Policy Research / Recherche sur les politiques

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CANADA'S CITIES

HORIZONS

POLICY RESEARCH INITIATIVE

Canada's Cities

The idea of "the city" often conjures up two distinct images. One is that of the dynamic, livable city: the cosmopolitan centre of business, culture and entertainment with lively, diverse and socially inclusive neighbourhoods. The other image is more ominous: crime, dangerous streets, pockets of poverty, foul air, with pavement and traffic jams off into the horizon. Both perceptions are only partial reflections of the realities of Canada's cities. Coming to terms with Canada's cities in all their complexity is a key challenge for the development of effective public policy.

What is clear is that cities are the spaces and places in which most Canadians live and work. Canada is now one of the most urbanized countries in the world. Roughly 80 percent of Canadians are urbanites — with almost two-thirds of the country's population living in metropolitan areas with greater than 100,000 residents.

Previous *Horizons* issues have examined the urban aspects of transportation, diversity and immigration, public safety, globalization and poverty. However, one of the major challenges for policy researchers is to look beyond the urban elements of individual policy areas and to see how these elements connect and interact with a larger, more complex reality. The urban sustainability work of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy and the Quality of Life Indicators project of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities are two examples of this approach featured in *Horizons* recently.

(Continued on page 2)

About our new look

With continuous improvement, serving the needs of our community and **cost effectiveness** in mind, we have made a number of changes that translate into significant **production savings** for *Horizons*. We are pleased to introduce you to the results of these efforts with the first issue of **our new look.** While much has changed, you can still **count on *Horizons* to profile cutting edge research** for Canada's policy research community. We feel confident that you will enjoy the new look in this and coming issues, and we look forward to receiving your comments at horizons@prs-srp.gc.ca.

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EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Policy researchers in many fields increasingly refer to the need for an "urban lens." For example, any approach towards advancing Canada's global and continental competitiveness cannot ignore the fact that cities are centres of finance, production, services and innovation. In the case of immigration, another critical public policy area, policy developers are faced with the fact that the overwhelming majority of New Canadians settle in our largest cities (80,000 per year in Toronto alone). Social policy goals to address poverty are incomplete unless they consider the dynamics of wealth polarization and homelessness inside city boundaries. In the area of environmental sustainability, the impact of cities as consumers of energy, producers of waste and air emissions, and occupiers of ever increasing expanses of land cannot be ignored.

In his 1970 report to the Government of Canada entitled *Urban Canada: Problems and Prospects,* Harvey Lithwick stressed that the interdependence of the various dimensions of urban life ultimately undermine the overall effectiveness of any approach that tries to deal with each aspect in isolation. To address this at the national level, Lithwick recommended the creation of a national urban council. While governance approaches have varied in the past 30 years, interconnectedness and complexity remain primary characteristics of urban areas and thus urban policy issues.

How to develop an integrated approach remains an open question. One must ask if a single, master plan is possible or even desirable given the diversity of our cities. That said, the absence of such a plan should not preclude policy development that seriously considers wider urban realities.

The ongoing social, economic and environmental well being of Canada is inextricably tied to the well being of our cities. There is a wide and strong community of interest in this country for enhancing the quality of life and economic potential of our cities. The challenge then is to find better ways of appreciating the complexities of Canada's cities as we prepare for our urban future.

Laura A. Chapman
Executive Director,
Policy Research Initiative

PRI Launches Law and Policy Project

The PRI has launched a new initiative aimed at integrating legal scholarship into the development of policy research. Integrating legal scholarship into complex issues such our horizontal projects on social cohesion, sustainable development and North American linkages will inject a new intellectual and normative framework into important social policy discussion.

The Law and Policy Project is creating research networks and collaborative projects with other government departments, with a particular focus on the Department of Justice. As well, outreach efforts are being co-ordinated with faculties of law in universities across Canada to encourage awareness of the PRI's work in policy research and to encourage academics and graduate students to bring their work into a broader social policy forum.

The first major activity under the Law and Policy project is "Instrument Choice," which brings a legal perspective to tools of governance, risk management and policy implementation in a multidisciplinary context. The work on "Instrument Choice" is discussed on page 24 of this issue of *Horizons*, and will be the focus of a recurring column in future issues.

More information can be obtained from Pearl Eliadis at 613-947-3914 or p.eliadis@prs-srp.gc.ca

ISUMA on Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Canada

Look in early 2003 for an issue of *ISUMA: Canadian Journal of Policy Research* on Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Canada. Co-edited by David Newhouse (Trent University) and Evelyn Peters (University of Saskatchewan), the issue covers a range of topics, including migration and demographics, concepts of community and governance, urban social issues and economic development, and the emergence of an Aboriginal middle class.

New Applied Policy Studies Program

Mount Royal College in Calgary now offers a Bachelor of Applied Policy Studies. This four-year program integrates several core disciplines — economics, political science, and dedicated policy studies subjects — with courses in entrepreneurship, technical writing, law, computing and others. The principal objective of this multidisciplinary program is to prepare graduates for professional careers in the many fields where expertise in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation is required.

The program combines six semesters of course-work with two paid terms of Directed Field Studies under the supervision of an instructor. The program is designed to accommodate work term placements in all three levels of governments, as well as in the corporate and not-for-profit sectors. The first cohort of students entered the program in September of 2000 and is now available for placement in Directed Field Studies.

The Department of Policy Studies actively encourages inquiries and is keen to build partnerships with agencies and organizations interested in employing a student during her or his two four-month terms of Directed Field Studies.

For further information, visit the college's web site at www.mtroyal.ab.ca

Technology and Tolerance

"… [A] connection exists between a metropolitan area's level of tolerance for a range of people, its ethnic and social diversity, and its success in attracting talented people, including high-technology workers. People in technology businesses are drawn to places known for diversity of thought and open-mindedness. … **The leading indicator of a metropolitan area's high-technology success is a large gay population.** Gays can be thought of as canaries of the knowledge economy because they signal a diverse and progressive environment that fosters the creativity and innovation necessary for success in high-tech industry. Gays are frequently cited as harbingers of redevelopment and gentrification in distressed urban neighborhoods. Studies also suggest that the presence of gays in a metropolitan area provides a barometer for a broad spectrum of amenities attractive to adults, especially those without children."

From Richard Florida and Gary Gates,

"Technology and Tolerance: The Importance of Diversity to High-Technology Growth"

Center on Urban & Metropolitan Policy, The Brookings Institution

(June 2001)

Available at www.brook.edu/dybdocroot/es/urban/floridaexsum.htm

Cities and the Federal Agenda

George Anderson
Deputy Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Privy Council Office*

...there is a growing recognition of the "urban dimension" of a whole range of federal policy concerns including economic innovation and competitiveness, poverty, social inclusion and the quality of the environment.

*As this issue went to press, Mr. Anderson was named Deputy Minister of Natural Resources Canada

Urban issues have been rising on the federal agenda for a number of reasons.

First and foremost, Canada is very urban and becoming more so — a fact brought home in the 2001 census results. In 2001, 64 percent of Canadians lived in the country's 27 census metropolitan areas (each with a population of 100,000 or more) — up from 62 percent only ten years ago. Moreover, 51 percent of the population now lives in four large conurbations: the Golden Horseshoe, greater Montreal, British Columbia's Lower Mainland and southern Vancouver Island, and the Calgary-Edmonton corridor.

Second, many cities are facing a fiscal squeeze and see the federal government as a possible source of help. The extent and character of these fiscal difficulties vary tremendously across the country — contrast Alberta and Ontario for example — and even within provinces — contrast Toronto and Mississauga. The fiscal squeeze is most often put down to so-called downloading in some provinces, but it can also reflect changing cost structures or revenue decisions by municipal governments themselves. Municipal governments' total spending was not subject to as much restraint as the federal government's direct spending during the 1990s. Provincial government spending rose the fastest, in large measure because of rising health costs. A key part of the cities' argument about the "fiscal imbalance" they face is their restricted access to tax bases, in contrast to provinces which have virtually unlimited access to major revenue sources.

Third, the urban debate reflects increasing concern with Canada's competitiveness within North America. Many US cities have experienced a renaissance, riding an economic boom in the 1990s and benefiting from a number of new federal programs. North American free trade has exposed Canada's cities to sharper competition for investment and talent from cities south of the border. Perhaps no city has had a bigger adjustment in this regard than Toronto, which had to cope both with a deeper recession than the rest of Canada and some weakening of its role as the country's commercial capital.

It is thus not surprising that our larger cities have been developing their channels of advocacy. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has become an effective representative of municipal interests, with a direct impact on the government's program. In addition, the FCM now has a "Big City Mayors Caucus" which speaks for Canada's 18 largest cities. A smaller ginger group, the C5 mayors of Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver, is also attracting considerable attention.

Finally, there is a growing recognition of the "urban dimension" of a whole range of federal policy concerns including economic innovation and competitiveness, poverty, social inclusion and the quality of the environment.

This range of concerns is reflected in the mandate of the Liberal Caucus Task Force on Urban Issues appointed by Prime Minister Chrétien last year

following a commitment to an urban dialogue in the 2000 Speech from the Throne. The task force, chaired by Judy Sgro, is looking at strengthening the quality of life in our large urban centres by addressing competitiveness, environmental issues, cultural assets, transit, settlement and integration services for newcomers, urban Aboriginal people and crime-related issues.

Urban advocates have approached the federal agenda in a number of different ways. A great champion of Toronto, Anne Golden, has called for a national urban strategy on growth and poverty. The Big City Mayors Caucus has also recently called for a national urban strategy. The FCM's 2001 pre-budget submission to the Minister of Finance had five major elements: environmental and core infrastructure, clean transportation, affordable housing, brownfields clean-up and connectivity. In contrast, the Greater Toronto Charter movement has a quasi-constitutional agenda focused on status and powers.

In this debate on a possible federal urban agenda, it is important to bear in mind that provincial governments have explicit constitutional jurisdiction for municipalities, though provinces approach this differently. The Quebec government will not permit any municipality to enter into a direct agreement with the federal government without authority from the province. In contrast, the new government in British Columbia proposes to give municipalities greater autonomy and has promised new legislation in this regard.

How does the federal government see its role? The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Stéphane Dion, addressed this question at the FCM annual conference in Banff in May 2001. He emphasized the need to respect the constitution and was sceptical about opening up a debate on the constitutional status of cities.

Provincial jurisdiction for municipal affairs is not just a constitutional fact; it is also a deep reality that goes to the heart of urban policy.

Provincial jurisdiction for municipal affairs is not just a constitutional fact; it is also a deep reality that goes to the heart of urban policy. Provincial governments have used their jurisdiction to determine municipal boundaries, political structures, powers, obligations and fiscal means. Moreover, with their responsibilities for highways, land use and many key services, the provinces have tremendous impact on the quality of life in cities. In other words, urban affairs fall largely within the provincial area of influence and provincial approaches vary greatly.

Advocates of a more active role for the federal government often turn their sights southward and point to the American government's approach, especially the Clinton administration's major programs of support for public transit, community development and housing in downtown cores. Canada can certainly learn from the US experience, but any balanced view requires us to recognize the unintended negative consequences of other federal policies on American cities: generous tax treatment of mortgages, the interstate highway program, and the weak network of programs to combat poverty have contributed to urban sprawl and so-called "white flight" from many inner city neighbourhoods.

The experience of certain major American cities is instructive in another way. Federal support is only part of the story behind the revival of Baltimore, Philadelphia and other cities. Local leadership has been key. Almost all the success stories involve local leaders — as much from the private sector as from city hall — recognizing the challenge and coming together in a broad-based and energetic way. Unfortunately, too often this mobilization only happens after serious decline. The trick, and I think we are seeing this more and more across Canada, is to get ahead of the curve. As former Toronto Mayor Barbara Hall wrote recently in the *Toronto Star:* "Toronto is a proud city that will not let the slow decline of so many American cities happen here. But it will take all sectors of the community working together to make the Toronto renaissance happen."

Given that a significant majority of Canadians live in cities, one would expect the federal government to respond to their needs. While it has not usually spoken in such terms, the federal government already has a very significant urban agenda in the broadest sense.

Foremost, of course, is the national infrastructure program, launched in 1993 and now into its third phase. Approximately 75 percent of the investments to date have been directed to urban infrastructure; direct federal investment has totaled more than $3 billion since 1993. The new Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund will provide significant assistance for major urban projects.

Other key initiatives by the Government of Canada with significant impacts on Canada's cities include the $680M agreement on affordable rental housing signed with the provinces in November 2001, the $753M National Homelessness Initiative, the $2.4 billion annual funding for the National Child Benefit, the major investments in our largely urban research institutes under the government's innovation agenda, substantial annual support for immigrant integration, and the announcement last year of $500 million in additional support for cultural programs.

The federal government has also taken part in a number of initiatives specific to individual cities. For some years in Winnipeg there has been a tripartite partnership agreement between the three orders of government to promote cooperation. In Vancouver, the three governments have a special agreement to try to coordinate actions to address the serious problems of the lower East Side. In Toronto, the three levels of government have committed to a major renewal of the waterfront and jointly created a new corporation to manage the project.

Statistics Canada has been working with Intergovernmental Affairs and other departments to develop a major report on trends in Canada's cities, using the results of the recent census along with other data. There are many other ways the federal government could be more active in supporting research and public debate on the challenges facing Canada's larger cities, though we are seeing an encouraging flowering of policy studies by think tanks such as the CD Howe Institute, the Canadian Policy Research Network (CPRN) and the Canada West Foundation.

The Sgro task force's interim report will provide further focus to the agenda and pave the way for decisions. Whatever actions result, there is no doubt that the challenges facing our cities are more present in the minds of Canadians and that an "urban lens" will increasingly need to inform the work of researchers and policy makers.

A Federal Approach to Cities

"We need to apply an urban 'lens' to all policies and programs, both national and international that are directed at urban regions. An urban perspective will guide future legislation and policies so that programs designed for urban centres can be assessed for both negative and positive impacts.

"The Task Force recommends that an advisory body be established to include representatives from key national organizations, the academic community, and the business sector to provide on-going consultation and advice on urban policy to the Government of Canada.

"We also recommend that the Government of Canada should foster research on national and international best practices, provide intelligence on trends and conditions in our urban regions, and communicate Government of Canada activities related to urban issues. By working together, we can plan new programs, policies, and projects to address top priority urban issues such as housing, infrastructure and transit."

From Canada's Urban Strategy: *A Vision for the 21st Century*

Prime Minister's Task Force on Urban Issues

Interim Report, April 2002.

Available at http://www.liberal.parl.gc.ca/urb/ENGurbstrFINAL.pdf

The Cities Initiative: A Metropolis Project Focus on Immigrants in Urban Canada

Katherine Pestieau
Senior Project Advisor,
The Metropolis Project

Since 1996, the Metropolis Project has been a federal government initiative that has provided an international forum for comparative research and public policy development about population migration, cultural diversity and the challenges of immigrant integration in cities in Canada and around the world. While an urban element has been inherent in much of the work undertaken by Metropolis, the Project has just recently launched the Cities Initiative to provide a particular focus on urban issues and immigrants.

Immigration is an increasingly important factor in the management of cities, and researchers and policy makers at all levels of government are dealing with it directly. The high percentage of foreign born in our three largest Census Metropolitan Areas (Toronto 42 percent, Vancouver 35 percent and Montréal 18 percent, in 1996) is relatively well known. However, less known is that, grouped together, the next 10 largest cities have an immigrant population of 17 percent, while in the remainder of the country the figure is only 8 percent. Immigrants and their children make up an important segment of the urban population and have become a defining feature of the modern cityscape. Toronto has adopted the motto "Diversity is our strength" in response to this reality. Smaller urban centres are beginning to look to immigration to fuel their economic engines. Québec City, Winnipeg, Moncton and Halifax, for example, are actively trying to attract more immigrants to their jurisdictions.

If immigration is important to cities, cities are just as significant to immigrants. Overwhelmingly, cities are their destinations of choice: in 1996, 82 percent of immigrants coming to Canada settle in the country's top 10 Census Metropolitan Areas. Cities are central to immigrant settlement; it is there that they experience their new society, look for housing, schools and employment, and strive for some level of social integration.

Many of the over 200 research projects conducted under the aegis of Metropolis have directly examined the impact of immigrants on cities and vice versa. These have included studies on the levels and causes of ethnic segregation within cities, immigrants and refugees' pathways to housing, their levels of socio-economic integration, and many others. The Montreal and Vancouver centres, Immigration et métropoles and RIIM, have developed mapping projects producing detailed demographic profiles of the cities and their neighbourhoods. This work helps policy makers at all levels further appreciate the issues and assist them in elaborating sound and effective programs and policies.

Metropolis further recognized the importance of cities in the immigration process with the recent launch of its Cities Initiative which extends the Project's sphere of activity to municipalities. This initiative will create a more direct municipal engagement in Metropolis, in part through steering the policy-research agenda to areas where national and municipal issues converge. The Cities Initiative is building a network of individuals working specifically on the municipal aspects of immigration and is partnering with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

There is much work ahead. For more information consult our web site at www.canada.metropolis.net and look especially at the Cities Corner.

Neighbourhood Inequality in Canadian Cities

John Myles
Statistics Canada and University of Toronto

Garnett Picot
Statistics Canada

Fuelled by William Julius Wilson's classic study of Chicago ghettos, *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987), American researchers have returned during the last decade to concerns over neighbourhoods characterized by high rates of poverty, low labour force attachment and negative outcomes thought to be associated with deteriorating economic and social conditions in these neighbourhoods. Canadian research on neighbourhood inequality tends to be relatively sparse, but suggests some deterioration in economic conditions in many neighbourhoods.

This article elaborates on the spatial implications of otherwise well-known trends in the distribution of earnings and income among Canadian families in the last several decades. In the nation's eight largest cities, employment earnings were increasingly concentrated in the richer neighbourhoods between 1980 and 1995, while unemployment was increasingly concentrated in the poorer neighbourhoods. This led to a decline in average family incomes in the poorer neighbourhoods, while average family incomes rose marginally in the richer ones.

Employment earnings fell significantly in the poorer neighbourhoods

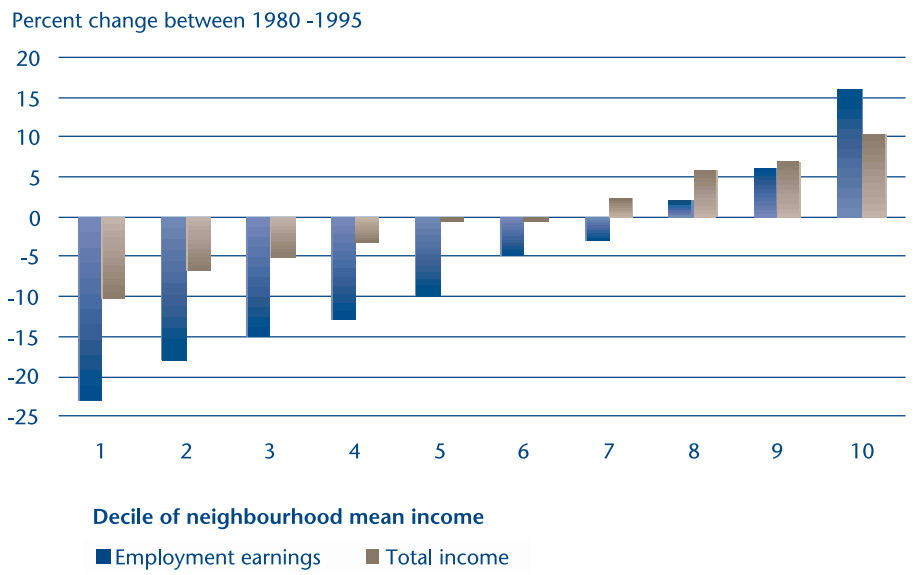
Employment earnings in the poorest neighbourhoods fell significantly over the 15-year reference period in the eight largest Census Metropolitan Areas in the study: Montréal, Québec, Ottawa-Gatineau (formerly known as Ottawa-Hull), Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver. The declines ranged from 11 to 33 percent. The poorest neighbourhoods were those in which average neighbourhood family incomes were in the bottom 10 percent of the income scale. This decline is displayed for Toronto in chart 1, but similar patterns are observed in all the cities studied.

In contrast, in the richest neighbourhoods (the 10 percent of people living in the neighbourhoods with the highest average incomes) average earnings rose by between 1 and 16 percent. At the same time, the unemployment situation deteriorated, primarily in the poorer neighbourhoods. For all cities combined, unemployment among core-aged workers, those between 25 and 54, rose from 11.2 to 18.9 percent in the poorest neighbourhoods, while barely changing in the richer neighbourhoods, rising from 3.3 to 4.4 percent. These changes in employment and unemployment patterns were the main reason the gap between the richer and poorer neighbourhoods increased, as measured by average total family income (including employment earnings, government transfers and other income, but excluding taxes). The increase in the neighbourhood income gap would likely have been less had neighbourhood income been measured after taxes rather than before taxes, but such data were not available. In any case, the most significant change among neighbourhoods was related to declines in employment and employment earnings in the poorer communities.

Changes in employment earnings, neighbourhood inequality and transfer payments are likely related in part to the business cycle. The unemployment rate was higher in all cities in 1995 than in 1980, and inequality tends to rise with unemployment. The

CHART 1:

Earnings decline in poor neighbourhoods, but gain in rich neighbourhoods, Toronto, 1980-1995



Data Sources: the 1981, 1986, 1991 and 1996 census

relative economic position of the poorer neighbourhoods will likely have improved to some extent during the continued recovery of the last few years. However, the rise in neighbourhood inequality was more or less continuous over the years for which income was reported in the last four censuses — 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1995 — no matter where they fell in the business cycle. Hence, the increase in neighbourhood inequality occurred independent of the business cycle. Employment was increasingly concentrated in higher-income communities, and unemployment in lower-income communities.

The gap between the lowest-income neighbourhoods and the highest can rise for two reasons:

- Because family income inequality at the city-level increases; and since poor families tend to live in poor neighbourhoods, and rich in rich neighbourhoods, this will manifest itself as a rise in neighbourhood inequality; or
- Even if there is no increase in city-level family income inequality, neighbourhood inequality can rise if low-income families increasingly tend to cluster in low-income neighbourhoods, and high-income families in high-income neighbourhoods (i.e., there is an increase in economic segregation).

This study used a "sorting" index to determine the extent to which the rising income gap was the result of a general increase in the level of income inequality, or the result of increased economic segregation. "Economic spatial segregation" increased in five of the eight cities. This increased tendency for low-income families to live in low-income communities and for high-income families to live in high-income communities, contributed significantly to the rise in neighbourhood inequality in four cities: Edmonton, Calgary, Québec and Winnipeg.

Toronto had widest gap between high- and low-income neighbourhoods

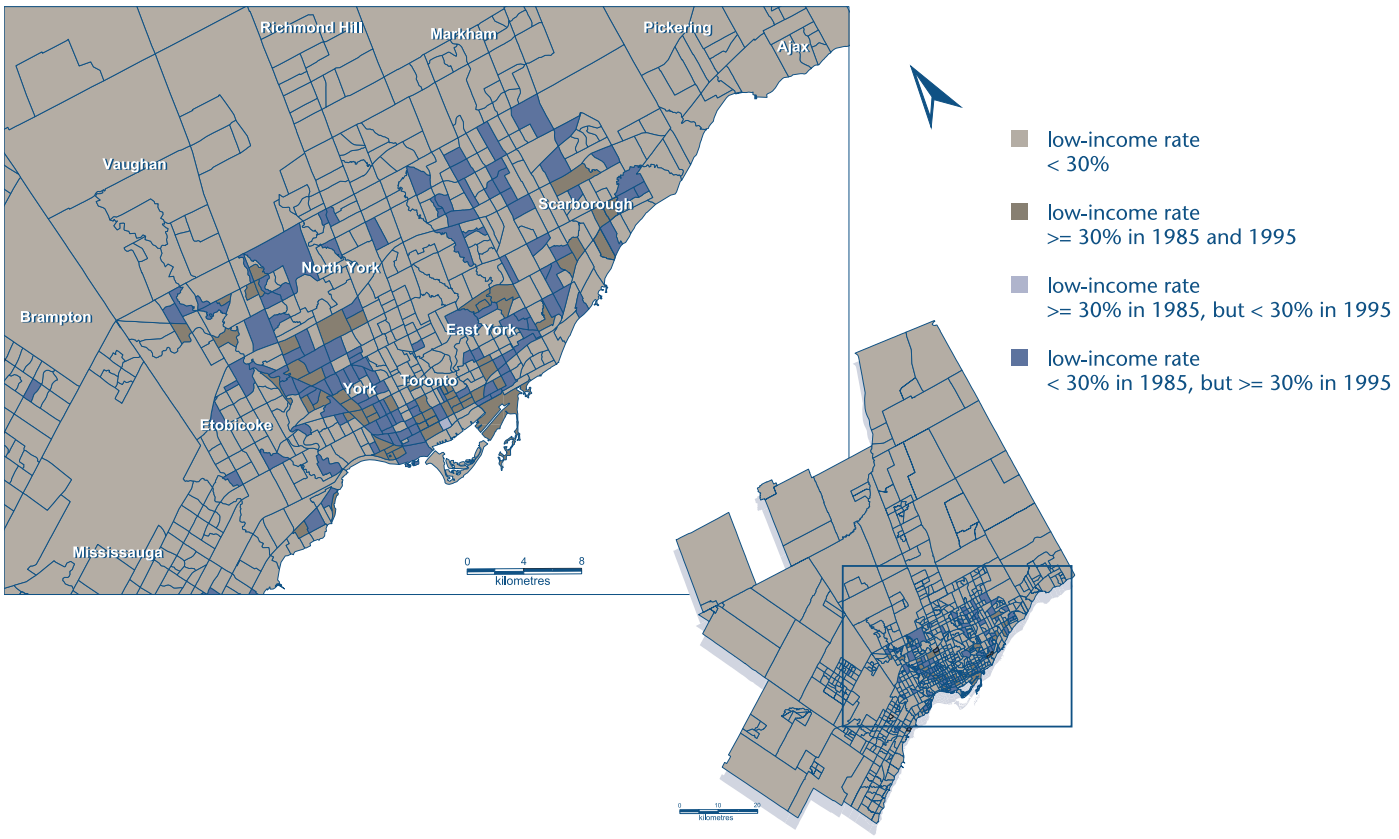
Toronto had the widest income gap between high-income and low-income neighbourhoods in 1995. This was not because low-income neighbourhoods were extremely poor relative to middle-income neighbourhoods. Rather, it was because high-income neighbourhoods had very high incomes relative to middle-income neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, low-income neighbourhoods became far more numerous in 1995 compared to 1985. Chart 2 maps the significant number of neighbourhoods that were not low-income ones in 1985 but had become so by 1995. As the economy improved to the end of the decade, some of these neighbourhoods could have returned to their previous status.

Regarding the difference between low- and high-income census tracts, the highest-income neighbourhoods in Toronto had 2.3 times the income levels of middle-income neighbourhoods, greater than any other city. Montreal was next at 2.1 times; the lowest was Ottawa-Gatineau at 1.65 times. Conversely, in Toronto, mean income in the poorest neighbourhoods in 1995 was 55 percent of that in middle-income neighbourhoods, similar to the ratios in Montréal and Ottawa-Gatineau. The ratio was 65 percent in Vancouver and 51 percent in Winnipeg.

The force driving changes in relative neighbourhood economic conditions between 1980 and 1995 was the change in distribution of employment

CHART 2 :

The number of low income census tracts rose between 1985 and 1995 in Toronto.



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1986, 1996

and unemployment, and of employment income. In Toronto, for example, employment rates of core-age adults, those 25 to 54, in low-income neighbourhoods declined from 75 to 60 percent between 1980 and 1995. For people aged 60 or under in Toronto, the share of total family income from earnings in low-income neighbourhoods declined from 85 to 65 percent. In contrast, employment levels were relatively stable or rising in higher-income neighbourhoods.

Transfers had only modest impact on the widening neighbourhood income gap

Between 1980 and 1995, rising government transfers, such as employment insurance, social assistance and child benefits, had only a modest offsetting impact on the growth of the income gap between low- and high-income neighbourhoods. The level of transfers was concentrated in low-income neighbourhoods and increased significantly over the period, accounting for a larger share of total family income. Changes in transfers, however, were widely dispersed among all neighbourhoods. This limited their impact on rising neighbourhood inequality, which, as documented above, resulted from the losses in earnings that were concentrated in low-income neighbourhoods.

Income data from the 2001 Census are scheduled to become available in spring 2003. It will be well worth updating this type of analysis to continue to track shifts in neighbourhood inequality, and the extent to which changes in the levels and distributions of earnings and transfer payments are behind such shifts.

Britain's Neighbourhood Approach to Urban Renewal:

A presentation by Raj Petal, Neighbourhood Renewal, United Kingdom

The objective of Britain's National Strategy Action Plan on Neighbourhood Renewal is to narrow the gap between deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country. In so doing, within 10 to 20 years, "no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live." Raj Patel reported on the progress being made in Britain's geographically targeted approach late last January at Human Resources Development Canada's "Ready, Set, Go!" conference in Ottawa. Mr. Patel is head of Research and Development at the U.K.'s Neighbourhood Renewal Unit.

The Action Plan, and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit that implements it, were created in January 2001. What is unique about this initiative is the premise that exclusion is concentrated in particular neighbourhoods and that solutions should be targeted accordingly. The strategy, moreover, recognizes that the problems these neighbourhoods face are interrelated and calls for a "joined-up" approach that works across government departments.

A major report, *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, had been released just the week before the conference. Disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Britain have burglary rates that are three times higher than in the rest of the country, have three times the proportion of children living in poverty and 30 percent higher mortality rates. In the 10 percent of England's most deprived districts, one quarter of adults are out of work and 44 percent are on means-tested benefits. In addition, these neighbourhoods are home to 70 percent of the country's ethnic minority residents.

Under the Strategy, neighbourhood renewal will be achieved in part through "floor targets" for government departments. Departmental floor targets have been set in areas such as employment, housing, crime and education. As a result, departments will focus on the geographic areas that are doing worst rather than using national averages to evaluate their progress. So, for example, one floor target stipulates that substandard social housing in deprived neighbourhoods is to be reduced by a third by 2004, and eliminated by 2010.

Another major plank of the Strategy is the use of local strategic partnerships, which are responsible for neighbourhood renewal at the local level. These partnerships "bring together public, private and voluntary sector service providers with the community and business sectors, and offer the opportunity to rationalize the many partnerships that exist already." The partnerships are supported by access to several funding sources for various kinds of community projects and the partners jointly decide how these resources are best allocated.

In summary, Britain's National Strategy Action Plan on Neighbourhood Renewal addresses the core problems of deprived areas. It provides mechanisms for all sectors to work together in partnership and focuses existing services and resources explicitly on deprived areas. Perhaps most important, the Strategy gives residents and community groups a "central role in turning their neighbourhoods around." It will be well worth monitoring the progress of this new neighbourhood-focused initiative.

For more information on the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, please see www.neighbourhood.dtlr.gov.uk/index.htm.

Urban Finance: Crisis and Remedies

Casey Vander Ploeg
Senior Policy Analyst
and
Loleen Berdahl
Director of Research,
Canada West Foundation

Clearly, population growth and economic expansion is less of a gain for cities and more of a burden. Cities incur increased costs with growth while provincial and federal governments realize greater revenues from taxes.

Canada's quality of life and future economic prospects increasingly rely on cities that are well operated and appropriately financed. But recent research by the Canada West Foundation has found that many Canadian cities are under serious fiscal stress. If not addressed, this will prove detrimental to Canada. It is incumbent on all levels of government to understand the current crisis and work toward solutions.

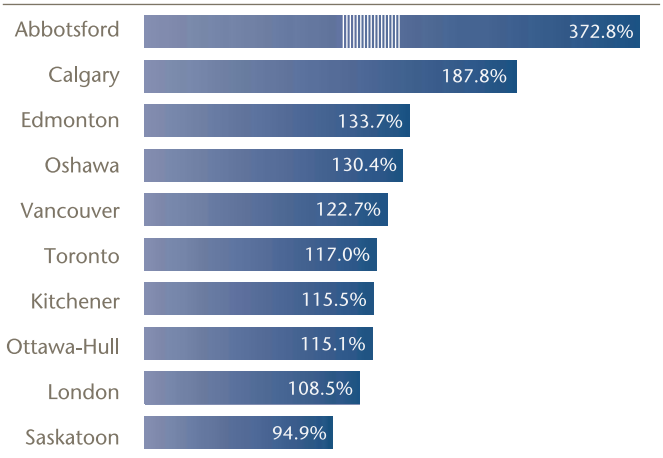
Causes of Urban Fiscal Stress

Three factors contribute to the current fiscal situation of Canada's cities. The first is rapid population growth. The 2001 census shows that Canadians continue to concentrate in large census metropolitan areas (CMAs). Nowhere is this more evident than in the West. Of the five fastest growing CMAs since 1966, four are located in western Canada (Figure 1). Population growth leads to increased demand for municipal services, places stress on municipal infrastructure and creates a need for more investment in a city's capital stock.

A second factor is the peculiar way city-regions grow. Much of the growth in Canada's CMAs occurs in "fringe" areas — smaller urban and rural communities that surround the "anchor" city. In 1981, the City of Vancouver comprised 33 percent of the CMA. By 2001, the ratio had fallen to 27 percent. The City of Calgary has grown by 14.4 percent since 1996, but this stands in sharp contrast to communities like Cochrane and Airdrie, which have grown by 58.9 and 27.8 percent over the same period.

FIGURE 1:

Canada's Ten Fastest Growing CMAs, 1966 to 2001
(% Increase in Total CMA Population)



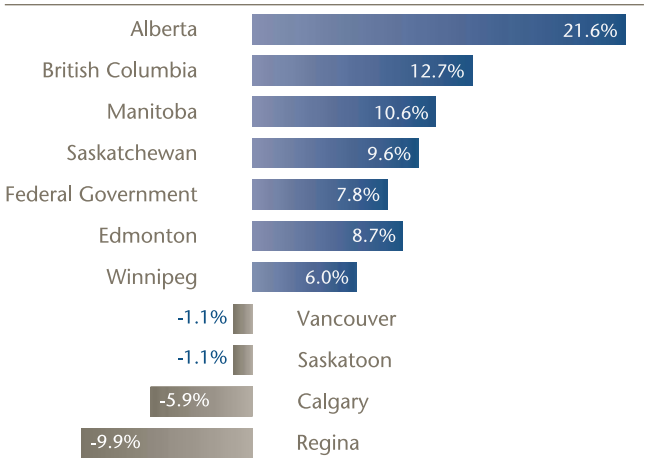
SOURCE: Derived from Statistics Canada census data (1966 to 2001). Data uses the CMA definition in place at the date of each census, except for Abbotsford and Oshawa. Adjustments for these CMAs were required to increase comparability. Note that the bar for Abbotsford has been compressed relative to the other CMAs.

Residents of surrounding communities often work, recreate and shop within the anchor city. In many ways, they use services and infrastructure without contributing to the residential tax base upon which those services depend. Some might argue that these "spillovers" are covered by provincial grants. But in the current climate of grant reduction, large cities are increasingly feeling the fiscal pinch. In addition, many of Canada's social problems and concerns – whether it be homelessness, affordable housing, illicit drug use or poverty – inevitably land in Canada's large cities.

A third factor of fiscal stress is poor revenue growth. While federal and provincial revenues surged during the 1990s, many cities have seen a decline in their real per capita revenues (Figure 2). A lack of diversity in the taxes available to municipalities, severe cuts in operating grants, burgeoning populations and inflation are the main causes. Calgary, one of the fastest growing CMAs in Canada, experienced a real per capita decline of 5.9 percent in total revenues from 1990 to 2000. As a result, real per capita spending on programs and services for many cities has slipped, and a significant capital deficit now exists. Clearly, population growth and economic expansion is less of a gain for cities and more of a burden. Cities incur increased costs with growth while provincial and federal governments realize greater revenues from taxes.

FIGURE 2 :

Growth in Total Revenues, 1990 to 2000
(% Increase in Per Capita Inflation Adjusted Dollars)



SOURCE: Derived by CWF from federal and provincial budget documents, the Dominion Bond Rating Service, the Canadian Bond Rating Service, Annual Reports of the cities (1990-2000), and Statistics Canada.

Options

Canada West research suggests five strategies to address the fiscal challenges facing cities. First, cities need to keep the focus on their core competencies and essential responsibilities. Local government exists to provide services that benefit local residents and can be funded from locally generated revenue. There is little economic rationale for local governments to be involved in income redistribution activities in areas such as homelessness and affordable housing, which more properly belong to federal and provincial governments that have access to a broader revenue base. Federal and provincial governments, for their part, must avoid off-loading these responsibilities to the local level.

Second, cities need to expand their usage of user fees and begin setting correct prices for their services. In the past, many user fees were employed to raise revenue, provide partial cost recovery or recoup average costs. Many urban economists argue that user fees are rarely used as a price-signalling device. This has led to the overconsumption of services, a loss of efficiency and higher costs.

Third, cities should adopt alternative service delivery mechanisms. While cities should certainly ensure that services are *provided*, there is often no compelling rationale for the city to *produce* the service. International experience suggests significant savings when the public sector competes with the private and non-profit sectors for the rights to deliver municipal services.

Fourth, cities need to enhance capital financing. Many cities follow a policy of pay-as-you-go for tax-supported projects such as road construction, and have restricted debt financing to their self-supported utilities. However, because municipal debt is issued to finance items that provide long-term benefits (infrastructure), some debt is necessary to share the costs of capital among all generations that stand to

benefit. Clearly, there is a balance between pay-as-you-go and debt financing. Cities also need to explore

> *federal and provincial governments need to provide cities with new revenue sources and more freedom to innovate.*

options for public–private partnerships in capital projects, an approach used internationally to reinvest in urban infrastructure, revitalize downtown cores, and rebuild harbour fronts.

Finally, federal and provincial governments need to provide cities with new revenue sources and more freedom to innovate. The property tax remains the staple of Canadian municipal budgets, but it is inelastic and fails to control spillovers. A significant one-time reduction in the property tax, offset with a new revenue-sharing scheme based on a more diverse set of taxes, holds the promise of better revenue growth in the future without increasing the effective amount of taxation. Such an approach would improve the competitive position of Canadian cities by better reflecting the tax position of their European and American counterparts.

These ideas have been discussed for some time, but there has been little movement. Canadians do not perceive a crisis. The focus on public finances remains heavily tilted toward health care and education. Municipal concerns rate low on the policy agenda totem pole. But one thing is clear: each time an option is deemed unpalatable or unworkable, the field of choices narrows. It is imperative that Canadians make at least some ideas work. If we are not up to the challenge, the only alternative is the status quo which may well usher in a steady decline in urban Canada's quality of life and standard of living.

For more information, see Dollars and Sense: Big City Finances in the West, *1990-2000 (Canada West Foundation, October 2001) and* Framing a Fiscal Fix-up: Options for Strengthening the Finances of Western Canada's Big Cities *(Canada West Foundation, January 2002), available at http://www.cwf.ca.*

BOOKMARK

Effective Cooperation

"The functions and powers of local government cover a broad range of areas, reflecting both similar competencies as well as significant differences. Different techniques are used to demarcate the powers. Narrow definition of competencies is, however, increasingly making way for broader plenary powers. With the increased role of local government as an institution of self-government in the provision of services, sound intergovernmental relations are vital to ensure the proper demarcation of responsibilities, effective cooperation between the different levels of government, and the adequate financing of local government. In this regard, organized local government is playing a critical role in bringing about cooperative government."

Nico Steytler, "Background Paper on the Place and Role of Local Government in Federations" prepared for the *Cities and Federalism Conference*, Rio de Janiero, Brazil (May 2002)

Available at http://www.forumfed.org/Reference/documents/Braz-118/citystey.pdf

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Policy Community Resources Launched

The Policy Community Initiative, co-located with the PRI, is proud to launch Policy Community Resources at www.policyresearch.gc.ca. Through this site, you can link to literature that identifies the challenges and strategies for building policy capacity, tools for policy developers and best practices for strengthening human resources. Visitors are encouraged to visit the site, benefit from the resources and provide feedback.

Canadian Cities Back on the Policy Agenda:

A new discussion paper from Canadian Policy Research Networks

The release of the interim report of the Prime Minister's Caucus Task Force on Urban Issues marks the return of cities to the agenda of Canadian policy communities. Contrary to predictions of the "locationless" effects of virtual communications and the "death of distance" in a global age, urban centers have become more – not less – important as places where people live, work and play. Knowledge-based innovation is the critical ingredient for prosperity and well-being in the 21st century, and it thrives in local spaces that attract economic producers, value diverse ideas and cultures, and include all residents in learning opportunities. Decision makers now face the challenge of understanding the factors that enable cities to make the most of the advantages of population density and the close proximity of creative people from all walks of life.

CPRN's Discussion Paper *Why Cities Matter: Policy Research Perspectives for Canada* takes stock of current knowledge about the problems and prospects of Canadian cities. Neil Bradford, a CPRN Research Associate and professor at Huron University College, uses a multidisciplinary overview to situate the challenges facing Canadian cities in historical and comparative context and in relation to contemporary debates. Experience shows that cities can be both engines of national prosperity and locales where the risks of social exclusion and environmental degradation are greatest. To understand this conundrum, the paper unpacks the complex economic, societal and political transformations that make cities strategic spaces and actors in the age of globalization. It assesses the need for new thinking about institutions and processes of urban governance and, equally, about public policy collaboration across political scales — local, provincial, and federal.

Four analytical frameworks currently inform debates on the Canadian city: economic clusters, social inclusion, community economic development, and environmental sustainability. Bradford identifies points of convergence among the different frameworks and explores shared visions and common strategies to "manage our coexistence in shared spaces." The paper then maps an ambitious research agenda for urban policy communities with four strategic themes: how local place matters, urban and regional governance, multi-level policy collaboration, and comparative and international urban studies.

Bradford examines the ways in which a new urban agenda might better align federal, provincial and local economic, environmental and social policies with the physical design and community planning of Canada's diverse city-regions. At a minimum, better alignment will redress the resource-responsibility gap experienced by local officials and embed an "urban lens" in federal and provincial policy making.

This up-to-date stocktaking of a rapidly evolving and complex policy field offers a baseline for further thought and action about the state of Canada's cities. As Bradford concludes, "Canada's political history has been shaped by dynamic and successful projects for nation building and province building. What may be needed now are similar leadership coalitions to build inclusive city-regions as an essential foundation for a prosperous, sustainable society in the global age."

The full report can be found at: www.cprn.org

Rapid Policy Development: Lessons Learned

John Burrett
Federation of Canadian Municipalities

The best way to kill an idea is to study it to death. Both "A Call to Action" and "A National Affordable Housing Strategy" took only a few months, but represented excellent, original research...

Homelessness is a national disaster, declared the Big Cities Mayor's Caucus of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) in November 1998.

By late 1998, reports of overloaded shelters, tragic deaths on cold winter nights and news of the "hidden homeless" of children and families were starting to permeate the public consciousness. This bad news came at a time when the country was riding the wave of one of the most prolonged periods of economic prosperity in its history. Clearly not everyone was benefiting — thus, the declaration.

This article reviews the initiatives undertaken by the FCM following the declaration and the personal lessons learned along the way. It is a reflection on a success story of rapid research followed by effective formulation and communication of policy recommendations and the eventual establishment of new programming by the federal government.

Research

In late 1998, the FCM moved quickly to develop a plan of action that was innovative and inclusive. The National Housing Policy Options Team (NHPOT), composed of a group of mayors, councillors and senior staff from communities across Canada, was formed to guide the process. Research and data gathering to give a picture of the situation was the logical first step for the Team.

The information-gathering process was multidimensional. The National Symposium on Homelessness and Housing helped initially to define the parameters of the problem.

Community input was then solicited from FCM members across Canada including information from the array of on-the-ground groups and individuals assisting Canada's homeless. Data from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and from Statistics Canada provided an empirical basis for the research. Throughout these various information-gathering activities, the FCM served as the home base — working with all the partners to develop a sound evidence base for developing policy options quickly.

This work culminated only six months after the declaration of a national disaster with the publication of "A Call to Action" in June 1999 (www.fcm.ca/PDFs/Housing/nhpoeng.pdf). The report forcefully presented the nature and scale of the problem across Canada. "A Call to Action" found that:

- Between 1990 and 1995 the number of households in Canada paying more that 50 percent of their income on rent increased by 43 percent;
- In larger urban centres there were at least 96,000 households on assisted housing waiting lists;
- Emergency shelter use was increasing significantly in many cities; and
- Canada would require 450,000 rental-housing units to meet projected demand in the decade following the report.

The report was unanimously accepted by the FCM membership at the June 1999 Annual Conference and served as the basis for consultations with government toward implementing solutions.

Policy Development

The work of the team did not stop with research. Local governments, large and small, used the data collected for "A Call to Action" to lobby MPs, discuss the issue with local media and ensure that the federal Cabinet was aware of the seriousness of the issue. A submission to the federal budget process from FCM in the fall of 1999 included information from "A Call to Action."

The federal government's December 1999 announcement of $783 million in funding for homelessness initiatives was undoubtedly the result of various influences. However, the research and dissemination processes led by the FCM's NHPOT played a role (we think a particularly persuasive role).

This inspired the FCM to continue its work. Over the spring and summer of 2000, the Federation, working closely with other organizations advocating action on affordable housing, produced "A National Affordable Housing Strategy." This was followed by a similar dissemination and communications process.

Lessons

The period between the November 1998 declaration and a year later when the federal government announced new funding was an intense period for those working on the project at the FCM. Lessons were learned which may be of interest to others in the policy community. They include:

Start from the finish: In the case of "A Call to Action," the goal was to gather the data to support what all of the stakeholders already knew: homelessness was reaching crisis proportions. Effective strategic policy research, like a good meeting, starts with a vision of what you think you want to conclude.

Your research is your armour: When you are taking an unconventional approach to building a research base, it is important to make sure you have the facts straight. The use of front line data from a broad range of stakeholders can be risky and extra care must be taken to ensure it can be substantiated.

…But you need a head chef: The role of key leaders was critical in articulating both a vision and an overall strategy. Champions with the energy and passion to move the project to completion were essential in co-ordinating the work of the "chefs."

Moving from research to action: Decision makers don't have time to read 60-page reports. In the end, condensing hard-won intelligence into two-page briefing notes, one-page press releases and 15-second sound bites on television, made sure the word got out. This project benefited from a cross-Canada network of municipal officials to communicate report findings to the local community. This built a broad range of support for the policy options identified in the report — a key element in getting the ear of decision makers.

The federal government's December 1999 announcement of $783 million in funding for homelessness initiatives was undoubtedly the result of various influences. However, the research and dissemination processes led by the FCM... played a role (we think a particularly persuasive role).

Policy research doesn't have to take forever: The best way to kill an idea is to study it to death. Both "A Call to Action" and "A National Affordable Housing Strategy" took only a few months, but represented excellent, original research that was better than anything else in existence.

Lots of cooks in the kitchen are useful …: The FCM's housing and homelessness research was possible because of the existence of a network of experts across the country who were ready and willing to supply both data and anecdotal evidence that was not available from national-scale data sources. The same network of experts also gave indispensable advice on the policy prescriptions presented. Their reach was critical in convincing city and town councils to fund the work and in communicating results to local policy makers.

The preceding article expresses the opinions of the author, and not necessarily the positions of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities or anyone named. For more information on FCM research and policy on affordable housing and homelessness, see "FCM's National Strategy on Affordable Housing" on the FCM web site at www.fcm.ca

Urban Growth Management: A Policy–Implementation Disconnect

Melanie Hare
Urban Strategies Inc.

...growth management efforts have not kept up to the changing nature of our communities, nor do our tools address the scale or level of complexity of our urban centres.

A Growing Problem

Growth management policies are designed to guide the "smart" development of urban areas. However, despite years of growth management policy in Canada, our urban centres are sprawling. Between 1976 and 1996, the Greater Toronto Area lost 150,000 acres of prime farmland to urbanization. Expansion, not intensification, has been the trend.

The Greater Toronto Area is expected to grow by 2 million people over the next 20 years. The 2001 Census data confirm that Canada has increasingly become an urban nation; cities are the engines of the national and provincial, as well as local, economies. Population increases and shifts of this scale indicate that growth management will become increasingly important in helping municipalities to accommodate growth, while maintaining livability.

Growth management is not a new concept. In fact, it entails many of the principles that urban planners have practised for decades – strong and vibrant downtown cores, open space networks, balanced movement systems, a mixture of uses, liveable communities, to name a few. Urban growth boundaries delineate the extent of urbanization in most official plans. Yet growth management efforts have not kept up to the changing nature of our communities, nor do our tools address the scale or level of complexity of our urban centres. It is clearly time to re-invent and vigorously apply thoughtful and co-ordinated approaches to managing the growth of our communities.

OPPI Policy Paper on Growth Management

In this context, the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) commissioned a policy development paper on growth management. *Exploring Growth Management Roles in Ontario: Learning from "Who Does What"* Elsewhere, released in September 2001, offers an assessment of current efforts in North America and provides direction with respect to current growth management initiatives in Ontario.

Findings and Outcomes

Generally, Ontario municipalities have official plans that contain policies which support healthy downtown cores, integrated open-space networks, transit supportive densities, mixed-use developments, a range of housing opportunities, open and fair process and co-ordinated infrastructure investment.

However, with ever-increasing urban sprawl, it is clear that policy on its own is not enough. What is needed? Five critical elements of a growth management strategy are identified in the policy paper:

- Collaboration, co-ordination and leadership among and between governments as no one level of government can do this alone;
- The introduction of new tools and resources and the innovative application of existing tools to effectively guide growth;
- The use of public investment and incentives to leverage market forces;
- Thinking, planning and making investment decisions based on immediate needs and 50 year timeframes; and

- The creation of a broad base of understanding and support for managing growth.

The Need to Go Beyond Policy

If our municipal policy frameworks support growth management principles, then what is the problem? Policy alone is not enough and never really has been. Three factors have rendered policy relatively impotent in recent times.

The first is related to scale. In the past, urban centres have been of a modest size and complexity, making growth management relatively straightforward. The current reality is of city regions that can have an influence extending hundreds of kilometres and can encapsulate a variety of communities.

Second, in the past, market forces have had a stronger regard for and incentive to work more cohesively with policy direction. However, the postwar era of big government has been replaced in the 1990s by a market-driven approach that has diluted policy directives.

Third, in the last decade, senior levels of government, through downloading and reduction in spending, have noticeably withdrawn their efforts to support managed growth in cities. Municipalities cannot do it alone. For example, the State of Maryland's smart growth platform encompasses a co-ordinated intergovernmental approach. Collaboration between the state, region, city and county governments have led to a layering of policies and initiatives which are led from the top but are mutually reinforcing and implemented on a voluntary basis at the local level.

A critical first step toward the implementation of sound growth management approaches will be to define the roles clearly — between and within levels of government, with the community, with potential investment partners.

> *...growth management will be critical over the next decades as our communities evolve into substantial and complex city regions.*

Who should champion growth management? Local municipalities are critical players but cannot, based on the current constitutional status, lead the charge in this realm. The province is the logical candidate to take on this role, just as its counterpart states of Maryland and Oregon have done. In Ontario, the current reviews of the provincial policy statements, the *Municipal Act* and the establishment of the Smart Growth Secretariat indicate the provincial government's interest in taking on a more direct role. The federal government also has a role and should consider expanding its role in critical infrastructure areas such as transit, housing, restoration and conservation of environment and heritage.

Capturing the Momentum to Re-invent Growth Management

Despite innovation and intent, and strong policy directions, no one community has been entirely successful at managing its growth. In Canada, what is clear is that growth management will be critical over the next decades as our communities evolve into substantial and complex city regions. These city-regions are the engines of our economy and the places which a growing majority of people call home. While current initiatives are promising, we cannot afford to lose this opportunity to renew our commitment and re-invent our approach to growth management.

The Ontario government's current initiatives are being matched by growth management initiatives being undertaken at Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, OPPI, the Canadian Urban Institute, the Conservation Council of Ontario, many municipalities and the Sgro Taskforce on Urban Issues. There is an opportunity to corral these resources to create a truly collaborative and co-ordinated strategy for guiding growth. Indeed it would be the corollary of smart growth — that being stupid growth — not to harness these resources to re-invent the way we manage growth in Canadian urban centres.

To read the OPPI Policy Paper on Growth Management in its entirety please see http://www.ontarioplanners.on.ca/pdf/growth_101001_position.pdf

Urban Spaces and Quality of Life: Moving Beyond Normative Approaches

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Quality of life, urban environment or urban sustainability indicators — whatever we choose to call them — spark enormous interest among scientists and governments.

The search for quality of life, particularly in the city, has occupied so-called post-industrial and increasingly urbanized societies for more than 40 years. Recently, this has led to initiatives to measure quality of life in urban areas. This column reviews several recent measurement approaches and reflects on how the concept of NIMBY (not in my back yard) may reveal aspects of urban life that present indicators are unable to assess.

The concept of quality of life, as applied to the urban environment, is usually understood in two ways. The first way concerns the living environment and involves the patterns of inequitable advantages and opportunities[1] that affect each citizen through accessibility to services, facilities and amenities. Proximity to these is a key factor in improving living conditions.[2] Other elements of the living environment include economic vitality and social equity, which encapsulate an infinite number of specific issues — for example, the quality and affordability of housing.

The second approach to understanding urban quality of life, according to Perloff,[3] relates to the natural environment in urban spaces. This approach holds that such factors as air, water and soil quality, and the amount of green space available affect the way we live. However, measuring these factors, for example noise or olfactory pollution, and defining what constitutes a good living environment or urban configuration is an inexact science.

Other aspects to consider in identifying the aspects of quality of life have been suggested by early writers such as Blumenfeld or Perloff. These aspects include, in particular, esthetic value, satisfaction with one's home and the democratic processes of local political authorities. In addition, there are issues of perception that take into account people's experiences in the city, the routes they travel and the sensory quality of their surroundings. These issues bring to mind the work of Kevin Lynch, who emphasized people's ability to understand (or read) their environment, adapt to it and change it to meet their needs.[4]

Measuring quality of life: indicators and models

The search for quality of life has led to efforts to put urban and environmental data into systematic order. The use of indicators has become popular in Canada and elsewhere as a means to compare urban spaces and to generalize the results. Quality of life, urban environment or urban sustainability indicators — whatever we choose to call them — spark enormous interest among scientists and governments. "Indicator" refers to a scale for indicating a state, a condition or a trend using a predetermined criterion, parameter, standard, reference or target. It should be understood that indicators are a simplification of complex phenomena and shed light on a set of interactions among various components in a system.

A variety of indicator systems have been developed, some in cooperation with government, in particular the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). CMHC proposed the creation of a general model called the Community Oriented Model of the Lived Environment (COMLE), which includes specific measurements for each of the indicators identified in the approach.[5]

COMLE models four components that make up quality of life — economic vitality, social well-being, environmental integrity and cultural congruence — by linking them to urban issues such as housing, land use, transportation, the natural environment, employment, distribution of commercial space, and the availability of public services including health, social welfare, education and recreation. The standard indicators selected (household income, employment, housing costs, etc.) were linked to specific measurements that were selected according to the availability of data. The indicators referred to socio-economic variables or variables relating to services and environment, including accessibility to health care.

Under COMLE, the measurement of environmental integrity was not highly developed. The difficulties with measuring environmental integrity are clear in the case of residential density. On the one hand, measurements of energy consumption and transportation choices serve to highlight the negative aspects daily commutes via automobiles. On the other hand, in terms of housing, the indicator focuses on the number of homes constructed per year, regardless of whether or not it encourages urban sprawl (probably assuming that development enhances economic vitality and the quality of residential environments). In this case, increased commuting times would be considered detrimental to quality of life, while increased housing would be positive. However, even though we can argue that urban sprawl reduces quality of life, it must be noted that consumers do not seem to have lost their enthusiasm for low-density housing located a fair distance from the downtown core.[6]

When CMHC tested COMLE, the municipal authorities conducting the tests said that the approach did not seem to capture all aspects of quality of life, particularly at the neighbourhood level. In addition, COMLE involves aspects that are not under municipal jurisdiction and do not support municipal decision-making. Other comments indicated that the model does not focus closely enough on community engagement and that the measures are not output measures. Lastly, the pilot tests showed an ongoing vacillation between wanting to determine the current situation based on rigorous scientific methodology and wanting to measure society's progress in achieving predetermined major societal or local objectives. The consultant responsible for the pilot tests concluded that the most tangible result was to make municipal authorities aware of the concept of sustainable cities and quality of life.[7]

Other quality of life measurement approaches have also been developed, particularly those involving community groups and associations, such as the project Vivre Montréal en Santé[8]. This project tried to reconcile quantitative and qualitative approaches using standard indicators, but expanded the measurements of perception through consultation processes in various Montréal neighbourhoods. The experiment was not conclusive due to lack of funds and adequate means but it continued in the form of neighbourhood discussion fora. Through these fora, the neighbourhoods carried out analysis and created action plans for urban renewal and social development in their areas.

Another initiative that has focused on applied and methodological activities to develop tools for measuring quality of life is that of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). The FCM recently proposed several indexes to reflect the overall nature and complexity of urban living, including an index of community participation.[9] The proposal expands the model for measuring quality of life, using some of the most pertinent components, but unfortunately is not able to resolve the ongoing difficulties with quality of life measurement initiatives. This is because the normative approach cannot be considered to be completely free of the biases of researchers and their sponsors.

Indicators are often unable to take into account local issues that reveal diverse realities, particularly in terms of socio-economic status or the make-up of the living environment. The challenge is to address the inequities in the quality of natural and built environments in specific spaces that differ in structure and nature. In terms of the immediate built environment, the quality is often affected by sites that are rundown or contaminated, and activities that are undesirable, pollution causing, noisy and stressful. Inventorying local stresses such as undesirable activities offers another means for understanding the quality of lived environments. These activities not only impact on quality of life, they often lead to environmental conflicts. These conflicts reveal problems and the perceptions of local stresses and risks. This leads to the not in my backyard (NIMBY) syndrome, which represents a demand for quality or conservation of the environment.

The NIMBY syndrome: revealing quality of life

The NIMBY syndrome must be seen as both an indicator of the quality of urban life in general and of the

effects of proximity in particular. It is an outlet for local stakeholders or individuals, who perhaps do not feel represented by the institutional system or the neighbourhood association, to express stress, discomfort, social tensions or the real or feared impacts of changes to the living environment.

We have also seen an increase in the strength of resident- or citizen-based protest movements in the form of informal public consultations or micro-local conflicts. The term NIMBY refers to residents' actions to protect an area near their homes or to limit undesirable uses there. Cases of NIMBY often arise in conflicts over land use. NIMBY cases can also be a way of reacting to the inadequate availability of public services.

Because of its impact on democratic processes and the media coverage it receives, the NIMBY syndrome has modified the urban planning and development process and influenced dealings between local stakeholders and government authorities. These situations can lead to the creation of a new forum for residents and institutional stakeholders to discuss the distribution of community-level services and facilities as well as the local effects of human activities. Of course, they can also lead to a head-on conflict or covert action, and they inspire different reactions in different people, since residents are never a homogenous group.

Nevertheless, local conflicts, which originate outside the established neighbourhood consultation systems during discussions on urban development and urban living, are valuable because they address crucial issues of quality and equity. These conflicts express tensions between the residents who live there and the people responsible for planning, using or making decisions about the space — in other words, between the conditions in the living environment and the functional organization of the city. NIMBY is one of the few options for expressing the experiences and opinions of the immediate and nearby residents and highlighting impacts that have been underestimated or even dismissed. The resulting conflict upsets the tacit rules of the institutional stakeholders and mediations between social and economic partners. It often involves citizens who receive very vague communications from local authorities and are rarely contacted directly by the players involved, who overlook problems considered too localized or too small. Lastly, micro-local conflicts are a sign of an often diffuse and loosely organized resistance but, because it is distinct and localized, it evokes a fleeting sense of identity. This resistance is the expression of people's attitudes toward the impact of activities and changes on their living environment.

Conclusion

Normative approaches to quality of life have neither completely exhausted all possibilities for measurement nor provided the results anticipated. Experiments conducted in municipalities across Canada indicate methodological advances and opportunities for social innovation. However, they do not manage to capture all aspects of the concept of quality of life. To some extent, conflicts over living environments, especially those relating to the NIMBY syndrome, pick up where normative approaches leave off. They highlight the impacts of proximity and people's perception of it and they let us examine the level of democracy at work in debates and decisions on land use and the availability of public services.

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Urban Policy Research Organizations in the United States

The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy works in partnership with academics, private sector leaders and officials from all levels of government to shape the development of urban policy in the United States. Founded in 1996, the Center publishes research on a wide variety of topics including urban finance, housing, employment, poverty, smart growth, and transportation. Three major initiatives have been launched recently by the Brookings Center. The Metropolitan Initiative examines the policy implications of key urban American development trends: explosive growth at the exurban fringe coupled with decline in the older urban core. The Central Cities Initiative seeks to help cities better understand and identify their role in the new economy and to determine how federal and state policies can bolster local competitiveness strategies. Finally, the Center has launched The Neighborhood Initiative, which examines the impact of federal and state policies on cities and, more specifically, on neighbourhoods of high poverty. A program of research, publication, activities and outreach is associated with each of these initiatives. Dozens of research papers have been published since 1997 and these are available from the Center's web site at http://www.brookings.org/dybdocroot/es/urban/urban.htm

The Taubman Center for State and Local Government at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University focuses on public policy and management in the U.S. federal system. Taubman Center faculty affiliates and senior staff pursue a variety of research projects on the politics, economics and implementation of urban development and transportation policies. The Center has also established an initiative to assist all levels of government in preparing for the threat of domestic terrorism. More information and publications may be found at http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/taubmancenter/

The Taub Urban Research Center at New York University's Wagner School explores issues and challenges affecting cities and metropolitan regions. The Center issues reports and conducts fora that include participants from government, business, non-profit organizations and the academic community. A new special project funded by the National Science Foundation looks at "Information Technologies and the Future of Urban Environments." The results of this ongoing research can be found at http://www.informationcity.org. Further research and information is located at http://urban.nyu.edu/

The Urban Institute (UI), based in Washington, was created in 1968 to monitor and evaluate the "Great Society" initiatives of the Johnson administration. During its early years, the Institute concentrated on persistent domestic problems such as poverty, education finance, unemployment, urban housing shortages and decay, transportation and welfare reform. More than 30 years later, the UI mission has broadened to include research on topics as diverse as taxes and criminal justice, governance in new democracies, advocacy and philanthropy, and health care policy. The Center is a primary sponsor of the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership and is co-producer of CityScape, a monthly radio show. Transcripts of the show are available on the Institute's web site. More information on the Urban Institute and access to its publications are at www.urban.org

Instrument Choice in Global Democracies

How do governments choose among different ways of implementing their policies? How does the new global environment affect policy design and tools of governance? Today's environment demands a more sophisticated understanding of how and why different policy instruments can be chosen.

As the first major undertaking of its new Law and Policy Project (*see p. 3*), the PRI is examining current thinking on instrument choice with a view to creating useful tools for policy makers. To this end, the PRI is working closely with the Privy Council Office, the Law Commission of Canada and in particular the Department of Justice. This reflects in part the importance placed on instrument choice by the Deputy Ministers' Challenge Team (DMCT) on Law-Making and Governance. In furtherance of the DMCT's work, the Department of Justice is leading a government-wide initiative to research and develop instrument choice strategies. The Department of Justice's conference, Instrument Choice: A Toolkit for Effective Government Action, held on March 26 and 27, 2002, is part of this important effort. Many of the issues that the PRI will try to tackle will be developed from this conference.

A proliferation of instrument choices

In the postwar period, Western governments tended to reach for laws and regulations first. In the 1970s and 1980s, skepticism about regulations led to a search for alternatives. The *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the "legalization of politics," the growing importance of international agreements and the trend away from big government have led to an increased range of policy instruments in Canada. Most recently, backlash movements and the cataclysms of September 11 have arguably swung the pendulum back toward law and to new questions about "efficiency" in policy design.

Today, Canada is a leader in the area of instrument choice, with academic experts spanning disciplines such as political science, law, sociology and environmental studies.

Policy Research Initiative

The PRI is launching its work on instrument choice with an international conference this fall, Instrument Choice in Global Democracies. This event will coincide with the 20th anniversary of a seminal study published by the Economic Council of Canada, *The Choice of Governing Instrument* by Michael Trebilcock, Robert Prichard, Douglas Hartle and Donald Dewees. The conference will give a retrospective view of key developments since 1982 and identify both current questions for policy research and strategies for addressing them.

The conference will also provide the foundation for a series of one-day policy dialogues on specific, practical instrument-choice issues and strategies. Materials from the conference and the policy dialogues will be published with a university press and highlighted at the 2002 National Policy Research Conference, Future Trends: Risk.

The importance of instrument choice will become clear in future issues of *Horizons* as we devote this regular feature to policy instruments and the outcomes of instrument choice.

A backgrounder is available from the PRI, and more information can be obtained from Pearl Eliadis at (613) 947-3914 or p.eliadis@prs-srp.gc.ca

July 18–21, 2002

National Forum on the Future of Canada's Cities

Canada25
(Victoria)

Canada25 works to promote a new definition of citizenship and the role of young Canadians in public life. The organization is convening a series of regional round tables across Canada and the United States in June, leading up to the second national forum, planned for July 18-21 in Victoria. The project aims to inform the debate about Canadian cities and to help formulate specific recommendations on how governments, business, the voluntary sector and citizens can work to ensure the vibrancy and diversity of our cities. For more information, please visit Canada25's web site at www.canada25.com

August 1, 2002

Early Childhood and Violence Prevention

The Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development, Health Canada
(Montréal)

This conference is intended for Canadian policy makers, service planners and providers. The focus will be on aggression in young children and on the need for early intervention to prevent violence. The conference will feature both international experts and a round table of participants. To register on the mailing list, please visit the Centre's web site at http://www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca/inscription.asp?lang=EN&info=12

August 8–11, 2002

Cities and Globalization: Communities in a Changing World

The 71st Annual Couchiching Summer conference
(Orillia)

This annual conference of the Couchiching Institute on Public Affairs has attracted public policy leaders to discuss fundamental issues such as health, democracy and science. This year the Institute turns its attention to urban issues — considering how globalization affects Canadian cities. Speakers include Yves Ducharme, Barbara Hall, Enid Slack, Anne Golden and David Lewis Stein. For more information go to www.couch.ca/conference/index.html

September 9–13, 2002

Togetherness in Difference: Citizenship and Belonging

Seventh International Metropolis Conference
(Oslo, Norway)

Immigration and its manifestations in the urban context have been the overall themes of Metropolis activity. The theme of this year's conference affirms that we have to have forms of togetherness in society that can accommodate difference and diversity. It also stresses the fundamental duality: the relationship between citizenship — in the widest sense, as a structure of access and rights in a society — and belonging, as a concept that makes it possible to include the cultural, symbolic and sentimental aspects of collective social life. For more information, please go to www.international.metropolis.net/frameset_e.html

Youth Homelessness

"Throughout the country, homeless youth have the same general characteristics: exposure to physical violence, mental health problems, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual abuse and conflicts with the law. They are often isolated with no family ties and few friends. Many have been raised in foster homes, have a lack of education and skills, and suffer from poor physical health. While the majority of homeless youth are male, the number of young women who are homeless is growing. Homelessness is a significant problem among Aboriginal youth. … [G]ay and lesbian youth are also at risk of ending up on the street because their families often reject them. Like Aboriginal youth, they avoid using some of the shelters because they fear discrimination. In some cities, youth avoid adult shelters, feeling unsafe around adults with behavioural or mental health problems."

From "Environmental Scan on Youth Homelessness"

Research Highlights: Socio-Economic Series 86 (July 2001)

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Sports and Recreation: Entertainment or Social Right?

Jean Harvey
Director, Research Centre for Sport in Canadian Society
University of Ottawa

The city — a place to live or a showcase? This question seems to be a major dilemma for urban policy today.

For more than a century, sports, recreation and parks have figured prominently in Canada's urban policies. The objectives guiding public policy in these areas have evolved, influenced by the changing role of government in Canada. For example, parks can serve to improve public health in our cities. One of the objectives behind Montréal's Mount Royal Park, like Stanley Park in Vancouver, was to oxygenate the city and offer citizens a place to relax. City parks can also serve as places for recreation. Since the latter half of the 19th century, cities that wanted their physical environments to support a high quality of life have made green space a focal point of their development plans. The creation of Allan Gardens in Toronto in the 1860s is another example of people's growing concern with the quality of life in their environment. Taken over by the City of Toronto in the face of pressure from the business and professional elite, Allan Gardens illustrates how green space was reserved for a limited number of activities that corresponded to the values and morals of the groups supporting them. The regulations governing Allan Gardens prohibited people from playing football or walking on the grass.

If city parks offered little space for the city's underprivileged classes to play sports and participate in recreational activities, these classes were also excluded from private clubs and associations such as the Montréal Amateur Athletic Association. Gradually, religious or lay organizations, funded by philanthropies, began to offer recreational activities and "healthy" sports for the underprivileged. Patros, YMCAs, YWCAs, community centres, boys and girls clubs, and playgrounds began to spring up across Canadian cities. The North American movement toward "rational recreation" in the early 20th century would elevate these activities to the forefront of the urban moral economy.

Moreover, the 1906 *Lord's Day Act* gave cities another role regarding sports and recreation, that of policing. The purpose of the 1906 Act was to encourage citizens to reserve Sunday for religion and family. The municipal police made sure that sports and recreational facilities stayed closed on Sunday, while turning a blind eye to elite private clubs. This law further hindered the sports and leisure activities of the working classes at a time when the six-day work week was common. For a while, it also restricted the growing entertainment industry, including professional sports, and renewed the struggle to eliminate blood sports (cock fighting, bull baiting, etc.) and boxing, events accompanied by betting, drinking and public disorderliness feared by public authorities and the local religious elite.

Sports and recreation have been at the heart of city life for some time, whether it was a matter of curbing their excesses, ensuring their morality or promoting access to them. They have also played an important part in people's attitudes about their quality of life. This notion of quality of life is quite ambiguous. It is definitely a "quasi-concept," to use the expression that Paul Bernard applied to social

cohesion. A quasi-concept is broad and loose enough to encompass a variety of components and criteria for evaluating its status and even its development. Michel Bellefleur, a philosopher specializing in recreation issues, recently suggested that quality of life be defined as a set of positive ways of organizing and living our lives. Quality of life, therefore, relates to the living environment cities create through their development plans, the opportunities to participate in sports and recreational activities that they offer as a service to citizens, the many social networks that they foster and the sense of belonging to a social and political community that they inspire and maintain. This sense of belonging is the source of a civic identity and the glue that holds it together. The semantic field covered by quality of life makes it a cousin to social citizenship.

Social citizenship refers to a series of social rights that historically were added to civic and political rights. The growth of the Canadian welfare state following the Second World War was accompanied by the gradual recognition of citizens' right to claim unemployment and health insurance and, at least in their collective consciousness, the right to sports and recreation. This acceptance of social rights was accompanied by a growth in municipal recreation services throughout Canada, to the point that they were transformed into essential services and citizens expected access to them as a fundamental part of the quality of urban life.

The welfare state crisis that has been felt sharply over the last three decades has greatly eroded the recognition of this right. In response to their debt situations, the devolution of responsibilities by higher levels of government and, in particular, new management principles borrowed from private enterprise, cities have gradually begun to privatize some services, close some facilities or introduce increasingly higher user fees. As a result, the client now comes before the citizen. The citizens who seem the most ignored are those with the fewest resources, especially the citizens of tomorrow. For example, in its report *The Progress of Canada's Children 2001*, the Canadian Council on Social Development draws on analyses of several national surveys to show the link between poverty and children's access to organized sports. In particular, the Council points out that more than 60 percent of children in the poorest households almost never participate in organized sports, whereas the figure is 27 percent for children from affluent homes. The Council also confirmed the theory that cities which give young people a voice in policy development are more inclusive than others. The report concludes that 72 percent of children living in cities participated in organized sports and 27 percent did not.

Isn't it time to resurrect the principle of access to sport and recreation as a citizen's right? Isn't this access critical to quality of life in the city?

While citizens' right to sports and recreation is being eroded, cities have made major investments to attract tourists and even private industry, especially by creating major events and facilities. Economic and social globalization is at the root of this new political order. Striving to be known as national or international destinations or to become world-class, big cities are putting on more festivals, trying to attract international cultural and sporting events and feeling their prestige threatened whenever a professional sports team threatens to pack its bags. Cities are no longer places for people to live; they have become showcases. For some of the urban economic elite, a city's international status is linked to its economic health, even its quality of life. These public investments are not grants to private interests, but absolute necessities. In a sea of international competition, don't cities need to set themselves apart, create a brand image, a corporate identity? Many impact studies hold up the promise of staggering economic and social benefits from these events, emphasizing the prestige for the city and the flood of tourist dollars that will benefit the collective wealth. Added to these benefits is that of civic pride, which will reinforce identity and people's sense of belonging to a dynamic local political community.

The city — a place to live or a showcase? This question seems to be a major dilemma for urban policy today. Do we preserve green space and cycling paths for the well-being of our citizens or do we develop a world-class golf course to attract

tourist consumers? Citizens do not seem to come out on top very often these days.

For example, at the time of writing, nearly 80 percent of the public pools in Toronto's schools had been given a one-year reprieve. The school board, which had previously given the City of Toronto's recreational services free access to the pools, threatened to close them, citing its inability to finance the facilities by itself. Can Toronto provide financial support to keep the pools open to all its citizens? It didn't hesitate to invest millions in its bid to host the Olympic Games.

Current debates about social capital, social cohesion and citizenship raise many questions concerning the direction for urban sports and recreation policies. Isn't it time to resurrect the principle of access to sport and recreation as a citizen's right? Isn't this access critical to quality of life in the city?

Studies on social cohesion emphasize that community recreation and sports are important to democratic life in a city. Recreation and sports facilities appear, under certain circumstances, to contribute in many ways. For the city's youth, they can be a place to learn about being active participants in the life of the community. Their parents' volunteer work could sow the seeds for their future involvement in community sports, recreation or other areas of citizenship. In a recent study for the Laidlaw Foundation, the Canadian Council for Social Development established a link between young people's participation in structured recreation, their physical development, their psycho-social development and behaviour, their current and future civic behaviour and their future civic competence. In addition, studies of young people who are completely marginalized indicate that sports and recreation may provide a means for this group to reintegrate, provided that they are not isolated measures and that young people have input into the nature and provision of these services. France's experiences in the 1990s with integrating young people from cultural minorities who were living in cities also showed how sports and recreation can be part of a social integration policy.

The sociability networks that develop in and around community sports and recreation organizations strengthen social bonds. According to some, they are the building blocks of social cohesion and are a rich and varied source of social capital. I would add that they are an excellent means of participating in the life of the city if not a springboard to active participation in local political institutions.

Sports and recreation also contribute to citizens' physical and mental health and allow them to express themselves and develop individually and as a group. Don't cities — which provide environments for us to live in — have the obligation to support, structure and promote access to sports and recreation for everyone? Can we talk about quality of life in our cities without fair access to sports and recreation? Isn't this access a social right and a city's responsibility? Just asking these questions sets us on the path to finding the answers.

Urban Neighbourhood Revitalization

"One of the really difficult problems in revitalizing a poor area is that programs that make the area more attractive for investors make it less affordable for residents. This paradox is at the heart of the policy problem in dealing with urban decline and disinvestments. Policies that alter the risk profile of a neighbourhood need to be complimented with the provision of housing options for all incomes. … Perhaps the most important lesson from this research is the ineffectiveness of single sector approaches to revitalization. Instead, comprehensive approaches comprised of a selection of policies tailored to suit the specific circumstances of individual cities are required. All orders of government as well as the private and non-governmental sectors must cooperate in the recovery plan. Furthermore, fostering the capacity of local organizations and residents to act on behalf of their communities can help revitalization become self-sustaining."

From "Disinvestment and the Decline of Urban Neighborhoods"

Research Highlights: Socio-Economic Series 90 (November 2001)

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

GIS 101

Michael Sawada
Assistant Professor, GIS
University of Ottawa

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) address spatial questions and can uniquely contribute to the decision-making process. Invented in Ottawa in the 1960s, by Dr. Roger Tomlinson for the Canada Land Inventory (CLI) initiative, GIS is now a top growth industry worth over $10 billion per annum globally.

A GIS is composed of:

- A database of map layers defined by spatial and attribute data, and
- Software with capabilities to analyze the relations between features among different layers.

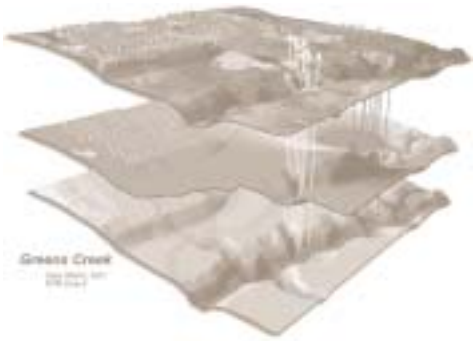
Spatial data are the digital map layers containing features observed on the earth's surface. Attributes are the physical or sociological observations at each feature within each layer. For example, a layer of points could be hospitals with the number of beds at each as the attribute; a layer of lines may represent public transport routes with attributes of number of buses and speed-limits; an area layer could represent census tracts with the attributes of population and income level (e.g., see Myles and Picot this issue) for each tract. Together, spatial and attribute data comprise the GIS database which can be quickly mapped and visualized.

GIS, however, is far more than a technology enabling display of maps. In order to tackle spatial questions, GIS allows for analysis among layers. Spatial questions deal with the concepts of distance, direction, location, accessibility, proximity, adjacency, containment and spatial coincidence (overlay) among features in space. If a policy affects any of these concepts, GIS will prove valuable within the decision-support system.

For example, GIS can contribute to policy forecasting, planning, implementation and monitoring. Consider a policy that plans to increase accessibility to health care for the aged. A GIS answers questions such as what proportion of the current or projected population aged 65 or older are within two kilometres (proximity) of existing facilities and 500 metres of public transport routes? Where should new facilities be planned? In another case, a GIS could be used at the planning and implementation stage of the proposed legislation for Canadian species at risk to determine, among other things, where the preferred habitats for species x are found (location); or what land uses intersect (overlay) these habitats and which stakeholders will be affected by land-use reclamation policies?

GIS has a long history in urban planning and policy formulation, largely spearheaded over the last 40 years by the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (www.urisa.org). Other forces in GIS education are the National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis (NCGIA) (www.ncgia.ucsb.edu) and the US Crime Mapping Research Center (CMRC) (www.ojp.usdoj.gov/cmrc/). GIS software is produced mainly by Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) (www.esri.com), Intergraph Corp. (www.intergraph.com) and Mapinfo Corp. (www.mapinfo.com). Local and federal governments (e.g., Statistics Canada) as well as companies like DMTI Spatial (www.dmtispatial.com) are sources of high-quality spatial data.

Thus, Geographic Information Systems provide considerable analytical information to assist the policy maker.



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