

October 11, 2002

## **Excluding Cities Harms Effective Child Care**

**Ottawa** – Canadian cities are trapped in a 19th century straightjacket when it comes to their relationships with other levels of government.

Their 21st century significance – as the places where 80% of Canadians live and work, and as the key drivers of the national economy – is not reflected in their political clout.

“This is much more than an issue of the appropriate distribution of political power,” says Jane Jenson, Director of CPRN’s Family Network. “It has a serious impact on the effectiveness of our social and economic policies, most of which take effect in urban communities.”

Jenson is the co-author with Rianne Mahon of *Bringing Cities to the Table: Child Care and Intergovernmental Relations* a new discussion paper released today by CPRN. The paper uses child care as the “lens” through which to present the case for a new relationship between *all three levels* of government.

“Canadian children can’t be divided into three parts, with federal needs, provincial needs and municipal needs,” says Jenson. “And there is no constitutional reason why the needs of the child and the community cannot come first. The proper mix of responsibilities between levels of government will follow.”

Jenson and Mahon argue that the most effective policies are those that balance considerations of equity, assured by a central government, with those of respect for diversity and local needs and conditions.

“This requires both centralized and decentralized components in social programs, and a lot of coordination among the various actors,” Jenson maintains. “Clearly, this can’t be achieved if cities are not at the table.”

The authors draw on experience both abroad and in Canada to demonstrate the feasibility of tripartite approaches to designing and delivering social services. They conclude that the barrier to a coordinated approach is not constitutional, but political.

“Trust among governments is key,” says Jenson. “Elected officials at all three levels ‘share’ the same voters. A real democracy demands that each takes into account the democratic commitments of the other.”

“Reconciling these different mandates of democracy is the challenge, but it’s a challenge we must meet if our cities are to provide the quality of life our future success depends on.”

- 30 -

CPRN is a national not-for-profit research institute whose mission is to create knowledge and lead public debate on social and economic issues important to the well-being of Canadians, in order to help build a more just, prosperous and caring society.

For more information on the publication, please contact:

Peter Puxley, Director, Public Affairs, Tel: (613) 567-7500 ext. 2019 – E-mail: [ppuxley@cprn.org](mailto:ppuxley@cprn.org)

To download a free copy of the report visit our home page: <http://www.cprn.org>

A weekly e-mail service, *e-network*, provides short updates on research projects or corporate activities. Visit [www.e-network.ca](http://www.e-network.ca) to subscribe.