

# **New Times, New Opportunities: An Urban Social Development Agenda for Canada**

Neil Bradford

Political Science Department

Huron University College

May 23, 2006

# Presentation Outline

---

## *Five Themes:*

1. Complex social problems converge in big cities
2. Social Development Model: People *and* Place Policies
3. Shifting National Urban Agenda: From New Deal to Open Federalism
4. Bringing the Provinces Back In: Urban Laboratories of Social Innovation
5. Moving Forward: Linking and Learning

# Complex Social Problems Converge in Big Cities

- New social risks: income polarization and vulnerable groups
- New spatial clusters of distress: “poverty by postal code”
- Complex issues of *national consequence* playing out at the urban scale (inclusion, innovation, sustainability)
- Canada’s social policy regime falling behind

# A Social Development Model

---

- Socio-spatial challenges require people *and* place policies
- People policies are universal and pan-Canadian including income support, education, health, labour market and workplaces
- Place policies are targeted and community-based including housing, transit, recreation, cultural supports and settlement systems
- Integrated people and place policies create 'pathways of opportunity' for excluded individuals and distressed neighbourhoods

# The Urban Policy Challenge

- Canada is an urban nation: people and place policies must 'join-up' in our cities
- *"All the great social policy questions of the day – education, health, poverty, housing and immigration – become urban policy questions"* (Dr. MERIC Gertler, 2002)
- Is Canada's urban framework suited to the new socio-spatial challenges?
- Lots of political attention to the "cities file" in past decade or so ...

# A Bit of History: Tracking Urban Policy (1)

## 1990-2000: A Lost Decade for Cities

- Federal/provincial downloading, offloading, and policy unilateralism
- FCM decries the “culture of non-recognition and neglect”
- Urban infrastructure deficits
- OECD summation: Canada’s “disjointed urban policy” and “lagging engagement” with city challenges (OECD, 2002)

# Tracking Urban Policy (2)

- **2000-2005: Liberal New Deal for Cities and Communities**
- Huge Federal Vision: "*A National Project for Our Time*" (Prime Minister Martin)
- Some promising breakthroughs: UDAs, Integrated Community Sustainability Plans, the Harcourt Report
- But obstacles to people and place synthesis: jurisdiction, machinery, focus, and time

# Tracking Urban Policy (3)

## 2006-2007 : Conservative New Deal for the Provinces

- Federal Vision: *"We know our nation's future depends on enlightened urban statecraft"* (Prime Minister Harper) but ...
- *"Ottawa has stuck its nose into provincial and local matters."* (Prime Minister Harper)
- Concentrate on demonstrable federal responsibilities and national priorities
- Aim to "provincialize" the cities file



# Bringing the Provinces Back In: Harper meets Harcourt

## Harper Government:

- Open Federalism and the Quebec Model
- Fiscal Balance and avoid messy inter-governmental collaborations

## Harcourt Report:

- Double Devolution and clarify government roles for transparency/accountability
- *"provinces have crucial strategic roles in reconciling policies and programs for places"*  
(Ch. 3)

# New Opportunities for Urban Social Development

## Provinces govern at the intersection of people and place policies

- Work with Ottawa on people policies (income security, health, immigration)
- Work with municipalities and community-based organizations on place policies (physical environment, labour markets, community care and inclusion)
- The jurisdiction, the tools, and now the fiscal capacity to invest in “strong” urban infrastructures (Clutterbuck and Novick, 2003)

## But not so fast ...

---

### An “urban lens” to anticipate the spatial impacts of provincial policies

- Fiscal Uploading: social Services, housing, health, welfare
- Horizontality: “a seamless continuum of supports”
- Engage Municipal governments: From “creatures of” to “partners with” provinces
- Engage community-based organizations in policy dialogue

# Cities: Laboratories of Social Innovation? (1)

## Density and diversity drive creativity today

Many local governance innovations that link people and place policies:

1. Task Force on Modernizing Income Security for Working-Age Adults (TCSA and St. Christopher House)
2. Vibrant Communities 14 city multi-sectoral poverty reduction project
3. UWGT Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force

# Cities: Laboratories of Social Innovation? (2)

---

1. Edmonton Social Enterprise Fund
2. Vancouver Inter-cultural Neighbourhood Houses
3. Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council

*“Government has much to learn from local practices in various Canadian cities that are leading us in innovative directions and could lead the world” (Dr. Leonie Sandercock, 2004).*

# Provinces: Laboratories of Policy Innovation?

## **Many promising provincial initiatives ...**

- Newfoundland: Community Accounts and Community Services Council
- Nova Scotia: Community Development Policy Framework
- Quebec: Anti-Poverty Law and Integrated Territorial Approach
- Ontario: Anti-poverty budget, Youth Challenge Fund, City of Toronto Act
- Manitoba: Community Economic Development Cabinet Committee
- Alberta: Family and Community Services Municipal Partnership

# Aligning the Federal Role

- **The Harcourt Report vision:**

*"It is time for a profound transformation in the federal government's role from being prescriptive, controlling and sectoral to becoming enabling, deft and integrated – and, where relevant, place-based".*

Meaning what ...?

# Two Federal “Value Adds”

- 1. An urban lens to its own people policies (income security) and place policies (physical infrastructure)
- 2. Convene for national policy learning and best practice knowledge transfer

*Ottawa has many community-driven projects underway in cities across the country -- Urban Aboriginal Strategy, Action for Neighbourhood Change, Inclusive Cities Canada, National Arts and Youth Demonstration Project – but these are not connected nor brought to scale.*



# Moving Forward: Linking and Learning

---

- The Council of the Federation: embed an urban and community policy stream
- Strengthen Intermediaries: community foundations, service organizations, think tanks, regional collaboratives
- FCM proposal: National Centre for Community Social Development
- European Examples: EU “Open Method of Coordination” and UK National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal

# Close with a big idea

---

- **“Innovative Federalism” for people and place policies where actors contribute their respective core competencies.**
- Provincial Governments: Policy Integration
- Federal government: National Connections
- Municipal governments: Local Planning
- Community organizations: Challenging Perspectives

Canadian multi-level governance matching the realities of an urban nation!