



Library of Parliament Speaker Series

Public Policy for Cities:
The Role of the Federal Government

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What do we want for our cities?

- Innovation and inclusion
- The combination of steady economic growth and participation by all citizens in economic, social and political affairs, which leads to
- Gains in well being for all citizens -
- that is social sustainability:

“Striving for harmony in the development of civil society, economy, environment, culture and political institutions.” (Polèse)



Achieving Socially Sustainable Cities

- Cities have become more significant “policy spaces”
- Many actors have a role in achieving socially sustainable cities
 - Many local actors
 - Three orders of government
- No one actor has the capacity to deliver this outcome



Every City is Unique

- In its assets, challenges and opportunities
- Thus, there is no single policy or mix of policies which will achieve social sustainability
- Governments must therefore be flexible enough to adapt to place-specific needs



Senior Governments

- Pre-occupied by urban-rural inequalities
- Have difficulty in delivering place-specific policies
- Their mission is to treat all citizens equally, as best they can, and
- To re-distribute benefits in order to achieve greater equality
- Provinces in particular deal with only one or two cities (often with 50%+ population)



The Federal Perspective

- The only government which has dealings in all cities, large and small
- Has the opportunity to provide leadership in urban policy
- However, this is a multi-level leadership role, (similar to the leadership role Canada plays in the international sphere)
- No scope for unilateral decision-making, or even control of the agenda



Ottawa is Falling Short

- Not organized to be a leader in response to the needs of Canada's cities
- No vision for 'spatial' policies, and weak capacity to act coherently-- still trying to get the team to the starting gate (OECD)
- Contrast to work of Rural Secretariat
- What follows are my own ideas, based on research CPRN has produced so far in our Cities and Communities theme



Public Policy for Cities

- Two main categories: people policies and place policies
- People policies are dominant, but must be complemented by place-specific policies (Séguin et Divay)
- Standard business of the federal government
 - Support for citizens whether they are elderly, unemployed, families with children, etc and
 - Financial contributions to important provincial services -- health care and post secondary education



Place-Specific Policies

- The traditional model of regional economic development is not sufficiently place-specific
 - Recent turmoil over HRDC Grants and Contributions and the Sponsorship program have made it increasingly difficult for federal departments to deal effectively with city issues and tap local knowledge
- Ottawa needs
 - A new governance model, with new machinery, new ideas, new relationships, and new conceptions of accountability
 - To combine resources across departmental lines



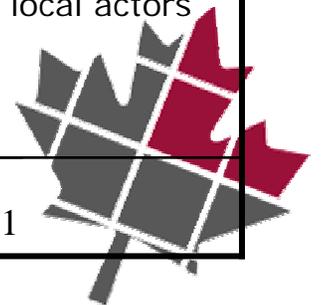
Distinct Challenges

- A bottom-up process, driven by multiple players at the local level (horizontal collaboration) and in the relationship with senior governments (vertical collaboration) (Bradford, 2003)
- As a partner in this bottom-up process, Ottawa needs a menu of activities where it can deliver
- Plus decentralized decision-making by local officers with delegated authority to make undertakings on behalf of the federal government



A Comparison of People and Place Policies

| Requirements | People Policies | Place Policies |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Role | Leadership | Collaboration, enabling, inspiring others |
| Decision-maker | Federal Cabinet or FPT process | One of several partners |
| Eligibility | Right of citizenship, based on family or employment status | Defined by a group of local actors or by local government with input from province |
| Establishing need | Every eligible person gets same treatment, based on criteria in regulations | Every place needs a different mix of federal contributions |
| Currency | Money | Land, technical assistance, regulation, capacity/building, credit, cash, etc. |
| Delivery | Cheque, direct deposit, or provincial service agent | Local agency, often an NGO, identified by local coalition |
| Accountability | Financial Administration Act or federal-provincial agreement | Monitor agreed indicators of results to be achieved, established by coalition of local actors responsible Demonstrate financial integrity (audited statements, etc) |
| Goal | Nation-wide equality | Socially sustainable communities |



Implications

- An urban lens combines people & place-specific policies
- The federal menu of possibilities could include:
 - Affordable housing
 - Immigrant settlement services
 - Literacy and language training
 - Child care and other “extended education” services
 - Home care and home supports for chronically ill
 - Support for self-employment and small businesses
 - Efficient infrastructure
 - Smart communities
 - R&D supports to foster research in industrial clusters
 - Youth justice and related training and employment opportunities
 - Services to urban Aboriginals



Implications (2)

- Departments need to pool resources and personnel to achieve socially sustainable cities
- This might be a single window, or at least a few efficient windows with clearly defined roles
- New contracting authorities and financial accountability methods
 - To deal with community-based organizations who deliver a wide range of essential social services



Implications (3)

- Local federal officials empowered to be key members of local coalitions
 - With discretion to choose from the menu of possibilities to build a package of programs and supports tailored to local need



Implications (4)

- A federal-provincial-municipal accord on measuring results
 - To establish a set of rules re local accountabilities
 - Where local actors define goals, assign responsibilities, and
 - Agree on a set of indicators to measure results over specified time frames of 3-5 years



Toward a New Governance Model

The next steps are:

Launch a federal-provincial-municipal process to

- Establish an agreement on multi-level, multilateral governance (based on the spirit of the Social Union Framework Agreement)
- Develop the appropriate federal machinery to be able to work effectively with individual cities
- Learn from existing collaborative initiatives and SCPI



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