Canadian Cities Still Playing Catch-up

Friday, June 11, 2004 – Cities are very much on the agenda in this federal election campaign. Neil Bradford, CPRN Research Fellow in Cities and Communities, and who teaches at Huron University College, University of Western Ontario, explains the logic behind the rhetoric in a recent presentation to the United Way Annual Conference on Community Building in Winnipeg.

In ***Community-Building: Seizing the Opportunity***, Bradford describes the apparent paradox of the importance of "place" in an era of instant mobile technologies that might be expected to make location irrelevant. But key ingredients of the global economy converge in cities – people, investment, ideas, policy and security. The quality of a country's urban environments determine its appeal to the crucial productive factors of the knowledge economy, and hence its global competitive success.

How does Canada fare in this respect? Bradford finds signs of innovation. But he also finds exclusion – concentrated poverty and negative neighbourhood effects – not the quality urban environments we need to build. He finds the reasons in the uncoordinated, multi-jurisdictional approach to cities, and under-resourced civil society organizations, the local vehicles so critical to adapting and delivering services.

Bradford sees Canada lagging behind. He outlines the elements that underpin a decade of urban regeneration and innovation in Europe and the United States. He lists the ingredients for what he calls "a new architecture for community-building" in Canada and the role governments, non-profit organizations and community coalitions must play in an effort to catch up to best practices abroad.

To access or download a copy of his presentation click here.

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