations in city-regions are found in the COG organizations. Willing the future in Edmonton and Winnipeg is complicated by traditional municipal rivalries in the region, particularly the traditional strains between the dominant central cities and the surrounding authorities. These conflicts are well rehearsed, and so is the penchant for the highest levels of central cities' leadership to pay passing attention to the partnerships and the smaller fry of the region's municipal community.

While central city municipalities hold the preponderance of the city-region populations, the failure to actively embrace regionalism—employing partnerships erodes the prospects for developing a deeper regional consciousness. Such consciousness, along with mutual trust

We can expect to see more good work from the existing regional partnerships, and this work should be engaged and, with success, celebrated. However, the present COGs may have serious structural defects that limit their potential to will the future. Simply put,

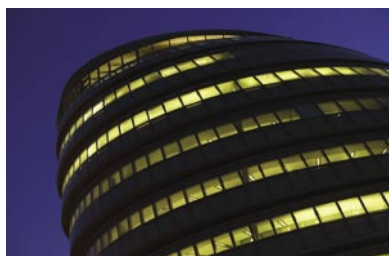
they are not sufficiently inclusive of the city-region leadership. Granted, non-municipal and non-governmental leaders are drawn into special initiatives mounted by these partnerships, and this is laudable and necessary. All the same, something more is required.

If the city-region truly involves interdependence among various communities, then the leadership of the regional communities should be assembled and active in some collective governance venue. Perhaps expanded COGs provide the basis for such a venue. The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) provides an example of how a COG can involve other institutions and governments in a regional governance body. Important regional authorities are at the table, as are state and federal agencies, and Mexico.

Then again, perhaps something entirely new should be created to promote an effective regional governance venue. Membership of a new entity would necessarily include municipalities, but also a host of other entities holding mandates that span the city-region. Candidates would include educational authorities, health authorities, transportation authorities, economic development authorities, major post-secondary institutions, utilities, the military, and selected federated “peak” organizations within the city-region including peak business and arts organizations.

Perhaps the reason we see no such beast in our western Canadian city-regions is because our leaders are now only taking first steps toward a serviceable governance regime for the major prairie city-regions. Fair enough. Perhaps the political challenges of promoting a more inclusive governance regime are only surmounted when a leader of exceptional vision, energy, and political capital emerges that can be spent on this agenda. In the absence of such a “hero,” it seems reasonable for our present crop of leaders to think regionally, gain practice at balancing local interests with regional ones, and lean toward inclusiveness. These exercises are all rehearsals for the willed future.

Edd LeSage is Professor of Extension at the University of Alberta. He has directed the Government Studies program at the University’s Faculty of Extension for 31 years. In 2005, his co-edited *Municipal Reform in Canada* was published by Oxford University Press.



If the city-region truly involves interdependence among various communities, then the leadership of the regional communities should be assembled and active in some collective governance venue.



Judy Rogers

Vancouver: Looking To 2010 With 20/20 Vision

The City of Vancouver has long been recognized as a leader in public policy and planning. Experts from all over the world come to Vancouver to see how our city and its political leaders have pioneered innovative ways to address urban issues. The City has won numerous awards that recognize this willingness to think outside the box and try new things.

Vancouver is taking a similar innovative approach to hosting the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. We will be the first host city to be driven by the goals of creating a Winter Games that is both sustainable and inclusive. We also plan to be the first Olympic city to create legacies and social and cultural shifts that our residents will benefit from both now and in the future.

Our sustainability goals will be achieved by taking a comprehensive approach to our work that will promote and balance environmental, social, cultural, and economic objectives.

Inclusivity will be accomplished by encouraging the participation of, and improving conditions for, all types of residents, regardless of their language, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or physical abilities.

Leaving legacies will not only mean creating things that will outlast their initial purpose. In Vancouver, we want our legacies to yield benefits sooner and not just later. We want to create physical legacies for the community, but also create other positive shifts in the way our residents approach physical activity, volunteerism, the arts, and literacy.

These concepts are the lens through which Vancouver is focusing all its Olympic preparation work.

It is challenging to itemize the myriad ways we are implementing our strategies to meet these goals, but here is a high-level overview of what the City is doing along with its 2010 partners.

Sustainability

We are the first host city to take a holistic approach to sustainability. Our desire is to push forward on practices that will benefit our residents environmentally, economically, and socially.

For our venues, we have made the decision to “reduce, reuse, and recycle” first. Instead of building all new facilities for the events being hosted in Vancouver, we decided to take several older facilities and refurbish them to accommodate the Winter Games. Not only will this approach save money, it will also reduce waste and leave an improved facility for our residents.

We are also striving to ensure that the new buildings we construct for the 2010 Games meet high environmental standards. Our Athletes’ Village and the new curling facility will be expected to meet LEED Silver, an international standard for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings. For the Village, which will later become a model sustainable community, we are also investigating a district energy system that would eventually allow us to provide heat to the buildings free of greenhouse gas emissions.

Our new 2010 broadcast and media centre, which will later be converted into a much-needed convention centre, will have one of the largest urban green roofs in North America. The roof will capture rain water for other uses, and keep the facility cool in warm weather to reduce energy use.

In terms of economic sustainability, we recognize that the money

we spend on the 2010 Winter Games should give our taxpayers perceived and real long-term value. We want all stakeholders—residents and businesses—to feel they have benefited both individually and as communities because of the Games.

Consequently, besides improving our infrastructure and facilities, we are also creating opportunities. Working with other levels of government and the Vancouver Organizing Committee (VANOC), we have created a number of opportunities to stimulate economic activity. A one-stop portal for businesses and suppliers called the 2010 Commerce Centre joins other community-based initiatives for training and employment of youth and inner-city residents.

Inclusivity

Vancouver wanted to learn from other host cities, and early on in the bid process we decided that our Winter Games needed to include and benefit those people in society who are often negatively impacted.

We were the first host city to include an Inner-City Inclusive Commitment Statement in its Olympic bid. The statement sets out specific objectives and goals for social sustainability and inner-city inclusion for VANOC and its government partners.

One aspect includes ensuring the venues are fully accessible for disabled persons. The statement also includes goals to help low-income residents of our inner-city neighbourhoods benefit from the Winter Games through programs such as job training; employment and business opportunities; better housing; improved access to sports and culture; and participation in Olympic preparations and decision-making.

We are already seeing positive outcomes. Several existing inner-city economic development initiatives, with which the City and its partners were already involved, have been integrated into a new independent agency to build on employment and business opportunities for inner-city residents and businesses.

VANOC has purchased many items—from computer systems to catering—locally. They have also selected a local inner-city company to supply office and stationery needs, and have encouraged their partners to do the same.

Bell Canada, a major corporate sponsor of the 2010 Winter Games, has donated \$2 million to support economic initiatives in the inner-city.

Meanwhile, the City of Vancouver has continued to help fund low-income housing. Almost 300 new non-market housing units have been allocated in developments in the Downtown Eastside, one of Vancouver's most in-need neighbourhoods. More non-market housing (250 units) will come as a result of the Athletes' Village.

New City bylaws will help protect current affordable housing by making it more difficult to convert single residential occupancy hotel units to other uses.

Also, for the first time in Olympic history, Aboriginal participation is an integral part of the planning and hosting of the Winter Games.

These kinds of initiatives will help ensure that all types of residents are included and benefit from the Winter Games.

Legacies

Naturally, physical legacies are the most tangible evidence of the Games' benefits. Permanent facilities tend to attract the most attention from residents, and offer a visual benchmark of our progress and preparation for the Winter Games.

Both our renovated venues and our new venues are designed to serve our residents once the Winter Games have moved on to the next host city.

Besides the buildings themselves, we believe the environmental standards we set will challenge our designers and construction companies to develop new techniques and materials. We envision that the LEED standards, ground-source heat pumps, greenhouse gas reduction, and energy planning will become common terminology and standard business practices in the future, partly because of the needs of the 2010 Games.

The experience our local companies will gain, because of the high standards set out in the 2010 Games, will give them a competitive edge in this field. This will be another legacy.

We are hopeful that we can also create other shifts in attitude and behaviour as part of the Olympic legacy.

For this purpose, the various partners in the 2010 Winter Games have established an organization called LegaciesNow. It proactively works with community organizations, non-government organizations, the private sector, and all levels of government to develop inclusive and sustainable legacies in sport and recreation, arts, literacy, and volunteerism.

It is appropriately named in that its objective is to create legacies in these areas right away. Its accomplishments to date have been significant, and anyone interested in knowing more about the organization's work should visit its website at www.2010legaciesnow.com.

Conclusion

Vancouver is excited to be the next host city of the Olympic Winter Games.

It will be a time to enjoy a world-wide gathering of sport and culture; a time to welcome the world to our corner of the planet; and an opportunity to proudly show everyone how the Olympic Games can be a catalyst for furthering sustainability, inclusivity and legacy goals that will improve lives long after the Olympic flame has been extinguished.

Judy Rogers has been City Manager of the City of Vancouver since 1999.

Building Community, Engaging Youth

Carmen Bohn

I live next door to a slum of slush-covered cardboard and muddy streams. The squalor threatens to overtake my yard, but I don't care. In fact, the micro-scale urban revitalization program undertaken by my neighbour's children inspires me. This incredible expression of creative play was made without the prompts of manufactured toys, and batteries were definitely not included.

Yet even as the details of the project finally take shape, the village begins to melt under the warmth of the afternoon sun. I watch in fascination at the children's reaction to this transformation. Excited about new possibilities, they quickly mobilize a few more friends and create a system of rivers, reservoirs, and dams.

I look at the village-makers next door and think about harnessing this creativity in designing and building better places.

How do we consult today?

As a community planner, I carry around a healthy degree of idealism. Yes, I am one of "those." I believe our world can be a better place, and as a planner and community builder, it is my professional responsibility to help make it so.

Community builders are called upon to stimulate and synthesize public input. In doing so, we often end up with input that isn't as creative as it could be. By providing the public with best practices and case studies, is it a wonder practitioners end up with answers



they expect and references to their own information? In going beyond the status quo, I see the opportunity to actually engage the public rather than simply to consult or inform. Although some (maybe even most) might find the status quo acceptable, choice and creativity can contribute to the design of better places. When we engage as well as inform the public, community builders acknowledge that public input is essential for making better places.

How can we make better places?

Building better places involves the input and imagination of all ages. One's interest in participating hinges on whether the subject is meaningful and relevant to them. Once inspired to contribute, the public should be encouraged to provide feedback that explores new avenues rather than reiterates what is already known.

Are we reaching our creative potential in making the best places possible? Our younger community builders can provide some guidance. Children exhibit a limitless sense of "why not?" They curiously dismantle their environments only to rebuild them in different ways. They embrace change. We can learn from their inspiration, and enjoy the opportunity to influence change in our environments through more creative public engagement processes.

Why should we engage children and youth?

Children and youth are the most creative segment of the population. Unencumbered by bias, young people offer community builders truthful, creative input. As people grow older, minds and lives become cluttered with new priorities. More time is spent thinking about property values rather than about how to enjoy those properties. Unfortunately, adults often sacrifice creativity for seriousness.

Young people aren't afraid to set priorities that include creative play. Working with youth reminds us that playful curiosity is genius and that the doors to greater creativity swing wide open when we allow ourselves to have a little fun. In encouraging the creative potential of our youth, we may remember how to be more creative ourselves.

Setting creativity aside for a moment, perhaps the most important reason to engage young people is that interested, involved children and youth grow into interested, involved adults. By teaching children from a young age about urban issues, they will develop a broader-based perspective. If youth can see that their opinions and participation are valued beyond mere tokenism, they will see the importance of their involvement and maintain active citizenship over their lifetime.

How should we engage children and youth?

In order to engage young people, we must ensure that they have an age appropriate level of contextual information and a basic understanding of urban systems. It is important that we set the framework for creativity to flow without providing the "right" answers. Box City (www.cubekc.org) is a hands-on experiential approach to community planning. Box City has been used successfully to engage all age groups in community building. Using mapping, role-playing, and collaboration, planners and community builders work with the public to explore the concepts of community planning and responsible citizenship. The value of this tool from an engagement perspective is the ability to use site-specific considerations to interactively explore a particular place.

Children and youth might have short attention spans but they also have a great capacity to interpret their environment, especially if the information is interesting and relevant to them. Although conventional methodologies such as presentations, information displays, and feedback forms may fail to engage youth, participatory and applicable activities might better capture their imagination and allow them to do what they do best—get creative.

There are many encouraging examples of youth engagement occurring within many Canadian municipalities. Child and Youth Friendly Calgary (www.childfriendly.ab.ca) believes in providing meaningful opportunities for young people to contribute to their communities. They actively engage youth in building better places through volunteer projects, partnership building, and advisory councils that offer input on child and youth friendly city components. In making it meaningful and fun, such organizations suggest many examples of great engagement strategies that work for people of all ages.

By engaging young people, we improve our current public engagement processes while we prepare for better engagement in the future. In providing real opportunities for youth to explore subjects important to them, they will learn to influence their environment in meaningful and creative ways. Better levels of participation, and indeed better places, are possible if we are all committed to engaging the collective imagination.

Carmen Bohn is a member of the Canadian Institute of Planners and is working as a consultant in Ottawa.



Canadian Cities Face Increasing Diversity: Are They Up To The Challenge?

Tom Carter

Over the past couple of years, several cities have experienced riots where race has been an important precipitating factor: Paris (France), Sydney (Australia), and Birmingham (England). Canadian cities have yet to experience similar upheavals, but there are growing signs of tension as the racial, ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity of Canadian cities increases. What is the nature of this increasing diversity and what does it mean for cities? How can we prevent the racial strife common in many other cities?

Recent growth in Canada has been concentrated in the larger cities. In 2001, 63% of the population lived in the 25 largest metropolitan centres with 95% of growth during the 1996 to 2001 period concentrated in these centres (Statistics Canada, 2002). Calgary led all centres with a population increase in excess of 15%, but Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal dominate the urban system with 34% of the total national population and close to 58% of total national growth (Statistics Canada, 2002).

The arrival of significant numbers of immigrants and refugees is a major component of this growth. Since 1990, annual arrivals have approximated 224,000 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2005). The residential location choice of newcomers has contributed to the uneven distribution of growth among Canada's major cities. During the decade ending in 2001, 43% of all arrivals went to Toronto, 18% to Vancouver, 12% to Montreal, and 3-4% each to Calgary and Edmonton (Statistics Canada, 2003). These five cities combined were the destination for approximately 80% of all arrivals. In the prairie provinces, 75-85% of arrivals settle in Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary, and Edmonton. All three prairie provinces are working to attract more new arrivals to address labour force shortages. Alberta, for example, wants to attract at least 24,000 immigrants each year and Manitoba 10,000. The major cities will continue to be the destination for most of these immigrants.

With the higher number of arrivals, there is growing diversity in race, ethnicity, religion, and language. Some immigrants still come from traditional source areas like Britain, continental Europe, and the United States, but most new arrivals now come from countries in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Because of the shift in source areas, many newcomers are "visible minorities," the term commonly used to describe those who are non-white. Visible minorities constitute approximately 37% of the Vancouver and Toronto populations; 17%, 15% and 13% for Calgary, Edmonton, and Winnipeg respectively. Chain migration, family reunification and above average birth rates for some new arrivals will continue to drive increasing diversity in the future. Projections by Statistics Canada indicate that the visible minority population by 2017 could be in excess of 8.5 million, up from the estimated 4.0 million in 2001. Although it is projected that 75% of the visible minority population will be living in one of Canada's three major cities, other cities will experience significant increases: 78% in Calgary, and 56% and 38% in Edmonton and Winnipeg respectively (Statistics Canada, 2005).

There is ample evidence to illustrate that this diversity is changing the character of our cities. It brings with it new forms of cultural expression, ranging from the nature of retailing and consumption patterns to housing design and land use patterns. There is a demand for different recreation services and sports activities, and increasing diversity has a major effect on services such as health, education, policing, and the justice system. It also affects the nature of the arts and entertainment industries, new forms of religious expression are introduced, and the political participation of new arrivals can change the fortunes of Canada's major political parties.

Change always generates a certain amount of tension. The challenge for cities is to accommodate this growing diversity and achieve the successful integration of new arrivals without negative outcomes such as racism, discrimination, development of marginalized people, and racial upheavals. In the Canadian context, action has been taken to deal with, and hopefully prevent such conflict, with legislation such as the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1985), the Employment Equity Act (1995), and the Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act (2001). However, legislation alone cannot guarantee harmony in a society characterized by diversity.

Some of the key issues that have to be addressed include dealing with residential concentrations and social exclusion, providing appropriate services at the local level, and developing a supportive housing policy. The importance of family ties often results in the residential concentrations of certain ethnic groups. There is a common perception that residential concentration fragments society and threatens cohesion. Ethnic enclaves, as these concentrations are often called, are good, in that they facilitate support networks of family and friends, enhance social inclusion, and become a focus for the development of local ethnic commercial and cultural services.

They can also lead to exclusion from mainstream society, stereotyping, and development of prejudice. Residential location in Canadian society cannot be dictated, but cities must recognize both the advantages and disadvantages of enclaves and identify appropriate policies. Adaptive policies lie in the areas of public education, employment equity, fostering an open society, and political participation. Ethnic groups must be able to feel comfortable both outside and inside their enclave (Carter, et.al. 2006). Integration, however, is a two way street. Newcomers must adapt to Canada and Canadian society, but Canadians and their institutions must also adapt to make space for newcomers. Policies, therefore, must be directed to all elements of society (Carter, et.al. 2006).



Growing diversity has an impact upon the delivery of services at the local government level. Do municipalities try to accommodate the specific needs of an ethnic group or adopt a universal approach of “one-size-fits-all” (parallel versus integrated services)? Municipalities find parallel services a real fiscal challenge. Are there programming mechanisms that will facilitate sharing of common facilities? These are important policy and program questions that have not been adequately answered and should be the focus of further research and best practice investigation (Carter, et. al. 2006).

Many newcomers, particularly refugees, experience overcrowding and housing affordability problems. Policies that target these new arrivals and shape programs for their housing needs can facilitate the process of integration. Too often there is a policy mismatch with provincial and federal immigration policy promoting increased numbers of new arrivals, but no corresponding housing policy that facilitates the provision of adequate and affordable housing. Inter-sectoral policy development is a key ingredient of successful immigration and integration policy. Urban policy has to facilitate planning for inclusive neighbourhoods and housing policy must support the provision of adequate, affordable housing, because secure housing and inclusive neighbourhoods establish the circumstances for access to a range of other formal and informal supports and networks that facilitate the resettlement and integration process.

Cities will face significant challenges over the next couple of decades as they struggle to accommodate a more diverse and complex society. All levels of government must work to develop

the appropriate policies and programs to allow Canada’s cities to accommodate this growing diversity, while minimizing the challenges that other worldwide cities have recently experienced.

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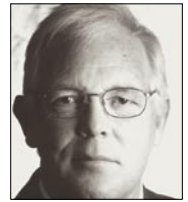
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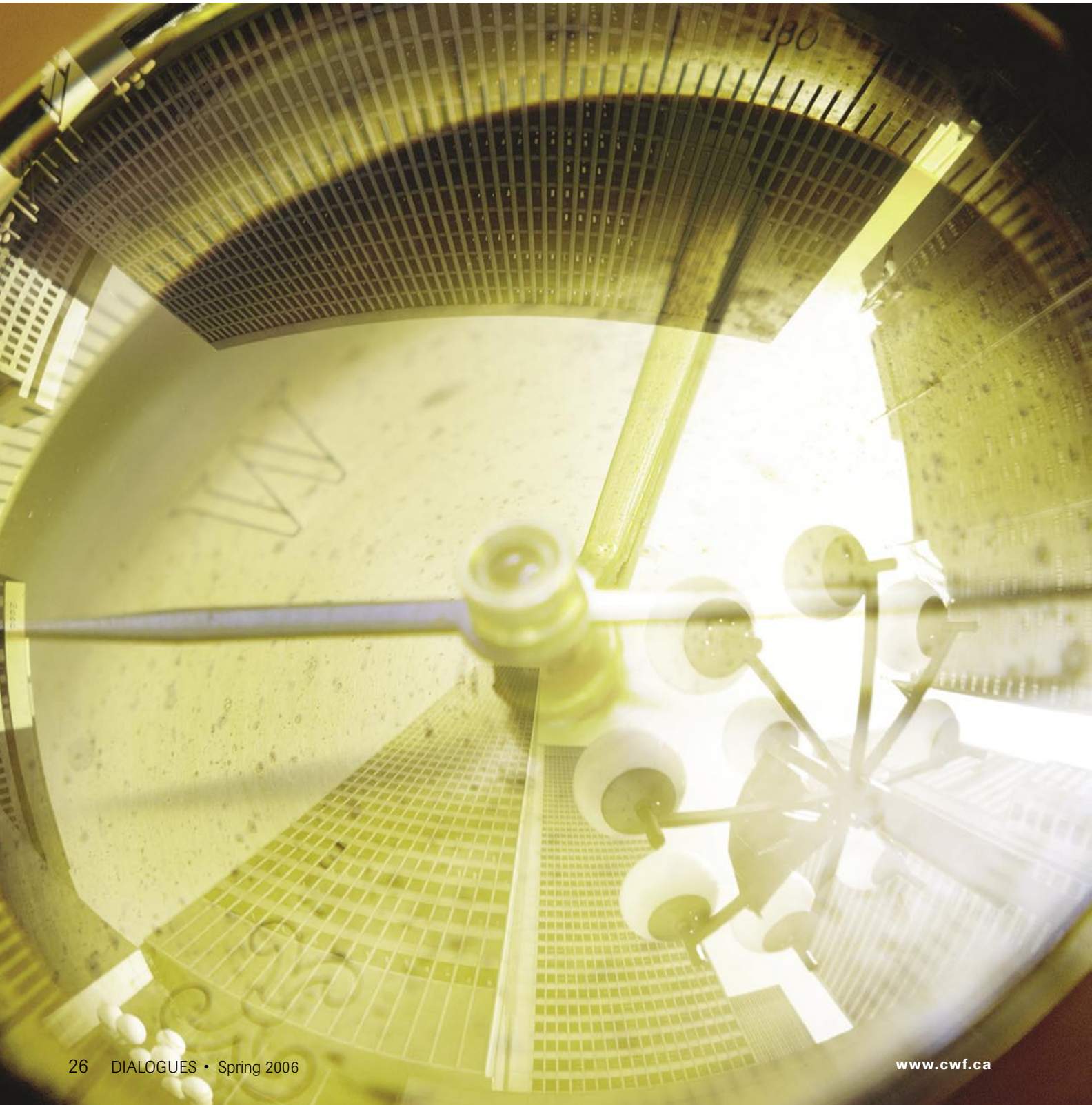
Tom Carter is Canada Research Chair in Urban Change and Adaptation and Professor of Geography at the University of Winnipeg. He is also Chair of the Board of Governors of the Prairie Metropolis Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration of Immigrants.

The 21st Century Belongs To Cities

Joe Berridge



Cities are the crucible of the twenty-first century economy, their streets the clear evidence of community cohesion or conflict. Nations and provinces may be important political containers, but they are not where your future is being decided, which is on the corner outside your urban window. That's the truism of contemporary city advocates and, unlike most truisms, it's largely true.



There's a growing body of international academic and intellectual support for the central role of cities in contemporary social and economic life. Harvard's Michael Porter has written extensively on the importance of connecting the diverse strands of the modern economy in one place—a city. New-age economist Richard Florida takes those notions even further with a thesis that it is only tolerant, open, user-friendly cities that can unlock the creative, intellectual energy essential for advances in innovation and productivity. At the social level, it is in the schools, universities, and cafés of the big city that every generation learns whether or not it can live with its neighbours.

Despite the fact that over half of us live in the four big urban regions, Canada was late at the urban table—preferring to hang on to the comfortable myths of our agricultural, small town personality, and the well-tried dysfunctions of two-level federalism. But over the past five or so years, it has joined all western countries with an urban agenda emerging as an urgent element of the country's political business. The city charter movement, the C-5 big city mayors organisation and the New Deal for Cities, Paul Martin's now still-born conversion to the cause of the urban regions, are all evidence of the inescapable importance of a third actor in Confederation—the big cities.

What do the big cities want? Money first. The financial capability of all big cities is structurally out of balance with their responsibilities, but beyond that they seek respect for the fact that every piece of senior level legislation—be it in immigration, health, education, environment, income support—has a direct impact upon the management of a city. As for formal powers, Ontario's creation of legislative space for the City of Toronto probably marks a first step in a general strengthening of the third level of government.

What will cities get? That's now the interesting question. Beyond confirming the federal gas tax rebates to cities put in place by the Liberals, the Conservative government is yet to really reveal its position on the role, importance, and financing of cities. Instinctively, one senses that Prime Minister Harper sees city issues as more provincial than federal, something to be resolved after the great re-balancing of the fiscal imbalance between Ottawa and the provinces. If he were to hold the formal debate about Canada's future structure many have suggested, would the cities now even be invited to the table? Given the scarcity of Conservative seats from the big cities, every big city is holding its breath.

Perhaps they need to inhale some new ideas. The urban agenda has, to date, been solidly social democratic in conception, with cities seen as the place where all the problems created by immigrant settlement, income disparity, educational dysfunction, and environmental stress come together, problems in need of fixing by more government intervention and increased social spending at the local level. There's no denying the accuracy of much of the analysis, particularly the troubling reality that today's new Canadians are doing much less well than previous waves of immigrants. If this is not addressed, it could have consequences that would threaten a core value and signal achievement of our country—the creation of the most diverse, peaceable, and enjoyable cities in the world. But the role of cities as primary income redistributors is not one they are financed or equipped to perform and, if anything, it makes more sense for cities to retreat from this area.

Canadian cities have traditionally conceived of themselves as a large utility company—the bus driver, pot-hole fixer, parks provider, and social service deliverer for their area—and have yet to move much beyond that localised agenda. They do too much of what they needn't be doing and not enough of what they should, which is taking charge of their strategic social and economic future. The contemporary city—indeed all cities since the beginning of time—really has two key functions: establishing an environment for community cohesion and creating the conditions for wealth creation.

The most effective city seems to be that which strategically directs its urban future but does not get consumed by the responsibilities of front line service delivery, leaving that to a multiplicity of public and private agencies while mandating performance, competition and choice. That leaves management time and resources for the important urban issues: how to create a competitive business environment; how to ensure the highest levels of education at all levels; how to avoid the social exclusion of particular groups; how to most efficiently deliver a range of local public services; how to move people and goods effectively through the urban region; how to ensure the lowest energy consumption and most secure energy supply; how to deal with waste; how to stimulate creativity; how to foster tolerance; how to make a beautiful, enticing city the whole world wants to visit. This is the real urban agenda and the city that structures itself to answer these questions will be a world leader.

If cities are to be the future of Canada, the urban landscape must be very different than what we see today. Neither the geography, culture nor capability of most cities match their serious responsibilities as the social and economic crucibles of our future. If the Tories want an urban policy, it should simply be this: a quick cobbling together of the essence of the best of UK and US urban strategies. Leave social spending to the provinces, but direct a badly needed tax stream—approximately 1 percent of income tax or the equivalent percent of sales tax would suffice—to the cities, provided they are organised as effective city-regions and spend the funds in clearly wealth-creating ways. We could, for example, make cities directly responsible for educational achievement and tie finance to performance—that would be a distinctly Canadian urban agenda.

Joe Berridge is a Partner at Urban Strategies Inc., based in Toronto. He has played a key role in some of the world's largest urban regeneration projects including reshaping waterfronts in Toronto, New York, and London.



dr. roger gibbins, president and ceo, canada west foundation

The Canada West Foundation began its **Western Cities Project** in 2000, and everything that has occurred since confirms the importance of this project. As Anne Golden notes in her contribution to this volume, “Cities are where the Canadian economy will thrive or flag in the face of international competition to provide the high quality of life attractive to talented and highly mobile knowledge workers.” In a similar vein, Tom Carter underscores the importance of cities for immigrant settlement and economic integration.

Thus the catchphrase that cities are the “motors of the knowledge-based economy” continues to reflect the Canadian reality. It is no wonder, therefore, that urban policy has begun to attract a growing cadre of scholars and researchers, and the Foundation is delighted to profile some of these individuals in this edition of *Dialogues*.

As many of the contributors have noted, Canada is an emphatically urban country, with more than 80% of the national population living in urban areas. In this respect, however, we reflect a truly global trend. There are now 438 urban agglomerations with a population of one million or more, of which six are in Canada. Toronto, our largest entry on the list, ranks only 60th in the world (www.citypopulation.de).

At issue, therefore, is the public policy architecture that will best serve Canadian cities in this global competition. In this respect, this edition of *Dialogues* raises some interesting perspectives on the potential leverage of public policy. Cities are the most organic of the various political communities in which we live, and their evolution is shaped in large part by literally thousands and thousands of individual decisions for which public policy would appear to have limited leverage. Would I prefer to live in an urban loft or a suburban home with a garden? Should I open a patio for my restaurant? Should I invest architecturally to make my new building an urban jewel, or should I minimize costs with another big box?

However, and as Byron Miller explains, even in these cases the policy context is important: “if we want to build a more sustainable future, we cannot rely exclusively on individual consumer decisions. Consumer decisions are always made in a policy context, and policies frequently shape options, preferences, and choices.”

This policy context is in turn an amalgam of municipal, regional, provincial, and federal policies. Initially, our focus is appropriately on the policy architecture for municipalities themselves, including the legislative and financial frameworks within which they are embedded. Although, as Andrew Sancton cautions, this focus should not take us down the road to the contemplation of city-states, it does demand greater creativity and innovation than we have seen to date.

Enid Slack points out that discussions of the appropriate policy architecture must go well beyond a discussion of individual municipalities: “Increasingly, the issues faced by large cities—economic competitiveness, transportation gridlock, loss of agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas, urban sprawl, air and water pollution, social polarization, and inadequate fiscal resources—can only be solved at a regional level.”

However, it is also important not to let senior governments off the hook. Although provincial governments potentially have a huge role to play in the success or failure of urban regions, to date the development of provincial urban strategies has been patchy at best, with Ontario’s new City of Toronto Act standing apart as an important exception.



The federal government's potential role is in flux given the transition from the Paul Martin Liberal government to the Stephen Harper Conservative government. The former prime minister did articulate an urban strategy, although it became diluted somewhat as the focus shifted from cities to urban areas and then to "communities" of any size where Canadians happen to live.

Although it is still unclear how an urban strategy will emerge within the new Harper government, there is no doubt whatsoever as to the importance of this issue to the country, and to the government itself. Loleen Berdahl's article argues convincingly that the federal role is an integral piece of the Canadian urban policy puzzle. As Anne Golden emphatically states, "it's no exaggeration to say that this country's future is at stake in Ottawa's decision to step up to the plate, or step aside, on a national urban agenda."

Berdahl proposes the creation of a Big Cities Task Force to examine just how a national urban agenda might be built in a way that is consistent with the policy priorities and federalism visions of the Harper government. Where, for example, do the cities fit within the framework of "open federalism?"

The Task Force recommendation is one that the Canada West Foundation strongly supports, for there is no question that the urban agenda train has left the station, and that its importance will only grow in both the Canadian and global contexts. The only issue, therefore, is whether the new federal government is on board, and on board as a passenger or driver.

A STRONG WEST IN A STRONG CANADA



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contact Julie Johnston (Director of Fund Development)

johnston@cwf.ca • 403.538.7355