More Money for Cities: Only the First Step

Friday, February 6, 2004 – The promise of more money for cities in the federal Throne Speech is an important step towards recognizing the gap between what we demand of cities and their capacity to deliver.

But it is only the first step.

It's now conventional wisdom that cities are key to our economic success. But we are only just beginning to understand how closely the economic vitality of cities is linked to their social health. In a recent article for *Plan Canada* (November 2003), based on her keynote address to the annual meeting of the Canadian Institute of Planners, CPRN's President, Judith Maxwell, argues that success in the new economy requires building what she calls "sustainable cities".

According to Maxwell, "a sustainable city strives for harmony in the development of civil society, economy, environment, culture and political institutions." Sustainable cities matter to the marginalized, because they provide efficient public transit, affordable housing, quality, affordable child care and other essential community services that facilitate participation in economic and political life. They matter to other citizens, too, for their level of public services and for their contribution to the community's economic appeal, its diversity, and cultural depth – in short, its overall quality of life.

The main threats to sustainable cities in Canada today come from; growing spatial segregation, as poverty becomes more concentrated *within* urban areas; a new economy wage structure with a growing gap between the participants and the excluded, and; new targeted social policies that undermine an escape from poverty. Overcoming these requires collaboration among social actors who share a common goal, but not a history of working together – governments, business, developers, educational institutions, civil society organizations and others.

To learn more about Maxwell's prescription, you can access a copy of her article, ***Sustainable Cities***, or download it, by clicking here.

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