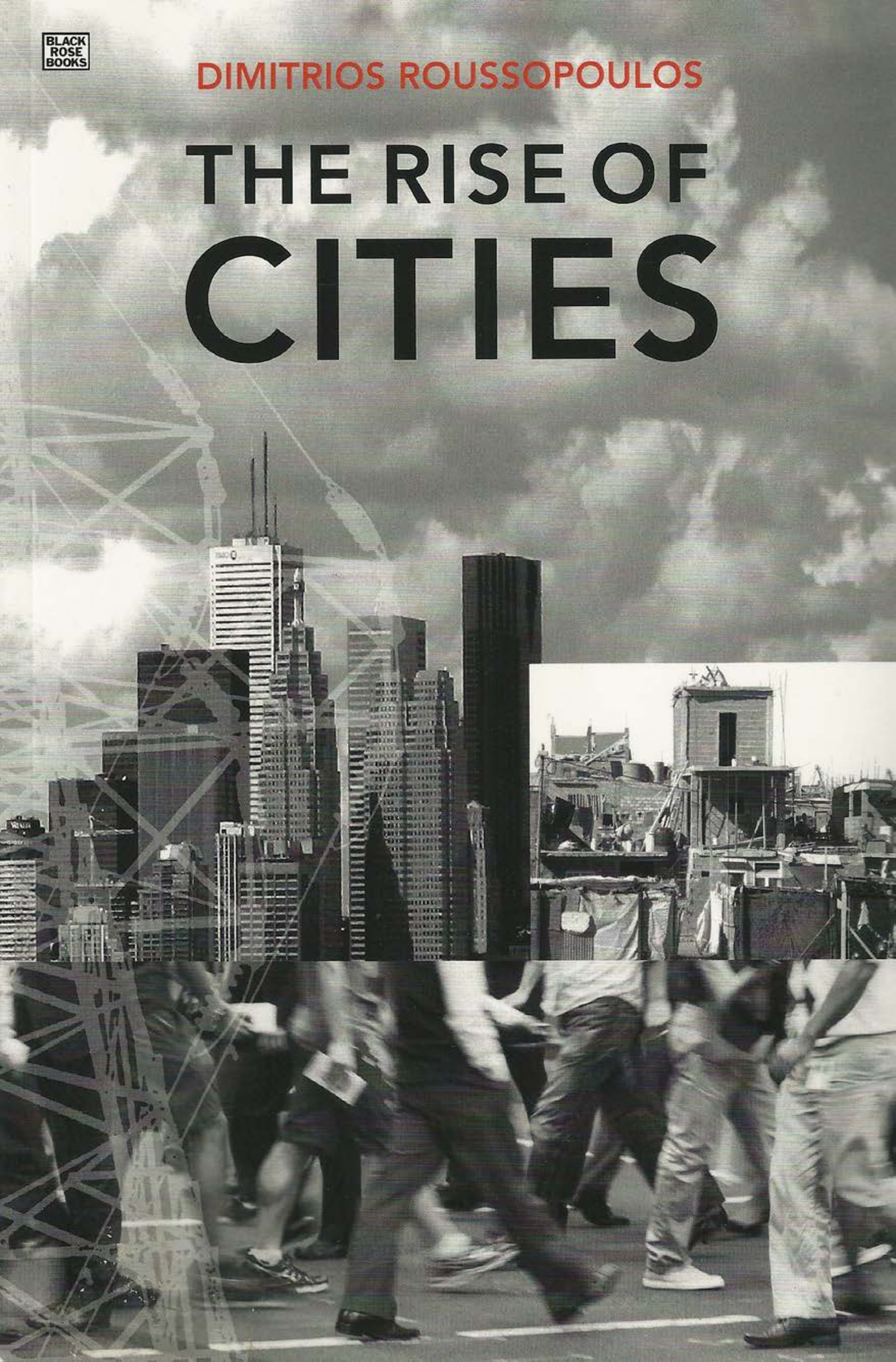
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DIMITRIOS ROUSSOPOULOS
THE RISE OF CITIES

THE RISE OF CITIES

DIMITRIOS ROUSSOPOULOS

THE RISE OF CITIES

Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Other Cities

Montreal • New York • London

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From the Rise of Cities to the Right to the City

Dimitrios Roussopoulos

Introduction

With the rise of cities, a major power shift is occurring this century across the planet in both economic and political terms. Many cities have suddenly become actors on both national and international levels. How has this come about?

Some Facts. According to the United Nations' 2014 revised *World Urbanization Prospects* (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs), for the first time ever, over half of today's increasingly global and interconnected world population, a totally of 54%, lives in urban areas. This follows on from the historic turning point in human civilisation, in 2007-2008, when it was announced that, for the first time, the majority of humanity lived in cities. The coming decades, the report goes on, will bring further profound changes to the size and spatial distribution of the world's population. The continuing urbanisation and growth of the world's population is projected to add 2.5 billion people to the urban population by 2050, with nearly 90% of the increase concentrated in Asia and Africa. At the same time, the percentage of the population living in urban areas is expected to increase, reaching 66% by 2050, whilst the global figures for rural population are soon expected to peak and gradually decline. What we are experiencing, in other words, is a titanic shift in the history of humanity. This development and its consequences will have a profound impact on all aspects of our civilisation and will determine the future of the entire planet and its ecosystems.

Today, the most urbanised regions include North America (82% living in urban areas in 2014), Latin America and the Caribbean (80%), and Europe (73%). In contrast, Africa and Asia remain on the whole mostly rural. All regions are expected to urbanise much further over the coming decades but Africa and Asia are urbanising faster than the other regions with 56% and 64%, respectively, of their populations projected to be urban by 2050. Just three countries—India, China and Nigeria—are expected to account for 37% of the total projected growth between 2014 and 2050.

Close to half of the world's urban dwellers reside in relatively small settlements of less than 500 000 inhabitants, while around one in eight live in one of the world's 28 megacities—a megacity being a city with more than 10 million inhabitants. By 2030,

the world is projected to have 41 megacities. Can one imagine that Tokyo, which is now, at 28 million, the world's largest city, and Delhi, with 25 million, are expected to be 37 million and 36 million respectively by 2030? Also notable is the fact that today's largest cities are concentrated in the Global South. These realities are key to the strategic considerations of social movements across the world.

Urbanisation

At least on the face of things, the process of urbanisation has been associated with many important economic and social transformations which have brought greater geographic mobility, lower human fertility, longer life expectancy and larger ageing populations. Cities have also been historical drivers of long-term development and poverty reduction. In both urban and rural areas, they concentrate regional economic activity, government, commerce and transportation, and provide crucial links with rural areas, between cities, and across borders. What's more, urban living is often associated with higher levels of literacy and education, better health, greater access to social services, and enhanced opportunities for cultural and political participation. All these features are, however, very uneven in many cities, and the contrast between cities is startling.

The rapid and unplanned growth of urbanisation threatens the natural environment in significant ways, especially when the necessary infrastructure is not developed or when policies are not implemented to ensure that possible benefits of the city are equitably distributed. Today, despite the comparative advantage of cities, urban areas exhibit greater inequality than rural areas, as well as generally greater disparities in comparison to each other. Hundreds of millions of the world's urban poor live in substandard conditions. In some cities, bureaucratic, unplanned or inadequately managed expansion leads to rapid urban sprawl, pollution, and environmental degradation, together with anti-ecological production and consumption of material goods. The current dominant forms of urban life are also the source of a great deal of alienation and inequity of social relations among genders, ethnic groups, lifestyles, generations and classes. Patriarchy, racialism and many other social forms of exploitation are still at the very core of current forms of urbanisation.

Urbanisation is inextricably connected to three dimensions required for a renewal of city life: namely ecological development that honestly faces life threatening problems; equitable social development and economic development that prioritise human rights, civil liberties and social justice.

As city-regions grow into metropolitan areas, they become increasingly important economic actors in their surrounding regions. Many of these city-regions play a determining role in so-called 'national economies'. Currently, the top 100 cities in the world are responsible for 38% of the total gross domestic product (GDP) while the top 800 cities, where a fifth of the world's population resides, account for 60% of global GDP. Jane Jacobs forecasted this development in her pioneering book, *The Economy of Cities*[1].

The Urban Economy

Authors of a report by the Global Agenda Council on Competitiveness, submitted to the World Economic Forum in August 2014, found that there are essentially six global

trends—or, as the report calls them, 'megatrends'—that are relevant to cities and their place in the world economy. These are: urbanisation, population increases and the status of the middle class; rising urban inequality; environmental problems; the rate of technological change; industrial development and prospects, including links with other urban economies; and, finally, what the report calls governance, or, more specifically, the role of citizens and the competence of the city's administration. Unsurprisingly, the report is largely fixated on an ideology of economic competitiveness, not unlike many similar reports produced by the World Economic Forum, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Canada, meanwhile, also reflects the growing importance of urban economies. For example, we know that 80% of Canadians live in cities, a figure that is increasing. Montréal, Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, and Edmonton account for more than 50% of the population and more than 50% of GDP. But the major problems these and other cities face are not being taken seriously by the power elite, with no change in sight. Meaningful considerations of these major problems are needed in the areas of public health, immigration, infrastructure, gainful employment, fair housing, public transit, the domination of the private automobile, green spaces, human rights and democratic citizen participation in civic life since they are largely off the current urban and social governance agenda in Canada. During national elections, these issues are rarely electoral campaigning talking points or up for serious debate.

Nevertheless, more than one research report has concluded that the 21st century will not be dominated by the US or China, Brazil or India, but by the City, or at least by key global cities. In a world that increasingly appears ungovernable, cities—not nation-States—are the islands of governance on which the future world order rests. If this future is upon us now, the road ahead is full of very dangerous obstacles.

The Historical Roots of Cities

Where did cities come from? A better understanding of the process that led to their formation and an examination of them in their earliest periods will provide insights into their achievements and failures.

Urbanisation began around the Bronze Age (roughly 3500-1200 BCE). New skills and technologies and a shift from hunter-gatherer to agrarian and trade-based societies led to clusters of civilisation focused on these trades and acting as resource hubs. Catal Huyuk (now in southeastern Turkey) was an early example of these cities[2]. Many factors contributed to some cities enduring while others entirely ceased to exist. Resources, location of trade routes, environmental degradation, environmental disasters, religion, and political and social structures were significant factors that influenced their destinies. What we want to consider is how those ancient cities were developed and managed and what certain cities shared that contributed to their survival.

Culture is usually referred to as urban, but when considering the overall span of human society, urbanisation is relatively recent. The developments of settled life, agriculture, and civilisation have all taken place within the past 13 000 years. As early as 6 000 BCE, the settlement of Catal Huyuk had a population of between 4 000 and 7 000 people, most of whom subsisted mainly on agriculture. Through important developments such as the domestication of plants and animals and the creation of pottery and

other crafts, the growth of agricultural towns and villages continued to develop, laying the groundwork for the eventual rise of cities.

It was during the fourth millennium BCE that cities became important centres for humankind, an 'urban revolution' that was centered on the Middle East and particularly Mesopotamia. During this time, this region's population growth concentrated into urban centres as growing cities and absorbed the neighbouring villages and towns. The population of the then largest city, Uruk, grew from around 10 000 to 50 000 over the millennium. Large populations, as we know them today, are not the only criteria for urbanism and such early Mesopotamian cities exhibited many other urbanist characteristics, as those noted below.

In 1950, the archaeologist Gordon Childe selected ten characteristics that he felt distinguished a civilisation from other kinds of societies:

1. Urban settlements
2. The specialisation of labour beyond agriculture
3. A system of taxation
4. A class structure with a ruling class
5. Governing bodies
6. Monumental architecture
7. Monumental artwork
8. Long-distance trade
9. Writing
10. Some scientific knowledge (basic arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy)[3]

The concentration of people into urban centres led to more effective trade and agriculture. A food surplus enabled part of the population of these early cities to devote their time to non-agrarian pursuits, such as art, science, crafts, government and religion. The large population of cities provided the human skills and resources needed for large-scale building projects, such as temples and fortification.

Cities also required a more complex system of government, leading to the emergence of bureaucracy, a priestly class, a military and slavery, as well as the creation of early city-States. We can find ample analyses of the rise of this stratification in the works of Peter Kropotkin, Murray Bookchin, Patrick Geddes, Lewis Mumford, Pierre Clastres and others.

As the cities of this region grew, they expanded their areas of influence over neighbouring towns and villages. By 2700 BCE, 80% of the population in southern Mesopotamia lived in cities. By 2500 BCE, most of these cities counted at least 20 000 to 30 000 people, with the largest at roughly 50 000. Eventually, the cities began to compete for resources and to come into conflict with each other, leading to wars of conquest and the first empires[4].

Global Cities

From before the Common Era through to the contemporary era and into the 21st century, another massive economic and political development with major social and

cultural implications occurred: the emergence of the era of global cities. In the context of the historical trajectory of cities, this development signifies the shift that has led to the majority of humanity now living in cities.

Today the neoliberal capitalist model is considered both by many left-wing scholars and disaffected left-of-centre liberals to be failing. One need only read *Harper's* and *The Atlantic*, various UN reports, *The Guardian* newspaper, *Le Monde* and *Le Monde diplomatique*. The bite of current economic crises and their oscillations continue to be felt as the State rushes to prop up failing banks, other financial institutions and key industries. Amidst all this, we see the incredible rise of global cities reshaping the world economy and assuming the status of major actors.

Global cities are part of the field of studies on globalisation, a major field in research that began in the 1980s and 1990s. From such a new field, two schools of thought emerged.

The keen globalists concentrated around the World Economic Forum, on the one hand, were convinced that the world was being fundamentally transformed. Some predicted the end of the Nation-State, of national cultures and identities, and of the capitalism of the past. Meanwhile, the other school, the sceptics, argued that globalisation was nothing new. The way they saw it, capitalism has been globalising since its early days; globalisation was simply the prevailing business as usual. In the end, the general consensus was that the world stage has indeed changed, but that some of its former features remain the same.

The differences between these positions, however, are complicated and important. The specifics of globalisation require a closer look at the actual distribution of power. Although, the old arrangements of nation-States still exist on paper, they have suffered huge economic blows as the 500 top multi-national corporations have increased their power and influence, aided by various international 'free-trade' agreements. Moreover, capitalism, now distributed across the globe, nevertheless faces a persistent unevenness of development as worldwide poverty while the powerlessness of the majority of humanity remains undeniably vast in scale and profound in roots.

It was John Friedman and Saskia Sassen who put forward the original thesis on global cities. In her 2001 work *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*[5], Sassen chronicles how three cities became command centres for the global economy, and in the process, underwent a series of massive and correlated changes. What distinguished Sassen's theoretical framework is her emphasis on the formation of cross-border dynamics through which these cities and the growing number of other global cities began to form strategic multi-national networks. The result, as such theoretical studies have argued, was the creation of a new worldwide division of labour.

The view of a deterritorialised world in which nation-State imperialism remains in place implies recognition that the importance of space, alongside the importance of global flows of capital, is still significant. In both instances, cities now hold massive sway.

The organisation of the global economy began to emerge on the basis of function rather than territory. Rather than flows being channelled by States for their needs and ends, economic movements of capital are now channelled via trade through world markets. In turn, global cities have overtaken previous routes as conduits of trade and

commerce. These functions are now generated and directed by cities and metropolises and the economic interests therein.

Beyond the few cities considered global cities, many other cities have undergone similar transitions, developing into nodes of capitalism some of which have strategic specialisation for the world economy. Via these nodes, contemporary capitalism has found an important solution to its problem of global command and control, a fact often openly acknowledged during annual meetings of the World Economic Forum. These nodes bring together different elements then combined in production. In many ways, they can be seen as the warehouses into which all the neoliberal plunder goes, and from which it is re-divided among the plunderers. The structure of cities is often determined by how they are integrated into the world economy, with many cities or regions having large clusters of particular economic activities[6].

Global cities, meanwhile, have become sites of concentration and coordination of resources and information drawn from across the world. They also become specialised into 'cyber-cities', and 'creative cities', as well as other buzzword cities. They represent a particular possession of a relevant sector of capital beyond the range and scope of local governments. Skyscrapers, high-rise office buildings and advertising billboards promote massive consumption. Meanwhile, working people are excluded from all-important ongoing decision-making, as are minorities and the poor, whose visibility is kept at a minimum. Cities are now regarded as corporations in their own right, whereas in the past they were manufacturing factories. The metaphors have changed.

Under such conditions, power within global cities is mainly held by multi-national capitalist corporations and their directors, allies in shaping local growth coalitions. We recognise that formal government and electors may be officially sovereign, but, in fact, the boards of trade, the chambers of commerce and the like, have great influence, major clout, and institutional weight. When there is a clash of interests between the State and multi-national corporate actors in global cities, the latter often prevails simply because more and more power is moving from the territorial to the functional—that is, to the nuts and bolts of the economy.

The deregulation of finance capitalism and the intensification of neoliberalism have provided global investors with huge amounts of capital to invest, empowering them to demand extensive concessions in return for their investment; such corporate investors have become, more than ever, major local power blocs, including in cities.

But as financial power flows through cities, it can still be harnessed by metropolitan governments—if a political will to do so is present. First and foremost, however, the enactment of such a move requires considerable citizen support. In the end, much of an urban economy is based on urban real estate, the workforce, and the public indulgence of what corporations can or cannot demand. High-urban communities, therefore, still have much flexibility with regard to what is politically possible within their economies. Although, many Nation-States have decentralised some important powers and delegated them to city and regional governments, in many ways cities have less independence than before. It is rare that city governments defy neoliberalism; rather, they compete to ascend the global ladders of competitiveness and attractiveness, a competition that imposes an increasingly entrenched homogeneity.

The political power elite and its bureaucracy, local and/or regional, benefit from

global city formations by extracting rents. They make money by selling or renting urban land and collecting taxes on high land prices. Zoning is an area of governance entirely within municipal responsibilities, generally speaking. Sometimes, they will seize vast amounts of land from poor people in various neighbourhoods to sell it to corporations. Corruption, needless to say, is particularly endemic to global cities in particular. There is a very close link between global cities and the very basis of contemporary capitalism. Accumulation has returned to its former centrality in economic growth and development.

The current crop of global cities is a recent one, as are all the twists and turns of today's urban capitalist investments. And this trend is in direct contradiction with the environment. The global thrust of these cities places the wishes of the 1% above real social needs. Our society is in deep crisis, which is in turn reflected in our attitude toward and relationship with nature. What is put aside by the power elite is forward-thinking urban planning and urban ecology, as well as the entire relationship of the city toward nature (the bioregion and its ecosystems).

People, meanwhile, can't afford fair housing within these cities, a direct result of their global city status. But corporations need working people. So millions living outside these cities make the daily trek every day by automobile, bus, subway, train and bicycle to their workplace. Air pollution and congestion result. Public health deteriorates and health services skyrocket in costs, weighing heavily on the public treasury. Other services, from education to social services, decline. Keeping the poor at bay costs more and more, while repression also adds to rising costs. The police in such cities are amongst the highest paid members of the city's bureaucracy, a fact which speaks volumes. Personal debt, on the other hand, continues to rise and is reaching an unprecedented scale. The evidence of alienation, dispossession, impoverishment, climate change, and global discontent is everywhere. Social exclusion, precarity and inequality are tensions expressed in private as well as public spheres. Hence an emphasis on mass entertainment seeks to distract attention from these conditions and everywhere in cities the spectacle is dominant on the urban calendar.

All cities, in addition to global cities, exhibit sharp income polarisation. In many respects, cities have historically tended to need, to some degree, a further exploited class to provide subsidiary services and cheap labour. But the power elite also fear them as a source of unrest and disruption. Global cities pull in more of the globally excluded than the power elite are comfortable with, because of the way they concentrate money and resources in the coffers of the 1%.

The Right to the City

What then has been the popular response to this situation? The essential question to raise is: 'To whom should the city belong?'

The concept of the 'Right to the City' was first presented by the theorist Henri Lefebvre in Paris immediately after the general strike of May 1968. Cities have always been created largely to serve the formation of Capital and State; on the other hand, they have always been contested by their citizens and their marginalised who, in doing so, have sought a quality of life that requires a political and economic rearrangement of the city as a whole. Lefebvre insisted that politics, especially radical politics, must

be rooted in the problems of everyday life in its agenda of urban transformation.

To date, both the State and Capital still have the upper hand. Yet urban struggles continue to be waged by the incursions of protesters, such as the Occupy movement and the global summit protests that take place in the hearts of global cities. Another pioneer thinker and theorist, David Harvey, recently published a book, titled 'Rebel Cities', in which he identifies how the most significant historical and recent uprisings have been urban-based, elaborating the political economy explanations for this.

Urban rebellions continue to be waged in daily struggles in the ghettos and neighbourhoods in both the Global North and South. Such marginalised areas are in many ways the colonies of global cities, often on the periphery, underserved and forgotten, teeming with unemployment and frustration, and often populated by migrants and the poor. As sites of rebellion, they can become something like autonomous zones off-limits to the police.

Protests, strikes, revolts and 'terror' attacks are not the only disruptive factors that impact the economies of cities. Even a major fire, road accident or railway derailment can create a blockage. A natural disaster or a disruption of supplies, from afar or nearby can impede high-speed economic flows with far-reaching, chaotic effects. These factors are also significant over and above the economic crises which, since the 1980s, have regularly occurred. An obsession with risk-management has emerged to deal with the insecurity arising from these vulnerabilities. Yet it is often not enough to head off problems, whether foreseen or not unforeseen. The system just doesn't have the slack to handle too many disruptions, not even small disruptions. The power structure, as it is so concentrated at its base, is more vulnerable than we choose to imagine.

This is why global cities continue to suffer shocks from events like the ongoing financial crisis in addition to those listed above, shocks which are the Achilles heel of the urban power structure and, in effect, the points at which the neoliberal regime can be effectively challenged.

The concept of the 'right to the city' arose during the urban upheavals of 1968; following this, Manuel Castells, in 1972, and David Harvey, in 1973, revolutionised the study of urbanisation and initiated a period of very important scholarship. Their special achievement was to link city formation processes (urbanisation) to the larger historical movement of capital. Henceforth the city was no longer to be interpreted as a product of 'urbanism', subject to natural forces inherent in the dynamics of population and space, subject to natural forces such as water sources, natural defensive structures or trade routes; instead, in these new critical analyses of urban history, cities came to be viewed instead as a product of specific social forces set in motion by capitalism. Class conflict thus became central to the new view of how cities evolved. After several years, the study of cities became directly linked to the world economy. This analysis has since gained attention among urban movements, activists, NGOs, and other scholars. As a body of knowledge, it continues to both grow and deepen as it has taken an important place in the future of our understanding of the urban question.

This surge in interest in a class critique of cities, and the connected political economy issues, is connected with mounting urban problems which are as yet unresolved. The status quo is very much tied into the neoliberal agenda, the main drivers of which involve

all sorts of restructuring and dismantling of what previously had been a more caring society largely cultivated in the 1950s and 1960s.The more recent measures, instituted largely in the 1970s and 1980s, have increased inequality with regard to the distribution of wealth and resources, resulting in the deterioration of the working and living conditions of those on the lower rungs of society, and have exposed urban populations to new vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the most recent crisis, which is the culmination of the unending unfolding of global economic crises since the early 1970s, has brought forth new mass social and political activity the outcome borne of discontent and an exasperation with social polarisation. The resulting marginalisation of segments of the population on an economic or social basis and the consolidation of a society which favours financial powers further erodes the political influence of a large part of the population and increase the sense of powerlessness that popular cynicism is often predicated on. In this situation, it is obvious that the prevailing political systems in numerous countries now lack the legitimacy they once had.

This is why now is the time to debate the alternatives that have emerged at various scales and which address issues of social equity, human rights, gender equality, and democracy. Without a doubt, if we are to have positive social change, ongoing exploitation and domination in our urban society must not only be openly acknowledged but also confronted. Next, we must critically examine the claims and values of the new urban movements so that they are capable of better representing the pluralities of society, vying for democratic cities with wholly-inclusive citizen participation. Through the centuries, we have imagined such a society, yet we have not yet realised all of its fundamental principles. Thus, to respond to the multiple challenges and needs that confront the contemporary city, while facing reality squarely, we must bring together citizens to kick-start more urban movements with such a vision.

The essays presented in this book offer the opportunity to expand our knowledge about the conditions prevailing in the past, present and possible future. They also suggest strategies and tools which are useful for translating these insights into both social and physical projects and for assessing our progress as, based on solid values and through trial and error, we seek concrete solutions and new possibilities for better cities.

The City Contested

There is a great deal of evidence through research by scholars, worldwide, showing neoliberalism's uneven impact; inequalities in urban areas are spreading under the impact of a globalised world economy, although with different determinants in developing and industrialised countries. As vulnerability and exclusion from access to basic goods and urban services seem to be worsening in the cities of the Global South, urban areas in the North are exposed to new socio-economic challenges. We witness this through poverty, socio-spatial segregation, the destruction of common heritage sites and historically working-class neighbourhoods, and the exclusion of growing sectors of the population from the economic and social opportunities that the city should offer.

The worldwide shock and catastrophic consequences of some of the latest crises further demonstrate the need for such an analysis of this phase of capitalism and its

entanglement with urbanisation. The beginning of the 2007-2008 economic crisis can be traced to the sub-prime mortgage and housing asset crisis in the US, provoking despair among low-income and middle-income households across the US. Eventually reaching a near-global scale, the harmful effects of the crisis have been increased in the following ways: by the millions of people around the world losing their homes due to their incapacity to meet mortgage payments; increasing unemployment and worsening working conditions; the growth of poverty and famine, adversely affecting populations' health and life expectancy; and further cuts to social aid.

The globalisation of markets, deregulation of capital flows and minimisation of State control over the financial sector on the one hand, and the deregulation of urban planning and the incorporation of real estate rental income into the financial circuit on the other hand, have had tremendous repercussions for cities by increasingly tying urban development and management to various market mechanisms and privileged economic interests. The close link that emerged between general profit gains and real estate profit gains created a wave of urbanisation dictated by finance capitalism rather than the needs of the population, with heavy consequences for the existing urban structures. In Italian cities like Milan, Naples, even Venice, for example, the housing shortage of the already densely-built city led to urban sprawl, increased housing prices and land purchases, degraded the territory, and eventually occasioned economic depression instead of revitalization, with resources, meanwhile, squandered on infrastructural projects of doubtful value and utility.

Such transformation exemplifies how cities are essentially pawns serving larger economic power moves. An engine of economic growth was and is focused on consumerism, the flip side of being a victim of decisions taken elsewhere than in mainstream political assemblies. The resulting fragmentation is witnessed in the infinity of enclosures, ghettos, enclaves that characterise it, undermining the meaning and essence of the city itself. The gentrification of neighbourhoods along with forms of land speculation contribute to a process of impoverishment that no longer merely affects marginal groups and the poor but generally the quality of life. The domination of our cities by more economically privileged lifestyles, employment and consumption habits seems to damage life, particularly for the vulnerable—who are constantly struggling to survive amidst starker realities—instead of enriching the meaning and purpose of cities and citizenship.

Nevertheless, contradictory and conflicting processes are always at work. First, neoliberal capitalism, being a dialectic process, destroyed the Keynesian mechanisms that were in place for 50 years until the 1970s. The modified policies, shepherded by institutions and agreements, maximised entrepreneurial freedoms and an institutional framework characterised by private property rights, free markets and free trade. The socio-spatial landscape of urbanisation under this brand of capitalism along with its implications for human society has impacted on the entirety of society.

The public discourse on the city hinges, on the one hand, on rhetoric of entrepreneurship, competitiveness, revitalisation, and the construction of a 'new' city; within this context, buildings designed by famous architects, mega-events like international sports competitions and festivals, and big infrastructure projects function as powerful symbols that celebrate a modernist metanarrative of techno-optimism, of continuous

improvement, of 'bigger and better'. However, on the other hand, there is the production of an alarmist representation of the city as dangerous and chaotic, stigmatising urban riots and legitimising heavy security policies, surveillance, division, by manipulation, consumerism, favouritism, and the banishing of those who are considered sources of fear, danger or insalubrity. The responses to all this has created gated enclaves and other areas of selective, socially-reproduced forms from which the Other (such as the poor, homeless, mentally ill and migrants) are excluded. Such 'undesirables' are instead relegated to specific parts of town, places with high concentrations of discomfort, where environmental conditions, culture and the provision of services are generally worse than other parts of town. This strategy includes the militarisation of urban areas, control through police security and even checkpoints, thus which paints many aspects of urban life by an image of a 'battlefield', especially in cities of the Global South.

Urban conflicts thus become inevitable and different aspirations spark different actions to contest the system, often aggressively; although these actions may be confined to small initiatives, sometimes in peripheral parts of the world, and may be unable to gather momentum or credibility, these are nevertheless a reflection of general indignation amongst a significant segment of the citizenry. Moreover. However, in recent times, the aggravation of urban contractions has stimulated the insurgence of new social movements or the revitalisation of older ones, kindling fresher debates about the new and different solutions to transform our decaying urban worlds.

It is within this context that the 'Right to the City' consciousness has been increasingly investigated in order to capture the nature of the conflicts amidst different aspirations and to build toward fundamental social change that involves the redistribution of material, social, political, cultural, and symbolic resources according to the principles of democracy, human rights, equality, recognition of differences, and inclusiveness, all within a framework of social justice[7]. One need only look at the work of the Global Platform of the Right to the City coalition, its support network of social movements, and its Action Plan[8]. However, the actions and proposals invoked in the name of the 'Right to the City' may not incorporate the theoretical and material implications of Henri Lefebvre's original theory. Moreover, the new urban movements may not all contest the every-present neoliberal market or the dominant modes of actions of the State. But it is the observations and analyses of the contributors to this book that popular movements tend to invoke radical changes and confront the status quo, in particular the socio-economic capitalist system, by invoking different traditions, in economics and economic development, which are not so driven by the standard market mechanisms.

Meanwhile, the public discourses of governments, mainstream international NGOs, and the circles of influence tend to co-opt the 'Right to the City' as a slogan for reformism or for legitimising weak forms of public consultation in the arena of urban governance, or exaggerating the systemic implications of their proposed policies and urban programs. There is no doubt that discourses around the concept of 'the Right to the City' itself has become a 'contested territory' where competing conceptions close to Lefebvre's meaning of 'the Right to the City' were silenced, as they were during the debate in Brazil, in favour of those put forth by actors with less radical perspectives.

From Slogan to Manifesto: The Rise of The 'Right to the City'

The various Charters that articulated the relationship between human rights and the city—for example, the European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City, and the World Charter—as well as other documents released at events like the World Social Forum (WSF) and the European Social Forum, represent the idea of the 'Right to the City'. This coalesced into a political manifesto, invoking radical transformation, through social and political actions, and challenging the privileges and power of global neoliberalism. These documents, which were presented at several Social Forums, reflect the deep discontent of people, increasingly disenfranchised and marginalised, against inequalities and social exclusion—a call for true citizenship and democratic participation of citizens in decision-making processes.

The first draft of the World Charter for the Human Right to the City was presented at the 6th Conference on Human Rights in Brazil in 2001, and collectively authored at a seminar at the 2002 World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre. Two previous documents appeared to have influenced the proposal for the European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City, which was presented at Saint-Denis, France in 2000, and the Treaty for Democratic, Equitable and Sustainable Cities, presented in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The second World Charter for the Human Right to the City was released in 2004 at the Social Forum of the Americas, subsequently presented at the UN's World Urban Forum in 2004 and later discussed in Porto Alegre, Brazil, during the WSF in 2005.

During the European Social Forum in 2010, a document containing principles and actions that became the European Charter of the Rights to the City was drafted by a group of urban movements, associations, activists, researchers and unionists with the aim of creating a permanent urban forum for affirming a worldwide 'right to the city'. The petitioners considered it essential to: stop evictions of city people from their homes, public spaces and neighbourhoods; safeguard labour rights; and oppose initiatives intent on the privatisation of public goods, services and spaces. Accordingly, a number of principles were developed along these lines.

In the case of the World Urban Forum (WUF), an official United Nations initiative, the 'right to the city' assumed a more ambiguous definition, reflecting the broader range of actors and mandates involved in the events. In 2010, the WUF was titled 'The Right to the City—Bridging the Urban Divide', which was less of a manifesto for revolutionary change and more of a slogan for mitigating the adverse effects of prevailing urban planning and governance frameworks which would incorporate social equity and democratic participation.

This forum was the result of a process started in 2005, when the International Science Council hosted a debate organised by UNESCO and UN-Habitat on 'Urban Policies and the Right to the City'. Both agencies interpreted the 'right to the city' as a rights-based approach to pursuing development in order to distribute the benefits of and ensuring equal participation in the economic development process. The concept was put forward in support to the Millennium Development Goals, which state that the international community is engaged in the effort to strengthen respect for international human rights and fundamental freedom. The 'right to the city' was embraced because it was considered

necessary to shift from a needs-based approach to a rights-based approach in order to ensure the redistribution of development gains,which in turn enhance democratic participation in the decision-making process, fully upholding urban people's fundamental rights and liberties, and to promote inclusiveness in the city.

The outcome of the 2005 debates were presented at the Vancouver WUF in 2006, where ideas, policies and practices promoting the 'right to the city' were shared and discussed among city mayors, policy makers, international organisations, academics, professionals from various fields, and NGOs. An interesting and important workshop on the Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities took place there. In a packed room, Montréal's Mayor Gérald Tremblay made a presentation, assisted by two members of Montréal Task Force on Municipal Democracy, which created the Charter. This event was followed by a joint effort by the UNESCO stand at the Forum and a wide distribution of the Montréal Charter in several languages took place. Soon thereafter, Mexico City and South Korean city Gwangju also adopted similar city charters.

Finally, the concept landed at the official UN-sponsored Rio WUF in 2010. Sadly, the discourse on the city that emerged from the official 'dialogues' was, in spite of interesting inputs, considered unsatisfactory—a missed opportunity to advance that agenda. The radical content of the concept of the original theory of Lefebvre was lost in order to achieve a broad consensus among the participants. The criticism of the capitalist order implied in Lefebvre's writings was dismissed and reduced to the acknowledgement of systemic distress and issues without mentioning their causes. The emphasis was on social inclusion, urban democracy and the satisfaction of individual rights, though still within a structurally unequal system.

In parallel, a more inclusive Urban Social Forum, organised by the social movements of Rio and Brazil generally, took place in the same city and was regarded as an alternative to the WUF. While it included some outstanding radicals, including David Harvey, Peter Marcuse, myself and other similarly-oriented radicals, its interaction with the official forum was limited.

An increasing portion of urban research, meanwhile, is revisiting the concept of the 'right to the city' which continues to be a working slogan and political ideal for urban social movements. It also inspires a comprehensive alternative socio-political project.

Before analysing some of these reflections, it is vital to recall Henri Lefebvre's meaning of the 'right to the city'. Two principles form the basis of his concept. First, the city remains a work in progress, a projection of society as a complex ensemble and meeting place of systems of objects, values and differences always in the midst of continual transformation and revision. David Harvey, whose contribution to the 'right to the city' dates back to the early 1970s, recently observed that the 'right to the city' is 'the right to change ourselves by changing the city'[9]. This entails imagining and institutionalising a new mode of urbanisation and reproduction of daily life, new socio-ecological and politico-economic relationships and, more generally, the generation of alternative ways of living together and of arranging our lives in space, on the planet and in our neighbourhoods. Harvey calls for a 'dialectical utopianism' capable of overcoming current socio-ecological forms imposed by the uncontrolled capital accumulation, class privileges, and gross inequalities of politico-economic power and overthrowing the physical and institutional structures that capitalism produces.

Second, all urban people should participate in the City's construction, directly and indirectly, emphasising the space of everyday life as a site of resistance. Lefebvre's exhortation is to 'radically rethink the social relation of capitalism, the spatial structure of the city and the assumptions of liberal democracy'[10]. This second principle insists that those who live in cities should play a central role in any decisions that contribute to the production of urban space. But it is crucial to note that he speaks neither of national citizens nor of residents with a street address nor of adults over the age of eighteen but of all people living out the routine of city life. He therefore establishes an egalitarian framework: all people, regardless of their other rights and titles (passports, property ownership, etc.) have an equal right to be part of the city, to participate democratically and creatively in this great collective project. Such a latter principle of universal municipal citizenship is, in fact, central to the Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities.

It is important to recall that Lefebvre's 'right to the city' anticipated the struggle for adequate housing and public services taking place in many Western countries in the 1960s and 1970s. These decades were dominated by social, labour union, and student movements, and activism involving squatting, rent striking and creating tenant unions, fighting for social housing struggles, campaigning for free public transport, and feminists reclaiming the street. Such movements and actions pointed to the birth of an alternative civil society in the urban core and brought to public attention issues such as identity politics, rights of difference, and social justice, to name just a few, bolstering the relevance of applying spatial and geographical principles in urban and regional planning. Evidently, his ideas had a hungry audience and so upon his several visits to Montréal, for example, he gave his lectures to packed university rooms.

World Charter for the Right to the City

The discussions among urban movements and organisations began at the first World Social Forum (2001) in Porto Alegre, Brazil on how to link and confront the major challenges facing society amid the current aggressive forms of urbanisation, sources of social and environmental deterioration, and unfettered neoliberal capitalism. Since that meeting, efforts have been made to bring together a wide range of local, regional and international actors to work toward a World Charter for the Right to the City and an action plan for its implementation. This coalition has declared its commitment to the social struggle for just, democratic, humane and sustainable cities. Indeed, its articulation broadens the traditional focus on improvement of quality of life issues concerning the need for housing as well as the neighbourhood to encompass quality of life on the scale of the city and its rural surroundings. Such a charter which would be a means of protecting people who live in both cities and regions affected by contemporary forms of urbanisation, the implication of which is to initiate a new and effective way of promoting, respecting, defending and fulfilling the civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights guaranteed by local, regional and international human rights instruments.

From the presentation of the first draft of the World Charter for the Right to the City at the Social Forum of the Americas in Quito in July of 2004, it has evolved through further discussions at the WSF in Barcelona in October 2004 and the WSF in

Porto Alegre in January 2005. A revised document was finalised in Barcelona in September 2005, and an action plan for its implementation has been completed and is being advanced.

Today the Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C) is an international network supported by over 100 civil society organisations, social movements, academic institutions, local governments, public sector agencies, foundations, and international organisations that seek to create an international movement to campaign for the recognition and implementation of the aforementioned values and principles of the Global Platform. At the heart of this thrust forward is a challenge to the commodification of urban land and an insistence on recognition of the social, function of land not privately owned (especially urban land) and property. Regions and cities have already endorsed some of these principles and officially reframed urban legislation nationally, such as in Brazil and Ecuador, and at the city level, in Montréal, Mexico City and Gwangju.

Additionally, a critical open letter by the coalition[11] was addressed to the 3rd UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Human Settlements, calling for UN-Habitat to include the 'right to the city' as a cornerstone of the New Urban Agenda. 'It is essential to ensure', the letter declared, 'the participation of civil society organisations and local governments—on an equal basis with respect to the other actors—as key partners in the definition and implementation of the New Urban Agenda'. This text was circulated in Barcelona at a thematic UN preparatory conference for Habitat III In April 2016 at which I spoke.

In Canada

In major cities across Canada, such discussions and debates as those mentioned above are hardly taking place. The social forum process is not a part of the consciousness of reformers, activists nor is it on the agenda of most social movements. Since 2013-2014, however, there have been some improvements. Before this, several large delegations from Québec attended the WSF in various parts of the world, the last ones having taken place in Tunis in 2013 and 2015, where some 50 000 activists from more that 4 000 social movements participated. In Quebec, there have been two social forums held to date, where some 5 000 activists and observers participated, while smaller forums have taken place in Toronto and Winnipeg, among others. In August 2014, the first pan-Canadian social forum, the People's Social Forum, took place in Ottawa, finally, with some 6 000 activists in attendance. And in 2016, a WSF is being attempted in Montréal.

In the US, however, the social forum process is better known. From Boston to the West Coast, there have been a number of urban fora, as well as two major countrywide social forums. The first of these took place in Atlanta, Georgia, with some 10 000 from across the country attending, while the second was held in Detroit, with some 20 000 activists in attendance from across the US. There is also an urban-based alliance of Right to the City activists in New York City and in other cities. No such network exists in Canada.

So on the whole, the body of analysis on the matter, some of which is presented here, has a long way to go in Canada. However attempts to trigger both the discussion and the implied action have not ceased, and the goal of this book, is to make a contribution to this continued effort.

Facing Reality

In 1982, I edited and Black Rose Books published *The City and Radical Social Change*, which was significant in covering a number of important questions, such as: the new urbanism, housing, public transportation, urban politics, the Montréal economy, neighbourhood councils, high-rises, and super profits[12]. Its sweeping introduction first dealt with the main dimensions of the growing urban crisis, while its second half dealt with history and reality of radical urban politics in Montréal. The combination and interaction between these two focuses added to the context of the others essays. This introduction continues to be relevant and important today, even though we, as radical activists, have moved beyond its early 1980s setting. It identifies many of the same urban problems we face today. The list is long, but one thing is clear: none of these problems have been improved upon. On the contrary, all of them have been aggravated by the intensifying wave of urbanisation.

The State, whether at the federal or provincial or the government at the local level, has been shown to be impotent, and has proven capable of making only the most makeshift repairs to a crumbling system. Social tensions continue unabated, with racial outbursts in Vancouver, Toronto and Montréal reported by the mass media, while police forces continue to expand and become more aggressive. The building of expressways costs billions while they continue to poison the air, destroy neighbourhoods, and waste energy. Montréal, for one, is in the midst of the construction of a multi-billion-dollar expressway in and out of the city's west end, the infamous Turcot (Montréal at the Crossroads, Gauthier, Jaeger, Prince, eds. 2009). Subsidised housing has enriched construction companies and banks, while urban renewal has become a factor in the growth of suburbs; it only plays a minor role in urban planning and in offering affordable housing for low-income people. The widely-cultivated worship of the private automobile has increased even though some cities, Montréal among them, have seen the introduction of car-sharing services as relatively inexpensive local car rental solutions. The increase of bicycle lanes and cycling on city streets is evident, but too many continue to use bikes solely for recreational, not commuting, purposes. Official unemployment varies within a constant percentage of the labour force, but the unofficial unemployment and underemployment rates are higher and the low minimum wage is harsh. Unmistakable evidence of decaying infrastructure and public transportation systems is everywhere.

There is ample evidence in the 1982 book, as well as in this volume, that neither the market nor current governments, at any level, have solutions for the urban crisis. The major problems plaguing Canadian cities in the 1980s—critical problems like urban poverty, including significant homelessness, urban sprawl and suburbanisation—remain unresolved. Our cities continue to import the riches of nature and export tons of waste; public transportation continues to struggle in competing with the wasteful private automobile; green spaces are still lacking, and natural spaces are still being devoured. Crime and epidemics, it is also worth mentioning, have yet to be eradicated, and the possibility of terrorism is increasingly a real one. All these problems remain unresolved and, indeed, have become worse in most cases. Then and now, the causes remain the same—namely that the concentration of economic and political power in the hands

of an elite minority continues to determines the course of urban history, mainly in the interests of the 1%. And while the city is still beyond the complete social control of this power class, and therefore is among the most important stages for rebellions, especially in advanced industrial/technological societies, there is not enough recognition of this reality by those movements on the political Left of the centre.

During the last 30 years, certain events have influenced schools of thought and action on the Left. The effects of suburbanisation and the exodus of many from the middle class, the effects of the fiscal crisis on local governments, notably in Canada's bigger cities, and the emergence of a plethora of large urban movements struggling for social housing with a focus on non-profit cooperatives, urban ecology, welfare rights, women's rights, and human and civil rights have together exemplified the particular importance of the municipal terrain. With its proximity to everyday life, it has been the setting for bitter struggles over housing (in Montréal alone, the Milton-Parc saga, the Overdale tragedy, and the Benny Farm project) and against urban renewal schemes, taxation and highways. When it became evident that the city-centre poor were being uprooted so that the land could be repossessed for hotels, office buildings, boutiques and renovated or new housing for yuppies, an urban class analysis became relevant once again. Consideration of the class nature of community control over the police, schools, social services, traffic, air pollution and related issues of public health and neighbourhood economic development is an essential ingredient in any analysis which aims to be global.

Concern for the future of cities has become widespread, more so than ever before. Yet among the professional urbanists, their aim of technical rationality and detached scholarship occludes detectable ideological values that determine their methodology.

What are these values? Urban planners, architects, engineers, economists, and sociologists on the whole who are concerned with urban problems see all these as piecemeal issues—as a matter of employment, land use, and commodities that influence personal taste and choices determined by vague technological and economic forces. It is rare, indeed, for schools of 'urban planning', architecture, and environmental studies to teach or research basic elements of the urban reality.

The big underlying questions, therefore, are largely left out of the classroom. Who owns urban land? Which lobbies influence municipal bureaucracy and politics the most? To what extent does the mass media report and/or analyse what city government does or does not do? What are the interests that are reflected in the media's choices to cover certain issues and ignore others.? How does City Hall actually work? What is the structure of our various governing bodies? What is the level of citizen participation in the consultative and decision-making processes? What is the profile of the main actors of the urban economy? For example, the media in Montréal have consistency ignored featuring the Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities. When the annual city budget is first presented to city council, there is hardly a whisper in the same media. When a zoning regulation is changed in favour of a new high-rise again, it is hardly mentioned.

Thus with issues unaddressed outside or inside the classrooms, young and aspiring well-intentioned would-be professionals in urban planning learn mostly technical skills, which only give them the status required to get well salaried jobs in this or that

city department, firm or consultation body. Overall, however, these young people, many of whom enter their schools and faculties with some political insights, graduate more often than not de-politicised rather than politically invigorated and clear.

Meanwhile, as the urban crisis gains political traction, the conservative Right continues to simply point to big government as the problem, insisting the solution is to allow for maximum market freedom to better enable its movers and shakers. This rhetoric is laced with hypocrisy, of course, because intervention bolstering an acceptable economic return on investment for the State is, in contrast, considered acceptable.

On the other hand, the political liberal centre focuses on a more or less similar analysis and views urban problems as largely unconnected. During the tenure of a liberal municipal government, a series of partial reforms are introduced, each targeting a particular urban problem. The results, like the attempted solutions, are always partial; root solutions are avoided. All the while, there are disagreements among various schools of liberal urbanists, who offer a stream of 'novel' remedies with the hope of being taken seriously by politicians and bureaucrats.

Liberal reform programs, as well as reforms offered by social democrats, are based on incomplete analysis of urban reality, results in dead ends. The political economy of neoliberal capitalism as we have outlined it here is taken as a permanent, basically unchangeable fixture by all such reformers. It is simply not questioned—not considered, by most, questionable. And those who do question its many features and effects are simply dismissed. The process of change this system could undergo, one which opens possibilities for major breaks, goes unexamined, unresearched, and therefore excluded from the political calculus. The specific character of social relations arising from this form of economy, and the nature and function of political power along with it, go unconsidered, remaining closed to discussion.

Determining the most useful criteria for analysis and solutions to the urban crisis requires an attempt to go to the roots of the matter and see where the discussion leads us—that is, a radical route. Instead, we face denial and avoidance at every other turn, the net result of which is an effort constantly undercutting its own potential for progress.

Alternative perspective

To radicals, however, the fundamental relationship that must be grappled with is the exploitation and domination of people by people. Without the elimination of both these reactionary features of the top-down societies we live in, nothing really major will change. This is true for both life in the city and at large.

In order to fully understand the realities of urban life, we must ask why cities exist in the form they have assumed, what meaning can be drawn from their historical evolution, and how present economic and political arrangements—along with their structural manifestations, which dominate our everyday lives—can be looked at honestly. By examining the ways political power becomes bureaucratised, the property relations that make it possible, income distribution, and how social classes are perpetuated and determine the composition of certain neighbourhoods, we begin to slowly put the pieces together. Today, radical urban economics has gained considerable intellectual traction and legitimacy, but it is not widely known outside the Right to the City move-

ment and Social Forum circles. Moreover, it is certainly not taught or discussed in schools. But when even a mainstream city journalist and writer like John Lorinc writes, 'In our era, globalisation has widened the gap between the richest and poorest inhabitants of outwardly robust cities'[13], it is clear the matter has become plain enough to be observed by most. With that, a window, ever so slightly, opens.

If, however, we examine and discuss the writings put forth by principals such as Lewis Mumford, Jane Jacobs, Murray Bookchin, David Harvey, and Peter Marcuse, we will begin to appreciate that we must set aside what passes for analysis on commercial media's editorial pages, as well as what passes for urban studies in most academic journals and schools. The richness of freed thought and analysis by such authors instead will not only nourish the social and urban movements on the front lines but will also enable a powerful convergence of thought resulting in a recognition of the need for a fundamental eco-democratic transformation.

Now What?

It is not enough to face the posed urban question and the crisis at its core. It has deepened, and its consequences with it. Our politico-economic system is clearly the main driver of planetary ecological collapse, driving the decline of human society along with it.

Resource overconsumption has led to climate change, all kinds of pollution, and human health issues. The engine of progress that has produced over three centuries of accelerated economic growth, revolutionising science, technology, culture and human society in general, is today fatally altering the planet. Roaring out-of-control, it mows down continents of forests, sweeps oceans of life, unearths mountains of minerals, drills and pumps out lakes of fuels, and devours the planet's dwindling accessible resources to turn them all into 'products', paid for with the destruction of fragile global ecologies built up over eons.

The evidence of all this is plentiful, yet there is widespread denial and delusion, albeit, cracks are starting to show. There are no technological solution or market solutions. In a very few sectors—electrical power generation being the main one—a broad shift to renewables could sharply reduce fossil-fuel emission. But if we just use 'clean', 'green' energy to power more growth, extracting ever more from the natural environment to produce more and more junk we don't need, we will still be headed for collapse. Agriculture is another sector in which reliance on fossil fuels could be sharply reduced—by abandoning synthetic fertilisers and pesticides and switching to organic farming. And there is no downside there—just the firm resistance of the agribusiness industrial complex. But for the rest of the economy's industries—mining, manufacturing, transportation and chemicals in particular— there are no such substitutes.

To better understand how this may be possible, it is worth considering the following facts, which cannot be stated often enough. Today, almost half of the world, more than 3 billion people, lives on less than $2.50 a day and 80% of humanity lives on less than $10 a day. This while the world's richest 1% own 40% of the world's wealth, the richest 10% own 85% of total global assets, and the bottom half of the economic world barely own 1% of global wealth.

These gaps have, unfortunately, only widened over time. It is worth noting, for one, that the richest 1% in the US in 1979 earned 33.1% more than the bottom 20%, while

the wealthiest 1% in 2000 raked in 88.5% more than the poorest 20%. Polarisation has grown even worse in the developing world of the southern hemisphere. Meanwhile, China, which boasted the world's most equal incomes in 1978, today has the most unequal incomes of any large society, and is considered a State capitalism 'success story'.

Democracy can only work where a roughly equitable socio-economic framework exists and human rights, including social guarantees, are wholly respected. Today we have by far the greatest disparity in the concentration of wealth in history. This is why, we hope, an eco-democratic revolution is indeed looming. This future depends a great deal on us, the main question being: what is the alternative?

Outline of the Alternative

Difficult though it is to discuss a comprehensive alternative to the status quo here, some key points, however, can be indicated to give us a sense of direction and an outline of a roadmap to fundamental social and political change. This attempt should not preclude us, following what has already been referred to from the start of this text, from examining the World Charter of the Right to the City or the Global Platform on the Right to the City and the accompanied action plan, which are good beginnings to an alternative. *Urbanization Without Cities* by Murray Bookchin[14], and my own *Political Ecology: Beyond Environmentalism*[15] are also good starting points. The succeeding chapters in this book gives many examples of urban struggles in Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver, as does David Harvey in his seminal book, *Rebel Cities*[16], does likewise.

Movements like Occupy Wall Street, which united thousands of people in many cities across the globe, essentially highlighted what is wrong with the current social order. By focusing on the slogan, 'We are the 99%, and we oppose the 1%', these movements did not simply broadcast clearly that they opposed capitalism; they advanced, for the first time in a long time, the importance of a class analysis of society. Indeed, it was noteworthy to observe the presence of this slogan and references to 'capitalism' (a word that had been absent from the lexicon for decades) in the mass media. What was the alternative(s) that the occupiers proposed? They are working on it. In the meantime, the ways the occupations were organised and how they functioned, many for very long periods of time, showed that democracy and egalitarian participation was very much at the core of the movement. In several instances they pioneered new methods of direct democracy. In a number of cases, a new kind of politics emerged. (The example of Spain will be presented later on.) From Tunis to Tahrir Square in Cairo, Zuccotti Park to Syntagma Square, Barcelona to Madrid, Gezi Park in Istanbul to Madison, Wisconsin to Kunming in Yunnan, Songjiang Shanghai, Shifang, Guangzhou and thousands of sites, cities and towns all over China, ordinary citizens demonstrated remarkably, with a rational environmental sense, against the profit-driven environmental irrationality and irresponsibility of their power elite[17]. What these mass movements of citizens had in common—apart from their horizontal democratic forms of organising themselves, a taste of direct democracy—was that they raised the spectre of a potential eco-democratic revolution. The outcome of this unprecedented opportunity depends to a great extent on the alternative we can devise. The exploration it will require must be undertaken with a compelling and plausible vision of how we might get there, wherever 'there' might be.

The alternative must commence with placing ethics at the centre of the new politics. As such, there can be no grounded beginning other than closely examining social ecology. We would do well to consider the extensive writings of social ecology's pioneer philosopher, Murray Bookchin.

What Bookchin asks us to take into account is that, as a society, we need to be in balance with nature, and that, consequently, we must ensure that diversity, spontaneity, freedom, and wholeness as practiced by our society. The ecological society of the future will have to reclaim the fundamental organic non-hierarchical relationships that existed in some cultures in the past and that subsequently have been deformed by the rampant rise of unbridled capitalism and the State. Hierarchy or domination destroyed the original balance, so that men became and still are dominant over women and children. Scarcity and warfare have escalated the problems created by this development, so that both domination and exploitation have become two sides of the same coin. History was then marked by the arrival of three pillars of authority: the monarch, the priest, and the military leader. Today these persisting conditions permeate our society and have created a deeply non- egalitarian culture whereby work has become toil, intellectual work is separated from the physical, and mass entertainment through new technologies supplant the simple pleasures of life, including those of the sensuous body. A major objective of social ecology is to abolish these dualisms.

Social ecology distinguishes between ecology and environmentalism accordingly. The latter remains predicated on the mechanistic, instrumental outlook of the modern world, which sees nature as resources for humans and humans as resources for the economy. Environmentalism does not question the status quo, but facilitates the domination of humans over nature and humans over humans. Social ecology, premised on interactions among the living and nonliving, contains the potential for an alternative. Social ecology incorporates humans' interdependence with nonhuman nature. Extending this notion to the societal whole, it becomes a distinct version of human and natural community, which includes the interrelations of social as well as organic factors to provide the basis for an ecologically well-rounded and balanced society.

Social ecology studies the patterns that make up the natural-social community, attempting to discern its history and inner logic. It uncovers the rich variety and diversity present in the community's evolution. An ecological approach to the community leaves room for spontaneity, both in nature and human nature. Biological and evolutionary forces that have resulted in the diversity found in nature must be fostered rather than controlled by authority. Governance should be more like steering a ship based on the direction and strength of the current, waves, and winds, rather than a total domination to satisfy the ever-expanding greed of civilisation.

To avoid the ecological collapse, humans must recognise and live within bioregional constraints. The ecosystems within bioregions provide a natural limit to the range of human options in controlling nature. Technologies, agricultural practices, and community sizes appropriate to the specific conditions of the bioregion are needed. Decentralisation is required to avoid pollution and yet maintain and restore the region's native plant and wildlife, while new social institutions compatible with an ecological sensibility are also essential. Diversity within the bioregion must be encouraged to reverse present

trends toward crop monocultures, urban concrete, and mass culture, which have wiped out eons of evolution over night. In other words, in confronting the stark possibility of the end of diversity, humans must open their imaginations to utopian vistas where ecological—indeed cultural, linguistic and social—diversity flourishes.

Social ecology has a deep commitment to not only reversing the domination and exploitation of nature but to eradicating existing social domination and exploitation in society as well. Hierarchical and class inequalities have resulted in homelessness as housing has become a commodity, while current patterns of land ownership have contributed to poverty and powerlessness of the majority, as well as racial oppression and repression and sexism. Of particular concern are forced methods of controlling populations, rather than restructuring and redistributing food, clothing, shelter, and political and economic power to all. Thus in social ecology we see the fundamentals of an ethics that can guide us away from the precipice. Indeed, the ensemble of these insights and values is the ethical premise that is the foundation of a new social politics and, most important to our future, a new urban politics.

Democratising Democracy

We must place this matter squarely at the top of our political and social agenda. It is possible, with a large citizen movement, to radically reform many of the current political structures of liberal democracy. In the eyes of millions who feel powerless, these structures lack legitimacy, whatever the mass media and most politicians say. What is needed is a shift away from minor tinkering around the edges of the current system; changes will have to be a radical departure from what exists today. And these changes must have as their first of many goals the formation of a system of proportional representation within the electoral system, from the cities outward. Elections must matter in cities; the rest of society beyond cities can do what it wills. So, to begin with, the current electoral systems in North America must change. We here need more than just theatre. Undertaking such a change will weaken the stranglehold of the current power elite.

We have to recognise, however, that accomplishing this alone is not nearly enough. It is but a pebble where a mountain must be built. Just as democracy can expand and contract it can ascend and tumble. We ought to be striving horizontally to develop a reliable sense of both momentum and accumulated progress. To take this direction we have to put our priority on grassroots community organising. We have to democratise democracy from the foundation of cities up, from within neighbourhoods and through new political institutions based on neighbourhood assemblies of participating citizens, federated in municipal institutions such as city councils. Only such a decentralisation of political power, along with its coordination at a metropolitan level, can begin to break down the hold of the power elite. We need nothing less than large urban movements in our cities demanding and working together in such a direction: a movement that takes as its goal the guarantee of voting rights for all citizens and noncitizens alike—as is the case in many European cities, such Hamburg, a movement that gathers all other movements for economic and social justice and for urban ecological relations to the bioregion and its ecosystems. A movement that urges urban citizens to intervene in issues of peace and war across the border (as has been done before by some Canadian

and US cities, for example) The case of the U.S, sponsored Contra-war against Nicaragua, U.S cities like Burlington, Vermont to Chicago took up anti-war positions to the chagrin of the State Department. In the face of a U.S. led invasion of Iraq, cities like Montréal and Vancouver passed strong city council anti-war resolutions. To achieve each of these goals, this movement needs to begin insisting that we are much more than taxpayers and passive reactors to what the politicians and bureaucrats seek from us. If we choose, we may break the grip of elected and unelected elites and replace an unsatisfactory status quo with citizens who participate not only in public consultations, and not only with formal human rights recognised, but in decision-making processes at neighbourhood and metropolitan levels.

Such a movement recognises that self-government ought not to be characterised by fits and starts. Rather, it should be a constant, sustained by wholly-democratic frameworks and structures, buoyed by assurances of equal access and opportunity for those who would vote and participate in the political decision-making arena. It should be characterised by a steady flow of meaningful information—not ads or spin, but substantive news and analysis and honest open debate that affords every citizen the knowledge and the insights necessary to actively engage with and share in setting the civil agenda.

The right response to the liberal democracy's crisis of legitimacy and general doldrums can no longer be focused on the potential for incremental improvements. Another major radical reform, for instance, would be to mandate participatory budgeting processes, where the people collectively determine to be informed as to the destination of public funds, including all or part of the investment budget, at neighbourhood, citywide and metropolitan levels.

Since 1989, hundreds of experiments in participatory budgeting have been initiated across all continents. Beyond common elements, each context has been built to allow for its own approach. This results in a variety of modalities, each inspiring in its own way. For citizens and social movements, participatory budgeting is synonymous with a rapprochement to the needs of citizen democracy, with priorities determined and defined at the local level. Here the nuts and bolts of local economics, as well as those of the urban economy as a whole, benefit from a top-to-bottom re-examination of the decision-making process.

In such experiments, a process begins to push citizen interventions past the parameters of our current narrow functioning of democracy to become a structure of active daily participation that goes beyond elections. As such, it begins to force the economic elite to occasionally back off and to begin to feel the pressure of accountability[18]. While there is currently no municipal participatory budgeting in any Canadian city, there is, ironically, some in the US, including in New York City. Paris, meanwhile, has the largest participatory budget in Europe.

Toward Community and Citizenship

Ecological awareness begins with the knowledge that we exist in nature as part of a continuously evolving dynamic web of relationships with all other life, matter and energy. But our evolution has long since shifted focus from the physical to the cultural, social, intellectual and technological. We have not evolved right out of nature, however,

even as temporary access to unusually high supplies of energy from fossil fuel sources may make it seem so.

We are still essentially natural creatures, but self-realising ones who can consciously control our lives and environment. In line with the distinction and relationship originally articulated by Bookchin, the ecological choice is to dedicate this consciousness—i.e., second nature—to constructing our lives and surroundings in accordance with our awareness and knowledge of that dynamic, supportive web: that web is first and foremost our relationship to nature, a relationship that is in harmony with nature, not in opposition or at war with nature or in ignorance of it.

Within this context citizenship becomes enlarged beyond the merely political, social and human to include a comprehensive public activism. In such a form, its mode is to continuously construct and reconstruct our social, economic, cultural and political institutions in accordance with the ecological evolutionary principles of first nature: interdependence, mutuality, diversity, complementarity and cooperation above and beyond conflict and competition. We can consciously use these most powerful principles of first nature (our relationship to nature) to inform our construction of human affairs and human relations with the rest of the natural first world—second nature (that is ourselves).

Bioregions comprise the minimum necessary geography, resources, culture and population to provide locally-stable, self-reliant and self-regenerating biotic and social networks that support life. A bioregion must be comprehensive and complex in its resources, life forms and patterns of energy exchange to reliably continue to produce and reproduce physical existence for the life forms that inhabit it.

Life for human inhabitants of a bioregion depends upon preserving the integrity of the complex of processes that enable life to thrive as part of the bioregional cycle, enhancing it only minimally, carefully, and with an awareness of being an integral part of such cycles. If human inhabitants wish to exist from the prudently enhanced surplus of the productivity that supports life in a bioregional network, the bioregion must be sufficiently large to provide both a safe and reliable surplus, as well as an adequate emotional and moral local existence.

Community is the social result of that bioregional network: a network that includes resources, productivity and exchange self-organised to maintain a general stability around a smaller and diverse population, energy transfers and symbiotic relationships. What we recognise as a human community will best be served when it is consciously organised to be congruent with the natural self-organisation of the bioregional web of life-communities and once it is dedicated, first and foremost, to sustaining that network and that bioregion moving forward.

A human bioregional community will seek stability for the collectivity by internally maximising and coalescing biotic and social complexities. It will seek its human creativity by similarly maximising equity, freedom and justice for the individuals it comprises, prioritising the community and individual equally.

Human communities find the optimum combination of complexity and freedom, stability and creativity in the construct most fundamental to civilisation—that is, in the city. It is in and from an urban environment that most of us will construct our ecological lives as individuals and communities.

The new city we can consciously create from our present condition will be based upon a morally driven set of values derived from ecological principles and applied to preserve both its environmental and social integrity. It is not an objective construct to be achieved, but a comprehensive set of social, ecological, cultural and political processes, quite possibly resulting in constructs that differ from time to time and from place to place, varying in accordance with the available local models of natural ecological processes from which they derive.

Community, it must be remembered, is not strictly urban, but regional in scope. Rural and urban elements are to be cooperatively synthesised in complementary interdependence so as to maximise mutual self-reliance. Community is constantly rebalanced by the concerned activism of its citizens, so as to sustain internal local biotic and social stability as well as its integral and organic relationships with its neighbouring cities, as a part of the ever-larger and further comprehensive bioregions and ultimately the Earth-wide web of life, our ultimate and singular biosphere.

Concluding

The key to meeting basic human needs is the participation of individual citizens and neighbourhoods in urban problem-solving, among many other things. Some of the most important achievements in providing food, upgrading housing, improving human health, and tapping new energy sources will not be the result of centralised national and international efforts but of people doing more to work together to meet their own challenges. When those most affected by a problem assume the primary responsibility for solving it, once the corridors of power become accessible to them and they become part of the decision-making process, all will gain the understanding and skill to deal with the broader political and economic issues of their society.

Many successful problem-solving efforts have and still take place at the local level—the issue of housing for low-income people being a prime example. Urban agriculture provides for up to 15% of the food budgets of many. Self-help health care has been proven capable of cutting hospital admissions in half for some chronic illnesses, with those involved continuing to demand public funding for this kind of care. Meanwhile, simple housing design changes that adapt homes to climate conditions have proven capable of reducing heating bills by 50% in industrial countries. And solar energy provides much of the power for Chinese villages. All these initiatives, and many, many more that are largely unrecognised, are decentralised and participatory. Their successes are the product of direct involvement of citizens and neighbourhoods[19].

Citizens have always used individual initiative and many local resources to provide for their basic needs. The difference today is that many of these efforts are more organised and successful than in the past. They have begun to receive the financial and political support of the cooperative movement, trade unions, governments and foundations. Nation-States have started to look to their own resources, but national governments increasingly realise it is best and most effective to decentralise the accompanying resources and involve people at community and neighbourhood levels.

The ultimate success of these efforts depends on the participatory nature of local problem-solving. Citizens working on their own, without the real support of their neighbourhood, will be significantly less successful than people choosing to work cooperatively as

small groups. And undoubtedly, while small groups tend to start the process, sooner rather than later large groups of people must be involved. When those most in need of defining their problems, deciding on a solution, carrying out what needs to be done, distributing the benefits of the solution, and assessing their own work are involved the impact multiplies. Through cooperative self-help, individuals gain a sense of competence and self-respect and strengthen their ties to their community[20].

Furthermore, it's all very well that lobbying by trade unions, political parties, and organisations large or small direct their efforts at national capitals to try and influence the politicians involved in statecraft (a useful distinguishing term coined by Murray Bookchin). Such efforts target the 'board of political directors' at the very top of the State hierarchy, which, depending on circumstances, might respond to this or that demand. But where does social change—systemic change—begin and take root? The key to the answer is that the key element, the lever, is local—the neighbourhoods and the city. In other words, 'Think globally, act locally'.

Another very important issue regarding the reality and existence of cities that cannot quite be articulated here is the politics of land ownership, this subject will be discussed in another later work. This large and important subject deserves to be articulated in a substantial manner.

Suffice it to say, our kind of society has considerable capacity, from the official level down, for embracing many of the directions and radical reforms presented throughout this text. And as we know from experience, this society and its power structure have enormous capability for not only momentarily co-opting these politics as slogans but also absorbing and de-radicalising efforts that manifest any strength on the ground. These State-directed efforts result in marginalising the weaker wings of many movements based on new ideas, and, given time, government will try to turn these proposals into their opposites. Herbert Marcuse warned of this power to co-opt many decades ago. Extra vigilance must therefore be exercised and hardened determination must be in place from the start to push these ideas in the most transformative direction.

In doing so, we may well witness an ongoing series of major urban rebellions, some of which may go further still. After all, as frustration will result from declining power elite opposition to the sharpest goals of the 'Right to the City' movement and social ecology, rebellion may have to take on all public forums, leading to a literal citizen political takeover of cities. Nothing precludes, under certain conditions and circumstances, radical movements/ parties from being elected as majorities to city councils. This drive has already begun to produce some interesting results, emerging from Occupy movements and other social movements in Barcelona and Madrid, Spain, among several other Spanish cities. They have even formed a network of radical cities, which collaborate. Furthermore, many of these ideas are also being experimented with in a part of the world where the possibility of such an opportunity was totally unforeseen: Rojava in northeastern war-torn Syria. It is a project close to the hearts of the Kurdish people in many of the region's towns and cities. How successful will they be? Time will tell.

What gives the growing world movement working on an alternative an edge is that capitalism and the State have no solution to the ecological crisis and no way to halt the societal collapse that will eventually result. History was supposed to have 'ended',

remember, with the end of State socialism, the fall of the Soviet Union, and the triumph of capitalism two decades later. Yet today, history is rushing on. We are living in one of its most pivotal, world-changing moments—perhaps its most critical moment.

We may be approaching a new dark age when civilisation collapses, but the means to stop this possible wreckage are also in the making. Struggles against the destruction of the environment continue around the planet, and the urban resistance is following suit. Today, we are on the edge of a sea change, of near-simultaneous mass-democratic resurgences, one almost global in its scale. The planetary rebellion is still developing, still unsure of its future, but its radical democratic instincts are humanity's best last hope. Inspired by the pioneers of ecological humanism and social ecology, by thinkers such as Murray Bookchin and David Harvey, we can move forward. And the time has come to make history together.

The analysis and opinions expressed in this statement do not necessarily reflect those of this book's other contributors.

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At the Crossroads of Cultures: The Distinct Politics and Development of Montréal

Shawn Katz • Dimitri Roussopoulos

DURING 2017, MONTRÉAL'S CITY HALL is celebrating with a multi-million dollar extravaganza, the 375th anniversary of the 'founding of Montréal' as a French colony. However there is no mention of the fact that the island as early as 4000 years ago had been settled by First Nations aboriginals and that by 1000 CE they had stated to cultivate maize, and built a fortified village. They established the village of Hochelaga at the base of the mountain currently called Mont Royal. We know by archeological evidence that much of this land was settled at least since the 16th century. When the French imperialist Jacques Cartier arrived in October, 1535 he found a settlement of over a thousand aboriginal people living in over 50 houses, mostly longhouses. All of this is ignored by the official celebration. Instead we are told that the important date was 1642 when again the colonialists came onto the island and set-up Ville-Marie,unleashing a bitter war with the Iroquois people that went on for decades. A kind of peaceful co-existence prevailed by the mid-19th century.

Montréal is Canada's second largest city and one of North America's oldest, as well as the cultural and economic metropolis of the French-speaking province of Québec, the country's second largest after Ontario. With 3.8 million people, Montréal's metropolitan region accounts for 43% of the province's total population of 8.8 million, though just under half of that, or roughly 1.8 million, are in the urban agglomeration. Montréal is the second-largest primarily francophone city in the world after Paris, though it counts a historic and sizeable anglophone community that accounted for 17.4% of the urban agglomeration's population in 2011.

Founded as Ville-Marie by French missionaries/colonialists in 1642, the city, later renamed after the triple-peaked Mont-Royal that overlooks it, grew outward from the southern tip of the largest island of the Hochelaga archipelago, which sits in the majestic St. Lawrence River. From the conquest of New France by the British in 1760 through to 1830, Montréal was under the rule of governors appointed by the British Crown. The city housed the first parliament building of the United Province of Canada as of 1840, by which point it had emerged as a thriving business centre with well over 30,000 inhabitants, growing to over 130,000 by the time the Canadian federation was born in 1867. With the metropolitan region surpassing the million-person mark as early as 1930 and the city proper by 1950, Montréal's development prior to the age of

the automobile is today reflected in the city's walkable neighbourhoods and higher density, which is similar to many European cities and third in North America, behind only New York and Boston.[1]

For most of Canada's history, Montréal was the country's largest and most important centre, though its majority francophone population were the underclass in a province dominated by anglophone business interests. This persistent legacy of economic colonialism was arguably the only way that a primarily French-speaking city could be the metropolis of a mostly English-speaking country. It was thus inevitable that Montréal would have to cede its economic and financial supremacy to Toronto if the francophone population were to emerge from their positions of economic and social inferiority.

This is what happened during the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s. This seminal phase of Québec's history signalled francophones' rupture with centuries of subordination to both the Catholic church and the anglo business establishment, ushering in the birth of modern Québec nationalism, the creation of a robust welfare state (the "Québec model'), and the accelerated secularization of State and society.

As the secessionist movement grew in force and Montréal became the intellectual and organizational hub of the social movements, surging linguistic tensions and economic and political instability into the 1970s spurred an exodus of capital, corporate headquarters and at least 100,000 anglophones, as the city was simultaneously bleeding inhabitants—and with it, its tax base—to its suburban periphery.

The shift of economic activity westward may have already been long underway as part of global economic trends. The monumental debt load incurred from the Olympics held in the city that same year in 1970 did little to reassure the city's economic prospects, however, and both the 1970 October Crisis and rise to power of René Lévesque's separatist Parti Québécois in 1976 frightened many in the business establishment and anglophone communities. Toronto had already begun to gradually overtake Montréal in key economic domains as early as the 1940s, notably with the volume of stocks traded at its stock exchange, but the mass departure of businesses only hastened Montréal's economic decline. By the 1980s, Toronto had definitively surpassed Montréal as Canada's economic centre and most populous city.[2]

Montréal traversed a difficult transitional period in the following decades as it struggled to refine its footing in the new Québec. But over time, the void left in the economic establishment allowed for the emergence of a francophone "Québec Inc." which rose to take the place of the old anglo elites (though many of them remained). Montréal's economy eventually picked up again around the mid-to-late 1990s, and though the city still lags far behind other major North American cities on a range of economic indicators, it can nonetheless be said to have turned a page as it looks with greater optimism towards the future. Montréal may no longer be Canada's metropolis, but this "loss" of stature freed it to embrace its unique nature as a francophone city within North America and as the Québécois metropolis.

While simultaneously immersed within the North American anglosphere, Montréal's cultural rootedness within the global Francophonie is an essential component of its identity and distinctness from the rest of Canada, affecting everything from its political discourse and vibrant intellectual traditions, to immigration policies, cultural

expression and practices, and lifestyles. The colonial history and minority situation of Québec's francophones within North America is hard to overemphasize for its importance to the province's character and development. Quebecers exhibit a fierce attachment to their unique culture and language, which is reflected in the spirit of Montréal as a city that relishes going against the grain.

When Montréal shook off its prolonged morosity, it did so in large part by embracing its potential as a cultural metropolis at the intersection of Europe and North America. In the last fifteen years or so, "*Montréal, métropole culturelle*" has become the rallying cry of the political, economic and cultural establishments alike, with its rationale summed up by the president of Culture Montréal, Simon Brault, in 2007: "Either Montréal will be a cultural metropolis, or it will not be one at all."

Both Montréal and Québec lead their respective packs in Canada for cultural investments,[3] with the province benefitting from a degree of governmental support for the arts that would make most North American artists quite envious.[4] A 2010 study by Hill Strategies also identified Montréal as home to five of the ten neighbourhoods in Canada with the highest concentration of working artists (and the top three of four), with artists comprising between 7.5% and 7.8% of the labour forces in the top two spots located in the neighbourhoods of Mile-End and the Plateau Mont-Royal.[5]

Montréal has indeed emerged as an important centre for the contemporary creative domains. The city is widely considered the world capital of circus arts[6] and the North American capital of digital arts, and it is North America's only UNESCO City of Design (part of its Creative Cities Network), a designation reserved for but a handful of cities in the world including Berlin and Buenos Aires.[7] Responsible for 34% of economic benefits deriving from cultural activities in 2007, design is Montréal's largest cultural industry.[8] Québec's world-renowned film industry is headquartered here as well, and the city is recognized as an epicentre for dance.

In addition to the relative affordability of life in Montréal when compared with other major Western cities,[9] the city's creativity and dynamism might also be partially explained by Montréal's importance as a university hub. Greater Montréal counts the second highest number of university students per capita in North America and has emerged as Canada's most important centre of research and development.[10] With a population under two million, Montréal hosts two English-language and two French-language universities, as well as another in the suburb of Longueil that is accessible by metro to the downtown core.

Montréal's linguistic duality has thus evolved from a source of sectarian tensions and political economic instability into one of its greatest assets and distinguishing traits. Today, past rancours have largely faded to make way for an increasingly open and cosmopolitan Montréal, with younger generations in particular embracing the city's linguistic duality—as well as its growing multiculturalism—as essential components of its identity.

As a result, Montrealers are today highly bilingual, with 57.7% of the urban agglomeration's residents (and 53.9% of the metropolitan population) speaking both official languages—including a narrow majority of its immigrants who are at least trilingual, speaking both French and English in addition to their mother tongues. These allophone communities—immigrants whose mother tongue is neither French

nor English—accounted for 33.7% (roughly 25% metro) of the agglomeration's population in 2011. The urban agglomeration counts the most Arab- and Spanish-speakers in Canada (5.1% and 4.4% of the total population, respectively, as well as important populations speaking Italian (4.7%), Creole languages (1.9%), Chinese (1.7%), Greek (1.2%), Vietnamese (1.1%), Portuguese (1%), Russian (1%) and Romanian (1%). In all, over a hundred languages are spoken in Montréal today, and approximately 20% of Montrealers are trilingual.[11]

Montréal's location at the cultural confluence of Europe and North America, as well as its proximity to New York and Washington, DC, has thus positioned it as a highly international city. Today, the city hosts the greatest concentration of international organizations in Canada and the most international conferences of any city in North America, [12] and it is one of the continent's three United Nations cities, along with New York and Washington. It is also home to the second-highest number of consulates in North America, as well as Canada's largest population of international university students.[13]

An Introduction to Montréal's Political Structures

Much like Québec politics in general, Montréal's political structures are not always easy to navigate for outsiders—or for locals.

The first thing to know is that in a general sense, Montréal's political system largely mimics the British/Westminster parliamentary system in Ottawa and the provincial capitals, complete with political parties and party lines, the office of the official opposition—and power concentrated within the hands of the all-powerful executive committee, which is the municipal equivalent of cabinet at "higher" orders of government. The primary difference is that unlike prime ministers or premiers, the mayor is directly elected at large.

The mayor's handpicked eleven-member executive committee is the centre of power, equivalent to the federal or provincial cabinet. The councillors that compose it are traditionally selected from the mayor's party, though recent years have seen greater attempts at including—though some might say coopting—opposition members. City council must officially approve the appointment of the chair and vice-chair to the executive committee, but party discipline largely renders this a formality.

Montréal's city council is the largest in Canada, counting sixty-five members. It sits only once a month and is composed of forty-six city councillors directly elected in their districts, eighteen borough mayors (each borough contains numerous districts within it), and the mayor of Montréal, who since 2009 is also automatically the mayor of the Ville-Marie borough that represents the downtown core.

On Election Day, November 3, 2013, some 1 million electors voted for 103 politicians in 58 electoral districts, in 19 boroughs. A minority of these voters elected the Mayor of the City of Montréal. So that in addition there are eighteen borough mayors, forty-six city councillors and 38 borough councillors. Montréal also has the largest bureaucracy of any North American city, at 27,000.

City council has all the legislative responsibilities not allotted to the boroughs, including the adoption of the annual budget, the three-year investment fund for the city, and the urban master plan; allocation of the budgets for the nineteen boroughs;

responsibility for the environment and public safety; and approval of all agreements with other levels of government.

Yet while city council is officially the city's primary decision-making body, the practice, much like the Canadian Parliament, paints a less rosy portrait. Whether through the dearth of council sittings (and therefore oversight), the purely advisory role of its six commissions, or the rigidity of party discipline, the mayor and his executive committee ultimately hold most of the power. So long as the mayor's party has a majority in council, the opposition's influence is largely limited to the terrain of public opinion.

The next thing to know is that much of Montréal's present political structures emerged from the municipal merger/demerger drama of the 2000s. Under the slogan of "Une île, une ville" ("One Island, One City"), the PQ government of Lucien Bouchard (and then Bernard Landry) imposed a megamerger in 2002 that fused the twenty-nine municipalities of the Communauté urbaine de Montréal (CUM) into one.

The merger was extremely unpopular in many parts of the island, with opposition strongest among the anglophone suburbs of the West Island (a misnomer for a grouping of suburbs on the western portion of Montréal Island). The official opposition, the Montréal Citizens Movement opposed it as well.

After Jean Charest's Liberals were elected in 2003, they made good on a campaign promise to allow former municipalities to hold demerger referenda in 2004, which led to fifteen boroughs leaving the new megacity of Montréal to reconstitute themselves as separate municipalities.

In a twist of irony, however, the citizen backlash that erupted over the heavy-handed imposition of the mergers, and the subsequent drive to persuade voters in the newly merged entities to remain part of the new Montréal, ultimately served to lay the foundations for a new wave of democratization and decentralization in the city. Indeed, many of Montréal's most central democratic institutions today, from the robust borough system to the widely lauded public consultation body, the Office de consultation publique de Montréal (OCPM), are the unlikely outcome of this divisive period in the city's history.

The borough councils today have jurisdiction over many local matters, most notably culture and recreation (libraries, Maisons de la culture), urban planning (on side streets), local parks, social and community development, housing, and local roads (major arteries and parks are controlled by the central administration). Each borough is governed by a borough council of at least five members, composed of the borough mayor, borough councillors and city councillors for the borough.

Come election time, in other words, a Montrealer is asked to elect four separate representatives: city mayor, city councillor (for their district), borough mayor, and borough councillor (for their district). City councillors and borough mayors sit on both the city council and borough council, while borough councillors sit only the latter.

The island-wide Agglomération urbaine de Montréal also grew out of this period, created following the demergers in 2006 so that Montréal could continue to provide major services, such as police, transit, and waste management, among others, to all municipalities on the island. Montréal's mayor and his hand-picked councillors possess 87% of the voting power on the agglomeration council, reflective of the respective demographic weights of the cities on the island. And at the metropolitan level, the

Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM) has a coordination and planning role for the eighty-two municipalities that compose it.

In sum, Montréal emerged from the 2000s with a multi-level governance structure that divides responsibilities among borough councils, city council, the agglomeration council, and the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal—though in practice, the latter three are largely under the control of the Montréal mayor and his hand-picked councillors.

The Democratic Life of Modern Montréal

Some historical background would be informative here. The history of municipal democracy in Montréal officially begins in 1833 with the election of its first mayor, Jacques Viger. From that time to the present, the city would evolve under a variety of political regimes. For a long time, only a minority had the right to vote. Only male property owners, followed by taxpaying renters in 1860. At the end of the 19th century, the secret ballot was adopted. Adult women and widows who owned property were given the vote, followed by women renters in 1899. In 1980, municipal political parties were officially recognized by the Québec government and, a few years later, elected members of city council could be reimbursed for research and support expenses. And citizens henceforth could ask written questions from city council under a Québec government law.

The executive committee was created in 1921. In 1986 with the election of the Montréal Citizens Movement (MCM), city council now has oral citizen question periods. In 1987, city council established five standing committees of council. Some public consultation began on particular issues. Nine boroughs were established. Even before the MCM was elected in the fall of 1986, it abandoned a key part of its programme, namely to establish decision-making neighbourhood councils. This proposal had been held dear by the urban Left since the 1970s. A sense of betrayal ran deep. Instead the MCM established in 1988 district advisory committees, in 1988 and also established the Bureau de consultation de Montréal (BCM). In 1989, city council passed a declaration against racial discrimination. In 1994, under the right-wing Mayor Bourque, the BCM is abolished. In 1995, borough advisory councils are abolished. With the re-organisation of Montréal in 2000, and the decentralization, that took place with the newly formed borough councils, statutory citizen oral question periods were introduced preceding every public council meeting and the new office of public consultation (OCPM) and the office of the Ombudsman were established by 2002. The city of Toronto followed this example in 2006. In 2005, the Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities was adopted unanimously by city council as well as a public consultation and participation policy. In 2006, the numbers of borough were reduced from 27 in 2002 to 19, following the referendum results on municipal mergers in 2005. In 2009, the Right of citizen initiative to public consultation is unanimously adopted by city council. Henceforth, citizens could intervene on public policy issues between elections and oblige politicians to have credible public consultations resulting in concrete recommendations. In 2010, live webcasting of city council meetings were put in place. In 2011-12 standing commission of councils added up to nine and the Mayor

of Montréal's Democracy Award is created in recognition of active citizens and social movement promoting the further democratization of the city.

Within the North American context, Montréal's system of political parties is currently one of its most distinguishing features. Unlike the system in Europe (but similar to that in Vancouver), municipal parties in Montréal are independent from and largely similar to parties at other levels of government, especially owing to the absence of the federalist/secessionist divide that dominates the provincial and federal arenas in Québec.

Perhaps the most essential thing to know about Montréal's municipal parties is that they are not all cut from the same cloth: Some parties have (or have had) robust democratic structures that make them true membership-based organizations, while others have been mere electoral machines centred around the mayoral candidate and his or her team. Some promote a detailed policy platform developed over years that is founded on a cohesive urban vision or set of political values, while others are more "pragmatic" (or opportunistic), producing vague policy orientations designed at the top. Some last for decades, while others rise and fade at the time of an election.

Montréal's political party system dates to the 1950s with the founding of the Ligue d'action civique (LAC) in 1951, which won the mayoralty in the 1954 election along with a minority of council seats. Its mayoral candidate that year, a 38-year-old French-Canadian lawyer by the name of Jean Drapeau, was defeated in 1957 by the candidate for the short-lived Ralliement du Grand Montréal, he returned however to the mayoralty in 1960 after his newly founded party, the Parti civique de Montréal, swept a majority of council seats. In 1962, the voting franchise was extended to all taxpayers, and in 1970, Montréal finally moved to universal suffrage, thereby expanding the electorate from 380,068 in 1966 to 698,369. Both before and after, Drapeau went on to dominate every election all the way through to his retirement from political life in 1986.

1960-1970: Jean Drapeau's One-Man Rule and a Dream of Montréal

Drapeau dreamed of Montréal as a great world city, and was nothing, if not determined, in his pursuit of that goal. Revered by some as a visionary who built modern Montréal and placed it on the map, derided by others as an autocrat and megalomaniac who was intolerant of dissent (and insouciant of debt), his legacy is a terrain of some dispute—and is almost certainly a mix of all of the above.

The scale and speed of Drapeau's accomplishments were historic. Construction on the iconic subway the Métro de Montréal, modelled after Paris's, began in 1962 and the system was inaugurated in 1966. The city welcomed fifty million tourists the following year Expo 67, which coincided with Canada's centennial celebrations.[14] In 1969 Drapeau lured Major League Baseball's first franchise outside of the United States with the creation of the aptly named Montréal Expos, (an officially designated universal exposition) and in 1976, Montréal played host to the world again with the XXI Summer Olympics.

The list of monumental infrastructures and facilities built during these years was astonishing, from the Ville-Marie, Décarie, Metropolitain and Bonaventure expressways, to Place des Arts, the Olympic Stadium, and Parc Jean-Drapeau, with its man-

made Île Notre-Dame, built from rock and soil recovered from the metro tunnels and riverbed. Montréal in the 60s was Canada's metropolis that dreamed big, and under Drapeau the city found its swagger. Even John Lennon and Yoko Ono were seduced: the couple chose Montréal as the site of their second bed-in in 1969, and it was here where the duo recorded "Give Peace a Chance."

Drapeau's successes, however, came at a high cost, and not merely for the public purse. His Parti civique was a top-down and hierarchical organization, with most members hand-picked by Drapeau himself. Secrecy shrouded the activities both of city hall and of the party, and debates and dissent among Drapeau's councillors were out of the question. The mayor ruled with an iron fist and centralized all power in his hands. Yet by 1970, his style of governance, as well as the astronomical costs of the Olympic installations (the city finally paid off the stadium in 2006…), gave rise to new sources of citizen unrest and organized opposition.

1970-1974: Challenging the Strongman

Québec had just emerged from the Quiet Revolution, and Montréal was the epicentre of the new social movements born of its effervescence. The Drapeau administration could well bolt the doors of city hall—as it quite literally did—but the noise in the neighbourhoods was getting louder.

The 1970 election, the first under universal suffrage, saw the emergence of three small opposition parties, with the primary challenge coming from a formation of left-wing nationalist organizations and union activists who had come together to form the socialist Front d'action politique (FRAP). The FRAP had an active membership of a thousand people, and it ran candidates for thirty-one of the fifty-two council seats, but none for mayor. The 1970 election was not a ripe moment for change, however: the October Crisis had erupted days earlier following the kidnappings of a British diplomat and Québec cabinet minister by the Marxist nationalists of the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ). Terror hysteria set in as the Trudeau government in Ottawa imposed the War Measures Act, and Drapeau successfully tarred the FRAP as terrorist sympathizers. With FRAP members arrested for suspected ties to the FLQ (as were some 700 activists) and police stationed at polling booths, and with armed soldiers and armoured cars everywhere Drapeau was re-elected with nearly 92% of the vote. His Parti Civique swept every seat on council.

Drapeau's opposition was henceforth careful to avoid the tags of Marxists or revolutionaries that had destroyed the FRAP. Very slowly the diverse opponents of Drapeau began to coalesce and to develop more robust political structures. In May 1974, the Rassemblement des citoyens et citoyennes de Montréal / Montréal Citizens Movement (RCM), was formed around a broad coalition that brought together partisans of the Parti Québécois, the federal New Democratic Party (NDP), the defunct FRAP, trade unionists, environmentalists, independent radicals, and a significant number of anglophone intellectuals.[15] Drapeau's dictatorial rule had spurred a breadth of unity on the left, and in particular between French- and English-language activists, that was unprecedented.[16]

Eschewing the overtly class-based discourse of the FRAP in favour of inclusiveness

and structural reform, the new party was built on a left-wing urban agenda that aimed at democratizing and decentralizing Montréal's political structures, improving the quality of life in the city's neighbourhoods, and advancing social justice. It was structured democratically around a General Council that served as its "collective leadership," in between the annual General Assemblies that decided policy.

The RCM's platform called for the creation of neighbourhood councils with significant decision-making authority, the decentralization of municipal services to the neighbourhoods, the creation of district councils to supervise urban development, and the encouragement of housing co-operatives, as well as various measures focused on aiding the homeless and urban poor, combatting pollution, developing recycling programs and bike paths, increasing public transit and aiming for the eventual elimination of fares, preserving green spaces and heritage buildings, integrating immigrants and ethnic communities, and creating employment.[17] The party elected a woman, Léa Cousineau, as its first president, and would continue to champion gender equality as one of its fundamental principles. By 1986, 43% of its 6,500 members were women.[18]

1974-1986: The RCM and the Rise of the Opposition

Within six months, the party had succeeded in rallying nearly all of Drapeau's municipal adversaries under its tent, and in its first election showing in 1974, the RCM stunned even itself by capturing 18 seats on council—including Montréal's first women councillors, all three elected under universal suffrage,(in 1940, the first woman elected was Jessie Kathleen Fisher) —to form the first real organized opposition to Drapeau.[19] Their mayoral candidate, Jacques Couture, received 39% of the vote, drastically reducing Drapeau's support to 55%.

Immediately upon electing its first councillors, however, internal quarrels between the RCM's "pragmatist"-electoralist wing and the urban socialist factions led a group of high-profile social democratic councillors to break away and form a new centrist party in the form of the Groupe d'action municipale (GAM). More centred on its councillors' profiles than a programme or party base, the GAM attracted the support of the local business community, which had grown weary of Drapeau's lust for grandeur and deficit-spending ways.

On the provincial scene, René Lévesque's new Parti Québecois stormed to power in 1976 on a wave of nationalism, accelerating the flight of corporate headquarters and of many English-language Montrealers who feared the PQ's agenda and the prospects of secession (though many have also suggested that the PQ's election might have served as a pretext for corporations to do what they would have done anyway[20]). The GAM campaigned in 1978 on the economy,[21] It had as its Mayoralty candidate Serge Joyal, a former nationalist student radical who stated more than once that he was going to give Montréal his priority for the future. He subsequently become a Liberal senator in Ottawa, The RCM placed emphasis on social housing, neighbourhood councils, and embraced direct action wrapped up in urban socialism. With the opposition divided and the provincial upheaval instilling a desire for stability on the local scene, Drapeau, the very figure of continuity, surfed to a stronger majority victory, as the RCM collapsed in the polls.

The 1978 electoral disaster discredited the RCMs, a job performed by the mass commercial media which involved outright red-baiting. The party turned to soul-searching as it refocused on its strategy for winning the next election in 1982. Its left-wing very largely quit and the control passed onto moderate social democrats. It jettisoned its former promises for free child care and free transit in 1978 and elected a bilingual young labour lawyer and nationalist, party co-founder Jean Doré, as leader in 1982. Under Doré, the party moderated its image, reached out to business, and lobbied hard to attract the city's vibrant social movements. He refocused the party around winning, and emphasized concrete proposals like an urban master plan for downtown, more affordable housing, and most importantly, giving people a voice at city hall by creating avenues for public consultation .

At the same time, electoral changes brought in by Lévesque's reformist provincial government in 1978 transformed local politics in the province. Mirroring the reforms aimed at provincial parties, the new rules banned corporate donations, capped contributions from individuals, imposed ethical and financial disclosure obligations on candidates, limited electoral expenses, allowed for the reimbursement of electoral expenses incurred by candidates who obtain at least 20% of the votes, and officially recognized and regulated municipal political parties.

Meanwhile, the RCM's more centrist approach was bearing fruit, precisely as the provincial reforms aimed at weakening the influence of money in politics began to level the playing field and strengthen opposition parties in Montréal. The urban reformist movement was rallying to the party, as mounting opposition to Drapeau's anachronistic and autocratic reign was beginning to force the mayor's hand.

The choatic development and vast destruction of heritage buildings overseen by Drapeau gave rise to demands for more robust urban planning that protected neighbourhoods from encroachment. Drapeau's obsession with grandiose projects was criticized for bankrupting the city and ignoring the daily concerns of residents, from quality and affordable housing, to accessible recreational, cultural and park facilities, to well-funded public transit and well-maintained roads. And most importantly, people wanted a say in the decisions affecting their lives. They wanted a democratic city.

In the 1982 election, the RCM elected fifteen councillors and the GAM three, as the Parti civique's support dipped to its lowest point ever at 48%. Doré won 36% of the vote and became Opposition leader following a by-election in 1984. The GAM, having failed to reach the 20% threshold for reimbursements, fell into debt and disbanded before the next election, leaving the RCM to once again rally the opposition under its tent.

The newly elected opposition soon found itself confronted by the limits imposed by Drapeau's strongman rule: unlike the system in Toronto or Vancouver in which councillors each had a researcher and secretary, in Montréal there were but two secretaries for 57 councillors. Drapeau refereed all council proceedings himself, even those involving himself, while councillors were given no offices, desks, private telephone lines, or even a drawer in a filing cabinet at city hall.[22] Yet Doré successfully made his councillors' lack of resources an issue by exposing the Drapeau administration's authoritarian ways as an anomaly in North America.[23]

1986-1994: Jean Doré and the Rule of the Reformers

In 1986, perhaps sensing the way of the winds, Drapeau tearfully withdrew from the race and retired from political life. In the election that year, the RCM swept to office on a wave of change, capturing fifty-five of fifty-eight seats and catapulting Jean Doré into the mayoralty with 68% of votes cast. Overnight, city council had jumped a generation: the new mayor was 41 and the average age of the RCM's councillors was 39; fifteen of them were women, and only fourteen had any experience in the local political scene.

On the path to electoral success, however, Doré—who once said he was not and had "never been" a socialist—had watered down some of the party's most audacious proposals, even jettisoning the core promise of neighbourhood councils after the Parti civique derided them as "neighbourhood soviets."[24]

The RCM, founded as a party of the people and against big-money interests, disappointed many of its longtime backers once in power. In the Overdale affair, critics accused the administration of favouring developers over tenants who rejected relocation schemes offered to them in exchange for the destruction of their community. They were accused of betraying their commitment to heritage preservation, most controversially in the case of the demolition of the Queen's Hotel. And the party simultaneously angered its pacifist and environmental constituencies by permitting the Matrox company to clear twenty hectares of protected forest land in the Bois-de-Liesse park, the last site of black maple trees on the island, so they could expand their parking facilities after signing a lucrative contract with the U.S. military to develop computer-generated simulations to be used for training programs.[25]

On the democratization front—the core of the RCM's platform and identity—unquestionable advances were made that finally opened up the democratic process to citizen consultation and scrutiny, though they disappointed many of their base with their timidity at the time.[26] The greatest accomplishment was perhaps the creation of the Bureau de consultation de Montréal (BCM), which set the foundations for public consultations in Montréal.[27] Yet the one-time promise of neighbourhood councils—which were to provide citizens with real powers [28]—were reduced to borough advisory committees (comités-conseils d'arrondissement) in the city's nine new boroughs, with the obligation of holding regular public hearings on local issues such as zoning changes. It soon became apparent, however, that they lacked any real authority, as they were composed only of councillors and were under the complete control of the executive committee, which set their agendas and vetted their recommendations before they were sent to city council.

By 1987, eight of the more left-wing MCM councillors had aligned themselves against the mayor and his executive committee, spurring the imposition of party discipline. [29] Disillusionment with the party set in, as accusations erupted that the administration had turned its back on its base and social democratic principles, cozied up to developers and the business community, and was engaging in some of the same centralizing practices it once reproached of Drapeau.

Soon, four high-profile RCM councillors had resigned from the party to form the Coalition démocratique de Montréal (CDM), while the Green movement then emerging in Europe spurred former RCM-er and intellectual Dimitrios Roussopoulos to

found Montréal Écologique, the city's and North American's first municipal Green party. Both were community-focused parties that closely resembled the RCM at its inception, and they agreed to a non-aggression pact in 1990 to divide up the contested districts, with the exception of the Plateau-Mont-Royal (the left's traditional stronghold in the city and the RCM's base of power). The CDM's success that year was limited to the districts where three incumbents, among them today's longest-serving councillor, Marvin Rotrand, were re-elected, and it received 8.5% of the vote in the twenty-four seats contested, while its mayoral candidate Pierre-Yves Melançon, received only 4.7%. Montréal Écologique, which didn't run a mayoral candidate, picked up 7.5% in the twenty-one districts it contested.[30] Their electoral list included 10 women and 11 men.

With the new parties on the left unable to mount a strong enough challenge, the continued weakness of the Parti civique on the right, and obvious media drawn central defining issue of the election, the electoral participation rate plunged to 36% in 1990, down from the 50% for the seminal election in 1986.[31] Doré, who remained popular, campaigned on combatting poverty, and he surfed to a second majority victory with 57% of the vote, higher than that received by his candidates at 50%.[32]

With the Bourassa Liberals in power in Québec City and the Mulroney Progressive Conservatives in Ottawa, the RCM's second mandate took place within a context of rising austerity, and the RCM didn't reject the ambient embrace of market "imperatives" posed by the globalization of capital—indeed, combatting poverty, Doré soon clarified, came by encouraging entrepreneurialism and attracting investments.[33] The municipal government became viewed increasingly as a technocratic "administration" or provider of services, much like a business, in line with the neoliberal makeover of governments the world over.[34]

In the approach to the 1994 election, the tightening control of the executive committee over the party and municipal bureaucracy spurred a new wave of resignations from councillors on both the left and ring wings of the caucus.[35] The party had become disconnected from its base in the community movements, many of whom deplored the party's decline into a centralized electoral machine.

1994-2001: Pierre Bourque and the Populism of the Right

The Parti civique had disbanded in 1994 and its veterans, along with the right-leaning defectors from the RCM, regrouped in the new Vision Montréal party, started by former head of the Jardin botanique de Montréal, Pierre Bourque. A right-wing populist with a good deal of flair but little political vision, Bourque attacked the Doré administration for wasting public funds on the supposedly bloated size of his administration. Bourque's simplistic message of "relaunching Montréal" through lower taxes, smaller government, more private enterprise, more cleanliness—and here's the twist, more gardens—resonated with the air of the times. Bourque was elected with 46% of the vote in 1994 and his candidates won thirty-nine out of the fifty-one seats, while the RCM collapsed to only six seats.

The Coalition démocratique de Montréal and Montréal Écologique had merged into the Coalition Démocratique/Montréal Écologique (CDME), but they failed to build any real power base and their vote share actually declined to 6%.[36] In 1998 the party voted to dissolve its union, while high-profile councillors Marvin Rotrand and

Sam Boskey continued to sit under the banner of the Coalition démocratique. For its part, Montréal Écologique ended as a political party to reorient its efforts towards civil society initiatives, most notably with the creation of the Centre d'écologie urbaine de Montréal and the organization of five citizen summits in the 2000s.

The RCM had disillusioned many while in office, but in retrospect, its achievements merit some attention. Though it was admittedly coming from far behind, the Doré administration opened up city hall to the citizens, decentralized municipal services by creating thirteen information Accès Montréal offices throughout the nine newly created boroughs, laid the foundations for public consultations, and gave Montréal its first bike path network and reserved bus lanes, its first urban master plan in 1992, and its first plan for Mont-Royal park. As evidenced by the political and media establishment's unanimous lauding of his legacy upon his death in 2015, history is likely to remember Doré quite fondly, as a democratizer and modernizer who brought Montréal into the contemporary age after the dark decades of Drapeau. Social housing through the SHDM, a para-municipal body was a major achievement.

By contrast, Bourque seemed intent on bringing Montréal back decades. The horticulturalist-turned-mayor soon revealed himself as an arrogant and irrational populist with a strong parti pris for developers and a marked aversion to democratic debate. Calling himself a man of action (as opposed to discussion or reflection, presumably), he sought to dismantle the limited institutions of public consultation that Doré had implemented in the name of reducing "bureaucracy"—and thus concentrating power in his hands. The borough advisory committees and Bureau de consultation de Montréal were both disbanded, with their functions assigned to a commission headed by politicians. Bourque turned such a deaf ear to the views of others that fifteen of his councillors had defected by 1997 to leave him in a minority situation. Yet the "populist magic" around his persona remained, and his persistent popularity surprised everyone in 1998 when he was re-elected with a majority of seats on council.[37]

Bourque's tenure saw a limited degree of progress on the environmental front, with the creation of the *éco-quartiers* centres that help advance environmental initiatives in their districts and the selective collection of household waste. Perhaps Bourque's greatest legacy, however, was his promotion of a merger of all the municipalities on Montréal island, an idea first put forth by Drapeau in the 1960s. He and other mayors submitted a report to the Lucien Bouchard government in 1997 calling for "one island, one city," which was eagerly taken up by the PQ government.

Bourque's dissolution of the Bureau de consultation de Montréal sparked outrage among many Montrealers, speaking to the extent to which the advent of public consultations had raised the democratic bar in Montréal. In 2000, the mayor finally caved to public pressure and pressure by the Québec government, and created an advisory committee on public participation, to which was named Gérald Tremblay, a lawyer, businessman and former Bourassa minister, as its head. The Tremblay Commission recommended many of the elements instituted more than ten years earlier by Doré, and when Bourque refused to follow through, Tremblay was spurred to jump into the political arena.[38]

Tremblay created a new centrist party called the Union des citoyens et citoyennes de l'Île de Montréal and rallied the anti-merger forces, including fourteen suburban

mayors, under his banner. His party then gained in support following its merger with the weakened RCM/MCM, and ran on a platform that promised more affordable and social housing, a metro extension east to Anjou, decreases in property taxes, allowing referenda on local zoning changes, and massive investments in infrastructure.[39]

Tremblay was elected mayor of the new megacity in 2001 with 49% of the vote to Bourque's 44%. Later renamed Union Montréal, the party was a broad coalition of francophones and anglophones, Liberals (mostly) , PQers (fewer), and NDPers which encompassed councillors from the former RCM, Coalition démocratique de Montréal and Parti civique, as well as all councillors and mayors of the pre-merger suburban municipalities on the island. Bereft of charisma and later blamed for being oblivious—perhaps deliberately so, as seems increasingly likely—to the massive corruption that flourished under his nose, he was nonetheless a pragmatic and consensual leader on many fronts, and he was subsequently re-elected in 2005 and 2009, with his team garnering three consecutive majorities. His most fatal flaw may have been that he was an 'idealist' (as his chief of staff once mentioned to onr of this chapter's co-authors) which made him vulnerable to manipulation by powerful interests, and which bore severe and wide ranging repercussions for Montréal. This would ultimately prove to be his undoing.

2001-2012: Gérald Tremblay and the New Megacity of Montréal

The PQ's municipal mergers were pushed through despite widespread opposition, and the new Ville de Montréal, counting twenty-seven boroughs and double the population of the old city at 1.8 million, officially came into being on January 1, 2002. The new city which Tremblay was elected to govern was a radically altered entity, and not only for its size. The PQ's Bill 170, which had imposed the municipal mergers across the province (other cities saw similar reorganizations), was harshly criticized on the democratic front. In an effort to assuage these concerns, municipal affairs minister Louise Harel included provisions in the bill aimed at empowering Montréal's boroughs with significant new responsibilities, evolving them into robust jurisdictions in their own right.

Similarly, after years of pressure from citizens and civil society in the wake of Bourque's disbanding of the Bureau de Consultation de Montréal (BCM) in the nineties, it was—again, quite ironically—only upon the imposition of the municipal mergers in 2002 that a new public consultation office was created. Harel, who later became opposition leader at city hall, incorporated the creation of the Office de consultation publique de Montréal (OCPM) directly into Montréal's city charter, thereby protecting it from the whims of the politicians of the day (and thus from the same fate as its predecessor).

Neither the PQ's decentralization to the boroughs nor the strengthening of public consultations succeeded in swaying many opponents of the mergers, however. In December 2003, therefore, Mayor Gérald Tremblay, striving to convince voters in the former municipalities to reject the demergers and remain part of Montréal, successfully pushed the new provincial Liberal government to adopt further modifications to the city's charter. In what amounted to the most radical urban decentralization plan in North American history, Montréal was effectively transformed into a federation of

boroughs, with the former borough presidents promoted to borough mayors, much as is the case in Paris's *arrondissements*.

That too evidently failed to sway many residents of the newly merged boroughs, as fifteen of them voted to reclaim their nominal status as separate municipalities in the June 2004 referenda. Yet the borough reforms had been passed, and the new reality mostly remains, though it appears threatened under a new wave of re-centralization launched under the current (2017) mayor, Denis Coderre (to which we will return).

The Citizens Will Have Their Say: The Office de Consultation Publique de Montréal (OCPM)

Today, Gérald Tremblay's name is indelibly linked to the corruption scandals that led to his resignation in November 2012 under a cloud of suspicion and outrage. Yet the early years of his mandate, though forgotten by many, merit highlighting as well. They marked the most important period of modernization and democratization that Montréal had seen since the rise of the RCM.

The creation of the OCPM, which came into being on the same day as the megacity of Montréal and was operational by September of that year,[40] set the tone for the changes to come. An independent and neutral body—its commissioners may neither be elected officials nor municipal employees[41]—the OCPM would eventually grow to approximately twenty-five commissioners including the president, all of whom are appointed by a two-thirds vote on city council. Both city council and the executive committee may mandate the body to hold consultations on any issue. Consultations are also automatically triggered by modifications to the urban master plan that are initiated by city council (but not the borough councils), as well as all measures affecting major institutional or collective infrastructures, ranging from airports, hospitals, universities, train stations, parks, and cultural installations, to major residential, commercial or industrial development projects (either in the business district or anywhere across the city if larger than 25,000 square metres), and classed heritage, cultural or natural sites.[42]

Modelled after Québec's widely respected Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement (BAPE), the province's first permanent public consultation body created by the Lévesque government in 1978, the OCPM's model is believed to be unique in the municipal world.[43] By all accounts, the OCPM has been just as resounding a success as the BAPE before it, if not more so. With the OCPM's careful evaluation of citizen input and expertise, as well as its rigour, integrity, transparency and independence, it has managed to set a new standard for citizen engagement in Montréal and spurred Montrealers to embrace the opportunities it provides in ever greater numbers.[44] The volume of briefs filed has tripled since 2006, with nearly 26,000 people visiting the OCPM's website in 2014 and 1,400 participating in the consultations (25,000 participated over the course of its first decade), while its Facebook and Twitter accounts now reach over 5,000 Montrealers.[45]

Similarly, the wide respect afforded the OCPM has made it difficult for both politicians and developers not to take heed of their reports, though by varying degrees depending on the situation. Its recommendations, while non-binding, are influential and sometimes serve to modify the proposals, especially when recommendations are

supported by a critical mass of citizen interveners or by key actors of civil society considered experts in their domain.[46] As a credible third-party arbiter at the municipal level, the OCPM has inspired cities around the world who are seeking to open up their political processes to citizens.[47] This is not at all to say that Montréal's public consultations regime doesn't suffer from serious gaps and shortcomings, which we will address when we discuss the urban planning regime in Montréal. Its recommendations are first tabled with the all-powerful executive committee, which cherry picks what it finds acceptable. But there is no question that its creation marked a major step forward for Montrealers' participation in the governance of their city, and its entrance onto the scene set the stage for the changes to come.

The City as a Federation of Boroughs: The Tremblay Decentralization

Fresh on the heels of the creation of the OCPM, the second most important change to Montréal's democratic structures in the last two decades (2000-2010)has been the radical strengthening of the borough system. Indeed, many of Union Montréal's most prominent and long-serving councillors had campaigned on the central promise of a far-reaching decentralization program when they first came onto the municipal scene as members of the RCM decades before. Diluted by the Doré administration and abandoned by his successors, the decentralization agenda made its greatest advances ever under the administration of Gérald Tremblay.

Despite the admittedly varied motivations that inspired the reforms, the greater accessibility of borough council meetings, which are located in closer proximity to one's home and attract smaller or larger crowds than those at city council, depending on the issues, have been an obvious invitation to greater attendance by citizens, which many have eagerly embraced. The same can be said for the advent of borough councillors and the resulting increase in local representation, since all councillors can devote more of their time to interacting with residents, in particular in the age of social media where a message to a councillor is a few keyboard clicks away (and some councillors will even respond within a few hours or a day).

The decentralization has also allowed for the strengthening of political communities that are rooted in the boroughs. In the case of the Plateau Mont-Royal or Rosemont-Petite-Patrie, for instance, the dominance of the opposition party, Projet Montréal, has acted as a moderate bulwark against a central administration whose largely car-friendly agenda has often clashed with the more ecological values of the boroughs' residents. In this sense, there has been a democratic benefit to bestowing greater power to the elected officials who are closest to their communities and may better reflect their political values, in a manner not unlike federal systems.

The greater proximity to voters afforded by the borough structure has thus largely found expression through the conventional channels of representative democracy. On a deeper and more participatory democratic level, however, the question of centralization versus decentralization is only one side of the coin. If the councillors to whom power is decentralized fail to actively engage with and involve local residents in the exercise of their powers, then there is ultimately little difference on the level of democratic governance. On this front, the balance sheet among Montréal's boroughs is

thoroughly mixed, with the degree of citizen participation varying widely across the boroughs.

All boroughs have standing consultative committees on urban planning, with many some committees on other issues such as traffic or inter-cultural relations as well. These advisory bodies usually involve a mix of community leaders, experts, politicians and citizens, and are tasked with issuing recommendations to the borough council. Public consultations on important local issues are also organized by many boroughs upon occasion, with Ville-Marie organizing them monthly. The extent to which these consultative mechanisms serve to actually impact policy is a question of debate, however, and here too it varies widely across boroughs. Only a small handful of boroughs are experimenting with elements of participatory democracy, and by and large it is elected officials still calling the shots.

Ultimately, the decentralized borough system has exhibited many of the same strengths and weaknesses as those seen with federal systems: while harmony across jurisdictions may suffer—including the standards for democratic participation—boroughs also gained the *potential* to serve as small-scale laboratories for policies which can then be emulated by other boroughs or expanded across the city. City council has played a poor role in seeking common standard and policies for the whole of the system.

The Plateau Mont-Royal, long considered the heartland of left politics in Montréal, provides many such examples. In 2006, under the Union Montréal borough mayor and one-time RCM councillor, Helen Fotopulos, the Plateau led the way with the first widespread participative budget exercise in North America, involving public assemblies that produced working groups to allocate $1.5 million in capital expenses (residents could also participate via the borough's website).[48] Inspired by the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre's success in pioneering participatory budgets since 1989, it was a highly promising and progressive first step. This experience even gained international recognition. It was an example of how grassroots community organisations can not only influence a political structure but can established a kind of partnership.The participatory budget process was unfortunately discontinued by the subsequent Projet Montréal administration, which cited the $150,000 price tag of the exercise as justification for replacing it with a more circumscribed and purely consultative online budget simulator that cost $5,000.[49] This model of an online "participatory budget" has since been utilized in the Sud-Ouest borough as well. The techno-solutions approach reduces citizen participation, and the human face-to-face disappears eliminating any pretense of participatory democracy.

Appreciated as an enrichment of local democracy by many, the decentralization towards the boroughs has nonetheless led others, such as Denis Coderre, to lament a balkanization of the city's governance. Beginning under Tremblay, in fact—*after* the demergers had gone through—there were already efforts to recentralize power in the mayor's hands. Following a Tremblay-backed reform that was implemented by the Québec government after the 2009 municipal election, the residents of the Ville-Marie borough that represents the downtown core were removed of their right to be democratically represented at the borough level. Under the new rules, the mayor of Montréal automatically becomes the mayor of Ville-Marie and handpicks two city councillors to sit on the borough council with him, who then make up 50% of the seats. This has

effectively disenfranchised those who live downtown. The undemocratic outcome can best be seen with the last election, where Denis Coderre, who was elected mayor on the strength of his support in the peripheral boroughs, was imposed as borough mayor on the residents of the downtown core—where Coderre came in third with only 23% support and all three council seats were filled by opposition members.[50] For nought.

The Montréal Summit and the Decade of Democratic Radical Reforms

The OCPM and present borough structure are perhaps the two most visible and transformative reforms of the Tremblay years, but they were far from the only measures that served to deepen Montréal's culture of participation. As the first mayor of the newly amalgamated Ville de Montréal, Gérald Tremblay was elected on a vow to unite Montrealers following the divisive Bourque years. As the "foundational act" of the new megacity, therefore, Tremblay immediately made good on an election promise to call a Montréal Summit in which citizens from across civil society would gather to lay the direction for the new city.[51] This idea was pioneered by the First Citizens Summit on the Future of Montréal, held in June 2000. Organised by the Urban Ecology Centre of Montréal with urbanists from the four universities of Montréal, it created an affinity and excitement amongst civil society organisations. Many of the candidates for the municipal elections of that year were also present.

The first of its kind anywhere in North America, the officially organised Montréal Summit signalled a turning point for the city that pointed the way to a decade of modernizations across various domains. Months of preparation that began in mini-summits at the borough level ultimately included thousands of participants. However the participants were officially invited by the City of Montréal. These were followed by a series of thematic summits on key questions, like democracy, environment, housing and so on. The process ended with a list of priorities selected for the decision-making summit held on June 4-6, 2002, which was composed of a roundtable of three hundred civil society leaders chaired by Tremblay. Along the way, and before the June concluding summit, a Second Citizens Summit of the Future of Montréal was organized by community activists, university teachers and students, and open to all who wanted to attend. It is at this summit that the proposal of a human rights charter for the citizens of Montréal was first articulated. In other words, citizens were not quite trustful of the good intentions of the new elected politicians, and thus wanted to make sure that an open citizen driven process was held. Where the Montréal Summit was most innovative, however, was in its robust follow-up: taskforces for key domains were established from among the participants with the mandate of executing the various measures adopted, with each provided a budget, civil servants and at least one politician assigned to the file.[52] The process was in fact so successful that the model was replicated a decade later for the equally ambitious Je vois Montréal in 2014, organized to relaunch Montréal after years of corruption imbroglios that darkened Montrealers' faith in their city.

The proposals adopted at the Montréal Summit covered a wide range of domains, from the environment and culture to socio-economic development, with those flowing from the taskforce on municipal democracy perhaps among the most enduring and consequential.[53]

Among the most progressive ideas to emerge from the Montréal Summit was a charter of citizens' rights. After a rigorous two-and-a-half year process piloted by the Taskforce on Democracy that involved widespread public consultations, the Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities was finally adopted unanimously by city council in 2005, and entered into effect in January 1, 2006. The first of its kind in a North American city, the Charter reaffirms Montréal's commitment to the fundamental values of citizen participation, human rights and dignity, diversity and inclusion, social justice, equality, sustainable development, and respect for the environment, and sets out the relationship between citizens and their local government along with concrete expectations. Lauded by the likes of UNESCO and UN-HABITAT, Montréal's Charter has attracted much attention from cities around the world, especially in Latin America and Asia, and has been made available in nine languages online.[54]

Another measure to emerge from the Montréal Summit —and another Canadian first—was a new municipal office of the Ombudsman established in 2002, with the first and current ombudsman appointed unanimously by city council. The Ombudsman has the mandate of investigating complaints by Montrealers who feel they are (or are likely to be) adversely affected by a decision, act or omission of the city or boroughs. The Ombudsman also offers the only available recourse for citizens seeking to ensure compliance with the Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities. Following from her (or his) investigations, the Ombudsman may choose to intervene with the body concerned (city council, executive committee or borough council) on behalf of the citizens affected.[55] In the wake of the Summit, the city also established a new Auditor-General to oversee the city's administration, review the approval of all public contracts, and publish an annual report.

Included in the Charter of Rights and Responsibilities was a new citizens' right to initiative, a tool implemented in 2010 which allows Montrealers to trigger an OCPM consultation on their own subjects of choice, thereby complementing the body's consultations mandated by politicians. All residents of Montréal over the age of 15 may initiate a public consultation on a matter of concern to either the borough or city, by presenting a petition signed by at least 5% of the total eligible (i.e., 15+) population in the borough (capped at 5,000 people for more populous boroughs), or by 15,000 people for city-wide petitions. The borough or city is then required to publish a full review and analysis of the consultation and to provide a detailed explanation of its decisions made in consequence.

In the spring of 2012, the OCPM organized the first ever citizen-initiated public consultation on the subject of urban agriculture, after 29,800 Montrealers (twice the minimum requirement) signed the enabling petition.[56] Approximately 1,500 people participated in the process, and the OCPM released its fifty-page report in May 2012. In July 2015, the city announced the launch of another citizen-initiated public consultation, this time on decreasing the city's dependence on fossil fuels.[57] Mayor Coderre pre-empted another large citizen mobilisation by decreeing a OCPM consultation. It drew over 3500 participants on-line and in real life with over 150 briefs presented at the hearings.

Following an accelerating trend in recent years which also flows from commitments to transparency made in the Charter of Rights and Responsibilities, today all city council

meetings (since 2007) and most borough council meetings are livestreamed and posted online through partnerships with Montréal's WebTV solidarity co-op. Since 2012—when interim mayor Michael Applebaum, who was later arrested in office for corruption, attempted to improve the public's trust in their political institutions (Montréal's political history is full of ironies…)—the once notoriously secretive executive committee opened its doors to cameras as well, making 90% of its agenda available online the day before. (Issues pertaining to public security and contract negotiations will remain in camera.)[58]

By the standards of transparency set by other major Canadian cities, however, one area where Montréal was late to the game was on open data. After much pressure from civil society group Montréal Ouvert,[59] the city finally initiated its open data portal in October 2011, followed by an official policy on open data in 2012.[60]

Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: Bylaw P6 and the Curtailing of Democratic Rights

The democratic advances described above were important steps in the right direction. Yet the democratic record of the Tremblay administration is mixed, owing to significant controversies that marred his later years.

A first blemish on this record relates to the issue of policing. Much as elsewhere, the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM) has been exhibiting increasingly authoritarian tendencies in its policing of demonstrations since at least the mid-1990s, and in 2005, the U.N.'s Human Rights Council reprimanded the SPVM for its widening recourse to mass arrests.[61] The Tremblay administration opted not to respond, however, and this dubious tactic continued to flourish under Tremblay's watch, as did the police practice of invoking the Québec Highway Safety Code's provisions on blocking traffic (Article 500.1) to crack down on protests. This latter practice has now been invalidated by a Québec superior court judge, who found in November 2015 that the Code as presently written (and applied) violated citizens' right to protest as guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.[62]

It is extremely rare that mayors in Montréal will criticize the police force. Yet in 2012, the historic eruption of nearly six months of mass demonstrations during the "Maple Spring" student protests spurred the Tremblay administration to take a rather large step further than an omission, as it decided to formally expand the discretionary powers of the police. At the height of the conflict in May, the city passed highly controversial modifications to Bylaw P6 that restricted Montrealers' rights to protest by imposing a requirement, backed by steep fines ranging from $500 to $3,000 for repeat offences, for organizers to have itineraries approved by police eight hours in advance. It became clear later that this was done because of pressure from the provincial Liberal government of Charest. The effect of the change was to criminalize non-violent dissent. Approximately 3,400 people were charged by the SPVM under the reworked bylaw as of June 2014,[63] often involving heavy-handed police tactics, kettling, and mass arrests of hundreds of peaceful protesters at once, at times before the protests even began.[64] Across Québec, 3,509 people were arrested in demonstrations held between February 16 and September 3 of 2012 alone, with 83% of them the product of mass arrests, while another 1,500 people were arrested in 2013 following protests linked to the Maple Spring.[65]

We must always be vigilant when democratic rights are curtailed, but even more so when they result in certain communities are being disproportionately targeted. The SPVM's selective enforcement of Bylaw P6 has raised such concerns over political profiling of youth and left-wing activists. A 2015 report by the Ligue des droits et libertés found that 83% of all protests in Québec that failed to provide an itinerary to police in 2013 and 2014—in Montréal, just over half of all demonstrations refused to—were nonetheless tolerated. Of the 17% that were suppressed, however, 76% were linked to the student movement, while 11% were anti-capitalist in nature and 9% were to protest police brutality (4% were "other," including environmentalist, anti-P6, and anti-colonialist causes).[66] Such an asymmetrical application raises serious questions about whether protesters were being targeted for what they did (protesting without an approved itinerary), or rather for who they were and where they were at a particular moment.

Predictably, charges levelled under P6 found themselves repeatedly contested in court, with some SPVM officers even found to have fabricated first-person accounts of the infractions in order to justify the crackdown.[67] After the municipal court judge in this case issued a scathing rebuke of the SPVM's tactics and criticized the vague wording of the bylaw in February 2015, the city finally responded by withdrawing all 1,956 cases pending. As of June 2015, 83% of all charges issued under P6 between 2012 and 2014 resulted in either acquittals, the withdrawal of charges, or the stay of proceedings. The current mayor, Denis Coderre, has nonetheless defended the bylaw, saying only that its application by police would be reviewed.

Brown Envelopes and Black Eyes: The Fall of Gérald Tremblay

The second and larger stain on Tremblay's democratic record is not hard to identify, for it hung like a dark cloud over his final years and will likely continue to tarnish his legacy for years to come. Following two years of mounting pressure on the provincial Liberal government of Jean Charest, the Charbonneau corruption inquiry was established in November 2011, setting the stage for a series of dramatic allegations that targeted the mayor's inner circle. The accusations snowballed into a sequence of massive corruption scandals that plunged city hall into turmoil and cast a long pall over Montréal that lifted only with the municipal election of November 2013.

The accusations linked Tremblay's party, Union Montréal, to a system of collusion and trafficking of influence with engineering, architecture and construction firms, most notably surrounding a now-cancelled $356-million water-meter contract—the largest in the city's history—that went to a firm controlled by Tony Accurso, a construction magnate and alleged fraudster with supposed ties to the Mafia.[68] The accusations reached Tremblay's former second-in-command and chairman of the executive committee, Frank Zampino, who was discovered soon after having left office to have twice taken a luxury cruise on Accurso's yacht. Zampino is today suspected by police of being a central figure behind the conspiracy to rig the bidding process in Accurso's favour and are only now facing trial.[69]

In May 2012, Zampino was arrested on charges of fraud, breach of trust and conspiracy—in relation to a *separate* case. He is accused of being the mastermind behind a scheme to rig another bidding process in favour of a construction company owned by Paolo Catania, one of Québec's biggest real-estate developers, who was arrested the

same day. This case involved a $300-million residential development project called Faubourg Contrecoeur, awarded to Catania's company in collaboration with Dessau.[70] In fact, as chairman of the executive committee from 2002 to 2008, Zampino was at the heart of several other hot-button issues, including the Griffintown redevelopment, though no allegations in this affair have yet come to light.

As the Charbonneau inquiry continued, the public heard of hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not millions, collected illegally by Union Montréal (businesses cannot legally donate to political parties in Québec). A portrait was painted of civil servants and politicians amassing a fortune in bribes, in exchange for awarding inflated contracts to construction companies who made tens of millions from kickbacks.[71] With city business paralyzed by the scandals, Tremblay resigned in November 2012, a week after he was personally cited at the inquiry as being aware of the criminal strategems flourishing under his watch.

Tremblay has always maintained his complete innocence and complained of being a victim of betrayal by his closest confidantes. An affidavit released in August 2015, however, showed that the province's anti-corruption squad, the Unité permanente anti-corruption (UPAC), believes Tremblay indeed knew. UPAC believes the water-meter contract was but one instance of a broad system of corruption and collusion that was in place between January 2004 and December 2009, in which engineering, architecture, and construction firms received favours in exchange for illegally financing the mayor's party.

Tremblay's resignation in 2012 sparked a sequence of caretaker administrations, including the first interim mayor, Michael Applebaum, who took the reins at city hall on a vow to tackle corruption and restore public trust. Seven months later, he was arrested in office, and stood trial on fourteen criminal counts including fraud, breach of trust, corruption and conspiracy stemming from his time as borough mayor of Cote-des-Neiges-Notre-Dame-de-Grace from 2002 to 2012. Bribes worth tens of thousands of dollars made to Applebaum are a central part of the accusations, although the former mayor maintains his innocence on all counts.[72] Applebaum is now in jail for a number of years.

After all this, the newspaper headlines on April.15,2017 screamed that "Crime controls the towing industry" in Montréal. We are informed that the Hells Angels and Mafia bullied competitors, according to the city's inspector general.

2004-2015: Projet Montréal and the Rise of the "Green" Opposition

Shortly after Gérald Tremblay was elected as mayor of the newly merged city of Montréal, a new political party of the center-left emerged that would grow to mark the megacity's first decade. Co-founded in 2004 by urbanist Richard Bergeron and community activist Claude Mainville, Projet Montréal arrived onto the municipal scene with wide-eyed visions of what the sustainable city of the 21st century must be. Its founding pillar of sustainable development is shared with some Greens. The driving force was Richard Bergeron, who was single-minded about the need for street cars. One of the co- authors of this chapter was solicited by Bergeron who was surprised to learn that there were that many anglophones in Montréal, and that an English-language

version of his programme would be useful. Somewhat later a four hour taped interview was conducted of this politician in the making who firmly believed that he was going to the win the elections. The interview revealed a conventional political view of Montréal, peppered with a few new ideas,

Projet Montréal is a program-based party like the RCM and similar such parties since, with its detailed policy program defined by members in congresses held every two years. It also shares many of the RCM's early values, although with a marked shift of emphasis appropriate to a century defined by the twin crises of climate change and urbanization: less Karl Marx and more Jane Jacobs and Jan Gehl, the Danish architect and urbanist who's one of the main influencers of the New Urbanist movement.

With its overriding goal of improving urban quality of life, cutting car dependence and reversing urban sprawl, Projet Montréal focused its policies on developing walkable, socially mixed and human-scaled neighbourhoods that are centred on public and active transit, quality public spaces, and small-scale independent businesses that are rooted in their neighbourhoods. In sum, where the RCM was largely a party of social activists and left-wing intellectuals with a large membership, Projet Montréal is often viewed as a party of ' experts' (with some urban planners) and environmentalists—an image which is well earned, though its core candidates and partisans also include some community activists, teachers and academics, journalists, and students. Its support base skews younger than the other parties, and while less present in anglo communities than was the RCM, they are nonetheless a mix of francophone and anglophone, composed largely of partisans of the New Democrats, Greens, Parti Québécois, and left-wing Québec solidaire, though with a smattering of Liberals as well.

Projet Montréal quickly established a base in the Plateau Mont-Royal, with Bergeron, its three-times mayoral candidate, winning their first and only council seat in 2005 while receiving 8.5% support for mayor across the city. The party has greatly expanded its reach in every election since its founding, obtaining ten of sixty-five city council seats in 2009, when Bergeron came in third for mayor in 2009 behind Tremblay and Harel, with 25.45% of the vote,[73] and then twenty in 2013, though Bergeron's vote share for mayor remained stagnant.

Much like the RCM before it, the party has undergone a gradual evolution over the years in which it has sought to moderate its image and burnish its economic credentials in a bid at widening its electoral base. After Bergeron's second unsuccessful run for mayor in 2009, the party followed the RCM's path of moderating its commitments, with the party's members approving the removal of many of the more transformative components from its program in the lead-up to the 2013 election. The party's commitments to reducing transit fares and to implementing free transit downtown for all were replaced by a push for a reduced "social fare" for low-income earners, and its commitments to constructing social and affordable housing were significantly weakened.[74] Admittedly, many of the modifications may have been motivated by the prioritization of sustainable development over social issues, considering the costly nature of the party's signature promises regarding urban redevelopment and the expansion of transit.

Yet where the above modifications may be defended from a financial standpoint, the party's watering down of its commitments on participatory democracy is more

problematic. Gone were promises of implementing proportional representation in the voting system, participatory budgets at both borough and city levels, neighbourhood councils (the RCM's never-delivered promise), and citizens consultative committees. Most disappointingly, the Plateau's new borough administration after 2009, led by Luc Ferrandez, cited budgetary concerns in cancelling North America's first widespread experiment with a truly participatory budget exercise, implemented under the prior administration in 2006, to replace it with a purely consultative (and pedagogic) online budget simulator. This retreat towards a more conventional idea of representative democracy is not without an echo of the RCM's transformation upon electing its first members.

Despite these weaknesses, however, Projet Montréal remains a progressive party. Its policies continue to favour a social economy, small business, and artists,[75] while its vehement opposition to Tremblay's modifications to Bylaw P6 reaffirmed the party's democratic instincts and its defence of Montréal's social movements.

Moreover, there may be an important distinction to be made between Richard Bergeron's discourse and positions and those of the party's councillors and membership. For instance, even when members voted bold policies as in the first two platforms, the urbanist leader never exhibited any passions for democratization or addressing social inequalities. Internal discontent with his leadership often surfaced, most notably after Bergeron made disparaging comments about homeless out-of-towners treating Montréal as a "vacation colony," and again during the 2013 election campaign when he seemed to embrace the police and backpedal on the party's opposition to P6 in a radio interview. Patently, Bergeron's core project was the physical and technical redesign of cities, with his focus on densification and active and public transit often overriding concerns around gentrification or social injustices. His credentials as a democratic and social progressive were thus a matter of some debate.

The actions of Projet Montréal's two borough administrations in the Plateau and Rosemont-Petite-Patrie, which were first elected in 2009 and then massively re-elected in 2013 with margins surpassing 50%, further contribute to this interpretation. In addition to both boroughs' developing biking infrastructure, expanding pedestrian and green spaces, discouraging car use, combatting climate change (through mandated white roofs, for example), and promoting urban agriculture and sustainable development, they have also implemented some of the most ambitious and progressive social policies in the city, most notably regarding social and affordable housing and rent controls for artists' studios.

Projet Montréal today counts over 2,400 members and is the longest existing political party on council, though it is currently traversing a difficult period following Bergeron's third defeat in 2013. Soon after the election, Bergeron was lured by the freshly elected Mayor Coderre to sit on his executive committee as the member responsible for major urban design projects and the strategy for the downtown core. Unable to refuse such an opportunity, Bergeron resigned as leader and left the party to sit as an independent.

The departure of the founder and leader is never an easy occurrence for a party. It can, however, become an opportunity under the right circumstances. Bergeron was

Projet Montréal's intellectual father who garnered a great degree of cross-partisan and media respect (if not affection), and he did much to popularize New Urbanism in Montréal. Yet Bergeron is also a Drapeau-ite at heart—he frequently cites the former mayor as an inspiration—whose lofty schemes, while inspirational to many, also overshadowed the social conscience of the party and may have turned off many voters more concerned with the bread-and-butter issues of urban life.

Illustrative of this is that soon after the 2013 election, the party became more active on the social front, demanding more money be set for the purchase of terrains for the construction of social housing[76] and requesting additional powers from the Québec government to require their inclusion in residential developments. Indeed, despite the fact that 22,500 eligible families are currently awaiting subsidized housing in Montréal, the present guidelines are non-binding due to the lack of this legal authority.[77]

Ferrandez was been the interim leader of Projet Montréal since Bergeron's resignation.. Ferrandez has stated that the party must shift its focus to neighbourhood quality of life and to favouring diverse small-scale interventions over grandiose schemes, and he has sought to strengthen the party's credibility around the economy, job creation, and issues of affordability.[78] For many Montrealers outside the central boroughs, however, Fernandez's image as an anti-car crusader may obstruct his efforts at moderating the party's image.

The party's problems, moreover, may not be over just yet: since Bergeron's defection, the mayor has also lured the party's parliamentary leader, Rosemont-Petite-Patrie's Marc-André Gadoury (conveniently bringing the administration within a seat of holding a majority on council), while another councillor from the same borough, Erika Duschene, resigned from the caucus to sit as an independent. Little is definitively known about the motivations for the defections, though storm clouds can be spotted over the horizon. While the allure of greater policy influence seems to have motivated the first two—both Bergeron and Gadoury expressed frustrations at the limitations posed by their opposition roles—the third seems to have been motivated by disagreements over the leadership styles of Ferrandez and to a lesser extent, another borough Mayor Croteau.[79]

Projet Montréal's nature as a program- and member-based party will likely ensure its continued strength in the city's densely populated inner districts. Beyond that, however, the party's prospects will greatly depend on the selection of its new leader, and so Valerie Plante was elected head. The seeming popularity of the first-term incumbent, Liberal Party loyalist Denis Coderre, with his media savvy approach to everything will be hard to beat. Yet regardless of its success in the next electoral contest, Projet Montréal has already re-energized city politics in Montréal, infused it with a new freshness and has kept watch on some of the more gross actions of the current city government. It has managed to attract a younger inexperienced line of followers who know virtually nothing of the history of the urban left. Yet the greatest sign of the party's influence may well be in the emulation and adoption of some of its ideas by the administrations of Coderre, to whom we now turn, presently counting its founder, Richard Bergeron, among his inner circle. The new leader Valerie Plante is trying to wash clear the stamp of Bergeron on her Party.

2013-2015: Denis Coderre, the Media Mayor

On a systemic level, little suggests that the endemic corruption of the Tremblay years is gone for good, and arguably, inadequate measures have been taken to ensure this is so. Yet with this caveat in mind, the election of November 2013 nonetheless allowed Montrealers to turn the page on a dark chapter of the city's history. Former federal Liberal minister Denis Coderre, heading the slate of candidates that counted the most former councillors of Tremblay's Union Montréal, was elected with just under a third of the popular vote. It was the worst result for any mayor since 1940,[80] and only 42% of Montrealers exercised their right to vote, representing a slight increase over the 39.4% of 2009. All the same, Coderre quickly imposed himself as mayor with the help of a populist flair, an aggressive and energetic media (and Twitter) presence, and a shrewd understanding of political dynamics. The contrast in style from Gérald Tremblay could not be more stark.

With Canada's cities buckling under a lack of powers and resources, Coderre has fought hard to increase Montréal's clout through alliance-building, and he has sewn closer ties with Mayor Régis Labeaume of Québec City in an effort at strengthening their negotiating hand with the province and winning more powers for their cities. He has embraced a more metropolitan approach to the city's governance, while also nourishing warmer and more cooperative relations with the province's regions, where wariness towards Montréal has often been the rule. And he has expanded Montréal's international presence as well, most notably creating a new Bureau de relations internationales and hosting a June 2015 summit on combatting "radicalization" that was attended by twenty-three world mayors.

In addition, the pending arrival of Montréal's 375th anniversary in 2017 has served as a catalyst for a widening plethora of new projects launched by the city to mark the occasion, ranging from a revamped Ste-Catherine Street which would widen pedestrian spaces and include heated sidewalks in the winter, to covering of a portion of the Ville-Marie expressway to make way for a new public square in front of the Hotel de Ville—a project assigned to Richard Bergeron—to a new "urban promenade" to connect the river to the mountain through a range of pedestrian-friendly measures and visual cues.

In parallel with the administration's projects, a renewed dynamism is emanating from below as well. The Je Vois Montréal summit held in November 2014, launched by BMO in collaboration with the Chambre de commerce du Montréal métropolitain, gathered 1,500 citizens from across civil society to propose initiatives aimed at giving a fresh impulsion to the city. In the wake of the summit, Coderre established an office devoted to facilitating the realization of the 181 commitments made, with the website Je Fais MTL launched to allow citizens to follow up on their progress.

The Coderre administration has also advanced on its signature commitment to make Montréal a "Smart City," though exactly what this means remains unclear. Much of the plan is focused on populist measures like making free Wi-Fi available in key areas of the city or at mapping the city's infamous potholes, or else at increasing the efficiency of certain services like snow removal, traffic and parking management, and public transit. There is great potential in such a plan for improving public services and boosting the economy. Citizens and civil society organizations could participate more

fully in democratic oversight and governance, as well in the development of green urban solutions.[81] So far, the administration has stepped up the release of datasets on the city's online open data portal, but it remains to be seen how comprehensive the release of democratically pertinent information will be.[82] As yet, there is little to suggest that Coderre's "Smart City" is a particularly democratic or green one. It will all depend on the plan's implementation.

In the crucial domains of public transit, development, and democracy, moreover, Coderre's record thus far is far from admirable, and in many instances represents an important step backwards from the Tremblay years. During the last election campaign, Coderre was approached by a prominent member of the Taskforce on Democracy, who said that he was proud to be a member. Coderre, replied, "…don't be concerned I am democracy". Three years into his first mandate, he abolished the Taskforce of citizens, and abolished the Mayor's annual prize for democracy, which honoured citizens promoting it in the city. We were told during all this by the Mayor's appendage, that something else will replace all this past. To date, nothing has reversed the slide backwards.

Among Coderre's most troubling characteristics, we find his marked tendency towards centralization. Upon being elected, Coderre quickly set to work drafting a massive administrative and borough financing reform which was never proposed during the election campaign. Defended by Coderre as a move to streamline public services and render their delivery more equitable and harmonious across the different boroughs, they were vehemently attacked by the Projet Montréal opposition as a power and cash grab that would weaken local democracy and favour the periphery at the expense of the inner boroughs, who have been forced to raise taxes or cut services to absorb the blow. Under the reform's new funding formula, some of the city's densest inner boroughs will see their transfers from the central administration cut by between 10.8% and 13.7%, while outlying boroughs—Coderre's base of support—would be the biggest winners.[83] This starving of the central boroughs bodes nothing well for their aim of attracting families, and may seriously damage efforts to halt and reverse urban sprawl.

Coderre's time as mayor has often been characterized by a glaring disconnect between words and action, with this nowhere more visible than in his record on the environment, green space, public transit, and urban planning. In January of 2015, the Coderre administration released the ten-year land-use and development plan for the urban agglomeration, focused on densification, transit-oriented development, increasing public transit use, expanding protected green space, and preserving heritage.[84] Specifically, it vowed to increase protected green and to increase the share of public and active transit use. Yet on both fronts, the Coderre administration's actions have flown in the opposite direction of the stated objectives. On preservation of green spaces, a massive housing development planned (5500 houses)for the northwestern tip of the island threatens to raze 185 hectares of nearly untouched grassland and wilderness home to 70 bird species. Recently the announcement that Coderre will chop down over 1000 trees on Parc Drapeau shuttering the popular summer swimming pool very much used by the working-class people of the city. On public transit, the STM was forced by Coderre's budget cutbacks to reduce service and raise fares for the first time in nearly fifteen years (to which we will return), and the transit agency has been playing catch-up ever since.

In sum, Coderre's election breathed new life into the office of the mayoralty in certain areas, with a renewed dynamism noted in the realm of intergovernmental relations in particular. Yet two years into his mandate, there are rising concerns about the true balance between image and substance. Denis Coderre has often resorted to headline-grabbing announcements—such as keeping bars open until 6am, fully pedestrianizing Ste-Catherine Street, or making 2015 "the year of public transit"[85]—which all too often he fails to deliver. More seriously, he has exhibited centralizing and antidemocratic instincts, as well as a lack of sensibility and understanding around the importance of protecting green space and built heritage, engaging in careful urban planning, and promoting sustainable development. Each of these areas will be discussed in greater detail in the sections that follow.

Urban Planning

Up until the late 1970s, the massive new infrastructure developments and building constructions launched to modernize Montréal's downtown core under Drapeau were built with little regard for either history or harmony, and even less for democratic participation. Victorian-era heritage, such as the mansions of the old anglo élite in the famed Golden Square Mile—the older French heritage was more respected—were routinely demolished to make way for new constructions, and entire working-class neighbourhoods between the old city and the business district were razed to the ground. Between 1957 and 1974, 28,000 homes were demolished in Montréal to make way for the cranes of "progress," which only hastened the flight to the suburbs of the middle class. [86]

Mentalities began to change slowly throughout the eighties, as efforts were made to slow the exodus to the suburbs by revitalizing downtown neighourhoods. It wasn't until the arrival to power of Jean Doré's RCM in 1986, however, that a true paradigm shift took place that broke definitively with Drapeau's functionalism. Montréal's first urban master plan, released by the Doré administration, sought to maintain and enhance Montréal's character as a "human-scaled" city and engage a shift toward sustainable urban development guided by citizen engagement. Priority was given to densifying the central boroughs, reducing car dependence, and luring people back from the suburbs by enhancing the urban quality of life.[87]

The new planning regime was not without its weaknesses, however. The master plan was conceived as an evolving vision document and framework to guide the city's actions, rather than as a set of fixed regulations.[88] Very quickly after its adoption, a "culture of derogation" set in that saw height restrictions and zoning modifications (to name a couple examples) treated less and less as firm constraints and increasingly as vague expressions of orientations that are open to interpretation and questionings on their pertinence to specific cases.[89] This culture of derogation has remained to this day, with popular mobilization the only real avenue to contesting the granting of these exemptions

These shortcomings notwithstanding, the years immediately preceding and following from the plan's release saw vast new redevelopment schemes that breathed new life into the downtown core, most notably including the faubourgs around Old Montréal and later the award-winning Quartier International business district. While

not all of the lofty ambitions expressed in the plan were equally successful, the qualitative leap forward for Montréal represented nothing short of a revolution in urban planning. The culture shift was enduring, with the Tremblay administration's 2004 master plan serving to confirm and amplify the new direction engaged by Doré.

The Megacity of Montréal's First Master Plan

Following broad-based outreach and public consultations, the new plan was adopted in November 2004, later accompanied by an array of complementary plans including the transportation plan (and pedestrian charter), the sustainable development plan, a plan to protect and enhance natural environments, an affordable housing strategy, and a policy for protecting heritage buildings.

The 2004 master plan follows in a straight line from the RCM's first plan, with its central objective of sustainable development and its emphasis on decreasing car dependence by enhancing urban quality of life and favouring densely inhabited, human-scaled and transit-oriented. Yet it also possesses the same weaknesses as the 1992 plan, namely around its enforcement and respect. Indeed, while highly ambitious, many of the promises made in the plan have gotten left by the wayside, with one of the most regrettable being its commitment to fix annual targets for decreasing the ratio of car use and reducing the presence of cars on the island.[90] This was supposed to be included in the transportation plan, but has still never materialized. As explained in the transportation section, the consequences of this failure have been to undermine the advances achieved on other fronts.

The new plan was the first for the new megacity of Montréal, and it's difficult to understate the extent to which the municipal reorganization thoroughly transformed Montréal's planning regime. The vast decentralization that preceded (and was meant to prevent) the demergers transferred responsibility for all urban planning regulations to the boroughs, with each composing their own local chapter of the 2004 urban master plan according to the orientations and criteria established therein. As a result of the reforms, the city no longer has a central urban planning office. All of Montréal's boroughs now have advisory committees for urban planning composed of experts and citizens, but they most often meet in private and don't hold public hearings.[91] A new advisory council on heritage was also created called the Conseil du patrimoine de Montréal.

While positive in many regards, the decentralization involved a step backward in regards to democratic urban planning processes. Before, all changes to the master plan were automatically referred to the OCPM for a city-wide consultation, but the new powers devolved to the boroughs were not accompanied by the same level of obligation around consultations, and in the process the role of the OCPM was greatly reduced. The boroughs may still choose to ask the city to call upon the OCPM, but they do this at the expense of ceding control over the project to the central administration.[92] They also have other, less onerous, less independent and less credible mechanisms at their disposal, which they sometimes prefer.[93]

The boroughs are now only under the more minimal requirements laid out in the weak and contradictory Lévesque-era provincial Loi sur l'aménagement et l'urbanisme

(LAU), which demand neither advance publicity of the hearings, nor a separate information session prior to them , nor any obligations around access to documentation. The consultations can be led by politicians rather than independent commissioners, and they have no obligation to produce any recommendations.[94] In practice; this makes it much easier for zoning changes and other modifications to the urban plan to be passed with a simple vote of the borough council, following from consultations led by an ad hoc committee of councillors that may act more as a smokescreen than a true forum for the input of citizens and civil society.

With the inadequacy of the public consultation process in the boroughs, the Loi sur l'aménagement et l'urbanisme (LAU) remains the only 'guarantor', albeit an extremely weak one, of citizen participation. The LAU allows for a local referendum to be triggered if enough residents deemed to be directly affected by a decision rendered by the borough council (such as a zoning change in one's immediate vicinity) sign a citizens' register. In these cases, boroughs most often opt to abandon the proposal rather than devote the resources to a public fight. Yet this has incited some boroughs to take advantage of the LAU's weaknesses around public consultations to opt for sneakier methods, such as launching minimal publicity so that residents aren't made aware of the proposals. [95] The OCPM can be brought into the boroughs to do a local public consultation, but the local politicians balk at the cost.

The municipal reorganization and attendant reforms therefore completely transformed the way Montréal plans major projects, which now fall in a jurisdictional grey zone between the central administration and the boroughs. Without any efficient and transparent central planning office, major urban projects can be headed either by the central administration (in collaboration with the borough), in which case it (usually) goes through the OCPM, or else left to the borough (in which case it often doesn't). Montréal's charter grants city council (in practice, the executive committee) the right to take control of a project from a borough if it deems the project significant enough to warrant it.[96]

The most problematic effects of this administrative dilemma can be seen with the first major project engaged after the municipal reorganization, in the historic neighbourhood of Griffintown in the Sud-Ouest borough. This case, to which we now turn, also shines an unflattering light on the most fatal flaw of Montréal's urban planning regime: the political power of private developers.

Griffintown: Private Interests and the Failure of City Planning

With the building of the Lachine canal in the early 19th century and the subsequent arrival of the railway, the area stretching south and west from the business district emerged as the birthplace of industrial activity in Canada and the home of Irish immigrants fleeing the Famine, with a working-class population that soared to 45,000 by 1847.[97] A series of disaster and then the Great Depression signalled its long and steady decline, however, with the closure of the Lachine canal in 1970 delivering the *coup de grace*. By 1971, only eight hundred residents remained in the area, which had been rezoned strictly industrial by Drapeau in 1963, and it plunged into a no man's land on the western edge of Vieux-Montréal, scarred by vacant lots and abandoned buildings.

In August of 2006, Devimco, a big-name developer known primarily for its Dix30 big-box suburban shopping and entertainment complex (or "lifestyle centre") on the south shore, proposed a massive redevelopment scheme that would effectively rebuild the historic heart of the neighbourhood from scratch.

From the beginning, the city and borough worked hand in hand with the developer, even inviting Devimco to collaborate in the writing of the PPU for the Peel-Wellington sector in Griffintown's southeast quadrant, which was explicitly tailored around the promoter's project.[98] Despite the scale, sensitivity and strategic location of the redevelopment, the OCPM was excluded in favour of a brief and partial public consultation process in early 2008 led by the borough mayor and approved by the Tremblay administration.[99] With critics already dismissing the consultations as a charade, the Tremblay administration then short-circuited the process by declaring its support for the project before the hearings had begun.

The $1.3 billion megaproject quite literally bulldozed through the history and character of the area, featuring big-box commercial development, high-rise condos, an entertainment complex, office space, and two hotels spread across a surface area of 225,000 square metres.[100] The redevelopment also included social and affordable housing and new parks and public squares, and it was designed around the city's first planned tramway line, included within its 2007 transportation plan—at the same time as it called for the widening of streets and the inclusion of 5,000 underground parking spaces.[101]

Devimco's incoherent something-for-everyone approach seemed designed to avoid controversy.[102] Yet the public and media outcry was overwhelming. The Conseil du patrimoine came out solidly against it in 2008, decrying Devimco's proposal to destroy the historic street configuration and arguing that its project, which called for expropriations and the demolition of many of the area's historic buildings, failed to respect the industrial and working-class Irish heritage of the neighbourhood.[103] Fuelled by the sham consultations that led to the adoption of the Peel-Wellington PPU in 2008, critics worried that the storied neighbourhood would be wiped clear to make way for a soulless and cookie-cutter condoville surrounded by some of the city's poorest neighbourhoods.

The proximity between the Tremblay administration and Devimco was at the heart of critics' accusations. Devimco's advisor on strategy had even been in charge of economic development for the Tremblay administration until two years prior.[104] And indeed, the city went to great lengths to favour the company, reserving the entire sector coveted by Devimco to protect them from competition and real-estate speculation.[105] This enraged housing activists, who had spent years demanding the city reserve the area's many vacant lots and abandoned buildings for social housing, yet who met with nothing but rebuffs. This was the beginning of a very long fight, as the Griffintown project quickly became the most controversial redevelopment scheme seen in Montréal in decades.[106]

In the end, it was the economic and financial crisis of 2008 that did more to modify the project than all the citizen opposition. The slowdown hit real-estate particularly hard, forcing Devimco to reduce the scale of the project and prolong its implementation

into phases, while the city ultimately lifted the reserve on terrains, which opened the floodgates for other developers to rush in.[107] Now well advanced, the rebaptized "District Griffin" no longer includes an entertainment complex in the Peel basin and covers about a third of the original area, with its numerous phases distributed across the Peel-Wellington sector. It includes a larger residential component, maintains the historic street configuration, and protects more heritage buildings. Yet its character, unfortunately, is largely the same as before, with mostly fifteen-to-twenty-storey high-rises, an upscale hotel, and big-box retail chains like Winners and Metro on ground level.

There is near-unanimous agreement today that the development was severely botched, and both the city and borough have since been playing catch-up in trying to limit the damage. A new PPU for the entire 92-hectare neighbourhood was adopted in 2013, which zoned much of the remaining area low-rise and called for an array of measures to reduce car traffic, expand public and green spaces, attract creative talent, and encourage active transit, often through innovative and high-quality designs targeting the public domain. Yet Griffintown, now one of Montréal's most trendy up-and-coming neighbourhoods, has undergone intensive gentrification that will prove extremely difficult to reverse. The minimal social mixity, lack of services for families, and inadequate public transit—in particular after the abandoning of the tramway—remain serious obstacles to the emergence of a diverse, sustainable, and liveable community.

Ultimately, Griffintown may still emerge as a passable eclectic neighbourhood (if by accident), though Montréal has sadly missed the chance to pilot a truly world-class and coherent urban redevelopment. One need only re-read Jane Jacobs classic on urban planning and view the excellent film on her vision of urban development, recently released, called 'Citizen Jane'.

Blast from the Past: Coderre and the Return of "Willy-Nilly" Development

One would have hoped that the Griffintown debacle be remembered as an important lesson on how *not* to plan urban development. Yet cut from the same pro-business Liberal cloth as Gérald Tremblay, Mayor Denis Coderre appears to be rushing headlong towards the same errors. We'll recall that the administration's ten-year land-use and development plan vowed to nearly double the amount of protected green space on the island—yet simultaneously, the administration announced plans for a massive housing development project on 185 hectares of nearly untouched grassland and wilderness in Pierrefonds, a suburban borough on the West Island. Despite attempts at greenwashing by the developers and administration, the development would undoubtedly lead to increased car traffic and sprawl, while environmental groups have termed the plan a "disaster" for the area's precious biodiversity that will lead to ecosystem "collapse."[108] Called the "last re-naturalized agricultural lands" on Montréal Island by the Sierra Club Québec, the wet meadows count as many as 160 bird species (ten of them endangered), as well as coyote, deer, and vole populations, all of which would be harmed by the development.[109]

Heritage and development activists are raising the alarm. Riled by the Coderre administration's manoeuvrings around the Maison Alcan, its plans to raise the height

limits for high-rises in certain areas including the Gay Village, and its support of the Pierrefonds housing development, Phyllis Lambert, a well-known heritage conservationist and architect has compared Coderre's heavy-handed manners to those of Jean Drapeau, accusing the mayor of taking Montréal "back to the '80s" with his "willy-nilly" development that follows the mayor's whims rather than any cohesive plan or longer term vision.[110]

Events since the Pierrefonds controversy have further cemented this emerging narrative around Coderre. In the Sud-Ouest's St-Henri, one of Montréal's most emblematic and storied neighbourhoods, work on the new Turcot Interchange was briefly interrupted after the discovery of the vestiges of an 18th-century village that lies at the origins of the once-important leather tanning industry in Canada. Archeologists unearthed the surprisingly well-preserved foundations of about twenty buildings from Saint-Henri-des-Tanneries—which were then entirely destroyed. The city and province cited the importance of the new interchange and the location of the ruins on the site of a planned sewer collector. Heritage activists from across the country, as well the borough mayor and entire borough council, decried the swiftness of the decision. Yet to the shock and dismay of many, the bulldozers went ahead.[111]

The Ongoing House Crisis

The right to housing is slowly being recognized as fundamental. But we have a way to go. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Section 25,par.1) signed by Canada in 1948 as part of the right to an adequate standard of living could not be clearer. The International Agreement on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Section 1, par.1); as part of the right to an adequate standard of living , Québec signed on April 21, 1976; the International Agreement on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (Section 5, par. 3,ii), as part of the right to equality in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, an agreement signed by Québec on May 10,1978; the International Agreement on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (Section 14, par.2,h) an agreement signed by Québec on October 20,1981 are important documents the values of which could not be clearer. In addition the Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities, adopted by city council unanimously, under its chapter 2, 'Economic and Social Life' Article 18 commits the City of Montréal to a forward housing policy to help the neediest.

Yet in Canada, one of the richest countries in the world we face the following painful facts.

The latest Statistics Canada figures inform us that 8% of Canadians are homeless. In Montréal average of 550 young street people seek housing daily. Louise Fournier who worked for the Douglas Hospital in her study published in the 1980s determined that there were 30,000 homeless in Montréal. This was contested by Mayor Coderre who commissiones a one-day study that concluded that there were 3000 homeless in the city, a figure contested by several housing groups. The highly respected housing group, FRAPRU maintains that 102,480 Montréal citizens pay more than 50% of their income on their rent, and that 53,000 pay more than 80% of their income on rent. while the OMH, the municipal housing office says that the waiting list for public housing in Montréal is 25,000 persons and families.

Housing is not a commodity like any other. A person cannot survive the harsh Montréal winter very long without a place to live. We know that sub-zero weather kills homeless people. So why is this the case?

The municipal land market is dominated by the real estate and construction industries. Their working premise is the private ownership of houses, which seriously indebts people and chains them to the wheels of the marketplace. There is public housing for the poor, but there is also social housing of various kinds. There are some 420 non-profit housing cooperatives in Montréal, part of the third social economy. The largest non-profit housing project on a land trust in North America is the Milton-Parc community project with some 647 units of various dimensions, and with some 1500 citizens living within six city blocks of each other. Significantly since the land is owned in common, there are absolute restrictions on ownership so that private property does not exist and neither does any form of speculation through the buying and selling of houses. Every municipal party and government has done all it could to prevent this model of community housing to not be duplicated elsewhere in the city. The Milton-Parc project has entered its 35th year of existence.

In New York City on the other hand, the local government of Mayor de Blasio has yielded to the many tenant, homeless and community advocates who have called out for Community Land Trusts (CLT), a model of non-profit land ownership, in which a board of community stakeholders govern the use of land, while regulations ensure the permanent affordability of the rental or the rental of home ownership on that land. The mayor is giving groups the opportunity to submit proposals detailing how they would develop and manage CLTs.

Towards Democratic Urban Development: Civil Society and the City

Since the 1960s, Québec has developed one of the most vibrant civil societies anywhere in the world. According to a study carried out in 2005, Canada ranked second after the United Kingdom for the number of people employed in the non-profit sector, with Québec accounting for nearly a third of all organizations in the country despite being home to under a quarter of its population.[112]

Montréal's planning regime has gradually responded to the force of its community sector, and the city has come a long way since the days of Jean Drapeau's one-man rule. In the elaboration of major frameworks of future actions, the city has developed a culture of robust consultations and consensus-building with organized interests—often termed the "Québec model"[113]—that has been quite successful at rallying diverse actors around common ideals. The 2004 urban plan, for instance, was devised in collaboration with key actors of civil society, notably Vélo Québec, Héritage Montréal and the Conseil régional de l'environnement de Montréal.[114] Similarly, for the elaboration of the sustainable development plan, an employee of the Conseil régional de l'environnement was hired to sit on the technical committee that developed the proposals and led the analyses.[115]

Naturally, not all civil society groups hold equal sway. The most influential civil society groups at the metropolitan level include the Chambre de commerce de Montréal métropolitain and Montréal International (for businesses), the Fonds de solidarité

and Fondaction (the investment arms of provincial labour confederations FTQ and CSN, respectively), Culture Montréal (a non-profit organization representing cultural actors large and small), and the Chantier de l'économie sociale (an umbrella group of social economy, or third sector, organizations).[116]

Yet as we've seen, when it comes to urban planning, the degrees of influence exerted by various actors at the local level vary greatly depending on an array of factors, including the project in question, the developers and administration in question, the political context, and the potential benefits accruing to each side. Lofty invocations of social licence and public participation are frequent and easy, but the failure of recent administrations has been in ensuring the coherence of their actions with their words.

The main problem with policy-making in Montréal, therefore, relates less to the development of major orientations, and more with the failure to respect them. When the city has acted with foresight and firmness in defining the parameters of projects in advance (i.e., insisting on coherence with the master plan) and then building consensus with local actors, Montréal has accomplished world-class development in the public and long-term interest, such as with its award-winning Quartier International. Yet when democratic engagement has been skirted, developers have exhibited no qualms in taking advantage of the weakness of public bodies to have their own way with the city at the citizens' expense.

Indeed, Montréal's post-2002 public consultation regime, when respected, provides the most solid bulwark against the exercise of undue influence by developers and the most effective forum for civil society groups to exert influence on policy. When proposals pass through the mediation of the OCPM, all stakeholders, groups and citizens are heard on an equal footing, and the organization's thorough and thoughtful recommendations, respected by all sides, provide policymakers with a clear path forward towards a balanced development that serves the public and long-term interest. While non-binding, its independent and credible reports are nonetheless highly influential on the city's final decisions.

Certain actors exert more weight than others in influencing final outcomes and modifications of projects, of course, with the city especially valuing competence and representatively. Experts, pan-Montréal groups, institutions and boroughs thus all exert a great degree of sway. As an example, the 2004 urban master plan was greatly modified in the wake of the OCPM audiences to take into account input from housing rights group the Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain (FRAPRU), the Conseil régional de l'environnement, environmental group Équiterre, the public health authority, and municipal blue-collar unions.[117]

The infrastructure for a fair and democratic urban planning regime is already in place in the form of the OCPM, yet the system is in need of further consolidation. Skirting the OCPM is the primary way for the central administration to favour developers while giving short thrift to the views of civil society groups. There is thus an evident need to strengthen the city's legal obligations under the city charter to automatically trigger more OCPM consultations, as called for by the president of the OCPM.[118]

The patchwork of processes in place at the borough level is another major breach in the integrity of a planning regime that serves the public interest. Since the boroughs fall only under the weak and outdated provisions of provincial law, big-pocketed

developers are able to exert a heavy influence on borough administrations to obtain their desired derogations, while local politicians seeking to limit public input have no shortage of avenues to facilitate their task. Local civil society organizations are finding it extremely difficult to obtain information, follow the processes closely, mobilize their constituencies, and ultimately influence decisions regarding urban planning at the borough level.[119]

Moreover, the 2003 municipal decentralization destabilized civil society by diffusing the locus of decisional authority away from city hall and towards the boroughs. Organizations like Héritage Montréal , the Institute of Policy Alternatives of Montréal (IPAM) and the Conseil régional de l'environnement had developed relationships that facilitated their access to information and officials, with their standing resting on the fact that they represented city-wide constituencies. With the decentralization, the fragmentation of power and resulting heterogeneity of processes between the boroughs have complicated their work.[120] Major reforms are called for to either massively expand the OCPM's jurisdiction into the boroughs or at least to strengthen and standardize the obligations around public consultations at the borough level so as to match the rigours of the OCPM process.

Sustainable Development and Urban Ecology

Sustainable development was one of the key priorities to emerge from the Montréal Summit in 2002. Following from the summit, dozens of important actors of civil society partnered with the city in the development of the 2005-2010 plan that was released by the Tremblay administration in 2005.[121] This was later followed by a second plan for 2010-2015, this time in conjunction with 180 organizations from across civil society (the 2016-2020 plan is currently under development).[122] Each plan was vast and thorough, with specific objectives detailing the city's commitments in a wide array of areas, most notably greenhouse gas emissions, transit and transportation, urban sprawl, water and air quality, water management, energy efficiency, waste management, urban agriculture, green spaces, and biodiversity. We will touch upon only some of these areas below. In this process certain ecology organisations were excluded because they were deemed by the city bureaucrats as too radical, most of which are grouped around the Reseau Quebecois des Groupes Ecologique. The university campuses QPIRG groups were also excluded probably for the same reasons as were experts from the two English-language universities.

However in the early months of 2017 a fundamental and fortunately publically debated difference among environmentalists showed deep flaws in the movement. The central issue was a proposed electric train project from the south shore off island to the airport. The lid on this government sponsored and pension funded project was taken off when the provincial public consultation project determined that the project was seriously flawed on a number of grounds. Some groups like Equiterre and The Suzuki Foundation were prepared to support the project because it is better than the status quo while others stated " we want it better" and for less money.

Climate change

In 2005, Montréal committed to reducing its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 30%

below 1990 levels by 2020. The latest GHG inventory in 2009, however, showed that the city was far behind schedule, with total emissions having only decreased by 6% (and 11% per resident) since 1990, which the city attributes largely to greater energy efficiencies gained by the many conversions of buildings from oil to electricity or natural gas. [123] The city's 2010-2015 sustainable development plan and subsequent 2013-2020 emissions reduction plan thus sought to accelerate and expand the city's efforts. Tracking progress on emissions reductions is difficult, however, since the next inventory is only scheduled for 2017 (2013-2020 plan, p. 43). That being said, we can measure the achievements of certain signature measures outlined in the plan.

Transport accounts for the largest share of the urban agglomeration's GHG emissions, with a 2009 ratio of 39%. The bulk of the remainder is shared evenly between industry (24%) and businesses and institutions (24%), while residential use accounted for 9% of total emissions. Indeed, between 1990 and 2009, emissions from waste management and the residential sector experienced the deepest cuts, decreasing by 72% and 40% respectively, due to the increased efficiency of biogas capture from landfills in the former case and the increasing conversion of homes from oil to cleaner sources in the latter instance.[124] Yet the 34% increase in emissions from businesses and institutions during this period largely cancelled out these gains.[125]

Despite figuring in Montréal's climate change intentions, the truth is that on the industrial, commercial and institutional fronts, the provincial and federal governments are the ones holding the most powerful levers. In the commercial and institutional sector, for example, the largest reductions are to be sought through improving the energy efficiency of buildings and reducing the use of oil for heating. These two measures alone, in fact, are expected to account for two thirds of the entire city's emissions reductions—and yet are largely out of the city's reach. We will therefore not spend much time on these here. Montréal acknowledges that the most significant source of reductions in the industrial sector is expected to come from Québec's new cap-and-trade system, which has been operational since January 2013.[126] It was linked to California's one year later, and will be joined by Ontario following an announcement in April 2015. [127]

The previously mentioned citizens' initiative for a public consultation on climate change and its impact on the city resulted in the OCPM recommendations being adopted by the executive committee by the city. The how and when these actions will be implemented is any ones guess. There is no critical or implementation plan in place and no monitoring engagement either.

Transit and Transportation

Transportation is the most important source of emissions in Montréal and where the city expected to find the next largest source of emissions reductions. The city's five-year progress report released in 2012, however, showed that the city was falling far behind schedule owing to a financial shortfall, having completed only 25%-30% of its objectives halfway through the plan's term. All the same, Montréal has made major strides on public and active transit in recent years.

In June 2006, the Québec government released its first ever public transit plan, which provided direct funding to transit agencies in exchange for expanding service by 16% in five years and increasing ridership by 8% over the same span. The goals

were echoed by Montréal's 2008 transportation plan, and the city increased its annual funding to the STM by 15% between 2008 and 2012 to attain $375.6 million, and by 41% (up to $50.8 million) to the Agence métropolitain de transport (AMT), the provincial agency that manages the suburban train network.[128] Beginning in 2007, the Société de transport de Montréal (STM) thus reinvented itself under the design-savvy Mouvement collectif theme and launched an important process of modernization and growth.

The endearing and effective rebranding campaign accompanied a 21% increase in bus and metro service on the island of Montréal between 2006 and 2011, and 25% once you included the three new metro stations opened in 2007 in the north-shore suburb of Laval, which benefitted from the STM's first metro extension since 1988.[129] With investments by the STM of $460 million between 2008 and 2012,[130] over a thousand new buses were purchased to replace aging models and boost service, metro cars and stations were renovated, and efforts were launched to improve passenger information systems. The agency's efforts were wildly successful. Ridership soared by 11.4% to easily surpass provincial targets, and customer satisfaction rose from 84% to a peak of 90% in the fall of 2011.[131] In 2010, the STM's success was recognized by the American Public Transportation Authority (APTA), when it was awarded the prize for the most outstanding public transit agency in North America—a first for a Canadian city since 1995.[132]

Following from a $2.4 billion investment by the province (75%) and urban agglomeration (25%), a fleet of 468 sleek new metro cars, repeatedly delayed, while a 180km of reserved bus lanes have been built across the island as of August 2014.[133] A new train line to the suburban communities north-east of the island was completed in July 2015, and a five-station metro extension is currently planned for the blue line to the city's east end.[134] Following a major announcement by the provincial Liberal government in January of 2015, the Caisse de dépôt et de placement du Québec, the provincial pension fund's investment arm, is to be mandated with developing a light-rail system from downtown to the south-shore suburbs via the new Champlain Bridge.

All progress is good progress of course, but as with most North American cities, Montréal was coming from far behind. By 2011, the STM had brought the city's ratio of people using public transit back up to 37%—where it had been in 1993, before falling to 34% in 2003.[135] The STM's 2011-2020 plan thus called for a further 40% increase in ridership, which it noted will not be possible without increases in funding. In an age of climate change, this should have been a warning to Montréal's politicians that there was no time to rest on their laurels. Unfortunately, with the election of Denis Coderre as mayor in November 2013, they did. The new Coderre administration immediately tossed out the tramway that had been Project 1 ("*Chantier 1*") in Tremblay's Plan de transport, cut funding for the STM, and began pushing expansions to car infrastructure, most notably a costly extension of highway 19 to Laval.

In the wake of the belt-tightening, the STM was forced to cut bus service for the first time in nearly 15 years, scaling services back by 3.1% while raising fares by an average of 3.2%.[136] In the 2015 budget, the STM's budget increased by only 1.4% over the prior year, thereby failing to make up for the prior cuts.[137] Meanwhile, fares for the monthly passes went up yet again, this time by 3.1% and 4.2% for regular and reduced monthly passes, respectively. Predictably, ridership stagnated in 2014, at a point

scarcely higher than it was in 2012, and the STM's own predictions for 2015 saw an effective stagnation yet again, aiming for a mere 0.4% increase in ridership.[138]

The capitalist economy is driven by the construction industry, largely housing and the automobile industry. Our city streets in Montréal as elsewhere are dominated by private cars, trucks, and buses. And yet, every year, a few downtown streets are closed off during a car-free day, and greeted as a standard joke. Little organised and serious opposition against this form of domination exists, by the environmentalists included. Every year more cars clog the streets of the city. Some 10,000 cars enter the city center every week day. Is there a public policy to reverse this growing trend? None.

Montréal, City of Cyclists... and Pedestrians?

Compared with other cities in the US and Canada, Montréal's human-scaled neighbourhoods and more compact design have helped make it a walking and cycling city, with Montréal having the highest density of all Canadian cities (at 4,438.7 residents per square kilometres as of 2006—nearly 500 more per square kilometre than second-place Toronto) as well as the highest proportion of people residing in high-density neighbourhoods (at 16% to Toronto's 11%, with high-density defined as 10,000 people per square kilometre).

Higher-density cities of course greatly encourage the use of public and active modes of transit by residents: in 2006, prior to the launch of the city's 2008 transportation plan, Montréal's census metropolitan area (CMA) exhibited the highest proportion of people opting to travel to work by public transit (22%) or by walking or cycling (7%). Within the city of Montréal proper, the ratio was 35% public transit, 11% by walking or cycling, and 53% by car—again making Montréal the least car-dependent of Canada's cities, though far behind a model city like Copenhagen, where nearly 70% take public or active transit in 2006 to get to work.[139]

Montréal thus still has a long distance to go to challenge its predominant car culture, but the city has been making great strides toward developing its bicycle infrastructure and deepening its bike culture in the last decade. Indeed, Montréal has repeatedly been cited by the Copenhagenize index in recent years as one of the world's most bike-friendly cities and the leading bike city in North America, although it has tumbled from eighth to twentieth on the list since 2011.[140]

By the mid-2000s, the city of Montréal counted approximately 400 kilometres of bike lanes (of varying styles), and the city's 2008-2018 Plan de transport set the goal of doubling the city's bike path network to 800 kilometres by 2015. By 2013, 17,000 new parking spots for bikes had been added and by 2015, the bike path network had grown to more than 680 kilometres—missing the target, but progressing nonetheless.[141] Most crucial to Montréal's cycling success has been the quality of the paths: many of them are wide and separated from the street with thick concrete dividers, rendering them safe and pleasant for more casual cyclists. Rush-hour traffic jams are a daily sight along these paths on De Maisonneuve, Berri and De Brébeuf, which are among the most widely used in North America.[142] The new Coderre administration has set a new target of doubling the current network to attain 1,280 kilometres within the next few years, though no precise target date has yet been set, nor have any measures been proposed for increasing the rate of completion.[143]

Equally central to Montréal's status as a cycling mecca has been its wildly successful bike-share system, BIXI. Since launching in 2009, the self-serve system has become an integral and beloved part of the Montréal streetscape, having expanded to 460 stations and 5,200 bikes spread across ten boroughs and the two neighbouring municipalities of Westmount and Longueil. Its innovative design, modelled on an earlier system in Paris, has now been exported to cities around the world, most notably London, New York, Washington (D.C.), Boston, Melbourne, Ottawa/Gatineau and Toronto.[144]

Montréal's progress in encouraging walking has been more mitigated, despite bold pronouncements by a succession of mayors. In the central neighbourhoods, approximately 40% of Montrealers report walking as their primary mode of transit for short distances.[145] Following from the Montréal Summit, Montréal developed a Charte du piéton (Pedestrian's Charter) that was integrated into the Plan de transport, which affirmed the central role of walking in Montréal's transportation mix. A plethora of small-scale and seasonal pedestrianizations on major streets have followed, new public places have been created in the central neighbourhoods, and sidewalks have been widened on major arteries.

Despite the city's progress, Montréal, like other North American cities, is still overwhelmingly car-dependent. The popularity of cycling and walking remain largely concentrated within the denser central neighbourhoods, where in Ville-Marie and the Plateau, for example, over 70% of the population got to work by public and active transit in 2011.[146] Yet on the other extreme, in the distant off-island suburbs of the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM)—whose share of the total active population in the metropolitan region is growing at Montréal's expense[147]—it's another world. Between 2001 and 2011 in fact, the total share of car use for all home-to-work travel across the metropolitan region actually went *up* slightly, from 65.2% to 65.7% (plus 3.4% for car-sharing).[148]

It is evident that luring people back to Montréal's higher-density central neighbourhoods is an inescapable component of greening our urban environments and combatting climate change. Yet successive mayors —as well as those in provincial governments, where all major funding decisions are made—have failed to provide the robust leadership required. Old mentalities and short-term thinking continue to pose as obstacles to progress, and bold pronouncements are most often undermined by a lack of coherence and vision on the policy front.

The rebuilding of the Turcot interchange in the Sud-Ouest is a perfect example of this. A proposal adopted unanimously by Montréal's city council in 2010 foresaw a more compact and circular interchange compared to the sprawling and airborne colossus of superhighways constructed in the 1960s. The design, developed by Richard Bergeron, who sat for a year on Tremblay's executive committee, would have decreased overall car capacity, featured more public transit and the implementation of a tramway line, and freed up vast swaths of land for new residential developments and much-needed green space in Saint-Henri.[149] Yet the province, which pays the full cost of the project, declared the city's version too costly and imposed a traditional structure requiring expropriations and maintaining the 300,000 cars-a-day capacity instead, although it did ultimately agree to add dedicated bus lanes after much pressuring.

There was considerable civil society opposition to this autoroute, everything from public demonstrations to an impressive book published. But with the heavy hand of the provincial government, the Ministry of Transport won out, largely because the opposition was poorly organised and not militant enough.

Whether in the rebuilding of the Turcot interchange, the extension of highway 19 to Laval, the cuts to the STM, or the general timidity with which successive administrations have experimented with green urban design, the tendency has too often been to consider bicycle, pedestrian, and public transit infrastructure as self-congratulatory embellishments after the fact rather than as invitations to imagine cities anew. Cars are still king in Montréal, and our current political leadership shows no signs of wanting to challenge old mindsets.

Waste Management

A former quarry and landfill, Montréal's state-of-the-art Complexe environnementale de Saint-Michel (CESM) was opened in 1995, being finally closed to putrescible wastes in 2000 and dry waste in 2009. By 2023, the massive 192-hectare complex will become the second largest park in the city after the Parc du Mont-Royal. It is the largest environmental rehabilitation project in the city's history.[150]

The city has set a goal of recovering 80% of all recyclable, organic and other recoverable waste by 2019, but in 2012 the urban agglomeration had only attained an average of 40%, up from 22% in 2006. The ratio of recyclable waste that was recovered in 2014 was at 58.3%, up from 37% in 2006, but well behind the provincial goal of 70% by 2015.[151] Composting is one area where Montréal has fallen even further behind, after repeated delays, political decisions have forestalled the opening of five treatment facilities across the island that will (eventually) transform all organic waste into compost and biogas.

Upon completion in 2019, Montréal's waste management regime will be the first in Canada to include a pre-treatment centre for all household waste in the interests of diverting the greatest amount possible from landfill.[152] At present, municipal pick-up of brown bins (for organic waste) is only available for 100,000 households in Montréal, which explains the meagre progress made on this front. Only 13% of organic waste was recovered in 2015, a slight improvement over 7% in 2006. Once the new centres become operational in 2019, however, a once-a-week pick-up of newly distributed brown bins will commence, and boroughs that still have twice-a-week garbage pick-ups will see one of them cancelled.[153] The city will almost certainly fail to attain the provincial government's target of collecting 100% of organic waste by 2020.

Inclusion and Equality in a Diverse City

Political institutions around the world are confronted with their failure to adequately reflect the diversity of the societies they represent, with marginalized groups, including women, ethnocultural minorities, and the poor or less educated classes, often excluded from the process. Montréal is no exception, with the city ranking poorest of Canada's three largest cities in terms of democratic representation of its visible minority communities.

In Montréal, an influx of immigrants has transformed the face of the city in recent

decades, even if the shift has not been nearly as pronounced as in Toronto or Vancouver. In the last National Household Survey published by Statistics Canada in 2011, visible minorities made up 30.3% of the population of the urban agglomeration of Montréal, while 33.2% were immigrants born in another country.[154] Yet in the 2005-2009 municipal term, only 4% of the 104 seats for city and borough councillors were occupied by visible minorities, compared to 11% in Toronto and 27% in Vancouver.[155] The situation is altogether different for ethnocultural minorities in general, who in the 2001-2005 mandate represented 30% of all city and borough council seats in the newly merged island-city of Montréal (no figures for 2005-2009 are available)[156].

Montréal does better in terms of representation of women. At 36.2% in the 2005-2009 mandate, the number of women on municipal councils in the metropolitan region surpassed those in most other Canadian cities, including Toronto and Ottawa, although there clearly remains a distance to go before attaining parity.[157]

Some of the impediments to political engagement and representation of minorities are more easily addressed than others, with the most resilient and complex obstacles undoubtedly being the social, cultural and socio-economic systems that serve to alienate socially disadvantaged and ethnocultural communities from their society, and thus from its political institutions. For women too, macro-level factors ranging from socio-cultural biases on the appropriate roles and work domains of women, to the resulting political culture and structure of our political parties, to persistent inequalities in pay and socio-economic outcomes for women, continue to act as obstacles to greater gender parity in our democratic institutions. These are all crucial and complex issues that are beyond the purview of this chapter to explore in sufficient depth, but some promising avenues do nonetheless present themselves.

Legal reforms are the area most amenable to short-term solutions for encouraging greater participation of ethnocultural minorities in our civic life. With approximately 10% of the population of the agglomeration of Montréal being unnaturalised immigrants as of 2011 (approximately 13% are not Canadian citizens, minus 3% who are not permanent residents),[158] the restriction of the municipal voting franchise to Canadian citizens is perhaps among the most evident barriers to fuller electoral participation. It is also the most easily removed, though it would have to be through legislative changes brought in at the provincial level. The establishment of an “urban citizenship” for immigrants awaiting naturalization would also allow Montréal to bring its voting franchise in line with its official conception of urban citizenship found in its Charte montréalaise des droits et responsabilités, which defines the citizens of Montréal as all physical persons residing on its territory.[159] Many countries around the world allow foreign residents to vote in municipal elections, including Norway, the Netherlands, Iceland, Chile, Argentina, Peru, Venezuela, and New Zealand.[160]

The question, however, is whether unnaturalised immigrants would avail themselves of this newfound right, or whether deeper and more complex factors are repelling their interest and engagement in politics. At the federal level, Statistics Canada has found that long established immigrants vote at higher rates than those who arrived in the last ten years. Even if there are no equivalent figures for municipal voters, this suggests that social and cultural integration are the most important factors affecting political engagement. Allowing immigrants to vote prior to being naturalized can only

serve to accelerate the process of political integration, and arguably comes with little to no down sides. Yet while this relatively simple and superficial measure would be a positive step, it would also prove insufficient overall, when we consider the low rates of participation for immigrants and ethnocultural minorities as a whole.[161] Indeed, the majority of the immigrant population are naturalized citizens, and many visible minorities, from aboriginals to the descendants of immigrants, are born in Canada.

In the more medium-term, electoral reform is one of the most promising avenues for boosting the political representation of both women and ethnocultural minorities in Montréal. The centralized candidate lists or mixed-member proportional representation (PR) systems provide parties with the ability to design their slates with wider objectives in mind, and therefore to prioritize the selection of women and ethnocultural minorities without fear that persistent prejudices in society will harm their electoral chances. In New Zealand, the switch to PR in 1996 substantially increased the political representation of the native Maori population.[162] Globally as well, those democracies with the best record of diverse representation are those whose electoral systems are based on proportional representation, with some studies suggesting that the electoral system—some form of proportional representation versus single-member constituencies as in our system—is even the *most* important factor to women's political representation.[163]

Similarly, municipal political parties can have an enormous impact through pro-active policies aimed at nurturing, identifying and recruiting women and minority candidates, and especially in PR systems that include candidate lists. Even within our first-past-the-post system, however, at the national and provincial levels, political parties have shown to be effective when they make this a priority. Most recently, such policies on the part of the New Democratic Party (NDP) resulted in the Rachel Notley-led Alberta NDP presenting a slate that surpassed gender parity (forty-seven out of eighty-seven candidates were women), while the party's federal cousins broke the record for women candidates for a national party in the 2011 election with nearly 40% being women, and then again in 2015, with the figure climbing to 43%. In both the federal election in 2011 and the Alberta provincial election of 2015, the NDP's efforts resulted in new records for women's representation in their respective legislatures.

In terms of ethnic minority representation also, the NDP's pro-active recruitment policies bore fruit in the 2011 election: in the wake of the party's massive breakthrough in Québec, the province became the only one in Canada to boast greater representation of visible minorities among its MPs (14.7%) than among the general population (8.8%).[164] Such measures need not be left to the good will (or electoral calculations) of parties. All levels of government, including the city of Montréal, could provide incentives in the form of tax rebates to political parties who achieve certain quotas of minority and women candidates.

At the same time pursuing such procedural reforms, it is essential to examine the deeper sources of the problem. As noted by Collin and Bherer, districts in Montréal with the important presence of immigrant populations—and generally lower rates of voting—are often also those with higher rates of poverty.[165] Indeed, immigrant communities are often among the most disadvantaged segments of society, and it has been well-established that socio-economic status and attendant factors are strongly linked

to political participation.[166] Similarly, Canada's gender-skewed economy continues to place women in an inferior position from that of men, with women's average annual earnings of $30,100 in 2008 representing less than two-thirds of the average $47,000 gained by Canadian men.[167] Women from visible minority communities are doubly disadvantaged.

In sum, it can be extremely difficult—and possibly counterproductive—to disentangle the respective and mutually reinforcing effects of social marginalization and economic well-being on civic disengagement. The Institut du Nouveau Monde (INM) placed its finger on exactly this when it argues that "civic participation of Québec minorities is the final step in a successful social and economic integration."[168] Both the Conseil des relations interculturelles and a 2006 study by Carolle Simard for Elections Canada found the same: that a causal link exists between the acquisition of social capital, the employment conditions encountered by new citizens, and the degree of civic and political participation.[169] Broader programs and reforms aimed at ensuring better social and economic integration of immigrants and minorities must therefore be the focus of long-term efforts aimed at achieving a more enduring and consequential transformation of our political institutions and culture, with the increased civic participation and representation of minorities serving as the visible mark of success.

Unequal Before the Law: Policing Communities

The law enforcement agencies of major cities are faced with the common challenge of policing diverse societies in as fair and equitable a manner as possible and of maintaining the trust of the communities they serve. The task is extremely demanding, but the stakes are too high for us to accept a lower standard for those entrusted with such authority in our societies.

As with many law enforcement agencies, the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM) have faced regular accusations of various forms of profiling: political, racial, and social alike. These are serious issues that must be addressed. When a group in society feels targeted by police not for what they do but for who they are, then trust in the police is severely compromised, as are the foundations of fairness and equality.

We have already discussed the rise in instances of political profiling witnessed in the wake of the Maple Spring protests in 2012. Much as in other cities, there have also been longstanding concerns about a culture of social and racial profiling within the Montréal police force. The Ligue des droits et libertés has found that racialized minorities, the homeless and mentally ill, sex workers, and drug addicts all face frequent harassment by police, including abusive identity controls, intimidation, fines, verbal abuse, and physical violence.[170] A seminal report released in 2009 by the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse du Québec (CDPDJQ, the provincial human and youth rights commission) shone a spotlight on the SPVM's systemic targeting of the homeless and vulnerable, leading to mounting public pressures for the police corps to reform its training processes and practices.

The SPVM has provided a mandatory course on racial profiling to all officers since 2006, which has failed to alter the culture of the organization. After persistent criticisms, the police released a vague and weakly enforceable strategic plan on racial and social profiling in 2012 which nonetheless signalled a greater acknowledgement of the

systemic nature of the problem, as well as a growing willingness to tackle it. In June 2015, the SPVM also signed an agreement with the Montréal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network, which entailed the creation of an aboriginal liaison officer and regular mandatory sensitivity and informational training for all police officers to teach them more about aboriginal cultures and the factors explaining the growing problem of urban aboriginal homelessness.[171] More recently (in 2017) the Old Brewery Mission has been instrumental in creating sensitivity training workshops for police officers presented in cooperation with the SPVM.

Organizations working in the milieu have noted only a very slight improvement thus far following from the 2012 strategic plan.[172] Similarly, of the roughly six hundred complaints filed annually at the Commissaire à la déontologie policière du Québec, the province's police ethics review board, approximately half have come from visible minorities over the past five years, who account for only 30% of Montréal's population.[173] Aside from the handful of highly publicized cases following from tragic deaths at the hands of police officers in recent years, the reality of racial and social profiling mostly goes on beneath the eyes of the mainstream public, with marginalized groups more often than not failing to report such abuses. They do not because they either lack faith in the impartiality and effectiveness of the process, are not even aware of its existence, or because they fear reprisals by police.[174]

It is difficult to find flaw with these fears of marginalized communities, since the current police complaints process is in fact a major part of the problem that serves only to encourage the reigning culture of impunity within the SPVM. With investigations frequently led by former police officers, the system is severely lacking in independence and credibility. Overwhelming anecdotal evidence also suggests that police officers frequently refuse to divulge their badge numbers (necessary to file complaints), while others go so far as threatening (or engaging in) reprisals against citizens who file complaints, including intimidation, fines, brutality, and arrests.[175]

At the police stations too, reports speak to a serious lack of respect and professionalism on the part of some officers receiving complaints, while numerous bureaucratic hurdles render it difficult to get the complaint accepted by police.[176] Even after being filed, a complaint against a police officer in Québec stands a six times greater chance of being rejected by the ethics board than resulting in an investigation.[177] Of the 40% of complaints that were accepted by the Commissaire à la déontologie policière du Québec between 2011 and 2013, the vast majority were sent to arbitration—which can lead only to apologies or explanations from police, but no disciplinary action—while only 3-4% of the roughly two thousand complaints filed a year result in any reprimand against officers, which themselves can take varying degrees of seriousness (or not). Only about thirty-five officers are assigned disciplinary action every year in Montréal.[178]

Fortunately, the provincial government is in the process of establishing a new independent and civilian-led bureau of investigations, the Bureau d'enquêtes indépendantes. The new body is a welcome addition, but it is weakened by its limited mandate of only investigating cases involving use of force by police resulting in death or severe injuries. A much broader mandate would be required to meaningfully alter the culture of the SPVM, most notably regarding its respect of democratic rights and relations with marginalized communities. Yet even a more muscular oversight body would be

insufficient alone. More far-reaching reforms must be envisaged as well, from careful recruitment and psychological screening of candidates, through to the education (not only training) of officers, which must instill a more complete understanding of the law and a fuller appreciation of the appropriate role of police in a democratic society.

Conclusion: Powers of the City

The challenges facing Montréal are diverse and imposing. In the above sections we have had ample room to discuss some of the core deficiencies pertaining to our public consultation processes, electoral system, the integrity of our institutions and political parties, as well as the over centralization of power.

Yet even if these significant shortcomings were to somehow be addressed, Montréal's potential would still be severely hobbled by the same structural constraints affecting all major cities across Canada: namely, the lack of adequate powers and resources appropriate to their mounting responsibilities in a century of urbanization.

This latter problem is one of scale and national scope. Under the Canadian constitution, cities are defined as mere "creatures of the province," whose powers and resources are subject to the whims of the provincial governments. Yet what was good for a mostly rural Canada in 1867, when only 19% of its inhabitants lived in urban areas, is patently and drastically ill-suited for the heavily urbanized and urbanizing Canada of the 21st century where over 80% of its population now live in urban areas.[179]

Canada's cities are thus called upon to meet the ever-rising challenges of the 21st century with the powers and resources fit for the era of the horse and buggy. They must absorb and integrate hundreds of thousands of new immigrants and refugees every year, over 90% of whom settle in Canada's metropolitan centres, with Canada's three largest city-regions alone accounting for 62.5% of new arrivals between 2006 and 2011.[180] They are the economic motors of their provinces and the country, and are also the international hubs for culture and creativity, commerce and investment, research and innovation, transportation, and tourism, all while providing quality health and social services, efficient public transit, affordable housing, well-developed and dependable infrastructure, a clean environment, and vibrant and liveable neighbourhoods for their expanding populations. As if this weren't enough, the crisis of climate change has reframed the urgency of these demands—in particular around urban quality of life—as the necessity of adapting to the changing climate and luring inhabitants back from the car-dependent peripheries have emerged as the ecological imperatives of our times.

In all of these crucial domains, cities are on the front lines. Yet as their responsibilities have expanded by leaps and bounds and their revenue sources have failed to keep up, a gaping fiscal imbalance has emerged in Canada between municipal governments and the provincial and federal levels, who reap nearly all the benefits flowing from investments and economic activity in the cities, and who claim all income, corporate/business, and sales taxes paid by urbanites.

For decades, Canadian cities have thus been clamouring for increased autonomy, resources and financial levers to meet their rising challenges, although their calls, with the sole exception of Toronto, have thus far been met with near-universal inertia, when not out-right refusal.

Canada's two largest metropolitan regions, Toronto and Montréal, both house populations the size of small countries. They must be recognized not as mere "administrations" as in the present parlance—with its managerial language that evokes quasi-mechanized providers of services—but rather the order of *government* that is closest and most responsive to the needs of its citizens.

In the wide range of domains where Montréal is called upon by circumstance to act, municipal officials on the ground are better positioned to devise appropriate and effective policies and measures than distant civil servants or politicians in Québec City. Yet at present, the provincial government and bureaucracy too often make the final decisions in its stead, sometimes against the clearly and even unanimously expressed wishes of its elected representatives. This anachronistic and unapologetic paternalism is unacceptable for a governed city of this size and importance. Cities deserve at the very least a tripartite partnership with provincial and federal governments, and where possible and practical, fuller autonomy. Cities in Germany, Sweden and Italy are case studies in the benefits of autonomy.

Specifically, Montréal's economic development is hampered by a lack of flexibility in the elaboration of calls for tender and awarding of contracts, by its inadequate fiscal capacities to train workers, subsidize businesses, and offer tax credits to lure (and keep) talent, businesses, investment, and international students, as well as its lack of power over major infrastructure and transit planning, which are often the exclusive purview of the Ministry of Transportation even when projects are located in the very heart of the city. Similarly, the city needs greater powers to integrate the tens of thousands of immigrants it welcomes each year and to recognize their professional qualifications: in February of 2015, the jobless rate for immigrants was 11.3% in Montréal compared to 7% for non-immigrants.[181] We are wasting the incredible potential of our new arrivals and encouraging their economic and social disenfranchisement, with all of the worrying repercussions this might entail.

Every bit as essential to the granting of special status and new responsibilities for Montréal is that they be accompanied by the appropriate transfer of financial resources and levers to fulfill them. Among the most important obstacles to Montréal's development at present is the city's massive overreliance on property taxes, which account for a staggering 67% of its revenue stream, despite being granted new powers to impose fees in 2008.[182] Ostensibly inspired by the 2006 City of Toronto Act, Québec added a paltry $34 million to its annual transfers to Montréal in 2008, while Montréal was granted extremely limited new taxation powers that paled in comparison to Toronto's. This included the right to tax parking spaces downtown, which was implemented in 2010 and brings in $20 million a year to help fund public transit, as well as a vehicle registration surtax, which brings in another $30 million.[183] Peanuts, in short, in a municipal budget of $5 billion.

The transfer of a portion of the taxes and fees paid on its territory to the provincial government (such as the provincial sales tax) are frequently invoked as avenues towards providing the crucial dedicated and long-term funding needed to help diversify the city's revenues, as are powers to levy new fees or taxes, such as provided for in the City of Toronto Act. The ability to impose a municipal income tax as in the case of New York City—requested by Toronto but excluded from the legislation[184]—would be

the most progressive and thus equitable option of all (especially if limited to high-income earners), with the province left responsible for collection so as to limit administrative costs. This seems highly improbable in the present political context, which likely explains why it has been missing from the debate. Yet in the absence of truly progressive taxation levers, it is vital that any new fees be as fair and equitable as possible, for instance by targeting luxury goods or environmentally destructive practices and products (such as private car use).

During the last provincial elections, all political party leaders came to Montréal's City Hall as well as the one in Québec City, promising new powers to the local governments. Negotiations were engaged in complete secrecy without any public debate. Finally during the last summer of 2016, one of the co-authors of this chapter got a number of telephone calls from several worried Montréal city councillors concerned that the new powers will be concentrated in the office of Mayor Coderre, and that given the fact that Montréal has a poor checks and balance system of government, such a turn of events would be very dangerous. Could the Institut de politiques alternatives de Montréal (IPAM) organise a public debate we were asked. On November 30, 2016 IPAM did just that at the Canadian Center of Architecture, in the presence of a very good public turnout. This was followed on January 30, 2017 by a roundtable on this same question attended by a representative cross section of Montréal's civil society. These discussions contributed to IPAM's briefs and discussions on Bills 121 and 122, which proposed that for example, all referenda on zoning issues be abolished. The conclusion of both the public debate and IPAM's articulation of that was not only should referenda not be abolished but that more local democracy was needed not less. Indeed the case was made in the media and before the Québec parliamentary commissions that a healthy approach to checks and balances would require a genuine partnership between organised civil society and local government. A relationship which should be ongoing, regular and where accountability and transparency are front and center.

Moreover, the lack of transparency and the insufficiently broadly based consultations with civil society both preceding and surrounding the ongoing talks were unacceptable. The lack of a democratic framework within which to discuss whatever new powers the city will obtain in the end, and the mayor's actions since taking office are not been reassuring. Contrasting sharply with the consensus-building style of Tremblay's early years, Coderre has exhibited a marked tendency towards centralization, seizing powers from the boroughs, disbanding the Democracy Taskforce (Chantier sur la démocratie), and excluding civil society from the boards of directors of the new local economic development associations, the Centres locaux de développement (CLDs). With major parts of the mayor's recentralizing borough reform stalled by the lack of the required two-thirds support in city council, critics have suggested that Coderre—who, elected with under a third of the popular vote, lacks even a simple majority on council—may be using the present negotiations with the province to gain new powers allowing him to bulldoze through the opposition, both on council as well as in the boroughs.

The question is thus one of scale: will Montrealers find themselves newly empowered by the coming arrangement, or will the mayor? Far from being equivalent, the awarding of new powers from the province to the city's executive committee would signal an enormous and dangerous step backwards for the democratic advances made

over the course of the last decade, while simultaneously opening the door wide to the sort of abuses that have dealt a severe blow to the city's development and international reputation in recent years.

How can Montréal democratic culture be enhanced ? This should include most crucially the widening of the mandate of the OCPM and the city's obligation to consult, as well as the strengthening of the power and independence of city council and its commissions, the maintenance and even strengthening of the boroughs as sites of neighbourhood democracy, the adequate financing of watchdog organizations like the Lobbying Commissionner and Montréal's Ombudsman, Auditor-General, and Bureau de l'Inspecteur Général to match the growth in the municipal apparatus, and the strengthening of requirements around transparency and open data. These institutions and the Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities must become tools for all Montrealers across the island and not just for those in the actual city of Montréal. These reasonable and modest reforms can only be the beginning of a process. The independence, autonomy and respect accorded Montréal's civil society social movements are fundamental requirements; and an ongoing public debate dealing with the choices and priorities facing citizens must be at the core of a democratic relationship inbetween municipal elections most especially.

For this political realignment to begin to take place in Québec and the rest of Canada, the out dated Canadian constitution has to be opened up and rewritten. An end must be put to the reactionary constitutional condition that 'cities are creatures of the provinces' thus denying any legal or constitutional status to cities. In the era of climate change, if the UN acknowledges that cities are central actors in finding solutions, and that consequently should sit around the table along with national governments, why can't such considerations be debated and acted upon here. It is time to acknowledge that this fear of cities must be faced and overcome. A democratic urban alliance of cities from coast to coast is required, so that the clock can be moved forward.

In the meantime a Montréal with greater clout and agency must be the result of Montrealers taking their future into their own hands, and not having an increasingly powerful mayor doing so in their name. Let us bury Drapeau once and for all times.

In short citizens of Montréal, as in other cities, must strive for a democratic and ecological city. We cannot have an ecological city without it being a democratic city. This goal is one with establishing a participatory democracy.

NOTES

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Toronto Politics and the Possibility for Change

Bill Freeman

TORONTO'S POLITICAL HISTORY and its present politics are perplexing. The city remains a progressive political force in both federal and provincial politics, usually electing Liberals or New Democrats to both houses, and yet Torontonians have elected a succession of Conservatives to lead the city.

The most recent mayor, for example, John Tory, not only reflects his politics in his name, but he has been the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario and a backroom player in that party since he was an executive assistant to Premier Bill Davis decades ago. While other Canadian and even many U.S. cities have been hotbeds of progressive politics, Toronto has been stuck in a conservative mode.

It is not that the city has avoided big city problems. Since the suburbs began to relentlessly gobble up good farmland in the 1950s, Toronto has been consumed by traffic gridlock, inappropriate development, poverty, pollution, and all of the other problems that plague large North American urban centres. Like others, this is an unsustainable city, but Toronto's political answer has been to continue to rely on the so-called "free market" for solutions. That, in effect, means let's do nothing and wait until the market solves the problems.

When Black Rose asked me to write an article on the city, I saw it as an opportunity to try to explain why Toronto's politics are so different and have avoided the reform movements of other places. As I began to work on it I could see that, while the problems of Toronto and its surrounding suburbs are overwhelming, the solutions are also pretty obvious. Out of that grew my recent book, *The New Urban Agenda*.[1]

That book takes the view that we need to clearly understand the problems that cities face and then design solutions. It is not a lack of ideas, or appropriate technology, or even money. All of those things exist in good supply in Toronto. What we lack is an understanding of the politics of our city and an agenda to mobilize for change. First, we have to understand what happened in the past in order to appreciate how that has shaped the politics of today. Then we can look at the leaders, their strengths and weaknesses, the issues, and finally political participation. Hopefully all of this will help us understand how we can build a new political urban agenda for progressive change.

PART 1: HistoryThe Family Compact vs. the People

The origins of the City of Toronto go back to 1793 when Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe chose the site for the capital of Upper Canada. He called his new capital York. Simcoe is remembered as a remarkable administrator who imposed a British form of civilization on the wilderness in this remote part of the empire. Like all newcomers to a strange land, Simcoe brought his own political ideology with him. He was a royalist, and fundamental to his vision was a society where an upper class, who gained their wealth from property, would rule, while the settlers were a type of peasantry with limited political rights.

Not surprisingly, the first major political conflict between different factions in the new capital was a revolt against this system of class privilege. The small town of York was incorporated as the City of Toronto in 1834, and its first mayor was a Scot by the name of William Lyon Mackenzie—as radical a firebrand as was ever elected to office in the city. Mackenzie led the 1837 revolt of farmers and workmen demanding the end of privilege and full democracy. The revolt was lost when the rebels, marching down Yonge Street, scattered after a volley of shots from royalists. But three years later, "responsible government," the practice of electing a legislature, and a government responsible to that legislature and the people, was established.

This set of events is usually interpreted in Canadian history as the struggle for democracy, and so it was, but it was a limited form of democracy. What is rarely mentioned by our historians is that at almost exactly the same time, the same issue had polarized the politics of Britain, the "mother country." In both cases, it was a struggle for suffrage, who gets to vote. In Britain, it is called the Chartist movement. Their demand was for universal suffrage for all adult males. In Canada, universal male suffrage was not achieved until the 1890s. Women did not get the right to vote until 1917. During most of the nineteenth century there were property qualifications that prevented most working men from voting because they could not afford to buy property. It was designed that way because the "lower classes" were deemed suspect by those with political power. The 1837 revolt and advent of responsible government did remove members of the Family Compact from positions of privilege, and it expanded the franchise. This led to the empowerment of a new type of merchant and middle-class elite that used their political power to promote their own economic and social interests.

This practice of elites using their political power to protect and further their interests continues to this day in Toronto.

The Belfast of Canada

Toronto was an Anglo-Saxon, Protestant city from its inception, dominated by merchants, bankers and civil servants. There was a working-class element in the city that lived in rooming houses and rented accommodation, but they had no political influence. The "lower classes" frequented the taverns that were on almost every street corner. Already by 1850 one of the first urban slums of Canada was beginning to form in an area called "The Ward," north of Queen Street and west of Yonge.

In the first fifty years of Toronto's history, the harbour was the centre of the life of the town. Goods, immigrants, and travellers of all types arrived and left on the schooners and steamers that plied Lake Ontario. Branching off from Toronto were the

great roads that gave access to the rural hinterland that was rapidly being settled. Yonge Street struck through the wilderness to the north, Dundas Street headed west to the thriving town of Dundas and the rich agricultural area of Southwest Ontario, and Kingston Road went east along the north shore of Lake Ontario to the town of Kingston and Montreal further east. In 1853, the first railway arrived in Toronto, providing a more reliable transportation system.

From its inception, this was a government and administrative centre. Soon the city became the most important trading and manufacturing centre in the province, and the population expanded rapidly. Toronto has always been dominated by government and business interests. Merchants, traders, and members of the legal community were consistently elected as municipal councillors, and when the city's manufacturing expanded, after Prime Minister John A. Macdonald legislated the national policy of high tariffs in 1879, industrial interests were active in the city's politics. It was this social mix that gave the city its conservative political character in the nineteenth century.

In 1847–48 the first major "foreign element," as they were called, arrived in the city. These were Irish Catholics who came to Canada fleeing the famine. Soon they were the largest single ethnic minority group in Toronto. There was considerable prejudice against the Irish by the Anglo-Saxon Protestants who dominated the city, and the Irish found it difficult to get jobs or even rent rooms. As a result, many left Toronto to go to the United States.[2] But though the Irish Catholics had virtually no political power in Toronto, their presence spawned a remarkably successful nineteenth-century political machine.

The Orange Order was a Protestant working man's fraternal order that is best remembered as being anti-Catholic and pro-British. The order was founded in Upper Canada in the 1830s and reached its height of influence in the 1870s. Toronto was the centre of the order in Ontario, with dozens of different lodges and over 2,500 members at its height. Members would gather for social functions in their lodges, where they would have big meals, listen to speeches, and perform the rituals of the order. Every July 12, Orangemen's Day, thousands would march through the streets of the city proclaiming their loyalty to their faith and the British Empire.

Between 1867 and 1892, the height of the influence of the Orange Lodge, there were twenty-two riots or near-riots that occurred between Protestants and Catholics in Toronto. The 1901 census found that only 15% of the population were Catholic and only 8% were of non-British origin—presumably Catholics had decamped because the city was unfriendly to people of their faith. It was then that Toronto came to be known as "The Belfast of Canada."

But the Orange Order was much more than a fraternal order. It was also a powerful political machine that could deliver the votes of thousands of working men. From the middle of the nineteenth century until the 1940s, virtually every mayor, controller, and alderman of Toronto was either a member of the order or had links to it.

For the working men who were members, the order delivered practical dividends. It controlled jobs. All government workers in the post office, custom house, gas works, waterworks, police, and fire departments had to be members of an Orange Lodge.[3] The control of working-class jobs was the basis of the political machines in cities across North America, from Tammany Hall in New York to the Democratic Machine in

Chicago. The only difference between Toronto and the American political machines was that they were based on the solidarity of working-class Catholics, while Toronto's machine was a working-class Protestant organization.

The Orange Order, like the merchants, lawyers, and government employees, was a conservative force in Toronto politics. They were staunch supporters of the Empire and the status quo.

The Progressive Movement

By 1900 the politics of political machines in large U.S. cities had taken on a distinct odour of corruption, but the same did not happen with the Orange Lodge in Toronto. The reason is that the Orangemen were well integrated into the city's political life, and there was not the same opportunity for corruption as in American cities. The reaction against political machines in the United States led to the development of the Progressive movement, which had a profound influence on municipal politics in Toronto and all Ontario municipalities. In some ways, it is still the dominant ideology that shapes the city's political life.

The Progressive movement, like so many other things in Canada, had its origins in the United States, but it was reshaped to meet the politics and social perceptions of this country. The Progressives were a dominant force in the Farm Parties in Ontario and western Canada. In 1920, the Progressive Party won 58 of the 235 seats in the 1921 federal election. By the end of the 1920s the party had fallen apart. In the 1930s most of the members joined the federal Liberal Party and some joined the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). The rump of the party that remained merged with the Conservatives to create the Progressive Conservative Party.

Progressivism was largely a middle-class movement that rejected the old politics based on the political spoils of vested interests, such as the class system of Lord Simcoe or the patronage of the Orange Lodge. The Progressives argued that good government, applied in a rational, scientific way, could solve the problems of society. It was an optimistic approach that favoured strong, interventionist government.

Toronto had a large educated middle class compared to other centres, and the ideology of the Progressives fit them comfortably. It was the middle ground between the socialists who attacked the excesses of capitalism and American-style individualists who rejected government. To the middle class who dominated Toronto in the first half of the twentieth century and continue to have a major influence today, the most important principle of government was proper management by honest public servants, based on business practices.

The Progressives were in favour of things like substantial investments in public education, libraries, parks, and good transit. The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) was created in 1921 out of the near-defunct private company that provided inadequate services. Public ownership of utilities, an idea of the Progressives that did not catch on in the United States, was taken up with enthusiasm in Ontario. Ontario Hydro was its greatest success. Land-use planning was also a key idea of the Progressives, and it was adopted by Torontonians. After the First World War, new communities were laid out carefully, and builders were required to follow standard practices. In 1912, the newly formed Toronto Harbour Commission, set up to administer the harbour, created

a plan to reclaim 1,200 acres of marshlands in Ashbridges Bay. In the 1920s another 2,000 acres of waterfront were filled in the inner harbour. Both of these huge parcels of land were set aside for the use of industry, transportation, and warehousing.[4]

Leaders influenced by Progressive ideas promoted many types of reforms that had significant impacts on Toronto. Progressives inspired agencies like the Children's Aid Society, Juvenile and Family Courts, and immigrant settlement houses. The profession of social work was inspired by the Progressives, and even academic disciplines like sociology, political science, and economics were influenced by a generation of Progressives who believed that political, social, and economic problems could be solved or ameliorated by the application of science.

One of the greatest achievements of the movement was the granting of women's suffrage. Ontario and the western provinces were among the first jurisdictions in the world to grant women the right to vote, and virtually all of the Canadian women's suffrage leaders had links to the Progressives.

If women's suffrage was their greatest achievement, Prohibition was their greatest failure. Drunkenness was seen as a major social problem at the time, and the Progressives, armed with "science" and motivated by demands for social purity and religious redemption, succeeded in having the laws in both Canada and the United States changed to outlaw the sale of alcohol.

This proved to be a disaster both for the Progressives and the rule of law. Prohibition led to smuggling of alcohol on a massive scale and the growth of organized crime. The Gooderham Worts Distillery, once the largest distillery in the world—led by the Gooderham Worts family, a pillar of Toronto society—was found to be involved with the likes of Rocco Perri, the self-proclaimed "King of the Bootleggers." The news shook the Toronto establishment.

Above all, Progressivism was a political movement. They were very critical of old-line political parties and spoke out against patronage and the political influences of vested interests and big business. Today there are no municipal political parties in Ontario, and the primary reason for that is the influence of the Progressive movement.

Toronto is the only city of its size in North America that does not have a system of political parties, and no other Ontario city has a system of functioning political parties either. In part this is a consequence of Ontario legislation that discourages political parties at the municipal level, but the real reason is that the Progressives convinced the public that there is something bad or inherently unfair in municipal political parties.[5]

To this day, Toronto municipal politicians run for election as individuals. They are not committed to a political platform. There is no party discipline in council. Politicians vote on issues in whatever way they deem fit. When a politician stands for re-election there is no way that they can be held accountable for their actions because they have not run on a platform other than on a few local issues.

The major consequence of this is that incumbents can win elections over and over again. To be elected onto Toronto City Council is almost a sinecure for life; sometimes an incumbent is defeated, but it is a rare occurrence. The politicians love it, and the citizens are unaware of how the system of no parties has shaped the political life of their city.

The lack of political parties, again, has tilted municipal politics in Toronto, and the rest of Ontario, in a conservative direction. Political parties are organized around ideas and policies. The lack of parties has meant that individual candidates rarely talk about city-wide issues during elections. It is ward politics that gets a politician elected to local government, not inspired ideas for progressive change.

The Problem of Growth

Municipal political life in Toronto was hardly the venue for innovative ideas and engaging debate that stirred action. The *Toronto Star* once editorialized that council members excelled "in the devious art of insulting each other openly and ingeniously, to the infinite delight of the public."[6] When debates became particularly visceral they could end in members of council hurling paper at one another, and more than one score was settled by a fist fight.

For the most part citizens either ignored the goings on at city hall because it was inconsequential to their lives, or they treated it like entertainment—nothing more enjoyable than a good fight, seems to have been the attitude. Serious problems were building, and the members of Toronto City Council simply were not up to the task of solving them.

The biggest problems were growth and the consequent problems of how to manage and plan for that growth. Toronto's population had grown steadily since its beginning. By the late nineteenth century the city was a major industrial, financial, and administrative centre, and people were attracted to the city because there were jobs, and well-paid jobs.

As the population grew, the City of Toronto could not house all of the newcomers, and people would find accommodation, or build new homes, in the small towns surrounding Toronto. That put stress on these towns. The new residents needed services like water, schools, streets, sewers, and other basic infrastructure. The small towns had limited tax bases and could not afford to provide these services.

Many residents of the outlying areas asked to amalgamate with the City of Toronto, which had a much larger tax base. By 1912 Toronto had absorbed thirty surrounding municipalities in this way. But providing these new services for the amalgamated municipalities was proving expensive for the taxpayers of the city. After 1912, there was a resistance to amalgamate any more territory because of the fear of increased taxes.

The Great Depression brought some relief to the problem of growth. In 1933, 30% of Toronto's population were jobless and a quarter of Torontonians were on relief. There was virtually no growth. The Second World War changed all of that when unprecedented boom times arrived. Toronto's manufacturers could not get enough workers.

People arrived from across the country eager to work, only to find that there was nowhere to live. Island cottages were winterized; workers slept on chesterfields and in damp basements, but with no building of residential housing, the problems only got worse. After the war, the growth, with all of its attendant problems, continued, and the city began to be transformed.

Before the Second World War, Toronto was an Anglo-Saxon city. As late as the 1931 census, 81% of the city's population claimed British ancestry. The largest non-Anglo-Saxon groups were the Jews at 7%, the Italians at 2%, and the Poles at 3%. After the

war, Canada accepted hundreds of thousands of people who were displaced by the conflict, mainly from central and eastern Europe, and many settled in Toronto and other big cities.

By the early 1950s the ethnic make-up of the city was changing. Immigrants from Italy, Portugal and other southern European countries came to settle here, and people from across Canada were flocking to Toronto because this was where the jobs were. Suddenly a housing boom had arrived in the city, and with it, the growth of suburbs.

The suburbanization of cities is one of the most important social and cultural movements of North America in the last seventy-five years. It was based on a number of changes. There was enormous pent-up demand for housing. The generation coming of age in the 1950s had suffered through the Depression and six years of war. They wanted family, security, and the good things money could buy.

There was rapid economic growth after the war. Manufacturing was booming in southern Ontario, particularly in the Toronto region, and that produced jobs with high wages. People from across the country migrated into big cities like Toronto. Immigration brought workers and families to Canada and most settled in urban areas. Women were entering the work force in unprecedented numbers, and income was more evenly distributed than decades before or since.

Governments were anxious to prolong the boom and saw the housing industry as a major economic stimulant. Prior to the Second World War virtually all working people lived in rental accommodation. After the war, legislation was changed to make mortgages easier to get, and financial institutions found that mortgages were one of the safest and most profitable investments they could make because the houses were used as security.

The federal government agency CMHC, Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (now Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation), provided funds to builders and developers, and the municipalities did everything they could to promote housing growth by building roads and providing services. With these changes a large section of the population had the means to buy houses, and homes were being built in unprecedented numbers.

There was one other element that helped to create suburbs: the automobile. In the compact cities before the war, people could get around easily by public transit. After the war, virtually anyone who had a job could afford to own a car, and millions were sold. This gave people the mobility they needed to travel from their homes in the suburbs to work. Distance seemed no object because cars were fast and convenient and gasoline was inexpensive. Public transit became virtually impossible to deliver to the suburbs because of distances, low density in the suburbs, and a lack of ridership.

The suburban housing that was built after the Second World War was on large lots. This resulted in communities that sprawled across valuable farmland. Car-dependent suburbs needed roads. As the economy of the Toronto-centred region boomed, the province constructed massive expressways in the 400 series to handle the ever-growing traffic fed by the new population in the growing suburbs. New municipal services like schools, water, sewers, and garbage pick-up were essential. All of this was expensive to deliver, and municipalities and the provincial government raised property taxes to meet the costs.

What soon emerged was a new type of city, with an older, relatively high-density urban core of houses and low-rise apartments on small lots, and low-density suburbs surrounding the central core. This was the pattern of Toronto, like it is in most North American cities, and it continues to this day.

Some of the suburbs, like Don Mills, were designed for middle-class families. Much of East York and Scarborough were built with one- and two-storey bungalows for working people. Etobicoke in the west end has some affluent neighbourhoods and North York has mixed neighbourhoods. Soon all of the land that is within Toronto today was taken up, and the growth spilled across municipal borders to Mississauga and Brampton in the west, Vaughan and Markham in the north, and Pickering and Ajax to the east.

All of these changes put enormous strain on municipal governments. On the one hand, Torontonians wanted orderly growth with well-planned communities and investments in infrastructure, but on the other hand there was an excessive concern about higher taxes. No politician could survive for long in the city if he or she advocated an increase in property taxes. The province was under increasing pressure to do something about this growing crisis, and it was not long before they acted.

"Big Daddy" and "Hog Town"

The Ontario Progressive Conservative premier Leslie Frost felt that it was essential that these governance problems be solved in a fiscally responsible way, and at the same time that economic growth be encouraged. In 1953, after much talk and consultation, the province imposed a new level of government called Metropolitan Toronto, or Metro as it was always called. Essentially what the legislation did was create a second tier of municipal government. Metro included all of the territory in York County south of Steele Street. It was an upper-tier municipality.

Originally the lower-tier municipalities were made up of Toronto and twelve other municipalities. In 1967, the lower-tier municipalities within Metro were amalgamated into six cities: Toronto, North York, East York, York, Scarborough, and Etobicoke. Each of the lower-tier municipalities had councillors directly elected by the people, and Metro council was composed of representatives from the lower-tier municipalities. The premier appointed Frederic Gardiner to be Metro's first chairman.

Metro was created to bring a coherent government to the sprawling, rapidly growing city. It was a plan to facilitate growth and provide a way to finance the new infrastructure and services that were needed in the suburbs through a broader tax base. Metro's powers included roads, major sewer projects, water facilities, regional planning, public transit, justice, parks, and some social services. The lower-tier municipalities were given power over police, fire, business licensing, health, and libraries, as well as planning approvals for buildings, local streets, and parks. In 1956, the legislation was amended to give Metro power over police and licensing.

Clearly this was a major shift in responsibilities, moving power away from local control to Metro, a political body much more distant from local communities and more difficult for citizens to influence. Before the Metro legislation was implemented there was considerable opposition from people in the City of Toronto and particularly from municipal politicians who understood—correctly as it turned out—that Metro

would result in a loss of their power and influence. But to the province, orderly government and promoting development were essential. They ignored the local concerns and imposed the new structure.

Chairman Gardiner has been credited with making Metro work. He was a lawyer, a Progressive Conservative in his politics, and a Progressive by ideology. In his private legal practice, Gardiner had been involved in various commercial enterprises. He had been a municipal councillor for about twenty years before his appointment, with extensive political connections at all levels of government. Gardiner knew how government worked, but his success came from more than that. As his biographer wrote, he was "big in size, big in ambition, big in appetites and big in rhetoric."[7] Soon he came to be called "Big Daddy."

Gardiner dominated the Metro Council, which was made up of politicians with no allegiance to political parties and with their chief loyalty to their ward rather than the city as a whole. Big Daddy was a politician who wanted to get things done in a hurry and knew how to make things happen. He believed that government should be run like a business by incorruptible administrators, and he had nothing but disdain for the ward-healers who tried to protect their turf and their friends. He disliked academics, theorists, advisors, and consultants. Here was a politician who made all of his own decisions and knew how to get others to go along with him. Gardiner was the strong man, the boss. Once, when a senior administrator used the phrase, "I think," Gardiner stopped him in mid-sentence to say: "I'll do the thinking; you just give me the facts."[8] It was under Gardiner's reign that Toronto came to be called "Hog Town."

Big Daddy dominated every political decision and every project when he was Metro chairman from 1953 to 1961. He examined every project in detail. He approved and organized the funding and construction of water treatment plants, water mains, sewage treatment plants, homes for the aged, and parks. Hundreds of miles of pipe were laid. In 1955, he proposed a second subway line for Toronto, the Bloor Danforth Line, and saw the project through to the beginning of construction.

Roads were a special obsession of Gardiner. Under his leadership, a system of arterial roads were built and extended across Metro. Even before he became Metro chairman he scouted out the possibilities for expressways. An elevated expressway was planned and built along the lakefront that was given his name, the Gardiner Expressway. Another was built down the Don Valley. The city was now surrounded on four sides with expressways: the Gardiner in the south, 401 along the north, the Don Valley Expressway in the east, and 427 in the west.

When Metro was established and the flurry of projects created by Gardiner got underway, municipal politicians and administrators from across North America came to Toronto and marvelled at what they saw. Cities across the continent were all experiencing the same problems related to growth. A two-tiered Metro-style government seemed to provide a way to deliver funding and services to the needy suburbs and at the same time provide government that could respond to local needs. But as time passed, criticisms mounted.

The most fundamental criticism was that citizens had lost control over their local government. Gardiner had little interest in the people in individual wards if their views clashed with his vision of Metro's needs. There was confusion as to which level of

government was responsible for which services and which politician to call if there were problems. Metro came to be seen as remote and disconnected from communities. In the meantime, politicians in the lower-tier municipalities became much better in responding to the needs of their citizens. This was particularly true in the City of Toronto. New alliances were being built, and often what galvanized those alliances was opposition to Metro and the powerful chairmen (they were all men) who led it.

There are two striking examples of this new politics. In 1955, under the leadership of Gardiner, Metro decided to expand the park on the Toronto Islands and demolish all of the houses. In 1956, the demolitions began on Hanlan's Point and began moving east. By 1968 over 450 buildings had been demolished and all that remained of the housing was on Ward's and Algonquin Islands. Opposition had been mounting to the destruction of the Island community, and the majority of members on Toronto City Council came to support the Islanders. They used their power and influence to stop further demolitions. Gardiner and his successors could win the votes on Metro Council because they had the support of the politicians from the suburbs, but they were prevented from carrying out their objectives by the politicians in the City of Toronto.[9]

An even more dramatic failure of Metro was the struggle over the Spadina Expressway. Gardiner had created expressways on the four sides of the city, but he was convinced that it was essential to punch a six-lane expressway through the centre of the city and connect the 401 to the Gardiner to facilitate the movement of traffic. The Spadina Expressway would have eliminated hundreds of homes and literally cut the city in two.

The Stop Spadina fight was a classic battle between those who lived downtown and wanted to preserve the quality of life of the inner neighbourhoods, and those who lived in the suburbs and wanted to improve the highway system so they could get around the city faster by cars. The suburban councillors could prevail in the Metro Council votes, but the Toronto citizens and politicians who opposed the project used every means at their disposal to delay and frustrate construction. In the end, Premier Bill Davis made the decision in 1971 to stop the expressway, and it was finally dead.

In retrospect, there is little doubt that the decision to stop the Spadina Expressway saved the inner city of Toronto from the deterioration that happened in so many North American cities. Now Toronto had the hope of becoming a liveable city, where quality of life would be valued and neighbourhoods sustained and strengthened. It also marked the beginning of a new politics of citizen involvement for Toronto.

The "Old Guard" and the "Reform Movement"

With the creation of Metro, a level of government had been set up that was insulated from the democratic control of the people. Here was a political body that was responsible for the most important local services, and yet it was dominated by one person, "Big Daddy" Gardiner, the chairman of Metro. Because there was no political party system, there was no organized opposition that could articulate a different vision or priorities for the city. There was opposition from some councillors, but these were individuals who were ignored in the fractured council and seen as irrelevant by the media.

It was in the City of Toronto that the political life began to change. Toronto's politics in the 1960s was dominated by a group that came to be called the "Old Guard." These

were the ward-healers who had been on council for a long time and knew how to keep their constituents happy. The Old Guard supported a business agenda and had their campaigns paid for by the developers and real estate interests who needed approval for their projects.

Toronto was growing rapidly, and that meant that not only were the suburbs expanding, but also that high-rise development was coming to the downtown core. Office buildings were going up in the financial district. Developers were demolishing old homes in established neighbourhoods to build high-rise apartment buildings. Urban renewal projects, funded by the federal and provincial governments, like Trefann Court, were threatening to destroy whole neighbourhoods.

Over and over again the Old Guard supported the developers and approved projects that were opposed by local citizens. Rumours persisted that these politicians met over card games in hotel rooms provided by the developers, and that this was where the decisions were made. Once a project appeared on the council agenda, the Old Guard had the votes to approve it no matter what objections arose.

John Sewell's book, *How We Changed Toronto*, describes how the city worked hand in glove with the developers at that time. "City hall had a formidable array of resources: staff, money, time, information, a captive city council. City staff had an investment in implementing its (urban renewal) plan, and had lots of tricks to make it happen. It withheld important information about the real costs and real impacts. It offered special treatment to those in the neighbourhood who agreed with its plans, thus splintering opposition and driving wedges between neighbours."[10]

It was at the end of the 1960s that this politics changed. The fight against the Spadina Expressway had mobilized citizen activists. The inner core of the city, then as now, had a number of established neighbourhoods with political institutions such as ratepayer groups or community organizations. In 1968, a group called CORRA—the Confederation of Residents and Ratepayer Associations—was formed. CORRA activists closely watched the politics at city hall and Metro Council and tabulated how councillors voted on key issues. In 1969, a court challenge led to the redrawing of ward boundaries in the city, which left many of the Old Guard vulnerable. Then in December 1969, Karl Jaffary, an activist lawyer, and John Sewell, a lawyer and community organizer, were elected to council.

There were a number of issues that the reform aldermen focused on, but two were the most important: democracy and the transparency of decision-making, and the unbridled development that was threatening Toronto neighbourhoods. In the next two years, over and over again the reformers challenged the Old Guard, and time and again they were frustrated in their efforts. But as time went on, the reformers became more skilled in their political handling of issues. John Sewell in particular was able to drive home his political points, and in the process, he dramatized issues that captured media attention.

As the 1972 election drew close, reformers in all parts of the city gathered in meetings to draw up election plans, but there was difficulty in finding agreement. They were not a cohesive group with a disciplined party structure and leadership. The reformers came from all political groups. There were New Democrats, red Tories, Liberals, and a number who were not members of any political party. Because of the divisions, there

was considerable distrust, which made it difficult for them to work together.

A serious division in tactics divided the group. John Sewell argued that they should focus on taking control of council, which meant focusing on the aldermanic races and ignoring the contest for mayor because the mayor had only one vote on council. Then, to the surprise of everyone, in mid-July 1972, David Crombie, who had been elected as an alderman in the previous council and was virtually unknown across the city, announced that he would run for mayor. Other members of the Reform Group and their supporters were furious. Some even tried to sabotage the campaign, but Crombie persisted.

The 1972 City of Toronto election is still remembered as a watershed event that changed municipal politics in the city. Crombie was running against two strong candidates from the Old Guard. At first it appeared that he would lose, but as the citizens became engaged in the election and got to better understand the issues, the momentum for Crombie's campaign grew, and he won handily. Despite all of the divisions and disagreements, there was jubilation among the Reform Group and their followers. Now they held eleven of the twenty-three seats on council, just short of a majority, but with the mayor's vote they could bring a new politics to Toronto.

David Crombie proved to be a very popular mayor. He was re-elected in both 1974 and 1976 with large majorities. But the evaluation of his tenure depends very much on the perspective of those making the judgment. Jon Caulfield, who wrote an influential book about Crombie called *The Tiny Perfect Mayor*,[11] maintains that he did little to achieve the goals of the urban reform movement. He was, and is, a red Tory, a conservationist whose most important political objective was to preserve neighbourhoods. He sought consensus and had no taste for the angry, divisive politics of John Sewell.

But the assessment of Caulfield and others misses one important point. Crombie, and the council he presided over, brought an end to the back-room dealing of the Old Guard. Under his watch, participation in the political life of the city flourished, citizens were given the opportunity to voice their views, full disclosure was required of all projects, and issues were decided by council only after debate that was often strident and divisive, but always engaging.

It is on the issue of development that Crombie is most strongly criticized. Early in his first term of office, he supported a 45-foot limit on the height of new buildings, but this stayed in effect for only a short period. The developers did not like the close scrutiny of their projects, but many of the reformers felt there was virtually no difference between the Crombie council and previous councils dominated by the Old Guard. The developers and real estate interests remained powerful and almost always got their way in the end.

With the passing of Fred Gardiner from the political scene, Metro Council became increasingly polarized. Most of the councillors representing the downtown—the City of Toronto—were reform politicians who were anxious to promote innovative projects. They were concerned about the lack of affordable housing, transit, traffic, poverty, homelessness, and a raft of related issues. But Metro Council was dominated by suburban politicians with a much different agenda. They were concerned about high property taxes and wanted to speed traffic along the streets and roads of the city. This split that first appeared at Metro Council continues to bedevil Toronto politics.

David Crombie left municipal politics in 1978, and John Sewell was elected mayor. Named the "blue jeans" mayor by the press for his casual dress, Sewell rode a bike to city hall to underline his anti-establishment politics. He took a much stronger anti-development stance than Crombie. Sewell is best known for his harsh criticism of the Toronto police for their actions that targeted the gay community in the bathhouse raids. A coalition was building against the reformers, and in the 1980 election, supporters of the police, developers, and real estate interests backed Art Eggleton, a Liberal, and Sewell was defeated.

With the defeat of John Sewell, the old coalition of reformers, who had so much influence in Crombie's day, had lost much of its energy. Even CORRA became a shell of its former self. But the changes introduced by the Reform Group became a permanent feature of the way the council operated. Transparency and full disclosure is now the rule for any proposal before council. Debate and strong expressions of opinion can be expected, and that has made council a model of town hall democracy.

There were still reformers, but they were not so much identified with anti-development politics. The New Democratic Party played a much more important role, especially in the downtown wards, and a new group of leaders like Jack Layton became prominent. This new movement focused on issues such as homelessness, housing, pollution, and poverty, and opposed the powerful grip that business held over the city.

Governance and the Imposition of Megacity

The Toronto-centred region was growing into a huge urban complex. By the 1960s, suburban sprawl extended well beyond the boundaries of Metro and into the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). After the provincial government decided that Metro was a success, they established second-tier municipal governments across the GTA by creating the regions of Peel, York, Durham, and Halton. Across southern Ontario, two-tier municipal governments became the rule, with most of the power located in the upper tier, or regional level.

Local control, where residents could influence the decisions being made in their communities, was under attack. Municipalities were being amalgamated and consolidated to become much larger units across the province. This was justified by saying that, because communications and travel had become so much easier, there was no longer the need for the same number of municipalities. Greater efficiency, providing better services, and promoting economic development were other reasons offered, but these changes were threatening the control that people had over their cities, towns, and communities.

Until the 1950s Ontario had a strong tradition of local government. Municipal elections were held every year. Then it became every two years, then three. Now they are held every four years. In the past, there were elections not only for local councillors and school boards, but in many municipalities, for members of the Public Utilities Commission and local Hydro boards. Referendums on capital projects that would raise property taxes were common. In time, many of these practices were eliminated, and decisions were turned over to the municipal politicians and appointed committee members who were often local lawyers or members of real estate groups. Local democracy was being eroded. People were viewed as taxpayers, not citizens who should have control over their local communities.

There were increasing complaints that local government was not working, and nowhere were they louder than in Toronto. Metro Council had become polarized between the downtown and the suburbs, and it was getting worse. "Dysfunctional" was the favourite word journalists used to describe Metro. It was like a fault line had emerged between the suburbs and the old city, with the politicians polarized into two groups that took opposite positions on most important issues.

Municipalities are the creations of the province and when the Bob Rae NDP government was elected in 1990, it appeared for a time that they would deal with the problems of Metro, but they delayed until almost the end of their mandate. By then it was too late. The province appointed Anne Golden, the head of the United Way of Toronto, to be the chair of the "Greater Toronto Area Task Force." Her mandate was to recommend governance reforms for the GTA and particularly Metro Toronto.[12]

In 1995 the Progressive Conservatives, led by Mike Harris, won the election and inherited the problems. Anne Golden tabled her report the next year. She recommended that all of the second-tier regional governments in the GTA be eliminated, that local governments be strengthened, and that a new second-tier government for the entire GTA be created.

At first the Harris government said they would implement the Golden report's recommendations, but when they finally announced their plan, it did not follow any of them. The premier said that outside Toronto all of the regional governments would stay in place, but that in Toronto all of the lower-tier municipalities were to be eliminated, and that Metro was to be converted into the City of Toronto. This, critics immediately cried, was "Megacity!"

Megacity created the largest public controversy in Toronto in recent memory, and it remains controversial to this day. The proposal was to amalgamate the six lower-tier cities and the upper-tier Metropolitan Toronto into one government and one administration that would be called the City of Toronto. One hundred and twenty councillors and six mayors were to be reduced in number to forty-four councillors and one mayor who were to govern the amalgamated city.

At the same time, the Ontario government proposed a reorganization of government services across the province. The province was to download responsibilities and costs for transit, social services, and housing, and the province was to assume responsibility for education. This reorganization, the province claimed, would be revenue-neutral.

There was an immediate negative reaction to the proposal in Toronto. A public campaign against Megacity was launched by the former mayor, John Sewell, and an organization called "Citizens for Local Democracy," or C4D. The co-chair was Kathleen Wynne, who became the premier of the province seventeen years later. This group claimed that the real intent of the Harris neo-conservative government had nothing to do with efficiency. It was an attempt to destroy the progressive political movement centred in the old city by swamping Toronto City Council with conservative suburban councillors.

They also saw it as a way for the Harris government to shift the resources of the downtown to the suburbs and also to solve the budget problems of the province by downloading provincial costs onto the municipalities. In their view these changes

would not bring more effective government; it was a blatant attempt to subvert local democracy, destroy the progressive, downtown political movement and make it impossible to govern the city.

The Harris government countered this argument with the claim that this reorganization would lower the costs of government and save money. They pointed out that there were six city halls and one Metro Hall, each costing millions of dollars in yearly upkeep. Under Megacity there would be the need for only one. The amalgamation of administrations and the streamlining of services would also save money. An accounting firm was hired by the province to study amalgamation, and it claimed there would be savings of $300 million a year. Critics said the costs were wildly underestimated.

The "democratic deficit" argument was an important issue in the debate. The reduction in the number of councillors meant that citizens had less access to the politicians who represented them. Each of the wards was to be half the size of a federal riding, made up of about fifty-five thousand people. Critics pointed out that it would be very difficult for citizens to control or influence their councillors, and it would leave the city open to control by corporate interests who had money and power. To many, Megacity was a sophisticated attempt to control the democratic process of local government, the form of government that was closest to the people.

As part of the mounting opposition, all of the lower-tier municipalities making up Metro Toronto held a referendum about Megacity. The results overwhelmingly rejected the proposal. Across Metro, 76% of voters rejected amalgamation. The weakest opposition was in Etobicoke, where 69.5% cast No votes, while the strongest was in East York, where 81.5% voted No. But this made no difference. The Harris government passed the law and Megacity was imposed.

The debate about Megacity continues, but now it is enlightened by almost twenty years of experience living in the amalgamated city. On the issue of costs, the evidence is clear. Rather than saving money, the costs of amalgamation ballooned. One estimate is that it now costs $1.2 billion more to administer the new City of Toronto than under the former structure.[13] But costs were only one of the problems. It took several years for the city to be integrated and reorganized into one administrative unit.

The costs of downloading have also been much higher than predicted. Social service costs are very expensive and difficult to control. The city has a higher proportion of its population who need assistance than smaller municipalities, because low-income people, particularly those with special needs, come into the city because medical, social services, and transit are so much better in Toronto than in smaller centres.

The City of Toronto was also required to administer the Toronto Community Housing program, a program for 164,000 low- and moderate-income tenants. The city soon found that they did not have the funds to keep up the repair on these units adequately. There have been complaints about the neglect and deteriorating quality of the buildings, which continue to this day. Meanwhile, the quality of public education in Toronto, taken over by the province, has deteriorated as special programs have been cut for lack of funds.

The downloading and reorganization of government services have contributed to the financial difficulties faced by the new City of Toronto and all municipalities across the province. Mike Harris and other members of his Progressive Conservative

government blamed the crisis on poor administration by the municipalities, but clearly that was not the case. Since amalgamation and the reorganization of services, the costs of administering the city have risen substantially; meanwhile, Toronto is reliant primarily on regressive property taxes. The city simply does not have the financial resources to pay the costs of the services that are needed for people in a large city.

The Harris government was responding to a real problem—finding the appropriate way to govern a large metropolitan area—but their solution was badly flawed because it was based on partisan politics rather than the principles of democracy. The people of Toronto continue to pay a high price for the imposition of Megacity, and it has not solved the problems of dysfunctional local government—in fact, it has increased the problems and divisions.

The New City

Population growth was driving unprecedented change in the Toronto-centred region. By the mid-1970s the City of Toronto had surpassed Montreal as the largest urban complex in the country and largest centre of economic activity. By 2011, the Ontario government was talking about the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), a sprawling continuous urban complex that stretched over municipal boundaries along the northwest shore of Lake Ontario.

The City of Toronto had an estimated population of 2.7 million in 2016. It is the centre of the GTHA with a population of 7.3 million. This is 56.8% of Ontario's population and 21.8% of the population of Canada. The GTHA is now the fourth largest urban centre in North America after New York (18.9 million), Los Angeles (17.8 million), and Chicago (9.8 million).

The region had emerged as the most important economic engine in the country, but economic changes were having an impact. The GTHA has long been the manufacturing centre of Canada, but after the year 2000 the rise in the Canadian dollar and increased global competition led to the loss of manufacturing jobs. By 2012, half a million jobs had been lost in the sector, with three hundred thousand of them in the GTHA.[14] There is no sign of a recovery of manufacturing jobs.

Manufacturing remains important in the GTHA, but the City of Toronto has emerged as a white-collar city. The downtown core is the financial capital of Canada. Over one hundred thousand people work in the banks, brokerage houses, and insurance companies along Bay Street. Government, financial services, tourism, and the service sector are the core of the city's economy. Retail is the largest employment sector.

A new development is now transforming Toronto: the rebirth of the downtown. It is hard to pin down an exact date for when this began, but sometime around the year 2000 the inner core of the city began to go through a major building boom that continues to this day and shows no sign of letting up. Condominiums began to be built in record numbers, and that was followed by new office buildings. The numbers tell the story.

A recent study described "an explosion in density in the heart of Toronto." The population of the downtown core more than tripled in the five years between 2006 and 2011,[15] and the growth continues unabated. Another report published in September

2011 found that Toronto had 132 high-rises under construction. This was more than any other city in North America. Mexico City was the next in rank with 88 high-rises under construction, New York City with 86, and Chicago with 17.[16] Some predicted that condo sales would peak in 2012 and that there would be a slump, but sales have been even stronger.[17]

Another study captures the scale of this growth.[18] The downtown of the city, defined as from Bathurst Street in the west, Dupont and Rosedale Valley Road in the north, the Don Valley Parkway in the east, and Lake Ontario in the south, has grown from a population of 102,289 in 1976 to 188,485 in 2012, a 95% increase. Today the population is estimated to be well over 200,000. It is not only condo development. Toronto's downtown is also going through a boom in office buildings. The TD Bank released a report in January 2013 that showed that between 2009 and 2012, 4.7 million square feet of office space were built. With only 3% of the City of Toronto's land area, the core of the city produces 51% of its GDP, 33% of all jobs, and has 25% of the city's tax base.

It is young people from 20 to 39 years of age that make up the largest group that live in the core, but the population of all age groups has been growing, with the exception of children from 0 to 19 years of age. From 2003 to 2013, there were 11,686 new floors of residential units that came onto the market. The TD study found that 65% of the units in the core were rental accommodations and only 35% owner-occupied. Many of the condo units have been bought by speculators and are rented. Most of the people living in the core are young, highly educated singles or childless couples. Many do not own cars. Forty-one percent either walk or cycle to work and many of the rest take transit.

Statistics on housing sales show the dramatic shift. In 2001, 75% of the new homes sold in the GTA were low-rise and 25% high-rise. Ten years later, in 2011, 62% were high-rise and 38% low-rise.[19] This is bringing more people downtown where condo development is strongest, but high-rise condominiums are being built all over the GTA. There is no indication that this shift to high-rise condo living is slowing down. In the first quarter of 2014 there were 2,496 high-rise condos sold in the GTA and only 1,631 low-rise units.[20] By early 2017 the average cost of a detached house in Toronto had hit $1.35 million.[21] House prices had escalated to the point that there was talk of a housing bubble that could have an impact on the city's economy.

The movement to the downtown has been propelled, in part, by economics. Ownership of single-family houses across the GTA is beyond the reach of many, even those who have a post-secondary education. Not only is the cost of living expensive in the suburbs, and property taxes high, but buying and owning a car and paying the cost of gasoline are becoming prohibitive. Commute times consume hours every day for those who live in the suburbs. Many are finding it is more affordable and convenient to live downtown, where cars are not essential.

The new urbanism is driven by cultural change as well. Many of the new generation reject suburban life. They want to be downtown, with their friends, in the centre of the action and close to work. They go to the bars and restaurants and to theatre, dance, and professional sports events. While their parents felt threatened by people who were

different from themselves, the new generation welcomes the multiculturalism and sheer diversity and originality of the city.

But this condo boom in the downtown core is only one part of the transformation of the City of Toronto. Beginning in the 1960s there was the movement to gentrify the housing that surrounds the downtown core. These are neighbourhoods like Riverdale, the Annex, North Toronto, Bloor West Village, and the Beaches. Before this, low-income people lived in inner-city neighbourhoods, but today they include some of the most expensive housing in the city. Many of the poor, low-income and even so-called middle classes have moved out into the inner suburbs to get less expensive housing.

Toronto has the unique characteristic of a downtown core that is populated by singles and childless couples, while the neighbourhoods surrounding the core house those with high incomes. Those with low and moderate incomes live in the suburbs of Scarborough, North York, East York, and parts of Etobicoke. In Toronto, these are called the "inner suburbs" to distinguish them from the "outer suburbs" that are beyond the borders of the city, like Mississauga, Brampton, Vaughan, Markham and Pickering.

In the inner suburbs there are a number of high-rise buildings that were built with CMHC funding in the 1960s and later. They represent the largest stock of rental housing in the city, but although they received considerable public funding, they are owned by private companies. This is where those with low incomes live. It is difficult to estimate how many people live in buildings like this, but I put the number at somewhere between eight hundred thousand and one million people.

The buildings look fine from the outside, but many are in very poor repair. The elevators, kitchen appliances, and plumbing often break down. The buildings are energy hogs, leaking heat through the windows and doors. This shift of those with low incomes out of the city centre into the suburbs is one of the most significant changes in Toronto. Another is the change in the make-up of the city's population in the last twenty years. The Anglo-Saxon, Protestant city that was once called the "Belfast of Canada" is now a city of immigrants from all over the world.

Today the City of Toronto is a multi-ethnic, multi-racial city of incredible diversity. Forty-seven percent of the population identify as visible minorities, and more than 50% are classified as immigrants.[22] The GTA regions outside Toronto are not as socially diverse, but there are large populations of Chinese in Markham and South Asians in Peel. Ethnic and cultural diversity has become the characteristic of the entire region. Mississauga, like Toronto, has a population that is about 50% visible minority.

Not all of Toronto's immigrants are poor, but many suffer economic hardships as they struggle to get on their feet in a new country. Because there has been no affordable housing built in Ontario cities since the early 1990s there is a desperate shortage of housing for people of low incomes, and in Toronto a great number of immigrants suffer by paying high rents for poor accommodation. It is economic circumstances that force them into the high-rise towers in the inner suburbs.

Studies of income and place of residence in Toronto show this clearly.[23] The downtown and the neighbourhoods surrounding the city core are where those with high incomes live. They have excellent city services and good transit. Many of those with low incomes live in high-rise in the inner suburbs where transit is poor, services are inadequate, and often shops are a long distance away from where they live.

PART 2: Politics

The imposition of Megacity by the Harris government has created a chaotic, dysfunctional political system in Toronto where the progressive voices are smothered by the conservatives of the suburbs. Some go so far as to say that today Toronto is ungovernable as it is presently constituted. Amalgamation forced two very different types of cities, the downtown and the suburbs, to come together and operate as one political entity. The people in these two cities have very different interests, outlooks, and objectives. That has resulted in a divided council where the majority are able to impose their views on the minority. Because there are more votes in the suburbs than the downtown, their views prevail.

The old City of Toronto, made up of the downtown and the ring of communities that surround the core, is high-density and relatively affluent, although there are pockets of serious poverty. This part of the city has excellent transit, and a high proportion of the people depend on transit, walk, or ride bicycles for their everyday needs. Cars flooding into the downtown have long been a very serious problem, but local people and their politicians can do little about traffic because suburban councillors are opposed to any infringement on the right to drive in the city.

Development is another important issue. The core has gone through major redevelopment pressures in the last fifteen years, but much of the construction has happened on vacant land along the Waterfront or on the Railway Lands. The old development battles of the 1960s and '70s, when residents tried to stop development, have been largely resolved because developers have learned to build on vacant land, rather than imposing development on existing residential communities. The new struggles are trying to control construction so it is not disruptive to the community. There is concern that new development will attract more traffic, and there are rising demands that more affordable housing be built, particularly for families.

The municipal politicians in the downtown wards are progressive, with almost all of them either New Democrats or Liberals. This is where Jack Layton, Olivia Chow, and others like them rose to prominence. On the 2014–2018 council there are sixteen councillors from the old city. I estimate that fourteen of those eighteen are progressive or semi-progressive in their politics and the issues that they support, but politics in the inner suburbs is very different.

The suburban councillors reflect a different set of values. Although a large number of people in the inner suburbs live in high-rises, their impact on city politics is barely noticeable. It is the homeowners in those communities that dominate the local politics. There are a number of reasons for this. A large number of the people living in the high-rises in the inner suburbs are immigrants, and only citizens are allowed to vote. Many come from countries that do not have a strong tradition of local politics, and many are young. It is very hard to get young people involved in municipal politics in this country. By contrast, the homeowners get out to vote in high numbers, and many follow local politics.

These people are not affluent like those in the downtown. Many bought their houses years ago when industrial workers could afford to own houses. Now a large number are retired and living on fixed incomes. They are finding it very difficult to

maintain their houses because of rising costs. This has made property taxes the number one issue in the suburbs.

Toronto's taxes are lower than other GTA municipalities, but that makes little difference to this group of voters. Those with low incomes pay little or no income tax, but property tax is based on the value of the house. Regardless of incomes, homeowners must pay their property taxes. This is the reason why politicians in the suburbs promise to keep taxes low, and why almost any item that appears on the city council agenda that could result in increased taxes is stubbornly resisted.

Traffic and transit are also important issues in the Toronto suburbs. Many of the homeowners have cars, and they want free and full access to drive anywhere. It is the low-income people living in the high-rises in the suburbs who need transit. Many of the immigrants rely on transit because they cannot afford to own cars, but service is terrible in the suburbs. It can take up to two hours just to get downtown for people in Scarborough. But this need is largely ignored because the immigrant population has almost no political voice.

The politicians in the suburbs are almost all conservative. Of the twenty-eight councillors on Toronto City Council from the suburbs, just four of them could be considered progressive or somewhat progressive. The political fault line that shapes Toronto's politics is between the downtown and the suburbs. Megacity led to the domination of the old City of Toronto by the suburbs and produced a council that is conservative and reactive, rather than progressive and innovative. The Harris government imposed Megacity to derail the progressive urban movement in Toronto, and it must be admitted that they were very successful.

Left, Right, and Mushy Middle

There are no political parties in council, no caucusing, no party discipline, and no block voting. This is what makes Toronto City Council different from other cities. It is difficult to predict the outcome of an issue until the votes are counted, but there are political groupings on council that help to shape its politics and determine the outcome of votes.

The progressives on council support improvements in services and programs for those with low incomes. They are in favour of affordable housing, culture, transit, and issues around quality of life and environmental concerns. They are not anti-development. This is a change from the days of the Reform Group in the 1970s. Today there is a consensus on council that Toronto needs new housing because of the growth of population, but the progressives believe in protecting communities. Not surprisingly, they have come to be called the "Left-Wing Group."

The majority of the politicians from the suburbs support low property taxes. Like former mayor Rob Ford, they believe streets are primarily for cars, and they tend to oppose things like bike lanes, group homes in neighbourhoods, and affordable housing, because they believe those facilities will harm property values. This group has come to be called "the Right-Wing Group."

There is another group of councillors who see themselves as unaligned politicians. They vote on issues depending on any number of different factors. They have come to

be called “the Mushy Middle.” Despite the derogatory term, it is the Mushy Middle who determine the outcome of many important issues on Toronto council because they are swing voters.

These political groupings are always in flux depending on the issue. Cycling is a good example. Some of the politicians in the Right-Wing Group have come to understand that if there are protected bike lanes in the city, numbers of people would cycle to work, and this would help to reduce traffic gridlock. They will, therefore, vote to support bike lanes; an issue that will have the almost universal support of the Left-Wing Group.

The outcome of controversial issues, like jets at the Island Airport, depends more on the councillor’s alliance to business or their concerns about the Waterfront. Corporate interests will lobby hard for big projects like this on the grounds of economic development. Other groups will lobby against it by pointing out that jets will harm the Waterfront, one of Toronto’s great economic opportunities.

In the parliaments of Ottawa or Queen’s Park, the outcome of issues is determined by the positions of the political parties. The outcome of controversial issues on Toronto City Council is always in doubt.

The Democratic Deficit

Since Megacity was imposed in 1998, the City of Toronto has had forty-four councillors representing individual wards across the city. Each of the wards have between fifty thousand and seventy thousand residents. The mayor is elected across the city that now has a population of 2.7 million people. The Mayor of Toronto is directly elected by more people than any other politician in Canada.

The ideal of democracy is to empower people so that they can collectively govern themselves. Most would concede that in a large nation-state of millions of people, this is very difficult, but local government should be different. Toronto’s local government, however, hardly begins to achieve the democratic ideal. The size of the wards makes it very difficult for people to even get to know their councillors, let alone have much influence over the political issues that are important to their communities.

The people’s representatives should also reflect the population, according to our democratic ideals. Again, in Toronto that is not the case. From the time Toronto was incorporated in 1834 to today, there have been seventy-two mayors. Thirty-three of them, or 45.8%, have been lawyers or other professionals, while thirty-one, or 43.2%, have come from business. This domination of business and professionals has not changed in recent elections.

The origins of councillors have been more varied than mayors, but lawyers and people from business continue to be over-represented. Clerical and blue-collar workers, or the unemployed or poor, occasionally let their names stand for office, but in recent memory none have been elected. Toronto politicians, and virtually all Canadian politicians, for that matter, almost always come from the professions or business.

There are other ways that councillors on Toronto’s City Council are unrepresentative of the city’s population. Gender is one. The last council (2010–14) had fifteen women councillors, or 33.3%. On the present council (2014–18), the number of women councillors dropped to fourteen, or 31.8%.

Age is another. On Toronto council, only three members are younger than 39.[24] Very few people under the age of 30 get elected to public office at any level in Canada. This is one of the reasons why the issues of young people are ignored, and why so many of the young develop a disdain for politics and refuse to vote or participate.

Despite the fact that almost 50% of Torontonians are visible minorities, only five of the city's forty-four councillors, or 11.4%, are from visible minority groups. One member is African-American and four are of south-east Asian origin. There are councillors from the Jewish and Italian communities and most of the rest are Anglo-Saxon.

But the most important factor that shapes who is on council is incumbency. In municipal politics in Ontario, once a politician is elected it is rare that they are defeated, and Toronto is no different. An incumbent councillor is a full-time politician with staff to handle constituency problems and make sure that the local media are carrying positive stories about them. They have money in their budgets for mailings to all of their constituents, and they use it for self-promotion. Most attend all important community meetings to make themselves known.

The lack of political parties also helps incumbents because it makes it very difficult for voters to understand what candidates stand for. Ward contests are almost devoid of city-wide issues. Incumbent councillors take credit for routine improvements, like fixing sidewalks or installing new streetlights, even though these improvements are part of the city's normal upgrading of infrastructure. They take credit for the accomplishments of others and city staff, and blame the mayor or other councillors for the problems. Because voters don't know what the politicians stand for, many will cast their vote for a name that they recognize on the ballot.

To illustrate how static the electoral system has become, in the 2014 Toronto election, seven new councillors were elected onto Toronto's forty-four-member city council, but only one, Jon Burnside in Ward 26, defeated an incumbent. The other six were elected in wards where the incumbent retired. In Toronto and across Ontario, once a municipal councillor is elected, they have a near sinecure for life. Our members of parliament in Ottawa and Queen' Park can change when an old government is defeated and a new one elected, but in municipal governments in Ontario the ability of incumbents to get reelected over and over again has become a major problem. This is particularly a problem in a dynamic, rapidly growing municipality like the City of Toronto.

Our municipal political system encourages ward-healers, interested primarily in their own political survival. It would be wrong to say that all councillors are like this. Some are very enlightened and articulate politicians who are willing to put themselves at risk when difficult and divisive issues come up, but they are rare indeed.

Sitting councillors have such a huge advantage over their opponents that they have to do something that angers a very large number of people to be defeated. As a result, council has become static, even ossified. Toronto city councillors tend to be old, white, male, and traditional, and their votes on issues reflect their conservative political views. This does not signal a healthy democracy. It helps to create councils averse to taking risks or promoting change. Unfortunately, this is the case in municipalities across the province.

Campaign Donations

"Follow the money" is the rule of those trying to understand who has influence in politics. If you can find out where a politician gets his or her campaign donations from, it will show their loyalties and how they will vote on issues. Because there are no municipal political parties, this rule is particularly revealing in Ontario municipal elections.

In Toronto, prior to the rise of the Reform Group on council in 1970, the Old Guard got virtually all of their money from developers and others in the real estate industry. That was why they voted again and again to approve projects even though many were opposed by people in the community. The Reform Group changed all of that, and since then most campaign donations come from individuals in small amounts. Even today Toronto municipal politicians are not as reliant on corporate donations as those in other Ontario municipalities.

Ontario legislation governing elections requires all candidates to disclose the names and addresses of all donations over $100. Robert MacDermid, a political science professor at York University, has performed a study of campaign donations in different GTA municipalities, and it reveals some interesting patterns. MacDermid found that in the 2006 election, only 12% of the total campaign funds raised by candidates in the City of Toronto came from corporations or unions. The rest came from individuals. He contrasted this to campaign donations in nine other GTA municipalities and found that over 50% of all of their campaign donations came from corporations, and that most of these corporate donations came from developers and other real estate interests.

Some municipalities had much higher levels of corporate donations. In Pickering, one of the largest GTA municipalities, campaign donations from corporations totalled 77%. MacDermid also found that winning candidates were much more likely to be supported by developers and real estate interests than losers.

Municipal councils deal with land and grant approvals to new developments. The decisions of these councils help to create the profits of the entire real estate industry, from the huge developers to independent real estate agents. Campaign donations are the way that those interests get the decisions they want from municipal councils.[25]

Toronto is leading the movement away from developer dominated municipal politics. For some years now, the city has had a campaign rebate program much like the ones federally and provincially. This has encouraged individual donations. In 2009, city council, under the leadership of Mayor David Miller, voted to ban corporate and union campaign donations, and that ban continues to this day. Only individuals can contribute funds to a campaign. This does not mean that corporations have no influence in local politics in Toronto. Every individual can contribute up to $1,500, and that can buy a lot of influence, but it is a far cry from the influence-peddling found in the municipalities outside Toronto.

Mayors of the Megacity

Ontario provincial legislation governing municipalities requires councillors to be elected in individual wards, while mayors are elected by all voters in the municipality. In the operations of councils, however, mayors have only one vote on issues, just like

every other councillor. This has led some to conclude that the mayor has no more political power than any other councillor. That may be the case in some Ontario municipalities, but it is certainly not true in Toronto.

Almost one million people voted in the 2014 mayoral election, and John Tory received 394,775 votes, or 40.28% of them. That alone gives the mayor prestige, influence, and access to the media and public. It helps the mayor to define the issues and the public perception of them. But a mayor's influence does not stop there. The mayor has a large staff personally loyal to him or her. The city bureaucracy works with the mayor and staff to set the agenda of council meetings. That in turn defines which issues go forward to council and shapes the recommendations of both the staff and the mayor.

Other councillors can bring forward their own motions, but the ability of the mayor to set the agenda gives him or her far more influence than any other individual councillor. As we will see when we look at different mayors, some have been very skilful in controlling the agenda and influencing members of council, while others have been unable to get the votes. As a result, some mayors have been much more successful in getting their priorities adopted while others have failed.

The mayor has one other power, and that is the ability to make appointments to city committees. Every councillor has his or her interests and abilities, and they have committees that they would like to serve on. The mayor has the power to appoint councillors to committees, and in that way, they can reward their supporters and punish their opponents. As we will see, this power of the mayor to appoint has been strengthened with the "strong mayor system" that was enacted during David Miller's day.
Since amalgamation was imposed in 1998 there have been four mayors of the City of Toronto. Each one has been very different from the others, and the councils that they have led have been different, with different priorities, successes, and failures. Let's look at each in turn.

Mel Lastman, the "Bad Boy"

The 1997 election, the first under the new Megacity structure, pitted the then mayor of the old City of Toronto, Barbara Hall, against Mel Lastman, then the mayor of North York. Hall, a centrist candidate, had the support of NDP and Liberal supporters while Lastman was a conservative from the suburbs. It was a close contest. Hall won the majority of the votes from the old City of Toronto, but this was not enough to counter the strong support that Lastman received from the suburbs. This was the first clear indication that the conservative suburbs would prevail over the downtown progressives in the post-megacity of Toronto.

The Lastman years, from 1997 to 2003, were difficult, as politicians and administrators tried to harmonize services across the city and reshape and adapt the administrations of seven governments (Metro and six lower-tier cities) into one. The period was particularly difficult for the poor of the city and those trying to deliver services to low-income people. Not only were social services downloaded to the city, but the Ontario government had cut welfare rates by over 20% and new affordable housing projects were cancelled. This pushed many low-income residents into crisis. The problems of homelessness multiplied. Divisions between rich and poor became more acute.

Meanwhile the city had moved into an era of almost permanent financial crisis.

The provincial government cut back on grants to municipalities. The downloading of responsibilities was increasing the city's costs. The province changed the Planning Act to let developers get permits with few environmental controls. These were boom times, and more and more people were coming to live in the GTA. The city was swamped by more and more traffic, but there was little new investment in transit or infrastructure. Municipal services were strained.

The Lastman administration simply was not up for the task of dealing with this mounting crisis. The mayor was popular in his political base of the inner suburbs. He complained to the media about the downloading and the mounting financial problems of Toronto, but his attacks on Premier Mike Harris were muted because they were both Progressive Conservatives. Harris was a polarizing neo-conservative who dismissed any attacks by Toronto politicians by saying that the council was dysfunctional.

Mel Lastman was a successful businessman. He was the original "bad boy" of the Bad Boy chain of furniture stores, and he was a remarkable promoter, but he lacked a clear agenda. He reacted to issues rather than imposing his vision on council. Under his leadership, the city was virtually turned over to the business community. Lobbyists promoting various projects roamed the hallways of city hall rounding up the votes of councillors for their projects. This type of free-wheeling business style led to complaints from downtown councillors, and finally there were serious accusations of corruption when the computer leasing scandal erupted.

The corruption accusations began with complaints that millions of dollars for new computers had been leased without proper contracts, but it escalated into charges of kickbacks to politicians. The controversy led to the appointment of Madam Justice Denise Bellamy to lead an inquiry into allegations of conflict of interest, bribery, and misappropriation of funds. The inquiry focused on $25,000 that was allegedly given to Councillor Tom Jakobek, the city budget chief, by a salesman for the computer leasing company, Dash Domi. The accusations were never proven in court, but Justice Bellamy stated in her final report that she could not believe the testimony of either Jakobek or Domi.[26]

Another conflict that flared up in the last term of Lastman was the expansion of the Island Airport. Toronto has had a sleepy airport on the Island since 1938. In 2002 the Toronto Port Authority, a federal agency that administers the port and the airport, announced that they wanted to expand the number of commercial flights out of the airport. To facilitate the expansion, they wanted to build a bridge across the Western Gap to service the airport. This proposal sparked the formation of a large opposition group called CommunityAIR to fight the bridge and airport expansion.[27]

David Miller, the "Boy Wonder"

These two controversies, corruption and influence peddling at city hall, and the expansion of the Island Airport, became the most important issues of the 2003 municipal election. Mel Lastman had announced that he was retiring, and this opened the field to a large number of politicians wanting to replace him.

There were five serious candidates, but by the end of the campaign three had emerged as top contenders. Barbara Hall, the former mayor who had been defeated by Mel Lastman, was well known but she had been out of politics for six years. She

supported the bridge and the expansion of the airport. John Tory, a prominent Progressive Conservative lawyer and businessman, hoped to inherit the business and suburban support of Lastman. Tory also supported the bridge and airport expansion. David Miller, a lawyer, was a downtown progressive who had been a councillor for almost ten years. He had been instrumental in exposing the computer leasing scandal, but it was his opposition to the bridge and airport expansion that was the most hotly debated issue at the end of the campaign. Miller used this as the wedge issue that differentiated him from the other candidates. On election day, he took 43% of the votes, to 38% for Tory and 9% for Hall.

Miller had won the election because of strong grassroots support from downtown voters. His support in the suburbs was weaker, but it was enough to get him elected. The election of a progressive candidate for mayor contradicts the contention that the suburbs have the votes to elect a mayor and dominate council. The difference in this election was that there was no strong suburban candidate. Miller, Hall, and Tory all came from the downtown. The voters wanted change from the Lastman days when city hall had been turned over to the lobbyists and business interests. Miller was the obvious choice. On election night, to the deafening cheers of his supporters, David Miller held a broom aloft, symbolizing that he would sweep the lobbyists out of city hall, and he declared that he would stop the bridge to the Island Airport.

After the scandals, political drift, lack of focus, and embarrassing bumbling in the handling of the affairs of the city by Mel Lastman, the election of David Miller as mayor was like fresh oxygen into the political life of Toronto. Here was a politician who was idealistic, intelligent, dedicated, and articulate. His personal qualities seemed to match his political assets. Miller is tall and good-looking, with a shock of blond hair that gives him a boyish, youthful look. Many felt that here was a politician with the energy and determination to deal with the huge issues facing Toronto.

The first order of business of the newly elected council proved to be a test of Miller's leadership. A motion was put forward rescinding the city's approval of the bridge to the Island Airport. After a sharp debate that revealed the left-right split that came to be characteristic of this council, Miller's motion passed. What had grown to be a political issue that had polarized the city was deflated in one council session.

Another early initiative was to clean up the way that Toronto City Council conducted business. The rampant lobbying and the political favouring of special interest groups that were seen in Mel Lastman's days were dealt with when Miller brought forward motions to appoint a city ombudsman, a lobbyist registrar, and an integrity commissioner. Those motions received strong support from council. The new mayor had got off to a good start.

Miller had been elected mayor in November 2003. As it happened, new Liberal governments were elected in both Ottawa and Queen's Park at about the same time. In October 2003, the Dalton McGuinty government had been elected in Ontario, and in November of that year Paul Martin became the Canadian prime minister. The seven years of the Mike Harris Ontario Progressive Conservative government, and Mel Lastman's tenure as mayor, had seen virtually no investment in the infrastructure of Toronto. Now it seemed that the political stars had realigned, and it was suddenly

possible to redesign the political landscape to increase the power of cities and solve their financial problems.

The financial crisis facing Toronto was the most serious problem facing Miller. Downloading by the federal and provincial governments had increased the costs of running the city, but municipalities had no access to the revenue-rich taxes on income and sales. The new mayor set out to change that arrangement.

Early in 2004, Miller launched city-wide citizen budget consultations. So many people wanted to participate in the process that participants had to be chosen by lot. To supporters, this seemed like the beginning of a participatory budget process much like those that had been instituted in some South American cities, but Miller's objective was not to create a new budget process. It was to underline the city's financial crisis and create the political climate necessary to force senior levels of government to permanently solve the city's financial problems.

At first the mayor had considerable success in his campaign. Paul Martin and the federal government began to develop a strategy for cities. A special urban secretariat was set up in the Prime Minister's Office, and Martin promised $2.5 billion for cities. A share of the federal gasoline tax amounting to $2 billion a year was set aside for municipalities, and municipal governments were given an exemption from paying the goods and services tax (GST), which amounted to $521 million a year across Canada.

While welcoming these new sources of revenue, David Miller pointed out that this funding did not begin to pay for the costs of deteriorating infrastructure or the construction of new transit that were essential for all large Canadian cities. He said that it was cities that needed additional funds, not small towns or rural municipalities, because cities had to bear the additional costs of growth. Martin rejected this point; all Canadian municipalities would be treated the same.

Miller then changed tactics. He proposed a new program called the "one cent now" campaign. The federal GST amounted to seven cents on every dollar spent on goods and services at that time. Miller's proposal was that one cent of every seven cents be dedicated to municipalities. For the City of Toronto, this would have amounted to an increase of $432 million in revenue a year, and of $5 billion a year for all municipalities across Canada in 2007.[28] But by the time the mayor's "one cent now" campaign got underway it was already too late.

In February 2006, the Martin government was defeated and the new Conservative Party, led by Stephen Harper, assumed office. Miller continued to promote his proposal, but it went nowhere. Harper had no intention of helping cities or designing a cities strategy. To him, Canada was made up of provinces, and cities, like all municipalities, were the responsibility of the provinces, not the federal government. With the defeat of the federal Liberals, Miller turned his attention to the provincial government of Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty. This partnership proved to be much more responsive to Miller's agenda.

The McGuinty government took time to gain momentum. They had taken over from the neo-conservative governments of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves and found that not only was the government in disarray, but that revenues had been cut to such an extent that there was an undisclosed provincial budget deficit of $5 billion, even though

Ontario was experiencing boom times. McGuinty was forced to raise taxes despite an election promise that there would be no tax increase. The premier and his cabinet ministers seemed awkward and ill at ease in the first months of their government, but then, in a surprising number of moves, they became a very activist government. The province put money into health care, set a program in place to deliver on a promise of cutting back on coal-fired power plants, and promoted alternative energy. Central to this strategy were promises of new transit for the GTA, Hamilton, and the City of Toronto.

The provincial Liberals strengthened the protection of the Oakridges Moraine and the Niagara Escarpment. They brought in planning guidelines to try to stop urban sprawl and legislation to promote alternative energy and green industries. But it was the promise of new money for transit that had the greatest impact on Toronto and other municipalities across the GTA. In November 2008, Metrolinx, an agency of the provincial government, adopted a regional transportation plan that they called "The Big Move."[29] This was a huge project, spanning the next twenty-five years and costing in total $50 billion in new transit infrastructure that would bring rapid transit to every corner of Toronto, the GTA and Hamilton.

In the past, provincial politicians were loath to meddle in the affairs of municipalities, but the crises of growth, pollution, and traffic gridlock, as well as the need to coordinate public transit throughout the entire urban region, from Oshawa in the east to Hamilton in the west and as far north as Lake Simcoe, made a coordinated plan essential. It was public demand that made this happen, and progressive politicians like McGuinty, Miller, and others responded to those demands. This reflects the new style of urban politics in Ontario. Within the GTA, the planning of new development would be carried out at both the regional and local level, but those decisions would also be shaped by the policies of the provincial government.

Early in their respective tenures as premier of Ontario and mayor of its largest city, McGuinty and Miller established a good working relationship. Both were lawyers, they were about the same age, and both had young families. This personal relationship played an important contributing factor in one other reform that has had, and will continue to have, a great impact on Toronto's political life.

The province had completed a major overhaul of the Municipal Act that came into effect on January 1, 2003. This modernized and streamlined the act and gave municipalities stronger and more flexible powers, but it still did not solve the problems that Toronto—by far the largest and most sophisticated municipality in Ontario—was facing. Miller went to McGuinty with the governance problems that he was facing, and in time the premier delivered a new City of Toronto Act in 2006.

Essentially, what the new act did was remove Toronto from the Municipal Act and give the city a number of enhanced and special powers. There are two specific powers in the act that have changed the way that politics is practiced in Toronto. The act requires the mayor to establish and appoint the members of an executive committee made up of councillors. Most of the members also became the chairs of the standing committees.

This has come to be called the "strong mayor system." In practice, what it means is that the mayor can control the votes of the thirteen members of the executive

committee, plus the chair of the TTC, who is also appointed by the mayor but does not sit on the executive committee. Going into council meetings, the mayor can therefore count on fifteen votes on all important issues. This is not quite the majority of the forty-five-member council, but it has strengthened the leadership of the mayor enormously.[30]

The second reform that the City of Toronto Act delivered was that it enhances the taxation powers of the city. Miller and others had long complained that the city does not have sufficient revenue to meet the needs of its citizens. McGuinty widened the taxation powers of the city to give them access to more revenue. Once given this power, Miller chose to impose two separate taxes: a land transfer tax and a vehicle registration tax.

The political controversy around the land transfer tax illustrates how the strong mayor system works. When the tax was proposed, the real estate and development industries mounted a huge opposition. Claims were made that this would mark the beginning of the decline of Toronto and the ruination of real estate interests. When the item came before council, the motion lost by one vote. Miller had been confident that it would narrowly pass, but one of the members of the executive committee, Brian Ashton, voted against the motion. The mayor acted with dispatch. Ashton was removed from the executive committee and a new member was appointed in his place. The motion was redrafted and resubmitted to council. It passed by one vote.

While Miller worked with the federal and provincial governments to improve the fiscal health of the city and strengthen its governance, most of his efforts were focused on the broader agenda that he had been elected on to improve the quality of life in the city. This included issues facing all large cities: transit, traffic, pollution, waste, crime, police, homelessness, taxes, and housing. Miller did not solve these problems, but he moved the yardsticks and brought in many innovative programs.

Transit was the most important issue in the city, then as it is to this day. Miller and his people knew a lot about transit, and the technology that they loved more than any other was light rail transit. LRT lines are built at grade level along streets, with a dedicated right of way. The trains are longer and larger than streetcars and can carry a lot of people. Tunnelling is not necessary, and therefore, the construction costs are much lower than for subways.

At first Miller proposed building seven LRT lines in the city. The province reduced the number of lines to four, much to Miller's objections, but planning went ahead. The province committed $10 billion for transit in the city over the next decade, including 120 kilometres of light rail transit. Miller called it "Transit City," and claimed that this would bring rapid transit to the suburbs. The program to build more bike lanes, however, has been a major disappointment. In 2001, an ambitious bike plan was adopted by council that promised new paths, lanes, and trails by 2011. By the end of the decade, less than half of the trails had been built. The major problem is in the suburbs. Creating bike lanes and parking spots for bikes often means reduced parking and fewer turning lanes for cars, and this has led to resistance.[31]

Even in the downtown, where there is greater support for bike lanes, there is opposition. The construction of protected bicycle lanes on Richmond and Adelaide Streets, designed to encourage commuting into the downtown core by bikes, was held

up for ten years. Cyclists would like to see an east-west bike lane on Bloor Street as well, but merchants there are opposed because they fear it will reduce car traffic. Safety is another problem. In many cities, bike lanes are built with protected barriers and curbs, but in Toronto the practice is simply to paint lanes on existing streets. There have been a number of cyclist fatalities. Miller found it difficult to get consensus on cycling issues, and the accomplishments were limited.

On environmental issues David Miller was more successful. Toronto, by the end of his tenure as mayor, was hailed as one of the most environmental cities in North America. Waste had been a major issue for at least four decades in Toronto. Miller made a commitment to divert 70% of waste from landfill to recycling. This was not achieved, but 45% of the city's waste was recycled by the end of his tenure as mayor.

Toronto's landfill sites were filled to capacity by the end of the 1990s, and for six years, from 2000 to 2006, the city's waste was trucked to a landfill site in Michigan. In 2006, Miller persuaded council to purchase a landfill site south of London, Ontario. Another Miller initiative was to move to a user-pay system of garbage collection in an attempt to change the practices of people. Finding a solution for waste had plagued the city for two decades and now a long-term solution had been found.

Miller promoted other environmental initiatives that were adopted by council. He worked to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from buildings with an innovative program to reward developers if they used materials and techniques that reduced energy consumption. A "tall buildings" program was pioneered to retrofit deteriorating high-rise buildings. Toronto was the first city in North America to have a mandatory requirement for green roofs on large buildings.

Some of the environmental programs brought in by Miller were small, like the imposition of a five-cent fee for all plastic bags, and others barely noticed, like the practice of buying city vehicles that have low emissions, but his environmental record is his greatest legacy. This comes from an article in the Toronto *Star*: "On Miller's watch, Toronto has … become perhaps the most environmentally progressive municipality in North America."[32]

Policing has also been a special problem for Toronto mayors in recent decades. Miller was mayor as the crime rates dropped across the city, and like most politicians, he took credit for it. The truth is that crime has been dropping across North America, but one of the most difficult issues that he would face as mayor was the increase in the use of hand guns by street gangs. This led to the killings of a number of young men and innocent bystanders will killed or injured in the cross fire. Miller argued that federal laws should be changed to ban hand guns, but he was ignored by the Harper government in Ottawa.

Combatting crime is something politicians talk about but have little control over, but what they can deal with is the police and the leadership of the police department. Miller took this on in a quiet way. It took time, but the mayor was able to remove the "law and order" police chief, Julian Fantino, and replace him with Bill Blair, a strong supporter of community policing. It is not recognized as such, but this was one of Miller's best achievements. Blair has been called "The best chief Toronto has seen in decades."[33]

Poverty and housing remain huge problems for Toronto. Miller set up a special

program for the homeless. This program found housing for over two thousand people who lived on the street. A Priority Neighbourhoods program was set up to provide additional money for programs and youth workers in low-income neighbourhoods. The lack of affordable housing is perhaps the most serious social problem faced by an increasing number of Torontonians, but there was little that the city could do about the growing crisis because it lacked the money.

One successful initiative that started under Miller's watch was the reconstruction of Regent Park. This was one of the most difficult low-income public housing neighbourhoods in the city, with a variety of different social problems. Regent Park was redesigned and rebuilt as a condo and affordable housing project with both market and subsidized units. This model of redevelopment is being applied to other large public housing projects across the city.

The limited success in dealing with housing and poverty was a disappointment for a progressive politician such as David Miller. The city simply lacks the resources to solve difficult and entrenched social problems. Experts agree that only senior levels of government have the resources to deal with problems such as this. The Conservatives in Ottawa, however, refuse to get involved. These are provincial responsibilities, according to Stephen Harper.

There were failures in other areas as well. The Island Airport expanded under his watch. Miller won the election of 2003 on the promise of "No Airport Expansion," and yet by the end of his term of office, the number of take-offs and landings of commercial aircraft on the Island had increased ten-fold, and Porter Airlines had established their hub of operations at the Island Airport. Porter used Bombardier Q400 turboprops but these planes were much larger than any other aircraft using the Island Airport.

To the press, it was Miller's handling of the 2009 civic workers strike that was his greatest failure. The unions were a major source of his support, and he flatly refused to consider any contracting out of services. In the midst of a recession and city budget problems, Miller felt the unions would be open to compromise, but their leadership dug in their heels in the hopes of retaining the gains they had made in the past. They went on strike in the summer of 2009, and with garbage piling up and a lack of city services, the strike became a central issue in the city.

The problem was that the mayor had led the public to believe that there would be a major rollback of accumulated sick leave in the collective agreements of civic workers, and when that was not included in the final deal, the feeling was that the mayor had sold out to the unions. Meanwhile, the unions also turned on him for his handling of the strike. Miller lost on both fronts, and his support, according to the polls, sunk to 21%. In retrospect, it was the mayor's communication strategy that was his undoing, not his handling of the strike.

When David Miller announced in September 2009 that he would not be a candidate for mayor in the 2010 election, there was surprise, even shock, among Toronto's political classes. Miller cited his family and explained that he had accomplished most of his political agenda as his reasons for stepping down. The media pundits attributed his decision to the dramatic loss of support he endured as a result of his handling of the civic workers strike that summer. A sober second look suggests that Miller was coming to the end of his effectiveness as mayor of the city.

Any politician, no matter how popular at the beginning, develops enemies and attracts disgruntled detractors after seven years. That, more than the strike or the mayor's family commitments, was the reason why he decided not to run again. But David Miller was not to go quietly into his retirement from politics. In the summer of 2010, just weeks before the next municipal election, Toronto hosted the G20 summit of world leaders. Peaceful demonstrations were planned by protesters, but on the Saturday of the conference, vandalism broke out on downtown streets. Shop windows were smashed and a police car set on fire. The police reacted the next day with harsh measures. Over a thousand people were arrested. There were accusations of police brutality and arrests of innocent people. In response, the mayor took to the airwaves to defend the police operations. This ended the Miller years on a sour note. The mayor was already a lame duck because he was not going to run in the November election, but his unqualified defence of the police in the G20 affair left a blemish on his record with many of his core supporters.

Miller's seven years as mayor of Toronto can only be judged by comparing his record to those of his predecessors and successors. On those grounds, he has to be viewed as one of the most successful leaders in Toronto's history. What he brought to the office was a progressive vision of what needed to be done to improve the city and the lives of its people. He was not successful on every issue, but his record is impressive. His greatest achievement is that he was able to do this while leading a deeply divided council where the majority of members leaned to the right rather than the left. Miller was able to play city council like an orchestra leader to get the votes that he needed, and that is no mean achievement. As we will see, this was the downfall of his successor.

Rob Ford, "the Maverick"

When Rob Ford announced his candidacy for mayor in March 2010, many who followed Toronto politics dismissed him as a political lightweight. Ford had been a councillor for ten years, and he had made a reputation as a neo-conservative who was in the habit of attacking the perks of his fellow councillors. Over and over again he was on his feet in the council chamber denouncing small budget items that he felt represented waste. This did not make him a favourite with any of his colleagues. Ford was a maverick, an outsider, with little support on council and even little support from other conservative councillors.

Once the mayoral campaign got underway, however, it was not long before he emerged as a front-runner. With David Miller out of the race, and no major candidate from the left, the press assumed that George Smitherman, a former high-profile Liberal provincial cabinet minister, would be the favourite. Smitherman was a downtown politician, a member of the gay community and a man with a reputation as a hard-nosed administrator who could get things done. His greatest liability was his abrasive personality that made him unloved and even feared.

But it was Ford who set the pace of the mayoral race. He expressed his policies in short pithy one-liners. "End the gravy train." "Respect for taxpayers." "We don't have a revenue problem, folks; we have a spending problem." "Putting people and families first."

He was a tax fighter, promising to control property taxes and repeal the vehicle

registration and land transfer taxes that Miller had implemented. He would cut the number of councillors in half, clean up the city, and remove graffiti. He opposed the construction of LRT lines, favoured subways, and attacked streetcars and cyclists because they interfered with traffic. All of this would be accomplished, he promised during the election, without increasing taxes: "Services will not be cut, guaranteed." But of all of the slogans, it was "End the gravy train" that had the greatest resonance with the public. It expressed the view that downtown elites used the system for their own benefit and cared nothing for those who lived in the suburbs.

The Toronto *Star* summarized his platform in this way: "Elitist, out-of-control councillors are spending a broke city into the ground with mismanaged downtown-focused tangents while core services wither and taxpayers who try to use them are mistreated."[34] There was a counter-attack by economists and urban experts who said the city was not broke or mismanaged, but it made little difference. Ford's narrative struck a chord with many, particularly those in the suburbs, and they were mobilized to go to the polls and end the perceived injustice.

As the campaign continued into the fall of 2010, Smitherman and Joe Pantalone, an NDP candidate for mayor, found it impossible to get traction. Both sounded like they were defenders of the status quo, while Ford was the champion of a new way of doing things that would deliver services with no increases in costs. His populist campaign had caught fire, and Ford easily won the election with 47% of the vote. Smitherman got 36% and Pantalone 12%. Smitherman won the downtown wards while Ford swept the suburbs. The election followed the pattern of the election of 1997, which saw the conservative, Mel Lastman, win against the centrist, Barbara Hall, by sweeping the suburbs. It was built on the fault line between the suburbs and the downtown, and seemed to reconfirm the theory that the Mike Harris Progressive Conservatives created Megacity to overwhelm the progressive voters in the old City of Toronto.

This was a vote against the so-called downtown elites who were perceived to have more privileges than people in the suburbs. This is how one online commentator, who called himself or herself "Canukie," expressed it: "I voted for Ford … it's my way of flipping the bird at all the downtown intellectual elites who think they are the be all and end all of everything … I'll be sorely disappointed if Ford does no damage."

These is little doubt that Ford misrepresented Toronto politics, but there also can be little doubt that the feelings of resentment felt by a large section of the electorate were based on real grievances. The downtowners are better educated and have both higher incomes and higher-status jobs. They live in neighbourhoods that have much better services, particularly transit. The feeling of many in the suburbs was that they were paying high taxes, and that the money was being spent to improve the downtown while their own communities languished.

The crisis of many people in the suburbs has worsened. Incomes have been dropping. Those who own their own homes are finding them expensive to maintain, and property taxes continue to rise because the city needs the money to pay for services and infrastructure. Many are caught between declining incomes and rising costs, and who do they blame? The politicians, who they see as feathering their own nests and providing benefits for their friends. They looked for salvation from a politician who told them what they wanted to hear. Rob Ford, a populist, understood these grievances

and used them very effectively to build the political momentum that carried him into the mayor's office. He was so closely identified with these issues that in time he came to call his supporters "Ford Nation." This in part reflects his arrogance, but it also shows that he was the only one in Toronto providing a voice for the people who felt aggrieved and exploited.

In reality, Ford is a Toronto version of right-wing populism. The Tea Party movement in the United States is another example. In Ontario provincial politics, the Mike Harris Progressive Conservative government came to power expressing these grievances through the "Common Sense Revolution," and so to some extent did the Stephen Harper Conservatives in Ottawa. The challenge for all of these right-wing movements is moving from electioneering and criticizing, to the exercise of political power. Some do it better than others, but that is where Rob Ford came undone.

Ford took office in a flurry of media attention. The sense was that radical change was coming. On inauguration day, the new mayor had Don Cherry, the colourful and controversial CBC hockey commentator, introduce him. Cherry set up the conflict on council in his typical no-nonsense way: "People are sick of the elites and artsy people running the show. It's time for some lunch pail, blue-collar people."[35] The only problem was that both Don Cherry and Mayor Ford are millionaires, not "blue-collar people," and the "artsy people" certainly never ran the show in Toronto. Many on council, particularly those from the Left-Wing Group, were insulted, and their concern was transforming into open hostility.

Ford's next act was even more controversial. In dramatic form, on his first day in office, he announced, "The war against the car is over!" And then, "Transit City is dead!" These were declarations of war against the David Miller agenda and those who supported it. Ford's critique extended well beyond Transit City. The new mayor had long despised bike lanes and cyclists. This is what he told council in 2007: "What I compare bike lanes to is swimming with the sharks. Some day you're going to get bitten … Roads are built for buses and cars. That's all … I bleed for them [cyclists] when someone gets killed, but it's their own fault at the end of the day."[36] Later he was even more blunt: "Cyclists are a pain in the ass."[37]

These are opinions he expressed about transit: "If you get behind a streetcar, you're stuck! Enough with streetcars;"[38] and "Gridlock creates pollution. It keeps you away from your families."[39] If there was any remaining doubt about Ford's opinions on cars and traffic, his own choice of a vehicle settled it. He drove a Cadillac Escalade, one of the biggest, most expensive and polluting cars on the road. Ford was not in favour of any form of surface public transit. He once expressed his policy on transit as "subways, subways, subways." His objective was to clear the streets of buses, bikes, and streetcars. That would leave the streets free for automobiles and trucks, and nothing else.

Transit proved to be Ford's testing ground, but other issues reflected his views as well. Not surprisingly, the mayor appointed right-wing members of council, all of whom came from the suburbs, to fill his new executive committee. Councillors from the left, who had been the core supporters of David Miller, were given only minor positions on the committees. Even the so-called "Mushy Middle" councillors were excluded. With these appointments, it became clear that Ford was not going to compromise. This was an unapologetically right-wing administration.

At first the mayor scored some victories. The vehicle registration tax was cancelled and Ford promised to cancel the more lucrative land transfer tax later in his mandate. A motion to privatize garbage collection for the west side of the city passed council without much controversy. Negotiations with the city unions went well. Councillor Doug Holyday, one of the mayor's closest allies, handled the labour dispute and gained some concessions from the union.

But there were also problems and controversies that annoyed, even angered, many. In June of 2011 Ford refused to attend Toronto's annual Gay Pride Parade, an event no mayor had missed since the parade's inception. Many in the city saw this as an insult. Others wondered what had happened to Toronto's reputation as a city of diversity. Still others bluntly called Ford homophobic. (Ford never attended the Gay Pride Parade.) The mayor's brother, Doug Ford, who was now the councillor in Rob's old Ward 2, badly handled the issue of waterfront redevelopment. His proposal called for a shopping mall, hotel, monorail, and giant Ferris wheel. Citizens mobilized to save the Waterfront Toronto plan, and the mayor and his brother were forced to beat a hasty retreat.

But it was on the all-important issue of transit where Rob Ford's leadership started to come undone. The mayor insisted that the Transit City projects be built as subways rather than LRT lines. All of the new rapid transit lines in Toronto were joint projects between the city and the provincial government agency, Metrolinx. The capital costs were to be paid in full by the province, and once completed, the lines would be operated by the TTC. Agreements had already been put in place between the city and the province, and if the transit lines were to be changed there would have to be new agreements and new funding. The two important transit lines were the Eglinton LRT, called the Crosstown, and the Sheppard LRT. Ten kilometres of the Crosstown LRT were to be underground and the rest on the surface. The Sheppard LRT was also to be on the surface. Ford insisted that both be underground and that the Sheppard line be built as a subway. The province agreed but said they would not pay any more money than what was initially budgeted for. In a new Memorandum of Understanding, the province agreed to take over the building and funding of the Crosstown and have the LRT run underground for its entire length. The city agreed to take over and fund the Sheppard line and build it as a subway.

Soon it became clear that this arrangement was simply unworkable. Building the Sheppard line as a subway was estimated to cost between $3.25 billion and $4.73 billion. The mayor said it could be built by the private sector and would not cost taxpayers anything. He appointed Gordon Chong, a former councillor, to study ways of financing the subway, and ultimately even Chong admitted it was not possible. There may be some funds that could be raised from the private sector for building subways, but nothing that could come close to covering the full costs.

The province was also finding it difficult, if not impossible, to build the entire Crosstown line underground. The eastern section would have had to go under the Don River. It would have been costly, and the engineering problems were reported to be insurmountable. Finally, in March 2012, Toronto City Council was in open rebellion against the mayor and his transit proposals. Council voted against the Sheppard subway scheme and returned to the LRT proposal. They also accepted that the Crosstown would be built as it was originally proposed, with the central ten kilometres of the line

underground and the rest on the surface. The original funding proposal was also put back in place. The province would pay the construction costs of both projects, but only as LRT lines.

This debate and the controversy around transit revealed that the mayor had little or no understanding of transit, subways or the number of passengers needed to make them economically viable. His scheme was unworkable and could not be financed. His promise that subways could be paid for entirely by the private sector was an impossible dream. All this was now laid bare for the public to see, and it played a major role in the end of his influence as mayor. But there was one other subway project that is worth relating here, because it reveals a great deal about how transit decisions are made in Toronto. It is called the Scarborough subway.

As part of David Miller's Transit City plan, a new ten-kilometre surface LRT line was to be built in Scarborough from the Kennedy Street subway station through to the Scarborough Town Centre. It was to terminate at the Centennial College campus on Sheppard. With all of the talk of subways, the people of Scarborough, and some of their councillors, now demanded a subway, not an LRT. There is resentment in the suburbs because people in the downtown have excellent transit services provided by subways. They want subways too.

Scarborough is a vote-rich part of the city. At the same time this issue surfaced, the province was holding a by-election in a Scarborough riding that the Liberals desperately needed to win in order to save their minority government. In the heat of the election, the Liberals promised that the LRT would be converted to a subway. Controversy raged. Ultimately, Toronto City Council agreed to build the Scarborough subway even though it was projected to add another $1 billion to the city's debt and give poorer service than the original LRT. The route would go through more affluent neighbourhoods with lower densities. It was to have only three stops, rather than seven stops on the proposed LRT line, and most subway riders will have a long walk to a station. The terminus will be two kilometres from the Centennial Campus. All this will reduce the use of the new line. Rob Ford, the neo-conservative tax fighter, had promoted a project that would lead to the city taking on debt, and at least $1 billion to the property tax bill.

The story of what happened to Rob Ford, and how his term as mayor of Toronto dissolved into a sad spectacle and media circus, is well known. He was accused of smoking crack with members of street gangs and being drunk at black tie society events. At first he denied it all. His denials only increased the media frenzy and led to more denials. Then, one day he simply admitted it all.

In the process, city council manoeuvred to strip him of his powers and turn the mayor's duties over to the deputy mayor, Councillor Norm Kelly. This was something that had never happened before in Toronto's history. People asked why Ford could not be dismissed for his behaviour, but there is no legislation that would allow it. A mayor is elected by the people and accountable only to the people. Rob Ford spent the rest of his four-year term as mayor in name only. Like a defrocked priest, he would attend city council meetings but say very little.

There are a number of conclusions that can be drawn about Rob Ford as a politician and his term of office. The most obvious is that he was simply out of his depth. Even though he had been on council for ten years before he became mayor, he did not know

enough about the issues, and that led him to make impossible proposals that were simply unworkable. Even this should not have led to the policy disasters. Toronto, like every city, is run by the bureaucracy, with civil servants who know the details of government. If Ford had relied on them for information and advice, he could have survived and even make a contribution. His failure as mayor has much to do with his drug and alcohol use, but he also would not consult with others. Even his allies and supporters on council had little or no influence on him. He was a wild card, a maverick, an outsider, who could not consult with others, or make the types of compromises that are required of politicians who operate on Toronto City Council.

Rob Ford seemed to think that his right-wing ideology gave him all the answers he needed to remake the city, and that was his biggest blunder of all.

John Tory, "the Blue-Blood"

Nothing could match Rob Ford's four wild and unpredictable years as mayor, but the 2014 mayoral election was almost as chaotic. Ford had made it clear that he was going to run for mayor again, and he predicted that his re-election would be a vindication of everything that he had done. Others in the city believed that he would be overwhelmingly defeated—who would want a mayor who had brought such disgrace on the city? As it turned out, neither a Ford victory nor an overwhelming defeat happened.

In most of Toronto's history, the electorate has granted a mayor at least two terms, but Ford was vulnerable because of his outrageous behaviour, and prominent candidates lined up to challenge him. Among the challengers were Olivia Chow, a member of Parliament, former school trustee and city councillor, and the widow of Jack Layton, the late NDP leader. Another was John Tory, a businessman and former leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party.

As the campaign got underway in the spring, it was Olivia Chow who took the early lead. John Tory showed solid support, and Rob Ford polled in the 30% range. There were other major candidates like Councillor Karen Stintz, but her campaign never caught fire, and she dropped out early in the race. Chow's greatest strength was policy. Her campaign team, made up primarily of New Democrats, had a good organization across the city and did a remarkable job of raising campaign donations. Chow is well known in the downtown, so the strategy of the campaign team was to work primarily in the suburbs because they knew that she had to do well there if she was to get the number of votes needed to become mayor.

Rob Ford worked the suburbs as well. This was the source of his support in the 2010 election. He talked about how much money he had saved the city while he was mayor, and did not back down when journalists and other candidates pointed out that his claims were simply not true. He talked about the continuing strength of Ford Nation, but there was no sense of the excitement of the previous election, when he swept the suburbs.

John Tory's campaign was well-funded, and a good organizational team was put in place. He had been prominent in Toronto politics for a long time. His stature within the Progressive Conservative Party was his greatest asset, and his daily radio call-in show kept his name before the public. Tory is a "blue-blood" Torontonian. His father and an uncle had created one of the largest and best known Bay Street law firms. John

Tory was also a lawyer, but he had been involved in business and politics most of his adult life. For conservative Toronto, no one could have better credentials.

It was assumed that Ford could never get many votes and that Tory and Chow would emerge as the major contenders. By July, the polls showed that Tory had gained the lead at the expense of Chow. Ford's numbers, to the surprise of many, remained solid and even showed signs of growth. In the backrooms, Conservatives and Liberals had joined forces to support John Tory. The Liberals believed that Ford had to be defeated at all costs because he was too disruptive, but they also wanted to stop Olivia Chow. There were a few reasons for this. John Tory is not a neo-conservative like Ford. He is a Red Tory, and in Ontario there is not that much difference between the red Tories and the Liberals. The other reason is there is a contest in Ontario between the Liberals and NDP for the left-of-centre vote at both the federal and provincial levels. The Liberals were very keen to defeat a prominent New Democrat like Olivia Chow because her election as mayor would indicate that the NDP was on the rise.

But there were other reasons for the growth of Tory's vote. He had emerged as the most likely candidate to defeat Rob Ford, and for many voters in this election that was the only important issue. He is a good stand-up speaker who knew the issues. Although his policies seemed shaky at times and open to change, his main platform on transit, called Smart Track, a 22-station scheme run mainly on GO rail lines, got favourable reviews. Olivia Chow had stronger and more consistent policies, but she was having difficulty convincing the public. English is not her first language, and she is not a strong speaker at public meetings. Some perceived her as weak, and there were even attacks on her because she is a minority. Many were concerned that she would be unable to stand up to people like Rob Ford.

The growing strength of John Tory throughout the election campaign was the important story, but the most surprising and dramatic moment of the campaign was Rob Ford's sudden withdrawal from the mayoral race and the nomination of his brother, Doug Ford, in his place. Rob was diagnosed with a serious form of cancer in the summer, and in September, on the very last day of nominations, came the "switcheroo" as it was called by the press. Doug Ford would run in Rob's place for mayor, and Rob would run for his old position as councillor for Ward 2.

In the end, this move made little difference in the election. Doug was able to hold Rob's share of the vote and maintain the leadership of "Ford Nation," but it was not enough to win. The final result of the election saw John Tory take 40% of the vote, Doug Ford 34%, and Olivia Chow 23%. Again, the split between the suburbs and the downtown remained a key factor in this election. Doug Ford won most of the polls in the suburbs, but not by enough of a margin to win. John Tory did well across the entire city. His vote was concentrated in the downtown, especially in the wards on each side of Yonge Street. This is the wealthiest part of the city. Olivia Chow only won two downtown wards. The election showed that Ford Nation was still a force in city politics. For Doug Ford to maintain 34% support from the electorate after Rob's drug- and alcohol-fuelled escapades was remarkable.

It was not long after the election before Mayor John Tory emerged as a cautious, even indecisive, political leader. His greatest success has been to return relative sanity to city hall. The mobs of reporters waiting in the hallways for yet another catastrophic

revelation to emerge from the mayor's office have vanished, and it is business as usual, much to the relief of most Torontonians. But what has also emerged is a conservative regime at city hall. Tory is led by his Conservative politics and his supporters in the business community. His handling of the issues tells the story. This is a brief summary of the most important.

The best indication of Tory's handling of city hall was shown immediately after the election with his appointment of the Toronto Executive Committee. This committee is a type of cabinet of the mayor's closest political allies. Tory's appointees were the same as Rob Ford's Executive Committee. No councillors from the old City of Toronto were included. Every member comes from the suburbs and the views of suburbs have dominated the Tory administration.

An issue of police administration was one of the first problems that Tory had to face. Toronto police had long had a policy of stopping people on the street to record personal details that then would be lodged in the police database. This has come to be called "carding." The police stopped who they deemed as suspicious characters, and that has meant overwhelmingly that those carded were young, black men. Accusations of racism have gone on for years, with considerable justification.

This issue came to a head, politically, in May and June of 2015. The police, from the lower ranks to the top officers, defended their actions denying that they were racist, but ultimately the majority of the public were not convinced and demanded that carding end. As the issue heated up, John Tory tried to mediate the issue by supporting the police and yet sympathizing with the critics. He misjudged the mood of the public and got caught in the middle. Finally, he withdrew his support and carding ended.

A more complex planning and infrastructure issue was the Gardiner east. The Gardiner is an elevated expressway that runs along the Waterfront, dividing the city from its harbour. It encourages thousands of cars and drivers to commute into the city from the suburbs. Planners proposed to take down 2.7 kilometres of the expressway and convert it into a boulevard at grade level. This would free up more land for development, help to connect the city to the harbour, and enhance the Toronto Waterfront renewal project.

A month before the issue was to come to city council, the mayor announced that he supported a hybrid solution, a rebuilding of the expressway. This in spite of the fact that there are very strong planning reasons for supporting the take-down option, and that the cost of the hybrid option was $500 million more. The reason Tory said he supported the hybrid option was that it would speed up traffic, even though studies showed that at most, it would cut commute times by two minutes. In the end, after a divisive political battle in city council, Tory's hybrid option passed by two votes. All of the downtown progressives voted for the take-down option, but Tory's motion for the hybrid option passed with votes from the suburban councillors. The mayor had promised to unite council, but it is as divided as ever.

Carding and the take down of the Gardiner were important but the most controversial issues since Tory was elected have been transit. Transit is complicated, expensive and controversial. The new mayor tackled this difficult issue with his usual show of confidence, but his leadership has led to one blunder after another.

During the election, Tory proposed what he called Smart Track, an expansion of

the regional transit system in both the city and the outer suburbs that included 22 new stations. The additional commuter service was to run primarily on the GO system tracks. Once elected employees for the City of Toronto, the TTC, and the provincial agency, Metrolinx, tried to implement Smart Track but found most of it impossible. The Tory plan has now been reduced to six stations, and even that presents problems. A recent Metrolinx study concluded that all but one of the six new stations may discourage ridership.[40] Despite this, Tory continues to tout Smart Track as a victory.

It is now clear that Smart Track was designed on the back of an envelope in the heat of the election to show that John Tory was knowledgeable and in control of this difficult issue. No transit experts were consulted. It was a scheme to win votes in the election, no more. An experienced politician and administrator like Tory would or should have known that it is very dangerous and even irresponsible to make political promises on technically complicated, expensive projects like transit without careful study by transit experts, and yet he did it anyway.

An even more controversial transit issue has been Tory's handling of the Scarborough subway. Scarborough is a vote rich part of the city. It has had poor transit since the days of Metro Toronto and the people are understandably fed up with the lack of service. They want subways, just like the people in the downtown, but the problem is that population densities do not justify building subways because of the low ridership and expense. David Miller's Transit City was a promise of less expensive LRT technology that ran on the surface, but many in Scarborough felt that was inadequate.

In the election both John Tory and Rob Ford promised a three-stop subway from Kennedy Station to the Scarborough Town Centre. After the election, this was reduced to a one-stop subway from Kennedy to the Town Centre. Tory strongly supported this plan, but the critics attacked the scheme on many grounds.

This one stop subway replaces a seven stop LRT line originally promised by David Miller's Transit City plan. It would have gone from Kennedy Station to the Scarborough Town Centre through high-density communities and terminated at the Centennial Campus on Sheppard. Another LRT line would have gone from Kennedy, along Eglinton and Kingston Road to Morningside. Altogether these two lines would have had 30 stops. All of this could have been built for less than the one stop subway and would have provided good transit for many more riders.

But it was cost that was the most controversial issue. The cost of the subway has ballooned to $3.35 billion. Ridership projections have been reduced to 7,400 per hour, well below the 15,000 riders per hour experts say is needed to make a subway successful. The city will have to pay for all of this except $1.48 billion promised by the Ontario government.

Because of Tory's leadership Scarborough will get a one-stop subway line that delivers service to far fewer people than the LRT and at a cost that is considerably more. The mayor could have stopped this process at any time. He could have said something like, "Sorry folks, I made a terrible mistake. We are going to go back to the original Transit City plan." This would have been seen as a failure of leadership, but Tory has considerable political capital, and the people would have forgiven him. More important, it would have saved Toronto from a project that will be an enormous drain on the city's finances.

Forum Research, a polling company, asked Toronto residents which they would prefer: a three-stop subway, or LRT lines with thirty stops across Scarborough. Fully 61% said they would prefer the LRT, and only 29% would prefer the subway. Even the majority of Scarborough residents said they would prefer the LRT,[41] but at this stage of the planning process their views will be ignored because Tory needs to save face and his political allies on council are prepared to go along with him.

The Gardiner Expressway takedown, Smart Track and the Scarborough Subway are the big issues but there are a number of smaller issues where Tory's leadership has failed. These are the most obvious.

- Tory's idea of improving traffic was to take parked cars off major streets at rush hour. There has been no effort to reduce speeds, calm traffic, or discourage vehicles in the downtown. The number of pedestrian fatalities have increased.
- The mayor has shown no leadership on cycling. Toronto is behind other major North American cities. It is not expensive to modify city streets and make them safe for cycling, but this issue is ignored in Toronto.
- The proposal to transform Yonge Street is little more than a promise to widen sidewalks. Other cities are creating pedestrian malls, but not Toronto.
- There is a crisis in hostels for both men and women in the city and nothing is done.
- Tory's efforts to keep taxes at the rate of inflation has led to a cut of services. That particularly harms those with low incomes.

We don't have a new urban agenda in the City of Toronto. We are locked in the old agenda of the post war era of cars and suburbs where politicians think they must present themselves as strong leaders who know everything. The once proud reputation of Toronto as a progressive city with a strong environmental record has been lost.

PART 3: Issues

Politics is not only about leaders and elections; it is about issues and how the political process deals with them. In Toronto and other Ontario municipalities, where there are no political parties, how politicians vote on issues is sometimes hard to fathom, but there are distinct patterns.

Votes are shaped by backroom lobbying, or who contributes to the politicians' election campaigns, but more often councillors vote according to their own opinions or biases. For example, many councillors are pro-business and will support anything that they feel will be good for economic development. Others consistently support motions that will improve the environment. The lack of political parties has turned many councillors into "ward-healers" who do little more than promote and protect the interests of their ward. For example, they will concede that group homes are necessary in Toronto, but "not in my ward." Meanwhile, city-wide issues are virtually ignored by these politicians.

The only way to clearly understand the voting behaviour of councillors is to record how they vote on key issues over a period of time. A group called "Hamilton Catch Newsletter" does that for the City of Hamilton. Catch follows the issues, evaluates them, and reports on how individual councillors vote. During elections, that provides

reliable information that electors can use to evaluate incumbent candidates. There have been attempts in Toronto to do the same, but ultimately they were abandoned. It would be a welcome addition to the politics of this city if a citizens' group were to take up that practice.

In Toronto, the most consistent indicator of how councillors vote is where their ward is located on the downtown/suburban fault line. Most downtown councillors support issues like strengthening social services, culture, anti-poverty initiatives, the environment, and labour. Suburban councillors are more likely to be pro-business, in favour of development and improving traffic flow, and opposed to bicycle lanes and increased taxes. Let's look at the most important issues that have been dealt with by Toronto's council beginning with the highest-profile issue of them all.

Transportation, Transit, and Gridlock

Transportation includes a group of interlocking issues that have been at the centre of Toronto politics for a long time.

- If global warming is to be addressed, greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced, and that means reducing the use of vehicles that burn fossil fuels.
- The Toronto region is car-dependent because a high proportion of the population live in low-density suburbs, both in the city and the surrounding towns and cities in the GTA. Today the only convenient way for people in the suburbs to get around is by car. If that is to change, a good regional transit system must be built.
- Toronto is one of the most traffic-congested cities in North America. Today the average commuter spends 82 minutes a day in travel time. Studies show that this could hit 109 minutes by 2031 if nothing is done to combat gridlock.
- Business groups say that congestion costs $6 billion a year in the Toronto region and is rising. That threatens the city's economic viability.
- It now costs about $15,000 a year to own and operate a car, and that is an affordability issue for every car owner.
- A key issue for the planners and politicians is identifying the appropriate mode of transit for each neighbourhood.

In 2008, the Liberal provincial government promised to spend $50 billion over twenty-five years to build a rapid transit system across Toronto, the GTA, and Hamilton. They sold this to the public on the grounds that this was the only way to deal with gridlock and maintain the economic viability of the region.

This argument appealed to the business community and particularly to those who live in the GTA suburbs outside the City of Toronto. But there is another community that needs good transit, and those are low-income people who are mainly concentrated in Toronto's suburbs outside the downtown area. Little attention has been spent on understanding their needs and building transit systems that will help them.

Transit has been talked about for so long in the Toronto region that everyone is in favour of it. In the GTA suburban cities, the politicians were delighted with the provincial

plan because the government promised to pay the entire costs of rapid transit. That meant that the costs would not be loaded onto property taxes. "Let's get on with it," said Hazel McCallion, the former long-serving, blunt-talking mayor of Mississauga.

Toronto politicians and the public also welcomed the provincial transit initiative, but there has been little agreement on how it should be implemented. David Miller produced the Transit City plan for seven, later reduced to four, LRT lines. When Rob Ford was elected, he announced, "Transit city is dead." He wanted the LRT lines converted into underground subways. During the 2014 municipal election, John Tory announced his Smart Track transit proposal and since then there has been a series of controversies over the Scarborough Subway line. The decision-making process was to be one of consultation between the province and municipal leaders, but because Toronto City Council and its leaders changed so often, and their leaders were so ill informed and indecisive the process became chaotic.

Toronto politicians have an important influence on transit decisions in the city, but every politician has different ideas for transit, and they compete with each other over their proposals during elections and in the council chambers. It seems we never have a final plan because there is always another politician with yet another scheme to consider. Transit is complicated and expensive. It is particularly complicated in big cities where huge transit systems have been built and new expensive services are planned. There are decisions on routes and on different technologies, like subways, LRT, buses, or streetcars. In Toronto, there are additional issues like the subway switching system that needs replacing, constant repairs to the running stock, managing a labour force of thousands of employees, and how all of this impacts on the city's budget. It takes experts to plan and manage a system like this: transit engineers, planners, statisticians, labour relations experts, and so on.

What do politicians know about these things? And yet they are the ones who come up with yet new and different schemes. The Scarborough subway is a good example but there are others. The Sheppard subway, has very low ridership and will never be viable. The University line north of the Eglinton West station goes through low density communities and has low ridership. And why? Politics. In the 1990s Mel Lastman was the Mayor of North York and he used his influence with the provincial government to get the Sheppard Subway funded and built. Another example is the selection of the route of the University subway line north of the Eglinton West station. It goes through very low density communities and as a result ridership is very low. Politics is at the centre of transit decisions in Toronto and that has led to one bad decision after another.

All this goes to illustrate that Toronto needs a new decision-making process on transit. We need the politicians involved, as well as the experts, but far more important there must be an opportunity for citizens to take part in the decision-making. After all, they are the ones who will be using transit once it is built, but in Toronto only the politicians have a voice and make decisions on transit. That is why blunder after blunder have been made in transit planning in this city.

Another example where a key constituency has been ignored in the transportation debate is cycling. In 2001, a bike plan called for 495 kilometres of protected bike lanes in the city. Today, less than half of that has been built.[42] The majority of those bike

lanes are only white lines painted on the pavement. Many are unsafe. There have been several accidents and fatalities, and as a consequence many people are reluctant to cycle in the city.

What went wrong was that suburban councillors used their voting power in council to delay the implementation of protected bicycle lanes or stop it altogether. Those same councillors want the city to speed up traffic and end gridlock, but they do not recognize that cycling helps to solve transportation problems. Cycling moves people out of their cars and onto bikes. It is healthier for the riders, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and helps ease traffic flow. There is ample evidence to show all of this. Copenhagen is the cycling nirvana of the planet, with 55% of commuters going to and from work and school by bicycle. Vancouver, a smaller city than Toronto, has more kilometres of bike lanes. They have adopted a plan to have 50% of commuter trips by walking, bicycle or transit by 2040 and are aggressively pushing ahead. Montreal, New York, and Chicago are now well ahead of Toronto in implementing bicycle lanes and promoting cycling.

There has been a strong and active cycling group in Toronto, but it is made up mainly of young people—a constituency politicians can ignore because of their low participation in civic politics. The city has wide streets and could easily accommodate bike lanes. There was virtually no effort by city council to educate the public or to build demonstration cycling lanes so that people could come to understand the benefits of cycling.

In time, better transit and a good network of bike lanes will finally come to Toronto, but it will be thanks to the province, not Toronto City Council.

Planning and Development

In the 1960s and '70s, it was intrusive new development in established communities that sparked the Reform movement at city hall. Developers were condemned by the reformers because they used their political and economic power to build high-rise towers that disrupted and changed the character of neighbourhoods. Even the federal and provincial governments used bullying tactics to impose urban renewal projects that destroyed communities.

Today in Toronto, many of those types of confrontations around development are gone, but there are still major problems with the planning process. The Reform movement of the 1970s established the principle that there must be transparency around development applications, and that practice continues to this day. There are public meetings on all contentious projects, and the public and councillors have the opportunity to criticize projects, both for their design and impact on the community. In many cases, this leads to compromises that solve problems before the projects are approved or built.

But these are not the only reasons why there is a lessening of conflict in the development process. Torontonians have come to accept that there must be more housing to accommodate people wanting to live downtown and immigrants who settle in the city. But the most important reason why new projects are more readily accepted is that developers have been selecting more appropriate sites. Today the majority of the new residential developments and office buildings are built downtown on land that has been vacant, such as the Railway Lands, the Waterfront, or reclaimed industrial lands.

Other sites have been empty parking lots. These types of developments did not change or threaten existing residential communities, and the construction was less disruptive.

The developments that have led to controversies in recent years have all been in affluent suburbs. For example, the residents of the Beaches, a prosperous neighbourhood in the east end of the city, resisted a development project on Queen Street East. When opposition arose, the developer made some changes to the plan, but still the residents were not happy. In the end the project was approved, and it was the progressive, downtown councillors who voted in favour.

But though some of the confrontations have lessened, there are still plenty of problems in the way that planning is practiced in Toronto. Ontario planning legislation gives the power of planning approvals to municipal governments. It also lays out a system, or regime, that municipalities must follow. Municipalities are required to create an official plan with specific zoning regulations in place. Toronto has a good plan, as do most municipalities in the province. The problem is that these plans are only a rough guide that can be changed, and are changed, with regularity. Zoning that sets out regulations on things like the height restrictions of buildings can be changed by a vote of council. At best, the official plans are a guideline. They give no assurance of stability. In other North American jurisdictions, official plans lay down the rules for what types of buildings are allowed in neighbourhoods, and those rules must be followed, but not in Ontario.

Another very serious problem that creates a mockery of citizen or political control of planning is the powers that have been granted to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). If the developer does not like the final decision of the municipality, they can appeal it to the OMB. This usually happens if the municipality restricts the size or height of the development. That will reduce the profits that can be made by the developer. The OMB often rules against the municipality, and that undermines the integrity of the planning process and encourages more appeals. The planning approvals system now is shaped by the knowledge that if the developer does not get their way, they will appeal. Those appeals are expensive and take up the time of city planners. That makes the city planning department much more reluctant to make tough decisions for fear of an appeal.

Complaints about the OMB by municipalities across the province have been legion. Toronto City Council voted overwhelmingly to ask the province to exempt the city from these appeals, but it was rejected. Developers have a great deal of political influence in Ontario. The province has designed a planning system works for the developers, and they want to keep it that way.

A related problem is with the quality of the new buildings. In Toronto, virtually all of the residential housing in recent years has been the building of condominiums. Complaints by buyers are rising. One type of complaint is around shoddy construction: plumbing that does not work properly, windows and doors that do not fit, unfinished hallways, and so on. Often the buildings are not finished on schedule. This disrupts the plans of buyers because they cannot move into their units. There are special problems with the so-called "glass buildings" that have been recently constructed. The entire outside skins of these buildings are made of glass. This gives them a spectacular look. From outside the sun gleams off the glass, and inside, there are ceiling-to-floor windows.

The problem is that the windows have a limited lifetime of twenty to thirty years, and then they must be replaced. That will be very expensive. In this age when engineers can design buildings that are very energy-efficient, this is a huge waste.

There is another set of complaints around the purchase agreements designed by the developers' lawyers. In the terms of sale, the developers have no responsibility to have the building finished on time and only limited liability for construction problems. There have been efforts to change the Condominium Act by opposition politicians, but the government has resisted, and few meaningful changes have been made.

A high proportion of the downtown condo units are bought by speculators who plan to flip them for a profit. No one knows what percentage, but one estimate is that 65% of new units downtown are occupied by renters. Absent owners and renters have a different approach than owners, because they don't see the condo as a long-term investment. That may well be the reason why there has been no political outcry over the state of these buildings or the cost.

It is still "buyer beware" in the Toronto real estate market.

The Public Domain

The Ontario planning system emphasizes the approvals of new buildings, but there is another related planning issue around the use and redesign of our public spaces: the streets, sidewalks, laneways, parks, beaches, and other places where the public has full access.

In North American cities, public spaces have become dominated by cars, and traffic congestion has made them unpleasant. In Europe, South America and other places where car culture has not been so prevalent, there have been major efforts over the last forty to fifty years to take back the public spaces of cities and towns and turn them into pedestrian havens of quiet streets for the enjoyment of the public. Restaurants, cafes, and shops flourish. Transit is given priority over private automobiles. Even the residential neighbourhoods of some European cities have gone so far as to ban cars altogether.

In North America, this struggle for the public domain has just begun, but there are signs that it is a movement that is gathering support. Portland, Oregon is the leader, but large cities like New York, Chicago, and Boston have joined the movement by blocking off some streets to traffic and building protected bike lanes on city streets. Vancouver, Montreal, and Ottawa are beginning to do the same, but not Toronto.

The problem in Toronto is not from want of ideas, or planners that can execute the redesign. The streets are broad, and every one of them has at least four lanes for cars, with two in each direction. Sidewalks, even in the busiest shopping districts like Bloor Street or Queen Street West, are narrow. Cyclists are forced to ride next to the curb because there are few protected bike lanes, and it is dangerous. Again, the problem in Toronto is politics. Suburban politicians are opposed to any restrictions on cars. Rob Ford, the former mayor, expressed it best by saying, "The war against the car is over." That is the view of many suburbanites, and the majority of Toronto politicians oppose any restrictions on cars. While other North American cities are busily creating pedestrian malls on some city streets, Toronto has only one: a two-block long mall on Gould Street in the heart of Ryerson University. A recent, much touted plan to reconfigure

Yonge Street turned out to be little more than a recommendation to widen the sidewalks. The majority of city politicians are so committed to car culture they are reluctant even to experiment with different street configurations.

Regardless of these attitudes, the struggle for the public domain downtown is bound to heat up because more and more young people are moving into these neighbourhoods. They want a different type of urban experience. Many do not own cars. They walk, cycle or take transit. This new generation is interested in design and improving the quality of life of their neighbourhoods. In time this will lead to a redesign of our streets, particularly those downtown.

There are other elements to this movement for control of public space. In downtown Toronto, new office buildings and stores are being built that feature striking designs with new materials. The ground floors of office buildings and even some of the newer condominiums have retail space, with shops, restaurants, and coffee houses. The PATH underground walking network in the beneath grade office buildings now extends from Dundas Street in the north to the Waterfront in the south, and from Yonge Street in the east to John Street in the west.

These are commercial developments, not public space. The irony is that private developers are doing what the city refuses to do. They are providing a safe, climate controlled walking environment for the public's enjoyment and convenience. For the developer and the stores, it is a commercial opportunity, but for the public it is an extension of city space that is open and available for them to enjoy.

Affordable Housing and Poverty

The greatest failure of our planning and development system is that it does not deliver the housing needed by the public. The new residential condominiums being built in Toronto's downtown are expensive. They are designed for buyers or renters who have high incomes and can afford the prices. The units are small, mostly studios and one-bedrooms. There are very few two- or three-bedroom units that are appropriate for families, and those that have come onto the market are too expensive for any but upper-income families.

There is virtually no affordable housing being built in Toronto today. Developers defend themselves by saying they cannot build housing like this at a price that can be afforded by those with low or medium incomes. By the time they buy the land, contract the architects to design the project, assemble and purchase the materials, hire the construction company, build the structure, and pay for all of the other costs, the prices that they must sell or rent the units at to recoup their costs and make a profit are too high for those with low and middle incomes. Perhaps these claims are exaggerated, but there is little doubt that these costs have driven prices beyond the reach of low- or even middle-income people in Toronto.

In fact, this is not new. Since the end of the Second World War, developers have not been able to build new housing that can be afforded by people with low incomes. In the past, governments provided affordable housing programs, but since 1995 the province of Ontario and the Canadian government have had no affordable housing programs. Canada is the only developed country without an affordable housing program. The City of Toronto has attempted to change this with a very modest program. If a development

is built on publicly owned land, the developer is required to provide 25% of the units as affordable housing, but there are very few developments like this in the city.

This lack of affordable housing has become the most serious social problem in Toronto and much of the rest of Canada. It will only get worse unless new federal and provincial programs are put in place. Most of those who are living in the downtown condos do not need support, but at least thirty thousand immigrants are settling in the city every year, most in Toronto's suburbs. This is putting pressure on rental housing. Vacancy rates are going down and the cost of housing is going up. There have been a number of reports in the press of families spending 50% or more of their incomes on housing, and the cost of putting a roof over their heads is impoverishing them.

The city's income gap is widening. David Hulchanski, a University of Toronto professor in the School of Social Work, has studied income inequality for many years. His most recent research is based on the census data. He found that the incomes of the wealthiest 28% of the city's residents had gone up significantly while the incomes of the rest have either declined or stayed stable. It is in the downtown core and the Yonge Street corridor that saw incomes rise, while in north Etobicoke, North York, and north Scarborough, incomes dropped. Even middle-income communities across the city saw average incomes shrink.[43] The study confirms that poverty has shifted out of the downtown and now is located in the inner suburbs of Toronto and has flowed into parts of the GTA.

Housing costs, meanwhile, are going up. This hurts the most vulnerable: single-parent families, children, and the handicapped. Often minority groups experience added difficulties because they face discrimination. The problems of poverty are getting worse, not better, in Toronto, and the lack of affordable housing is increasing the difficulties.

The lack of affordable housing is a problem across Canada, but it is particularly a problem in big cities. This is not something that municipalities can solve. They simply do not have the money needed for the scale of program that will be required. It must be senior levels of government that fund affordable housing. Only governments that control income and corporate taxes have the financial capability to create a fairer distribution of income and affordable housing.

Retrofitting Buildings

An issue that is becoming critical in Toronto and the rest of the country is the need to retrofit buildings. This is something that is not talked about or even recognized, but it is becoming urgent. There are two major reasons for this.

If we are to meet the challenge of global warming and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, we have to reduce emissions from the heating of buildings. The City of Toronto did a study of sources of GHG emissions in 2007 and found that about 37% came from vehicles and the same amount from heating buildings. In Toronto, most of that is from burning natural gas for home heating.[44] If we are to meet our international commitments on global warming, we have to reduce the burning of fossil fuels for heating our buildings. As well, many of our buildings are aging and need to be brought up to standard. That is particularly true of the older high-rise towers in the suburbs.

Virtually all of these buildings were constructed from the 1960s to the 1980s with the assistance of CMHC funding. There are hundreds of buildings like this in Toronto's suburbs, housing hundreds of thousands of people, most of them low-income, and many new immigrants. These buildings are privately owned and almost all of them need major repairs and renovations. Structurally, the buildings are sound, but the windows and doors leak heat, and the heating systems are outdated or need upgrading. Most need better insulation. Elevators break down, isolating the residents on the top floors, and plumbing and appliances need replacing.

These buildings have serious problems, but they are the largest source of affordable housing in the city and the GTA, and the city needs that housing. Toronto recognized this when David Miller was mayor. With his leadership, a building retrofit program was established for these older high-rise buildings. Money and expertise from the city were loaned to the owners of the buildings to do the needed retrofits, and then the money was repaid out of the energy savings over the next number of years. It is an excellent program, and it continues today, but only a limited amount of money is available because the city does not have the funds to provide the loans. If the project is to deal with the many buildings that need retrofitting, then it must be extended. The high-rise buildings are just the beginning of the problem. Virtually all of the houses, duplexes, and smaller apartment buildings also need energy retrofits if the city is to reduce its GHG emissions. This will require a much larger program.

There is no reason this cannot be done. The retrofit program is revenue-neutral because the costs are fully recovered with energy savings, but it needs government participation if it is to work. The benefits to a program like this would be enormous. The buildings would be improved and the quality of life of the people living in them enhanced. More important, it would decrease the greenhouse gas emissions of the city and help to meet the crisis of climate change. The program could employ thousands of people, particularly young people, who need work.

Taxes

No municipal issue in Toronto is more controversial than taxes. The complaints of many living in the city is that their taxes are too high, and the services they receive are not worth the money they pay. This can be dismissed as a right-wing rant, but property tax, the main source of revenue for municipalities, is inherently unfair and leads to grievances.

Property tax is not based on the ability to pay. Income tax and corporate tax are based on the amount of money the person earns or the profits the corporation makes, but it is the value of the property that determines the level of tax on property. This tax is calculated by comparing the property to other similar properties. That is a judgment call and can be challenged by appealing the valuation. Many people buy houses when their income is high. Later they may lose their jobs or retire, and their income is reduced, but their property tax does not go down. With the escalating price of property, it is likely to go up. People then complain that high property taxes are forcing them out of their homes. It could be argued that this is good because they should sell their houses and move into a less expensive home. That makes the house available to another

individual or family that needs it. But that is not how homeowners see it. They complain that high property taxes are evicting them from their homes, a powerful and emotional argument.

Politicians, particularly those from the suburbs who face this issue, have tried to deal with these complaints by shifting costs to user fees. This is happening across Ontario and North America. In Toronto, there is now a fee-for-garbage pick-up. The larger your garbage bin, the more you pay. There is a fee for the amount of water that a household uses, and another for use of community recreation facilities like hockey rinks, and so on. User fees are a political sham. We all use water and need our garbage collected. We encourage people, particularly children, to be active and stay fit. By shifting these costs to fees, it means that the user pays and property taxes are being held in check, but all that has happened is that people are paying in a different way. Often it means that low-income families cannot afford city services like recreation because they cannot afford to pay the fees.

But although it is homeowners who complain the loudest about property taxes, the property tax system, in Ontario at least, is designed to benefit homeowners. Those who rent an apartment pay about twice as much in property tax as owners of houses or condos, but very few are aware of that. This tax is collected in their rent and paid by the landlord. They have no idea how much of their rent goes to tax. A homeowner, on the other hand, gets a property tax bill from the city every year and can see what they pay this year compared to previous years. Fairness simply does not exist in property taxes. Homeowners, on average, are wealthier than renters, and yet they pay considerably less property tax. There is one other major benefit that homeowners receive. When they sell their principal residence, they pay no capital gains tax. This loophole in the tax system benefits Canadian homeowners by billions of dollars every year.

But the real complaint about property taxes has nothing to do with tax fairness. It is based on the belief that our taxes are too high. In fact, property taxes in the City of Toronto are the lowest in the GTA and among the lowest in Ontario. The reason for this is the hundreds of office buildings and high-rise towers that are in the city. These buildings pay high taxes, but they are much less expensive to service by the city than houses, and this helps to keep taxes low for everyone. Again, it is the homeowners who benefit the most.

Canadian municipal leaders for some time have been arguing that they cannot raise property taxes any more. Costs are rising and the city infrastructure is deteriorating. Municipalities need to have access to other forms of taxes like income tax or sales tax. In Europe and the United States this is common, but not in Canada. When David Miller was the mayor of Toronto, he was the leader of this fight and did get concessions from the federal government. This is a demand we continue to hear from municipal leaders, particularly the mayors of the major cities but nothing is done.

Political attitudes are changing and that may lead to new money for municipalities. There will be huge costs to repair and upgrade our urban infrastructure—things like bridges, water pipes, and sewers—and municipalities do not have the funds to pay for them. At this time it is difficult to predict what will happen with this issue.

But none of this will end the complaints about property taxes, or complaints about all taxes, for that matter. The Canadian tax system has been built over two centuries,

and it needs a complete overhaul based on the principles of affordability, progressive taxation, eliminating tax loop holes that benefit the wealthy and stopping the off-shoring of money to tax havens.

Governance: Reforming Toronto City Council

The current problems of Toronto City Council were created by Megacity, imposed by the provincial government of Mike Harris to frustrate the reform politics of the downtown progressives. If the city is to become a leader again, changes in the governance structure of the city have to be made.

Some have advocated that the city go back to its original Metro structure, with six lower-tier municipalities, but that would mean returning to a structure that caused the governance problems in the first place. Another suggestion is to create four lower-tier municipalities: Toronto, North York, Etobicoke, and Scarborough. But again, that is not a good solution. There is another, simpler solution that would solve many of the difficulties. The biggest points of difference are around planning issues. Already Toronto City Council has four community councils that look at these issues: Toronto and East York, Scarborough, North York, and Etobicoke and York. The problem is that these community councils are only advisory. Neighbourhood issues first go to the community council, and then the city council for ratification.

If the City of Toronto Act was changed to give community councils full control over planning and local issues, it would strengthen local control, and the ability of citizens to shape and influence their local government. It would also encourage the participation of citizens in civic government because it would allow for local control. This would remove the most contentious issues from city council. The entire city council would still have a major role to play because they would have responsibility for issues like budgets, transit, infrastructure, and so on.

This would be a very simple change in the legislation, but it would give much more power to local citizens.

Citizen Groups

In Toronto, like many North American cities, there has been a remarkable growth in the number and effectiveness of citizen groups. There are ratepayer groups that focus on property taxes, and community or neighbourhood organizations dealing with a variety of issues, but most citizen groups focus on single issues: a new high-rise building, a highway extension, or an airport expansion.

Many of these groups have the ability to mobilize large numbers of people around controversial issues that affect their community. All of the members, including the leaders, are volunteers. What mobilizes them is their desire to protect the quality of life of their neighbourhoods, keep out invasive development, and protect their communities from environmental damage. Some describe citizen groups as NIMBY (not in my back yard) groups because they want to protect their own turf, and there is no doubt that some can be characterized in this way, but the objective of most is to protect and enhance their community. These are citizens working together for what they see as building a better neighbourhood and city.

Virtually all of the issues that citizen groups engage with involve government in

some way. New high-rises, for example, have to go through the system of planning approvals controlled by the municipality. Pollution issues are the responsibility of a number of agencies. In order for Porter Airlines to be granted permission to fly jets out of the Island Airport, for instance, the proposal had to be approved by three public organizations: Toronto City Council, the Toronto Port Authority, and Transport Canada. The new Liberal government of Justin Trudeau stopped the proposal because citizen groups used their influence to persuade them that this was a proposal that would threaten Toronto's entire Waterfront.

Community groups are using the political process to their advantage. A development application that is opposed by a significant number of people will be required to have public hearings organized by local politicians. This gives groups the opportunity to make presentations before a committee of council. Members present briefs, make deputations, write letters, issue press releases, and use every means to make their position known.

There are times when members violate laws to dramatize their opposition, but those are rare occasions. Most members of citizen groups are reluctant to act unlawfully because that will frighten off others, and also because they are largely law-abiding, middle-class people who accept the legitimacy of the government, whether they support the particular politicians in power or not.

Increasingly careful, detailed research is at the core of the efforts of these groups. They gather evidence that supports their cause. Research is done on the proponent and the impact that the project will have on the community. Many of the groups do fundraising, and that allows them to hire experts and legal help to support their cause or issue. Groups are very conscious that they are waging two campaigns. One is to get a favourable decision from council or the regulating agency, and the other is to convince the public of the justice of their cause. That is why community groups are very careful about how they present themselves. Usually they will appoint a spokesperson for the group to control the message. Most often this is the chair or president of the association, but sometimes it is a member who is particularly good at handling the media. Spokespersons are key members of the group because they are the public face of the organization.

Because the issues are public controversies, and the decisions that determine their ultimate outcome will be made by public bodies, how the media treats the issue is of special concern. Well-organized citizen groups tend to have an advantage here. Corporate leaders are often uneasy in a public forum because it soon becomes obvious that they are motivated by profit. Their strength is deep pockets that can buy lobbyists, experts, and lawyers. By contrast, the strength of a citizens' group is the public nature of the way that they operate. Their objective is the broader public good, not private gain. This gives them credibility with the public.

Groups assume that the media will be neutral and report in a factual way. It is a shock for them when the media take sides and use their editorial pages to push their point of view, which can be quite different from the group's. The Toronto *Star*, for example, a newspaper with a progressive reputation, has supported the expansion of the Island Airport in the past, and their editorial pages reflect that point of view. Even many of the *Star's* news articles on the airport expansion reflected that position.

In an effort to get their message out, community groups have adopted the internet and social media with enthusiasm, and that has changed the way that they get their message to the public and inform their supporters. Twitter, Facebook, websites, and blogs are easy to master and are being used more and more to inform the public. Videos distributed via You Tube are another technique that some groups have adopted. This is a direct form of communication, without interference from reporters and editors.

An example of how the new media has influenced community groups is email. In the past, the chief communications tool of groups was the telephone. Telephone trees were set up to get news to members quickly, and leaders spent an inordinate amount of time on the phone. Meetings were essential to get consensus and work out details. Today e-mail has simplified organizing enormously. People stay in touch constantly. The leadership trade messages back and forth. Research- or information-gathering committees can do the same. There can be online discussions about tactics and events, and messages can be easily circulated. Meetings are announced and reminders sent out all by email. Today it is virtually impossible for a person to actively participate in a community group without email.

Public Participation

Citizen groups operate outside the established political process. "Extra-parliamentary," is one phrase for them. Politicians are decision makers, and the aim of those involved in citizen groups is to get the politicians to support their causes. But there is another movement afoot in Toronto, and other cities, to involve citizens in the actual decision-making process. The way that Waterfront Toronto makes planning decisions is an example.

Waterfront Toronto is an agency formed and financed in November 1999 by all three levels of government. Its task is to plan and redevelop 1,977 acres, or 800 hectares, of old industrial land along the city's waterfront. It is the largest urban redevelopment project in North America. The vision is to redevelop this land as sustainable, mixed-use projects with parks, housing, work spaces, and public amenities.

The planners, architects, and administrators who came to work for Waterfront Toronto when it was formed knew that they could bring world-class talent to work on the development, but they also understood that ordinary citizens should be involved in the process because they bring a different perspective to planning issues than professionals. They can make a valuable contribution by providing comments and critiques to the plans and input on how the mix of structures and public spaces related to each other. But where would Waterfront Toronto find people like this? The land was vacant; no one lived in the immediate vicinity. Who would be willing to commit to a complicated planning process like this that would take years to implement?

Over time, in fact, they found many people willing to participate, and the volunteers became an integral part of the Waterfront Toronto planning process. They met constantly with the planners, designers, architects, and other experts throughout the planning stage. Every plan was examined in detail and most were changed—some fundamentally. Waterfront Toronto pioneered one of the most remarkable public planning exercises ever attempted in this city—perhaps anywhere—and this process is far from being completed. Those involved, both professionals and volunteers alike, say that the public involvement has improved the plans enormously.

Another benefit that Waterfront Toronto got from this process was political. When Rob Ford was mayor, his brother, Councillor Doug Ford, was given the task of hurrying up the planning process along the waterfront. The mayor believed that things were taking too long. The city needed the money now, and much of this talk and design was a waste of time. Within weeks, Doug Ford came up with a plan that included a mega-shopping mall, a hotel, a giant Ferris wheel, and a monorail. His rationale was that his plan could be executed quickly and would bring a lot of money to the city in taxes, but the plan violated virtually every principle that had guided Waterfront Toronto's plan. It was environmentally unsustainable, with its most prominent feature an enormous, car-dependent shopping mall.

It was the volunteers who sprang into action to support the Waterfront Toronto plan. They formed a group called Code Blue and attacked the Ford proposal in the media. Soon it, and the Ford brothers with it, were converted into a laughing stock, as Code Blue pointed out all of the problems with their scheme. The campaign underlined that the Fords were simply out of their depth in dealing with sophisticated planning issues. It was not long before their plan was withdrawn for lack of support. The Waterfront Toronto plan now has the public support it needs.

The benefits of public participation are enormous. It leads to greater engagement in civic life, the empowerment of citizens, and better decisions. Democracy has often become an empty promise that amounts to little more than voting at election time. If we are to build viable cities, there must be meaningful participation by the public in decisions that impact their communities, towns and cities. That is the only way that we can get good government.

Politics, Participation, and People

In Toronto, and many Ontario cities and towns, the people have lost control of the political process, and yet the struggle to take back communities and strengthen the power of citizens has begun in earnest.

A concerted effort was launched to shift power away from citizens in the past. This was justified in the name of efficiency, and on the assumption that ordinary people do not know how to govern themselves. The real reason was that politicians wanted to tilt power towards those with commercial interests and deliver the benefits of government to the economic elite. We see this particularly in the creation of megacity by the Mike Harris government in the late 1990s, but also in the creation of Metro in the 1950s. These were carefully crafted political initiatives to make local government difficult to influence by the people and shift influence to business elites. Make no mistake; that effort worked; democracy was subverted.

But what this narrative of the City of Toronto also demonstrates is that people have never given up. Individuals, and citizen groups have struggled to regain power and they have had considerable success at different times. The Toronto reform movement of the 1970s is a good example, and today there is a resurgence of citizen involvement in the city that promises real and permanent political change. In almost every neighbourhood people are becoming involved in the local issues that concern them. They are making their voices heard, and that is creating a new type of politics in Toronto.

Even the Rob Ford fiasco is a reflection of the concern that people have for their

city. Most interpret this era of Toronto politics as a right-wing, populist movement to keep taxes low, favour the domination of cars on our streets, and stop social change. Suburban voters linked up with Rob Ford in the mistaken belief that he would protect them from what he called the downtown elites. But there is another interpretation of Ford Nation. People from the suburbs are feeling threatened and alienated from the political process, much like the progressives in the downtown, and they rebelled in the only way they could rebel—by voting for Rob Ford. They may have opted for the wrong leader—an out-of-control drug and alcohol addict who made wildly unrealistic promises—but their involvement in politics reflects a deep dissatisfaction with the elites who control this city. They too want meaningful change.

There is a growing feeling of unease with politics by the people of Toronto, and all Canadians for that matter. They see the promise of democracy – "government of the people, by the people, for the people"[45] – has been subverted. Government has come under the control of elites who use it to further their own interests, at the expense of the people.

This is not a pessimistic, unrealistic conclusion. I have developed this idea in greater depth in my book *Democracy Rising*.[46] Greater participation is bringing dynamic changes because people are becoming engaged. Democracy is rising because people are participating in community life and politics and demanding meaningful change. They are tired of elites telling them how to vote and what to think, while at the same time those same elites use their influence to promote their own vested interests. There are growing numbers of people who are fed up with this type of politics where the wealthy and influential reap the rewards of the political system at the expense of the people.

There is much to be done before we are able to take back the political life of this city and country. There must be structural change, and inspired political leadership is essential, but the real key is participation. Rather than trying to exclude people from the political process, we must develop a political culture of participation, and a system of politics that draws citizens into the political process. We need high levels of participation at all levels of public life—our communities, our cities, our provinces, and our country. Democracy, as Lincoln saw clearly, is the promise of government by the people—not government by the politicians, not government by economic elites, but government of ordinary people.

In the process of engaging in the participation in communities, and in political and civic life, we will develop a system of governance that will lead to better, more rational, and sensible decisions that truly reflect the needs and aspirations of the Canadian people. It will also reflect the economic and social needs of the people, not just vested interests. That is the promise of democracy, and Toronto needs it now.

NOTES

1 Bill Freeman, *The New Urban Agenda: The Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area*, (Toronto: Dundurn, 2015)

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Vancouver's Politics: City-Region Governance in Canada's Pacific Metropolis

Patrick J. Smith

THE "VANCOUVER MODEL" of urban/metropolitan governance is often portrayed as something close to ideal. Authors such as Andrew Sancton[1] and Robert Bish[2], and practitioners such as Ken Cameron[3] and Larry Beasley[4], have each contributed to this congratulatory motif. Historically, this self-image has had some support. Yet increasingly, contemporary challenges, like those faced by many North American city-regions, provide a push for more critical assessments. These are often democratic in nature, reframing the classic question of public administration identified by Peter Self and highlighting the tensions that exist between efficiency and accountability.[5] On this latter scale, the "Vancouver model" shows signs of fraying at its democratic edges, while the city-regional experience also raises questions about its ongoing efficiency. This critique seeks to rebalance the discussion by asking a number of simple questions about the health of Vancouver's local-regional economy, ecology, planning, finances, capacities, social sustainability, democracy, and governance. To begin, a brief definition of "Vancouver" is needed.

Anyone contemplating the politics and governance of Vancouver is faced with a different question from most other large urban city-regions in Canada: namely, "what is Vancouver?"

There are at least four Vancouvers:

1. *The City of Vancouver*: With a 2017 population of 675,502, it was once Canada's third largest city but is now near the bottom of the top ten, just ahead of Halifax and Hamilton. Its surface area is only 114.67 square kilometres (44.3 square miles), however, making it one of Canada's densest cities (at 5.34 persons per square kilometre). It is also very ethnically diverse: 25% of the population are now Chinese, and over half (53%) do not claim English as their first language.[6] With two thirds of Canada's population growth between 2001 and 2011 due to immigration, and most of it centred in Canada's three major city-regions, the majority of this increasing multicultural mix was reflected in city-regions like Vancouver.[7]
2. *Metro Vancouver*: The renamed and somewhat expanded Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) has a surface area of 2,878.52 square kilometres (1,111.4 square miles) and counts a 2017 population of 2,574,328. The GVRD is a federation

comprised of twenty-one municipalities, one First Nation and one unincorporated electoral area.

3. *Vancouver City-Region (A) – The Lower Mainland*: With a 2016 population of 2,690,921 and a combined area of 16,240.26 square kilometres (6,270.4 square miles), this area is essentially comprised of the two regional districts of Greater (Metro) Vancouver and the Fraser Valley. It includes twenty-seven municipalities, one treatied First Nation (to date, plus multiple other FNs) and eight unincorporated electoral areas. Generally, the Lower Mainland area is referenced in local weather reports; historically, it found reference in the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board (LMRPB), a regional planning body established following World War Two. The LMRPB produced a long-range plan ("Chance and Challenge") in 1967 with enough politics attached to it that the government of British Columbia (BC) abolished it and replaced it with BC's regional district system the same year. Originally, this Lower Mainland included four regional districts; over time, these were reduced by amalgamations to two (now the Greater Vancouver and Fraser Valley regional districts).

4. *Vancouver City-Region (B) – The South Coast*: This somewhat larger geographic area's 2016 population is estimated at 2,856,921. The informally defined region increasingly corresponds to the south coast of British Columbia, including Whistler and the Sea to Sky and Pemberton corridors, plus, perhaps, the commuting parts of the Sunshine Coast and some adjacent—and commutable—Gulf Islands. This South Coast nomenclature is perhaps best reflected in the still relatively new (since 2007) version of TransLink (now officially called the South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority), Vancouver's regional transportation authority.

Beyond these local-regional domestic political configurations, there are different institutional iterations that include these above definitions of Vancouver. Collectively, with the Victoria-Nanaimo mid-Vancouver Island corridor, the city is part of—and officially referred to as—the Georgia Basin (or GB-Puget Sound in its American iteration, in reference to a provincial bio-regional initiative begun during the 1991–1996 Mike Harcourt New Democratic Party (NDP) BC government. More recently, Vancouverites also found that when international list-makers talk about Vancouver, they are often thinking in these larger terms. In 2010, for example, the Economist Intelligence Unit ranked Vancouver as the most livable city in the globe. In 2011, Vancouver slipped to third place, mostly due to a non-local traffic issue on a highway on Vancouver Island north-west of Victoria—clearly a bigger definition than most Canadian urbanists would consider.

In cross-border regional terms, the Vancouver city-region also forms the northern terminus of Mainstreet Cascadia, a conurbation of eleven million people running from Eugene, Oregon to Portland and then to Olympia, Washington and Seattle and into the Vancouver region. A still-broader notion of Cascadia is the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER), a governmental amalgam of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana, plus Yukon, the Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Al-

berta, and Saskatchewan. And there is also a somewhat more focused and newer iteration (since June 2008): the Pacific Coast Collaborative (aka "Pacifica"), which runs from Alaska to Baja California. These transborder conceptions are both economic and ecological, and each intersects with part of the ecotopian psyche of the region.[8]

In trying to understand Vancouver's politics and governance, it is useful to keep each of these definitions in mind. Each iteration has a different history of local democratic politics and policy-making, and each speaks about the local political psyche. For the purposes of this discussion, the domestic versions are most illustrative, beginning with the City of Vancouver.[9]

The City of Vancouver

Even in Canadian terms, Vancouver is still a rather young city; it is also a relatively small one. It was settled by Coast Salish First Nation communities at least as far back as 500 BC, which was followed by intermittent interactions with explorers like Jose Maria Narvaez, George Vancouver and Simon Fraser. Its non-Aboriginal "founding" came in 1886 as the Pacific terminus for the Canadian Pacific Railroad (CPR), after which it grew as the CPR's western real estate arm.[10] The city itself went through a couple of early amalgamations (e.g., South Vancouver and Point Grey), and by 1911 its population was just 100,401 (on 114.67 square kilometres, or 44.27 square miles). Even as such, it dominated the region, with a population then of merely 164,020 residents.

The building of the transcontinental railway involved significant immigrant labour, which helped establish a strong local Chinese population and subsequently a South Asian component as well. Race relations in the city's (and province's) early history, however, were fairly clear. Those in power developed a broad range of racist laws and practices to ensure discrimination was clear and present. These included the promotion of federal head tax provisions, the denial of democratic voting and other rights, and limits on economic ownership and activity.[11]

Meanwhile, all city development went on without any real consideration of existing Aboriginal rights and title. That has remained so today, though some modern treaties and other understandings are now coming forward, with many of them being pushed by judicial rulings largely initiated in BC.[12] The 2009 Tsawwassen First Nation Treaty in Vancouver's neighbouring municipality of Delta is one such example of a modern and urban treaty.

PART 1: The Economy

British Columbia has been described as having at least two economies: one rural and primarily resource-dependent, centred mostly in northern BC, the Interior, and parts of Vancouver Island, and the other metropolitan and more tertiary in nature.[13] Much of the latter is represented by the Vancouver city-region. In terms of the metropolitan Vancouver economy, there has been a growing dichotomy between Vancouver's Lower Mainland city-region and the rest of the province, with much of the BC economy still heavily reliant on logging, mining, fishing, and other resource-related activities at the expense of a more robust manufacturing component. The economic base of the Vancouver city-region, on the other hand, is increasingly service-oriented, with a strong reliance on personal and corporate services, including tourism and the

province-wide distribution of goods and services.[14] The Port of Vancouver is also Canada's gateway for Asia-Pacific trade. With $187 billion in total trade with more than 160 trading economies, it is the busiest port in North America, ranks second in total cargo volume, and is the busiest on the west coast of the Americas.[15] All of this, combined with its significant multicultural population and increasingly interdependent and globally-oriented regional economy, has made metropolitan Vancouver an international city.[16]

Most of the best arable land in the province is found in this same Lower Mainland, which is an additional factor that impacts on the decision-making around economic development in the Vancouver-centred region. Only one quarter of the land in the province is suitable for farming, and much of this prime agricultural land is in the increasingly urbanized Vancouver-centred region of the Fraser Valley. Thus, the potential for policy conflicts and the necessity of devising region-wide solutions to urban development problems, both domestic and international, becomes immediately apparent.[17] In terms of green urban development, it has been the metropolitan authority (Metro Vancouver/GVRD) that has done much of the heavy lifting over the years.[18]

This pressure, abetted by a major housing affordability crisis in Vancouver, continues. The 2012 release of metropolitan population figures from the 2011 census showed that the suburban municipalities south of the Fraser and up the Fraser Valley (beyond the GVRD) are where the most significant growth pressures are found.[19] Most who engage in such moves to the suburbs fail to calculate the real costs.[20] And despite a softening of the Canadian housing market, Vancouver's affordability issues (like those of Toronto) remained through the second decade of the 21st century.

These challenges, spurred by cost pressures, are making growth and development increasingly contentious. In 2012, former provincial Liberal leader and Fraser Institute member Gordon Gibson reflected this in a *Vancouver Sun* op-ed, in which he concluded: "Vancouver is growing way too fast."[21] Whether such a new conservationist view might become more mainstream remains uncertain. It certainly has spawned a local debate about housing speculation and absentee housing investors. Indicators from 2015 suggest this fast-paced speculative growth continues.

PART 2: Democratization

The modern political history of Vancouver dates from the 1930s, when the local Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the forebear to today's New Democratic Party (NDP), campaigned for city council control. Up until then, despite patterns of immigration and employment—particularly on railway building by the local Chinese population—Vancouver's politics was dominated by the CPR, white Europeans (mainly the British), and business interests. Though there had been earlier instances of community dissent and the occasional election of left-wing and union representatives locally and provincially,[22] the first real political challenges to Vancouver's established order came in the 1930s. A series of protests by labour and the unemployed, which at times led to riots and the use of the Riot Act and mass arrests of labour activists by the city, dominated the Depression era and left the local business elite fearful of a "communist takeover." It also produced the last period when over 50% of local voters participated in civic elections (1928–1939). One outcome of this dissent was the creation

of one of Canada's first local political party contestations. The face of Vancouver's politics would never again be the same, even though the elite's proxy party, the Non-Partisan Association (NPA), continued to dominate for decades.

With assistance from their allies at the provincial level, the rules of the electoral game were altered in the 1930s, most notably by anti-leftist Vancouver mayor Gerry McGeer, who was also a Liberal member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) in the mid-1930s. McGeer managed to force a plebiscite on getting rid of Vancouver's ward system, replacing it with an at-large election in 1936. Unlike the rest of Canada's cities, this is still the norm in BC today. Most US jurisdictions have reformed local elections based on court decisions that concluded that at-large elections are simply discriminatory.

The other local business-elite response to the leftist political challenge was the creation of the Non-Partisan Association (NPA), which remains perhaps Canada's most successful civic party, having governed uninterrupted for nearly four decades –.by significantly outspending the CCF. The NPA gained control of city politics in 1937 (while Franco was still trying to gain control of Spain) and remained in charge until 1972, when they were defeated by a more centrist group called The Electors Action Movement (TEAM) set up in opposition to a major freeway development planned to run through downtown Vancouver, including its Chinatown community. The NPA came back to dominate again in the latter half of the 1980s and all of the 1990s, before losing in 2002 to its traditional leftist opponents, now organized as the Committee of Progressive Electors (COPE). Here local organizations like Think City, and activist organizers like Neil Monckton, were instrumental in identifying new leaders (like Mayor Larry Campbell, 2002–2005) and significantly broadening the engagement of many of the city's politically dispossessed. They did so with an agenda that focused on homelessness and the idea of a harm reduction approach to drug use, among other related matters. They also did so with increased efforts at civic engagement in the local vote and much more professional fundraising and electioneering. Vancouver's more recent turnouts were around 30% and sometimes higher, as in 2002 with the election of COPE and 34% in 2011. This is higher than many other large BC cities, which is certainly a product of the vibrancy of Vancouver's municipal political parties. In the 2014 civic election, Vancouver turnout was over 40% – the highest in decades.[23] With the four main local parties together spending almost $6 million, unregulated election spending was also the highest of any BC civic election to date. In 2005, the NPA won again, before finally losing to a combined left/centre-left amalgam of COPE and Vision Vancouver in 2008. In total, the NPA has won 68% of *all* of Vancouver's mayoral, council, parks board, and school board seats in the fourty-eight civic elections held between 1937 and 2014. (For many years these were held annually, then bi-annually, and then for terms of three years. In 2014, BC voters started selecting local governments to four-year terms, with the next elections scheduled for November 2018). In November 2011, Mayor Gregor Robertson garnered re-election with a Greenest City Action Plan, and his centre-left Vision party won outright control of city council, with COPE and the NPA left to split the remainder. However, Vision lost control of the Vancouver School Board and Board of Parks and Recreation in 2014.

The more recent 2014 Vancouver elections demonstrate a shifting dynamic, with three different parties electing mayors and councils in the five elections since (and

including) 2002. The left has gained over this period, with the now more development-friendly (and not so left) centre holding control of city council.

In the November 16, 2002 contest, the leftist Coalition of Progressive Elector party (COPE) gained control of Canada's eighth-largest city for the first time since officially forming in 1968. Three years later, COPE held but a single council seat and the NPA were back in power. While COPE's rise and fall was spectacular, it was also perhaps predictable. There were lessons learned that informed how Vancouver's left, albeit a reconfigured and more centrist one, again came to hold civic power in Vancouver—lessons already identified by the leftist party in the neighbouring municipality of Burnaby (BC's third largest), where the Burnaby Citizens Association (BCA) have dominated for a over a quarter-century. In 2008, 2011, and 2014, Burnaby's BCA won every mayoral, council, and school board seat, a record unprecedented in local politics in Canada.

Among the key lessons learned was the importance of not being overspent by their right-wing opponents. Historically, the local party that has spent the most in Vancouver elections has won. That has continued, with the left/centre-left now outspending the right. In the November 2011 civic race won by the centre-left Vision, for example, Gregor Robertson's party spent $2.22 million to elect the mayor and seven councillors—approximately $28.83 for each vote they received.[24] Rival NPA, which won two seats, raised about $2 million, thereby spending close to the same amount per voter, while the leftist COPE managed only $360,969 – or $7.43 for each of their votes. COPE complained and called for election finance reform, saying, "We weren't as effective because we did not have as much money."[25] In the November 2014 civic election, Vision Vancouver won a third majority, spending $3.4 million compared to $2.1 million for the opposition NPA. For all of Vancouver, this worked out to $9.29 per vote. That placed Vancouver in twelfth place for most money spent during local campaigns, behind a number of much smaller local authorities, including four in the Metro region.

The other electoral lesson was organizational: the initial Vision campaign in particular moved to a more professional footing. COPE's lack of success was mostly a product of inadequate funding and more amateur organizational structures, even though their 2002 breakthrough established a new, more professional model for Vancouver politics. After breaking away from COPE, for example, Vision received large donations from major developers, contractors, and financial corporations, as well as from more traditional public sector unions.[26] What that financing shift says about the future of Vancouver's left, centre, and right politics seems clear: the local party that raises and spends the most tends to win. In the November 2014 local elections, Vision held control of the mayoralty and council by spending $3.4 million to elect six of ten city councillors. The NPA raised $2.5 million and spent $2.1 million to elect three of the remaining council seats, with a Green taking the last seat, and the most votes of any councillor, after spending just $89,000.[27] COPE did not elect any members to city council, and they failed to submit their disclosure on time, which could potentially affect their right to run in the 2018 elections.

The NPA gained control of Vancouver's parks board—one of the few elected parks bodies in North America—leaving Vision with just one seat while the Greens took the remaining two on the board. On Vancouver's 2014–2018 school board, a lone Green

held the balance of power with four Vision and four NPA trustees elected.[28] Total election spending in Vancouver in 2014 was $5.6 million, up $400,000 from the previous vote in 2011.

In BC's "second city" of Surrey, the governing Surrey First party won re-election after spending $1.2 million, mostly provided by the corporate sector.[29]

PART 3: Ecology and Sustainable Development

As with the broader Cascadia region, ecology and sustainability have been significant items on the Vancouver's city-region's agenda for a considerable time. Here, the region has led the environmental charge, while the city government has played its part, particularly with early work on air quality (like the *Clouds of Change* report in 1990) and its more recent Vision-sponsored "Greenest City Action Plan 2020" initiative. As discussed elsewhere, the development of a Vancouver region, and an ecological ethos around it, was very much a bottom-up exercise: The cooperative, locally-initiated creation of a regional sewage and drainage district, and also a water district, prior to World War One, health and planning initiatives before World War Two, and the creation of BC's first regional planning authority after the war, the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board (LMRPB), all attest to a strong sense of regional problem-solving with a focus on cooperative planning, and increasingly, on "livability."[30] This focus will be especially needed, as an additional one million people are anticipated in metro Vancouver by 2040.[31]

With the creation of BC's regional district system in the mid-1960s, Greater Vancouver's first plan was developed, called the Livable Region Plan (LRP). Approved in 1976, its strategy to manage growth included five goals:

- Set residential growth targets for each part of the region
- Promote a balance of jobs to population in each part of the region
- Build regional town centres
- Build an improved transit-oriented transportation system
- Protect and develop regional open spaces

The LRP continued to guide development in the region until the 1980s, when more ecologically-sensitive local/regional politicians battled with the right-wing Social Credit provincial government of Bill Bennett over development on the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). The ALR was an earlier environmental creation of the Dave Barrett NDP government of 1972–75. When the GVRD, including then Vancouver mayor and future NDP premier Mike Harcourt, objected to a "friend" of the provincial government being allowed to take his Delta farm out of the ALR, the province, as part of its early 1980s "Restraint program," passed Bill 9, which took away the regional districts' planning powers across all of BC.[32]

What is instructive from these mid-1980s political battles is the fact that despite a loss of planning powers, the Greater Vancouver region continued to plan. It did so based on the strong local buy-in to the value of urban planning, as well as the general sense that the region would be more sustainable working collectively and cooperatively. So GVRD Planning became "Development Services" and carried on. In the 1990s,

under the new NDP premier and former Vancouver mayor Mike Harcourt, planning capacity was restored to the regional districts, and the Metro Vancouver region developed a new Livable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP) that was released in 1996. The strategy was the region's response to a forthcoming piece of provincial legislation called the Growth Strategies Act (GSA), which was to require regularly updated five-year regional plans, particularly for the fastest growing regions of the province. Greater Vancouver's initiative grew from the early work on the LRP and a major public consultation process over several years which produced 54 Steps to a Livable Region. The vast majority of these were focused on environmental sustainability.[33]

With the GSA, the then minister of municipal affairs, Darlene Marzari, provided what she called the "carrot" and the "big carrot" (rather than the stick), whereby municipalities that accepted their share of regional growth would be rewarded with transit investment benefits (the big carrot). Producing these benefits, however, has proven more fraught with local/regional versus provincial (and federal) tensions than Minister Marzari might have anticipated in the first half of the 1990s. At the end of the 1990s, the Greater Vancouver region was "gifted" control of transit and transportation planning by an NDP provincial government facing scandal and defeat. With transportation and land-use planning now essentially combined, the move represented a major breakthrough for sustainable planning. Instead of placing these powers directly with the regional district, however, the province established a parallel entity. This transportation authority, TransLink, has been at the centre of most regional-provincial tensions ever since, down to and including the March-May provincially-ordered plebiscite on how the region would pay for $7.5 billion in future transit investment. The results, announced in late June 2015, left a major funding and governance conundrum for Metro Vancouver and the province. Despite an almost 52% turnout—higher than most local elections in Metro—the No side prevailed, with almost 62% of the Vancouver region voting against the measure.

Originally under the control of a board of local mayors and councillors (like the GVRD), TransLink clashed with the province on regional priorities throughout most of the first decade of the 21st century—on transit technology (with the province wanting "Cadillac" Skytrain choices over the more affordable light rail preferred by TransLink), route priorities (with the province wanting a Richmond Airport-Vancouver line over the long-promised Evergreen Line to the north-east favoured by TransLink), and other areas as well.

Meanwhile, the GVRD went about revising its mid-1990s LRSP through an ongoing consultative process that produced a new Sustainable Regional Initiative (SRI*)* early in the 21st century. The goals for the regional growth strategy were the same as for the LRSP of the 1990s, and they showed more than a hint of connection to the LRP's goals of the mid-1970s:

- Create a compact urban region
- Support a sustainable economy
- Protect the region's environment
- Develop complete communities
- Support sustainable transportation choices

Left to their own democratic devices, the regional districts would have continued planning, with the major challenge remaining the traditional lack of local governmental funding. Agreement on regional priorities, while sometimes difficult, remained the norm. Like with "arms-length" Crown corporations, the dilemma was that the province wanted to to be able to continue moving some of the fingers attached to the arms. It was so in Greater Vancouver.

The major provincial-regional clash came on transit and transportation planning. After Vancouver's bid for the 2010 Winter Olympics was successful, federal dollars became available for related infrastructure projects, such as upgrading the Sea-to-Sky highway to Whistler, twinning the Trans-Canada Highway heading into Vancouver, building an airport-to-downtown rapid transit line, and investing in two perimeter roads across the region. None of these were high on the list of regional priorities—and indeed highway improvements were largely contrary to the LRSP and SRI. As TransLink was then still under the control of local mayors and councillors, both the transit agency and the GVRD resisted the provincial attempt to push these items to the top of the agenda. The response of the minister of transportation was to call TransLink "dysfunctional." Though armed with new legislative hammers under the Significant Projects Streamlining Act, the minister set up a quick "review" of the existing TransLink structure and replaced it with a corporate board that had much more limited local/regional input (via a Mayors' Council). Those changes facilitated the province getting its way and came at a cost to local accountability.[34] Tensions, however, continue to this day, and significant local/regional criticisms even suggest that the minister's new TransLink is more dysfunctional than before. When the regional Mayors' Council used its limited powers to thwart some of TransLink's initiatives, the premier called for a transit plebiscite in the region. The transportation minister insisted that the mayors come up with a plan to raise approximately $7.5 billion for new projects. When the mayors rejected a property tax hike, the saw-off was a regional sales tax hike of 0.5%. That vote, organized through a two-month mail-in ballot, was concluded on May 29, 2015. Though held under the auspices of BC's Chief Electoral Officer, the province exempted all parties from spending limits and disclosure requirements.[35] Despite this, the regional mayors announced that their funding for the Yes side of the plebiscite was $6 million, while individual municipalities spent additional public moneys in support.[36] The No side, led by the local chapter of the Canadian Taxpayers' Federation, spent just $40,000, but had read the public mood on TransLink and new taxes correctly.[37]

PART 4: Party Politics and the City of Vancouver's Civic Elections

Since 1886 Vancouver has had its own enabling legislation separate from the province-wide laws governing municipalities. Falling under various names until 1953, Vancouver's current legislation, called the Vancouver Charter, outlines the powers of the mayor and ten councillors, including their method of election. After experimenting with different types of ward systems in the 1930s, all wards were merged into one city-wide jurisdiction to prevent the local CCF from achieving success. Since that time, all civic elections across BC have been conducted through at-large systems, with councillors elected from a single constituency. Voters can, but often do not, cast up to ten votes for council, with

the ten (or fewer in smaller municipalities) top vote-getters being awarded office in this multi-member plurality system. Unlike more developed systems like those in Toronto and Montreal, candidates were only required to report election contributions and expenses well after the actual election—by six months (and now three) after the vote. There are no contribution or spending limits, no limits on where campaign dollars can come from, no limits on third-party spending, no tax deductions for contributions, and there is no public financing of campaigns. Actions to reform local election finance rules have begun, however[38] – including some spending reforms that were imposed in 2010 by a joint task force of the provincial government and Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM)[39] – but the exemption from any reporting obligations or spending limits for the 2015 Vancouver regional transit plebiscite suggests a province dragged kicking, if not screaming, into the democratic norms of the 21st century.

In late 2015, such election finance reform is still pending. It remains to be seen whether the collapse of third-term premier Gordon Campbell's administration and his resignation in March 2011 will impact the government's commitment to local elections financing reform (Campbell was a former mayor of Vancouver and chair of both the GVRD and Union of BC Municipalities). His successor Christy Clark's new Liberal administration has seemed more intent on senior provincial oversight of municipal government finances, as suggested by her government's new Auditor General for Local Government Act, 2012. No action on local elections finance reform was taken in the 2011 or 2012 legislative sessions, leaving BC as the "wild west" of local election financing. When the joint provincial-UBCM task force reported in 2010, the thinking was that any legislative changes needed a twelve-to-eighteen-month lead time for implementation before a subsequent set of local elections; thus BC's municipal vote of November 2014 was omitted from such transparency regulations and limits. With a three-year policy window before the next civic elections in November 2018 and an interim report on principles to guide such reform, there is some expectation that BC will move closer to Canadian and international democratic norms around campaign financing.

Most Canadian cities have fairly strong non-partisan traditions, and overarching provincial legislation often actively discourages local party formation. This non-partisan tradition is an offshoot of the late 19th and early 20th century municipal reform movement in the United States. This movement sought to separate city government from "politics" – and the perceived municipal corruption associated with it—by removing local parties from the electoral process. The longevity of the non-partisan tradition in Canadian municipal politics might be because it was imported near the end of the last century after the local non-partisan movement had become strong, but before the party battle was well established in English local politics.[40] Warren Magnusson agrees, suggesting that the divergence between upper and lower tier is because local politicians themselves found this arrangement convenient, as it allowed local politicians "greater freedom of action" once in office.[41] Stewart suggests it persists today because weak municipalities suit senior provincial masters.[42]

However, unlike every other major Canadian city with the exception of Montreal, Vancouver has had partisan activity at the local level at least since the 1930s, with the CCF first organizing council candidate slates in 1933. This activity was a simple outgrowth of a long-established union tradition in BC. As early as 1900, socialist/

labour parties had elected MLAs to the BC legislature, with the first coming from Nanaimo.[43] Much of this provincial left merged into the CCF in 1933.[44] Although the CCF never gained a majority on Vancouver's city council, its minor victories were enough to scare the local business community into responding to this "socialist threat" by forming the Non-Partisan Association (NPA) in 1937. Where the CCF faded as a *municipal* political force in the 1940s, the NPA continued to elect candidates. Winning nearly 75% of available council seats between 1937 and 1968, the NPA was the dominant party in a stable one-party system.

A major and permanent modernization of Vancouver civic politics came with the 1968 municipal elections. As shown in Table 1, two parties emerged that year to challenge the NPA: the centrist Electors Action Movement (TEAM) and the more radical-left Committee (then Coalition) of Progressive Electors (COPE). The first period of Vancouver's modern political era occurred between 1968 and 1974, when TEAM defeated the NPA to take control of Vancouver City Council, and once in power, prevented the building of expressways into the downtown core. With its more left, sometimes communist, policies, the fledgling COPE was a limited-impact player, electing but a single councillor during this time.

A new period of coalition government occurred between 1976 and 1984, when elections were so competitive that no party managed to win an outright majority. This can partially be attributed to TEAM members drifting off to become independents and a more moderate COPE gaining favour with voters. During this period, council majorities were often formed on an issue-by-issue basis, with COPE, TEAM, and independent candidates cooperating during elections to avoid cutting into one another's voting support. It was a lesson re-learned in the 21st century.

The collapse of TEAM in 1986 marked a return to a one-party system in Vancouver. While no longer traditional-left, COPE refused to further moderate its positions on a number of issues, content, to focus their election efforts instead on attacking the NPA's connections to local developers. The result of this posture was the NPA winning six straight majorities and almost 80% of council positions during this period, although COPE came close to securing a majority in 1990. Despite leftist efforts, ward system reform was defeated and the at-large system remained.

The 2002 Vancouver civic election marked another change for Vancouver politics, as it was in this election that COPE secured its first-ever council majority. COPE's triumph over the NPA can be largely attributed to the work of COPE organizers like Neil Monckton and others, and to bitter internal disputes in the governing NPA. Monckton played a key role during the 1999 effort and took over as chief party organizer during the build-up to the 2002 contest. Monckton brought together a team of skilled workers who provided the infrastructure and ideas needed to grow the party and expand the voter base. One major initiative, for example, was the Think City series of outreach conferences, which attracted thousands of non-COPE members to the party, including future COPE mayor Larry Campbell. During his tenure as campaign manager, Moncton's team raised over $1 million for the 2002 campaign and grew the COPE membership into the thousands. The NPA's incumbent mayor Philip Owen was essentially forced out of office after the party informed him he would have to compete for the party's mayoral nomination. This was partly in reaction to Owen's initiative on

Table 1: Vancouver City Council: Results and Typology (1968–2014)

Election Type	Year	NPA	COPE	TEAM	Ind.	Vision	Total	Turnout
Competitive	1968	8	1	2	0	—	11	39%
Elections	1970	7	1	3	0	—	11	41%
Majority	1972	1	1	9	0	—	11	28%
Governments	1974	4	1	6	0	—	11	28%
Competitive	1976	3	1	5	2	—	11	32%
Elections	1978	5	1	1	4	—	11	33%
	1980	4	3	2	2	—	11	38%
Coalition	1982	3	4	2	2	—	11	41%
Governments	1984	4	3	2	2	—	11	47%
	1986	8	2	—	1	—	11	46%
Non-Competitive	1988	7	3	—	1	—	11	40%
Elections	1990	6	5	—	0	—	11	41%
Majority	1993	10	1	—	0	—	11	28%
Governments	1996	11	0	—	0	—	11	27%
	1999	9	2	—	0	—	11	25%
Competitive	2002	2	9	—	0	—	11	36%
Elections	2005	6	—	—	0	4	11	32%
Majority	2008	**1**	—	—	0	8	11	31%
Governments	2011	**2**	—	1(Green)	—	8	11	35%
	2014	3	—	—	—	—	—	32%
Total Seats (%)		101 (48.33%)	41 (19.62%)	32 (17)	14 (7)	20 (9.57%)	209	—
Total Majorities		9	1	2	0	2	12	—
Coalition Leader		3	1	1	0	1	5	—

Note: Majority governments are in **bold**. Turnout is calculated based on the number of ballots cast divided by eligible population. Eligible population is based on 70% of projected Statistics Canada Census population figures for each year. Source: Vancouver City Clerks.

establishing Insite, North America's first official supervised injection site (SIS). The result was a split NPA—a not unimportant contributor to the outcome.

The 2005 election turned COPE's triumph into an interlude, as the party lost control of government, again to the NPA. Instead of a contest between COPE and the NPA, a faction of moderate councillors, including the mayor, split from COPE early in 2005 to form Vision Vancouver. Although the two parties (COPE and Vision) agreed to cooperate to run no more than eleven candidates, frequent public bickering between the candidates made a sham of their pledges. Competing for a common pool of voters, the left's 2002 majority of nine was reduced to a minority of five, with four Vision and one COPE councillor elected alongside an NPA mayor and slim rightist majority.

After their 2005 victory, the NPA reversed a number of their predecessors' key policies, notably those involving the promotion of arts and culture, local democracy, and low-cost housing. COPE was reduced from a party of thousands to a party of hundreds, while Vision Vancouver held its first congress in autumn of 2006 and began developing the infrastructure it would need to contest the 2008 election.[45]

Vancouver's Downsian Move to the Middle

According to Anthony Downs, parties tend to converge on the median voter to secure the support of a majority of an electorate with normally distributed preferences. The Non-Partisan Association has been situated at the same slightly-right-of-centre position for all of its history. The NPA boasts that its principles have not changed since 1937, and statements from its modern constitution only reinforce a commitment to conservative and free-market principles: Municipal levels of government should act for the benefit of the people and should allow every individual the freedom of worship, assembly, opportunity, and initiative; individuals have the right to enjoy the fruits of their labour and to own private property, and individual enterprise is generally preferable to government intervention; civic progress and stability can only be achieved by upholding the law, accepting social responsibilities, and accomplishing change by intelligent planning; and elected civic representatives should make decisions based on the viewpoint of many individuals and organizations and not be under obligation to policies or platforms of political parties.

With the NPA staying in the same position to the right of the voting median, election outcomes are for the most part left to other civic parties. TEAM is positioned slightly left of centre and closer to the median voter than the NPA. According to Downs' theory, this would mean they would win the support of a larger number of voters, and hence control of council. However, voters on TEAM's left flank were poached by COPE at the end of the 1970s and in the early eighties. This was less serious during the 1968–1974 period, when COPE proposed more radical-left policies. But between 1976 and 1984, COPE moved somewhat to that median centre, resulting in a period of coalition governments where no party obtained a majority in council. COPE maintained the same position after TEAM disappeared in the 1980s, leaving the static NPA to gain the support of centrist voters and win six straight majorities between 1986 and 2002. The split between COPE and Vision after 2005 allowed this prior reconfiguration to emerge again.

The 2002 election marked a radical departure for COPE. In selecting now Liberal senator Larry Campbell as their mayoral candidate and a number of like-minded candidates for council, COPE campaigned on a moderate platform, thus moving to occupy the place formerly held by the centrist TEAM. With the left united and the NPA unable to move closer to the median owing to internal divisions over Mayor Owen's harm reduction drug stance, COPE won a convincing victory. However, as explained below, the party system returned to the status quo ante in 2005, with Vision Vancouver replacing TEAM as the centrist party and a farther- (but not radical-) left COPE stripping off enough voter support to ensure an NPA victory with a small council majority.

While Larry Campbell and his moderate supporters on council were supportive of COPE's 2002 move to the centre, the strategy proved difficult to some influential

members of the party. Public opinion polls showed that the vast majority of Vancouver voters were also pleased with Campbell and his policies, but cracks within the party began to emerge soon after the 2002 election, with many COPE councillors unhappy with the new direction taken by Campbell and his chief advisor Geoff Meggs. Councillor Fred Bass went so far as to publicly denounce Campbell for destroying COPE, imploring the mayor at the annual general meeting on February 7, 2005, "I ask you, Larry Campbell, not to be a Trojan horse, to stop your factional war within COPE and work jointly with all COPE councillors to serve the people of Vancouver."

Vote splits on key policy issues were common between what were eventually deemed Campbell's "COPE Lites" (or "Diet COPE") and "COPE Classics," the latter of whom counted councillor Tim Louis, a long-time COPE member and former parks board commissionner. According to some observers, COPE Classics saw "Campbell compromising traditional COPE values … and have disagreed publicly with almost all the major public initiatives worthy of note—the ten-year transportation plan, the RAV [Richmond Airport-Vancouver] rapid transit line, now referred to as the Canada Line, the Olympics, the expansion of gambling." Very public infighting led the mayor and four councillors to form their own "Friends of Larry Campbell" caucus in December 2004 and its own Vision Vancouver party for the 2005 election, although by this time Campbell had decided not to run again for mayor.

The 2002 move to the centre brought electoral success, but it infuriated the leaders of the COPE Classic wing—to the point where they dismantled their party infrastructure and drove out their popular leader. By 2005, Vancouver's civic electoral scene looked much like it had in 1968. COPE returned to its more radical roots, as seen, for example, when Tim Louis called for city-owned brothels during the election campaign. Campbell was replaced as mayoral candidate by his former right-hand man Jim Green, who moved Vision Vancouver even closer to the middle by taking a pro-developer stance on a number of key issues and calling for increased police staffing.[46] He also had developer support. COPE agreed not to run a mayoral candidate against Green, and both parties agreed to run for only half of the ten available council positions so as to give the other side a chance, but this was ultimately not the same as running under the same brand. True to warnings, the Non-Partisan Association returned to power, despite being headed by a mayoral candidate, Sam Sullivan, who was being investigated by police for purchasing drugs for prostitutes while holding public office.

As shown in Table 2, the 2005 split and compromise with Vision Vancouver was reflective of a consistent strategy for COPE, with the 2002 effort to move a unified party to the centre standing out as an anomaly. In 1986, COPE and the centrist Civic New Democrats ran as two parties, but agreed to leave room for each other by running less than a full slate of candidates. The pattern was repeated in 1988 and 1990. With the demise of the Civic New Democrats in the early 1990s, leftist COPE was free to run a full slate of candidates in 1993, 1996, and 1999. Partial slates were run in order to make the most of "plumping" ability and because quality candidates were difficult to find. All three efforts resulted in massive losses for the NPA.In the 2008 civic election, there was some Vision-COPE cooperation on the number of candidates, with Vision running the mayoral candidate and eight candidates for council and COPE running just two for council. The result was a Vision majority. This was repeated in

Table 2: Council Candidates for Vancouver's Leftist Parties in the Modern Era

Year	COPE (centrist)	COPE (left)	Civic New Democrats	Vision Vancouver	Total (/11)
2011	—	3	—	8	11
2008	—	2	—	9	11
2005	—	5	—	6	11
2002	9	—	—	—	9
1999	—	6	—	—	6
1996	—	11	—	—	11
1993	—	11	—	—	11
1990	—	6	5	—	11
1988	—	5	5	—	10
1986	—	6	5	—	11
Total	9	55	15	23	100

2011, where Vision ran seven council candidates and faced no challenge on the left for mayor, while COPE ran just three for council, none of whom were elected.

There is a "Burnaby caveat" to Downs' notion: Vancouver's immediate eastern neighbour is the city of Burnaby, BC's third largest city with a population of just under a quarter-million. Throughout the 1950s and all the way through to the mid-eighties, Burnaby was under the political control of what became known as the (rightist) Burnaby Voters Association—a history of electoral success not too unlike Vancouver's NPA. The city first elected a centre-left Burnaby Citizens Association (BCA) municipal majority in 1987, under the mayoralty of popular former deputy fire chief Bill Copeland. Much like the later Larry Campbell in Vancouver, Copeland was not particularly political. He served as mayor with a centre-left majority until he was replaced by fellow BCA councillor Doug Drummond in 1996. Despite a split over succession, Drummond maintained the BCA council majority until turning the reins over to Derek Corrigan, who won majorities for the centre-left in 2002 and 2005, followed by complete council sweeps in 2008, 2011, and 2014. At the end of this term of office in 2018, the left will have controlled Burnaby for more than thirty years. The question raised by Burnaby is whether there are lessons here for COPE and Vision Vancouver regarding party organization and the importance of targeting the middle of the political spectrum.

PART 5: The Apparatus

Policy analysis in Canada's municipalities varies significantly from that undertaken at senior governmental levels mainly because of the three communities of actors involved: decision-makers, knowledge generators, and knowledge brokers. The first, decision-makers, operates under a much more debilitating set of institutional arrangements, while the other two are either less-populated or, at worst, non-existent. The capacity of local decision-makers to direct, receive and act upon sophisticated policy advice is often hampered by an antiquated approach to local governing in Canada. When coupled

with a paucity of knowledge-generating researchers and knowledge-brokering commissions, task forces or city-specific think tanks, the result is that un- or under-supervised public servants often drive and dominate the policy analysis process. While an engaged public service is not inherently problematic, at more senior levels of government this aspect of the policy analysis process is balanced by other institutional forms, broader policy communities, and a larger range of democratic input than is the norm in many Canadian cities. When we compare electoral and legislative arrangements in eight of Canada's largest cities, Vancouver is shown to be amongst the most lacking in democratic policy capacity, with its decision-making communities lagging behind other large cities such as Toronto and Montreal.[47] Indeed, even where local actor communities are adequately developed, local policy analysis still tends to be truncated and unsophisticated, and significant modernization is required before Vancouver will be able to demonstrate similar competence in the democratic domain.

How decision-makers, knowledge generators, and knowledge brokers interact to improve the rationality of the policy-making process by using increasingly sophisticated and integrated policy analysis techniques is central—as is, more importantly, how democratic engagement directs Canada's three largest communities. In this analysis, local mayors and councils are seen as the decision-makers; academics, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and research institutes as knowledge generators; and local commissions, task forces, or organized interest groups as knowledge brokers. However, this analytical framework is often mismatched with the local policy analysis process due to the underdeveloped nature, or even complete absence, of knowledge generators and knowledge brokers in many of the country's municipalities. That has often been the case in Vancouver: municipal commissions and task forces are extremely rare, and very few local-specific knowledge brokers exist outside of omnipresent local boards of trade and business-based service clubs. Where more issue-based local interest groups are sometimes powerful, they are seldom long-lived, well organized or based on more than emotive responses to local policy problems. In Vancouver, the political experience of the past decade does suggest some maturing on this front, but the city still ranks behind other Canadian cities.

On council-staff relations and the role of Chief Administrative Officers (CAO), David Siegel has referred to senior local staff as "leaders in the shadows." According to Siegel, senior staff (especially CAOs) have three very important roles:

- *Leading down*: managing and supervising the staff and their departments or sections (power through control).
- *Leading out*: dealing with local interests and media, negotiating, and being proactive with other governments (power through influence).
- *Leading up (the most difficult)*: advising council on policy matters, mediating, negotiating, and inspiring confidence (also power through influence).[48]

And these general roles in no way convey the magnitude and variety of responsibilities of a municipal official.[49] These various roles allow officials considerable capacity to influence policy, given that in Canadian cities like Vancouver, knowledge brokers are far less plentiful than in provincial or national policy-making arenas, and where they

do exist their focus is seldom concentrated on solving the problems of a single municipality. For example, Vancouver-based Better Environmentally Sound Transportation (BEST) often lobbies Vancouver City Council to promote "sustainable transportation and land-use planning, and pedestrian, cycling, and transit-oriented neighbourhoods," but as their efforts are aimed at all of western Canada, what lobbying efforts they do manage are more wide than deep. Knowledge generation about local problems is usually handled by local planning and policy staff, though on rare occasions external agencies do generate reports that are adopted at a local level. For example, while the City of Vancouver's homelessness action plan was generated using data gathered by internal social planning staff, the Greater Vancouver Regional District's homelessness plan is based on counts taken by consultants who were in turn commissioned by the non-profit Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia.

Due to the smaller knowledge generation and brokerage communities at the local governmental level, it is therefore more instructive to explore the state of decision-making communities in Canada's largest cities to place Vancouver's capacity in a broader comparative context. Capacity in this actor community cannot be taken for granted. For example, federal and provincial politicians set at least a portion of the governmental agenda and steer the work of generators and brokers by campaigning on platforms which they promise to implement if their party forms government. However, in local politics, which is often bereft of political parties, manifestos are virtually absent from local elections, and policy is made on a more ad hoc basis. Or, more disturbingly, even where local parties do exist, often their literature baldly states that elected party officials are under no "obligation to implement policies or platforms."[50] In the case of Vancouver, the elections of 2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, and 2014 have shown some more positive capacity developments on this front.

Lack of capacity in local decision-making actor communities may have been less of a problem in much of the 20th century, when local governments often, and accurately, characterized themselves as administrative arms of senior governments—or even "puppets on a shoestring."[51] But 21st century municipal governments in Canada, especially those in our largest urban settings, have not only gained more responsibilities through offloading, but also become increasingly financially independent of former provincial masters. For example, while the City of Vancouver's annual operating budget has risen to over $1 billion (to $1.2 billion for 2015, along with a $306 million capital expenditure plan), the provincial government contribution has dropped to a single-digit percent of total revenues.[52] This decline in the provincial contribution to the local authority has left the City of Vancouver to fend for itself on the revenue side, which has happened at a time of more policy-making freedom. Led by the province's major cities like Surrey and Burnaby, a new BC Mayors' Caucus took up the issue of limited local government financing and multi-level problem-solving in 2012, echoing a version of the earlier "on a shoestring" line, if no longer "puppets" of provincial masters. In an open letter to the feds and province, a steering committee of BC mayors sought a "bigger cut of the tax pie" to be able to meet their "front line" and expanding services. Their May 2012 case did not include seeking hikes of the local property tax, but rather a shift in the distribution of public revenue sources that stands currently at 50% federal, 42% provincial, and 8% local.[53]

In autumn 2014, the UBCM and the province fought over two different finance documents. The first was a report of the UBCM that sought new sources of revenue, while the second was an accounting firm's report to the province arguing that BC municipal compensation was out of line for senior managers. Each side sought to have its report considered, and each refused the other's while calling for their own concerns to be discussed first. It remains unresolved. Meanwhile, BC's new Auditor General for Local Government (AGLG) undertook a couple of early audits of select local governments and indicated that some issues existed regarding procurements. By 2015, the new local AG had imploded—fired and replaced for producing just three audits in two years, at a cost of $2.6 million—but a reconfigured office continues. [54]

Investigating Canadian local government decision-making communities would appear a necessary first step in understanding local policy capacity, and yet there is the difficulty of determining which institutional arrangements might hinder or facilitate such capacity. Unfortunately, there are few comparative examples on which to draw guidance. In the following assessment, Canadian cities are analyzed according to the capacity of local decision-makers to effectively fulfill their role in the democratic policy analysis process.[55] Eight categories of data were generated for eight of the largest municipalities in Canada: Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver. After comparing these cities, Vancouver's relative policy capacity is briefly considered, along with ways to improve it. Here, the capacity of residents to properly direct and oversee local policy analysis is arguably more important and forms the basis of the investigation.

The job of decision-makers during this process is to set directions for research and to supervise the development and implementation of appropriate policy options. There are two main stages in which to evaluate the capacity of local councils to effectively play this role: (a) during the electoral stage; and (b) during the legislative stage.

In most recognized democracies, there are three minimum standards that stand out in the electoral stage: (i) competitive party systems; (ii) a fair electoral formula; and (iii) limits to the amount that candidates can spend during elections. Non-partisan systems remove the commonly held view that electoral democracy—and democratic policy-making—ests on a competitive party system. Non-partisan elections are generally personality contests devoid of substantive policy discussions, as candidates do not fight under one common banner and have little capacity to develop policy platforms on which they collectively campaign or for which they can be held politically accountable. As such, once elected, candidates often have no common policy goals and are either free to forward their own private agendas, or, more commonly, to react to pressures from organized interests or civil servants. Simply stated, non-partisan politics in large cities undermines the ability of decision-makers to generate a coherent public agenda for elected officials. A recent survey found that 73% of those in the city of Vancouver—and 68% across the rest of the Metro region—felt "that developers and lobbyists had too much influence in their municipality." This perception that developers were "superior to city hall" was widespread.[56]

Non-partisanship tends to be associated with at-large versus constituency-based "ward" systems. At-large electoral arrangements—particularly when coupled with a

first-past-the-post system of vote counting—have had the effect of disenfranchising racial and ethnic minorities and lowering voter turnout. The end result is that the local governmental agenda often only includes the preferences of a small portion of residents within the municipality. Although at-large systems have been replaced by ward systems following court orders in a large number of US municipalities, and have been all but eradicated in Canada, they still exist in BC municipalities, such as Vancouver.[57]

As found at the national and provincial levels, unlimited election spending opens the door for wealthy groups and interests to have undue influence in setting the governmental agenda and often shuts out those with fewer resources. Election spending limits have been common practice for decades in Canadian federal and provincial elections, yet spending in some local electoral contests in Canada—and across *all* of BC—remains uncapped and, essentially, minimally monitored. This is problematic, for although local elections are often perceived as inexpensive competitions between local candidates, the reality is that elections in large Canadian cities can generate campaign spending in the millions. For example, the two major parties contesting the 2002 Vancouver civic elections spent almost $3 million on advertising and election-related spending.[58] In 2011, the centrist Vision spent $2.23 million, the right-of-centre NPA just under $2.6 million, and COPE, a little under $400,000. One single contributor—a local developer—gave the NPA just under $1 million.[59] In 2014, Vision spent $3.4 million and the NPA $2.2 million, and in the November 2014 civic election Vancouverites spent $5.6 million, including over $3.4 million for Vision Vancouver's majority on city council. The losing NPA spent $2.1 million.[60]

These high expenditures by, and contributions to, local parties all but eliminate independent candidates or less established parties, and they put enormous pressure on local politicians to raise funds, which badly biases the local electoral process. According to the 1991 Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, limiting election expenditure is essential to ensuring fairness in the electoral process.[61] In sum, free, fair, and competitive elections tend to generate mandates for governments, which guide their actions while they hold office.

During the legislative stage, decision-makers further refine and implement their agendas. It is also during this stage that they interact with existing knowledge generators and brokers and evaluate their advice. As refining and implementing efforts are contingent on the resources decision-makers have at their disposal, it is this factor on which to concentrate. Here five indices are assessed: (i) remuneration/incentives; (ii) pension benefits; (iii) staff supervisory loads; (iv) adequacy of staff support; and (v) adequacy of political/policy staff. How does Vancouver stack up?

One way of ensuring that politicians have enough time for their consultative and supervisory roles is to offer adequate incentives or remuneration. It has been long established that an adequate wage and benefit package is essential to keeping public servants committed to their jobs, with political officials being no exception. However, the Canadian local government tradition has been to elect a small number of politicians to part-time positions. Canadian local council positions have traditionally been under-rewarded for the work involved, and they frequently supplement their income by working other jobs. Rowat has noted this in Canada's cities:

> Especially in cities, where the job of councillor should be full-time or nearly so, the salaries are far too low to match the responsibilities of the job. An undesirable result of regarding the job as part-time, with only part-time pay, is that salaried professionals and other employees don't run for office…. Hence, the candidates are mainly self-employed professionals or businessmen … who are more likely to represent the interests of business and the developers than … the whole community…. Councillors' pay must be high enough not only to attract the most capable people … but also to help give the office the dignity and esteem that it deserves.[62]

A second potential problem is that even if financial compensation is adequate, municipal councillors may not see the value of making a long-term commitment to their positions. At federal and some provincial positions in Canada, for example, politicians are provided with additional benefits such as pensions after a number of years in service.

Like their federal and provincial counterparts, once in government local politicians rely substantially on the civil service to implement their election promises and for detailed policy advice. At the local governmental level, staff may be even more important due to the previously mentioned lack of external knowledge generators and brokers. One of the classic public administration problems is how political "principals" can compel their bureaucratic "agents" to implement a particular political agenda—especially in large polities. Much of the literature on political-bureaucratic relations focuses on the problems of civil servants hiding or controlling information in order to "budget maximize" or "bureau shape."

At the extreme end, the capacity of bureaucratic actors to significantly influence policy outcomes has been called "bureaucratic capture." Thomas Dye has described this phenomenon:

> Bureaucracies grow in size and gain in power with advances in technology, increases in information, and growth in the size and complexity of society…. The power of the bureaucracy is also enhanced when … policymaking responsibility … [is] deliberately shift[ed] … to the bureaucrats [by politicians]….The internal dynamics of bureaucratic governance also expands bureaucratic power. Bureaucracies regularly press for increases in their own size and budgets and for additions to their own regulatory authority…. Finally, bureaucratic expansionism is facilitated by the "incremental" nature of most policymaking.[63]

> Guy Peters, in *The Politics of Bureaucracy*, sees this a little more benignly:
> Bureaucratic institutions … do have some influence in the redistribution of powers away from elective institutions and in the direction of bureaucracy itself…. This capacity … of the permanent staff … essentially to determine the agenda of their political masters … becomes especially important in the presence of an agency ideology concerning the proper goals for the agency to pursue and the proper means of attaining those goals. Through the ability to control information, proposals for policy, and the knowledge concerning

Table 3: 2011 Population, Council Structure, and Partisanship in Eight Canadian Cities

City	Population (2011)	Mayor	Councilors	Non-Partisan	At-large	Unlimited Spending
Vancouver	603,502	Y	10	No	Yes	Yes
Montreal	1,649,519	Y	73	No	No	No
Calgary	1,096,833	Y	14	Yes	No	Yes
Toronto	2,615,060	Y	44	Yes	No	No
Edmonton	812,201	Y	13	Yes	No	Yes
Winnipeg	663,617	Y	15	Yes	No	No
Ottawa	883,391	Y	21	Yes	No	No
Halifax	390,096	Y	23	Yes	No	Yes

> feasibility, the bureaucracy is certainly capable of influencing agency policy, if not determining it. It requires an unusual politician to be able to overcome this type of control within an agency.[64]

This is a particular possibility with part-time politicians without much policy support—the case in many Canadian cities and certainly in Vancouver. Where federal and provincial politicians are provided with both the administrative and political staff necessary to aid their participation during the policy analysis process, this is often not the case in most Canadian local governments.

Local decision-makers' efforts to effectively generate and implement governmental agendas might be undermined by inferior institutional arrangements and under-resourcing. In addition to the population and council structure, Table 3 identifies whether each study city uses a partisan or non-partisan system, uses an at-large or constituency configuration, and imposes limits on election spending or not. Where all cities have a mayor and councillors, only Vancouver and Montreal have fully partisan systems. Where identifiable local parties may have existed for short periods in some cities (such as Winnipeg), the absence of party names on local ballots makes these affiliations difficult, if not impossible, to maintain and minimizes the benefit to the local voter as the main source of information.

Table 3 also indicates that Vancouver is the only major Canadian city to have an at-large electoral system. The subject of much debate and local plebiscites, the at-large system has remained in place despite concerted council efforts to replace it with a ward system as allowed under the Vancouver Charter. On October 16, 2004, 54% of voters rejected changing to a ward system while 46% voted "Yes," though only 22.4% of registered voters participated in the referendum. A local electoral commission struck to review citizen participation in the local decision-making process had recommended the plebiscite be held despite warnings that low turnout and skewed results would be the outcome of an off-election year vote. These problems were further compounded by the lack of any electoral spending limits. While other cities have used full at-large systems or multi-member wards in the past, all have abandoned what have shown to

Table 4: Mayoral Salaries 1950–2015 (2015 dollars)

City	2015	% Increase	2004	% Increase	1975	% Increase	1950
Toronto	$181,937	6%	$172,348	75%	$98,352	-27%	$135,207
Montreal	$178,905	14%	$157,186	74%	$90,420	0%	$90,138
Calgary	$216,380	46%	$148,309	56%	$95,179	76%	$54,082
Vancouver	$155,612	11%	$139,795	26%	$111,042	64%	$67,603
Edmonton	$176,145	30%	$135,184	42%	$95,179	n/a	n/a
Ottawa	$168,682	27%	$133,004	62%	$82,089	n/a	n/a
Winnipeg	$178,114	45%	$123,149	11%	$111,042	54%	$72,110
Halifax	$168,346	44%	$116,914	36%	$85,661	90%	$45,069
Avg.	$178,015	27%	$140,736	48%	$96,121	43%	$77,368

Table 5: Council Salaries 1950–2011 (2011 dollars)

City	2011	% Increase	2004	% Increase	1975	% Increase	1950
Toronto	$99,620	3%	$96,534	78%	$54,234	252%	$15,409
Montreal	n/a	n/a	$51,673	243%	$15,066	193%	$5,136
Calgary	$102,978	46%	$70,423	160%	$27,117	322%	$6,420
Vancouver	$63,610	9%	$58,485	62%	$36,156	135%	$15,409
Edmonton	$83,488	24%	$67,066	69%	$39,771	n/a	n/a
Ottawa	$92, 219	43%	$64,304	106%	$31,256	n/a	n/a
Winnipeg	$67, 190	7%	$62,381	216%	$19,756	28%	$15,409
Halifax	$72,357	61%	$44,885	49%	$30,130	487%	$5,136
Avg.	$83,066	29%	$64,470	103%	$31,6858	202%	$10,486

be discriminatory systems in favour of wards. Although discussions of proportional representation have occurred at the national and provincial levels—such as British Columbia's Citizens' Assembly proposals for a single transferable vote (STV) electoral system provincially—they have not been undertaken with any seriousness in Canada's major cities.

Finally, Table 3 shows that many cities now employ spending limits during local elections. Where all eight cities now compel candidates to disclose donors, only Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Ottawa capped the amount of money candidates may spend in their struggle to gain office. Following the long-established lead of their federal and provincial counterparts, these four cities also partially reimburse candidates for election expenses. Out of all cities, only Montreal avoids the pitfalls of non-partisanship, at-large systems, and unlimited election spending and, from an electoral perspective at least, can be considered the study city most likely to play an effective role in the policy analysis process.

Table 6: Pension Benefits

City	Pension	Terms
Vancouver	N	
Halifax	N	
Ottawa	N	
Winnipeg	Y	1.5% of best years at age 55 after thirty years of service
Edmonton	Y	6%
Toronto	Y	Same as regular city employees
Calgary	Y	2% final term's average earnings after age 60
Montreal	Y	2% of annual gross salary for every year of service at age 60 and after two years of service

Table 7: Supervisory Capacity

City	Total City Employees	Full-Time Councillors	Part-Time Councillors	Total Councillors	Ratio
Halifax	3,700	0	24	12	308:1
Montreal	29,000	53	20	63	460:1
Ottawa	12,000	22	0	22	545:1
Winnipeg	8,300	15	0	15	553:1
Edmonton	9,785	13	0	13	753:1
Calgary	11,295	14	0	14	941:1
Toronto	46,000	44	0	44	1045:1
Vancouver	9,000	0	10	5	1800:1

Regarding legislative aspects, local politicians need to be adequately resourced if they are going to be able to effectively develop policy, supervise staff, and interact with knowledge generators and knowledge brokers. Pay, benefits (like pensions), and staffing levels for local politicians in Canada's eight major cities all play important roles in determining the capacity of local decision-makers. In 2015, Vancouver's Vision councillors called for more funding to allow them to "keep up" with social media calls on their time.

Table 4 shows mayoral salaries (in 2015 dollars) for the eight cities, in 1950, 1975, 2004, and 2015. These figures reveal some clear patterns. First, while salaries for mayors were low in many of Canada's larger cities in 1950, they had climbed considerably by 2004 – averaging $116,000. By 2015, the average was up to $177,245. Second, salary strongly correlates with the population. Mayors from larger Canadian cities are paid more than mayors of somewhat smaller cities. It would appear that the financial incentives for remaining mayor are high in all eight cities. At least in terms of pay, the

Table 8: Political and Non-Political Council Support Staff (2004)

City	Total Employees	Total Council Support Staff	Political	Non-Political	Employees to-Support Staff Ratio	Employee-to-Political Support Staff Ratio
Winnipeg	8,300	41	39	2	202:1	213:1
Toronto	46,000	153	106	47	301:1	434:1
Montreal	29,000	56	32	24	518:1	906:1
Calgary	11,295	16	9	7	706:1	1255:1
Ottawa	12,000	14	6	8	857:1	2000:1
Vancouver	9,000	12	3	9	750:1	3000:1
Edmonton	9,785	10	2	8	979:1	4893:1
Halifax	3,700	7	0	7	529:1	n/a

incentive structure would seem to be conducive to hardworking, attentive and full-time mayors.

As demonstrated in Table 5, councillors have less incentive than mayors to perform as full-time politicians. Although salaries have dramatically increased in most cities since 1950, they are still much lower than mayoral salaries. For example, at just under $63,610, the salary for a Vancouver city councillor is just $12,000 higher than the salary of the average full-time worker in the city.

As shown in Table 6, only three cities do not offer pensions to local council members: Vancouver, Halifax, and Ottawa. The other cities offer a variety of schemes of variable benefit. Again, pension plans would be expected to provide politicians with some incentive to pursue their posts over the long term and make extra efforts to implement election promises while holding office. In terms of overall legislative stage arrangements, it would appear that Toronto, Edmonton, and Calgary are at least slightly ahead of other cities in this regard.

Table 7 describes the supervisory capacity of councils in each of the eight study cities. Here the number of councillors is compared to the number of city employees. In building the ratio, part-time councillors are counted as half a full-time councillor. Thus a part-time councillor in Halifax is deemed to have half the workload of a full-time councillor in Ottawa.

Table 8 describes the number of support staff available to local councils. Non-political support staff are regular city employees who work in an administrative capacity for the mayor or council, such as secretaries and receptionists. Political support staff are those appointed by mayors or councillors, such as political advisors or constituency office workers. A ratio has been devised for both categories by dividing the number of employees by the combined staff total for each city. Here Winnipeg has the best support staff-to-employee ratio (202:1), while Edmonton's is the worst (979:1). This means that councillors in Edmonton will most likely have the most administrative and public correspondence tasks and the least political support. The table also shows that with the exception of Halifax, all cities have some political staff to advise elected officials. In

Table 9: Policy Analysis Friendly City Rankings

City	Score	Non-Partisan Elections	At-Large System	Unlimited Election Spending	Below Salary Median	No Pension	Below Supervisory Capacity Median	Below Support Staff Median	Political Support Staff Median
Montreal	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Toronto	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Winnipeg	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Halifax	4	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
Ottawa	4	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Calgary	4	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0
Edmonton	5	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1
Vancouver	7	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

terms of the ability to provide a counter to the agendas of regular city staff, Winnipeg's institutional arrangements allow local decision-makers to play a more complete role in the policy analysis process, while Edmonton offers the least.

In comparing the capacity of local decision-makers to be effective during the policy analysis process in eight major Canadian cities, the intention is only to identify whether cities are more or less likely to be so.

Table 9 offers a ranking of each city based on an indicator which combines scores from the previously explained eight factors. Where binary scores are entered "0/1," other indicators have been reduced into "above or below median" scores. Under this scheme, Montreal ranks highest in policy capacity, while Vancouver ranks lowest in terms of how able decision-makers are to meaningfully participate in policy analysis. Montreal would appear to have the set of institutions most conducive to elected politicians directing and supervising policy analysis in their city, with the only real problem being below-median council salaries. With its at-large electoral system, unlimited election spending, low council salaries, no pensions, and low number of councillors and support staff, Vancouver City Council earns the least policy-capable democratic ranking.

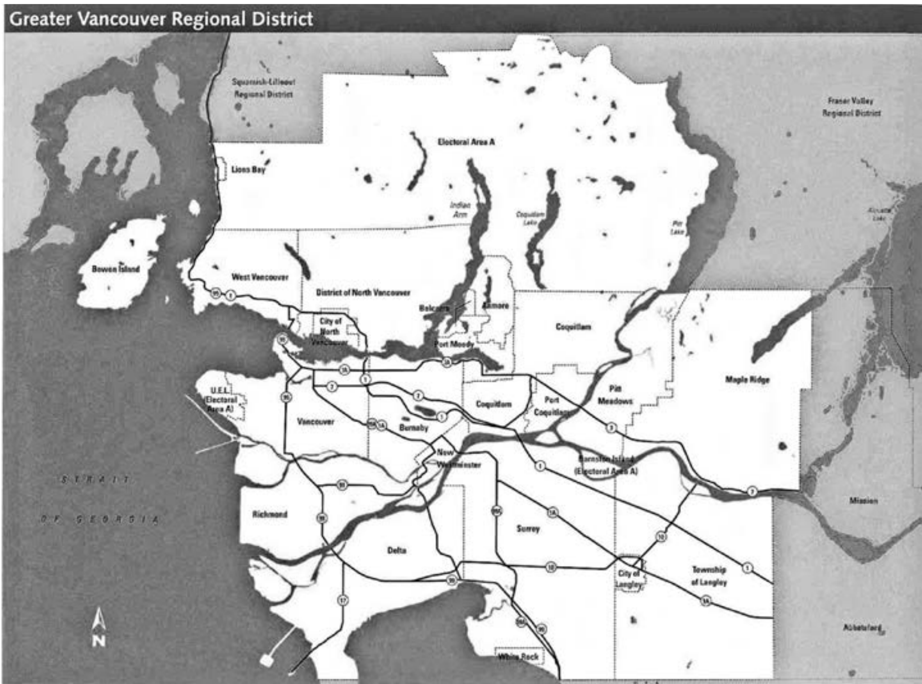
Here local decision-makers are not as likely to propose a government agenda or to supervise staff. Overall it would appear that some cities are more favourably suited to democratic policy analysis and direction than others, but also that all need to examine the institutions that are supposed to enable local decision-makers to effectively participate in the policy analysis process.

The better prepared and resourced Montreal politicians are less likely to rely on city staff alone for direction, and they can challenge the policy advice of internal actors by seeking input from external knowledge generators and knowledge brokers. If these other policy community actors are scarce, Montreal city council can use local funds to help establish and enable these communities in order to facilitate better public policy analysis. It is arguable that the other cities are more, and some cases like Vancouver much more, reliant on internal staff for policy direction and generation. Not only might this lead to less fully developed policy analysis, but in the worst cases, local politicians may be captured by their own public servants.

This lack of capacity to effectively participate and stimulate the local policy analysis process would appear to be problematic in Vancouver, in an era where cities are gaining more powers and more independence from senior levels of government.

Part 6: Urban and Regional Planning

In terms of planning, the first thing to say about Vancouver is that British Columbia's major metropolitan region is unlike the other city regions of Canada. Despite being Canada's thirdlargest city-region, Greater Vancouver is the essential "odd one out" to the Canadian re-metropolitanization trend of "bigger is better." Whether in Halifax, Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, Winnipeg, Calgary, or Edmonton, and—to a lesser extent— even Montreal, the Canadian experience is toward a more amalgamated, megacity model. In Greater Vancouver, this Canadian trend has yet to take hold; indeed it is generally resisted. Metropolitan Vancouver remains "*l'exception canadienne métropolitaine.*"[65]



Source: GVRD and Tsawaasen First Nation

With BC's population soon to be just under 4.8 million people, the Greater Vancouver Region contains a little over half (51.3%) of the provincial population and a majority (six of nine) of the largest local authorities in the province.

Retrospective

The history of planning in metropolitan Vancouver is both long and short, with a variety of regional authorities created, dating from near the beginning of the 20th century. Initially, these represented ad hoc (and often single-purpose) responses to a number of local and regional service dilemmas. Almost without exception, the early regionalization experiences were premised on locally perceived necessity. Actual "regional planning" dates from 1911, just twenty-five years after the City of Vancouver's founding, when Vancouver formed the Burrard Peninsula Joint Sewerage Committee with its Point Grey, South Vancouver, and Burnaby municipal neighbours. The committee funded a study which recommended "an ongoing co-operative response," and by 1914 it had convinced the provincial government to pass legislation creating a Joint Sewerage and Drainage Board. The board still exists today as a distinct legal entity within Metro Vancouver. Subsequent local action resulted in a regional Water District being created in 1926, which also remains to this day. This was followed by the establishment of four area health/hospital boards between 1936 and 1948.[66] Modern regional planning structures are best dated from after the Second World War. In 1948 – a year of significant flooding in the Vancouver-centred Lower Mainland/Fraser

River Valley—amendments to the Municipal Act were passed, allowing contiguous local authorities in a metropolitan region to develop a joint planning capacity. As a result, the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board (LMRPB) was formed that year. It covered the whole physical region—from Vancouver, up the Fraser Valley to the mountains and Hope. In some ways this was a recognition—and extension—of a voluntary planning association created in 1937 by Vancouver, Burnaby, Port Moody, Coquitlam, North and West Vancouver.[67]

Tennant and Zirnhelt have persuasively argued that the proliferation and success of these early joint boards and authorities led the way to provincial consideration of more broadly-based regional solutions to urban development problems, particularly with regard to their application in metropolitan Vancouver.[68] The authors called this process of planning reform "gentle imposition" by the province. The thinking of W. A. C. Bennett's Social Credit provincial government (first elected in 1952) was obviously affected by the early experience—and publicity—of metropolitan government reform in Toronto in 1954. As a result, community and regional planning provisions were added to the Municipal Act in 1957, empowering the minister to direct adjacent municipalities in "metropolitan areas" to establish a joint committee "to study and report on such matters of an inter-municipal nature as shall be set out by the minister." The already established LMRPB was able to undertake such a process, leading to an official regional plan for the whole of British Columbia's Lower Mainland by the mid 1960s. "Chance and Challenge," the "official regional plan," was approved in August 1966, but intra-regional tensions served to undermine it: as the LMRPB was moving toward this success, the provincial government, perhaps feeling threatened by a jurisdiction representing half the province's population, determined that administrative and political diffusion was a more appropriate response. Accordingly, a regional district system for the entire province was created between 1965 and 1967. As stated by then municipal affairs minister Dan Campbell, the British Columbia government's intention was clear: "Regional districts are not conceived of as a fourth level of government, but as a functional rather than a political amalgamation."[69]

As a result, the LMRPB was divided into four separate planning regions. Within the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), as with all regional districts in the new system, the functions given by the province were of two types:

> (i) *mandated functions,* which included general planning for the region as well as responsibility for governing the hospital district. In Greater Vancouver, mandated functions also included Water Board and Sewage and Drainage District responsibilities. (ii) *voluntary functions*, which were established by letters patent. They included seventy-eight functions from A to W (from ambulance and animal control to unsightly premises and weed control), and each district could choose the function it was to perform.

In the 1970s, the new Greater Vancouver Regional District successfully completed its first Livable Region Plan (LRP). It set out growth planning ideas such as regional town centres and the preservation of agricultural and green space, which guided regional development into the 1980s.[70] In 1983, a direct provincial legislative intervention removed the planning authority from regional districts due to a land-use dispute between

the GVRD and the province.[71] Strong local support for regional thinking remained, however, and the GVRD's regional planning continued under its renamed "Development Services." By the 1990s, significant new growth pressures were confronting the region. In metropolitan Vancouver and British Columbia, the response to growth management problems and issues of metropolitan democracy was to seek to build on the successes of prior regional agreements and governing arrangements. In 1995, under a new NDP provincial government, additional planning legislation was passed with the Growth Strategies Act. This legislation required municipalities to plan regionally and allowed the province to establish mediative processes when local-regional agreement was not forthcoming. The Act was the result of extensive provincial-municipal consultations, which included comparisons with other planning and governance models.

In 1995, the Greater Vancouver Regional District (with recently enlarged boundaries that are generally equivalent to the Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area) arrived at the end point of a five-year-long local-regional process of consultation and discussion. This led to the establishment of a new Livable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP), which was approved by the provincial government in early 1996.

Both the new British Columbia provincial planning legislation and the GVRD's planning process spoke directly to arguments about metropolitan governance, local-regional-provincial intergovernmental relations, and growth management reform. They also spoke about the extent of "senior governmental interest or capacity"[72] to address major urban issues and suggested that a "consensual model," as exemplified by Greater Vancouver, was "inherently weak" and suffered from a "lack of mandate," a lack of representation, and "an inability to achieve consensus on matters of specific policy."[73] The Greater Vancouver and British Columbia experience of the early/mid 1990s suggested an alternative to the metropolitan restructuring being pursued in other Canadian jurisdictions—with metropolitan Toronto's megacity and the Greater Toronto Area, the new Greater Ottawa-Gatineau metropolitan area, and a new metropolitan Halifax, among others. The British Columbia experience also supported a notion of metropolitan governance as an alternative to metropolitan government and the ideas of "bigger is better."

The other major planning change in the latter half of the 1990s was the decision of Glen Clark's NDP provincial government to "gift" transportation planning responsibility to the Vancouver region. The link between land-use and transportation planning had long been sought locally and within Greater Vancouver. Rather than place such responsibility with the regional district, the province created a new regional entity: TransLink. Like the Chinese warning to be careful what you wish for, TransLink's history has been more fraught with tensions—largely due to provincial interference. After having bestowed the regional transportation body with authority, the province stepped in with various over-rides of their decisions: One early example was the preference of the regional agency for light rail (due to cost) over any extension of its 1980s Skytrain technology. But when the province offered funding for a second "Millennium Line," Premier Glen Clark announced it would be a Skytrain, as he had contracted with Bombardier to set up an assembly shop in the Metro area as part of the deal.

Then after the 2001 election of the Gordon Campbell Liberals, the regional body selected the "Evergreen Line" extension to the north-east as its next priority in recognition

of the Tri Cities accepting their share of regional growth. The second-term Liberals, thinking of 2010 Olympic legacies—and a federal pot of $400 million— cancelled the the region's prioritization in favour of a Richmond Airport-Vancouver (RAV) line (now called the Canada Line), which was initially to be tunnelled, although this was later cancelled due to costs. On three occasions, TransLink mayors voted on the issue: the first two times they rejected the provincial decision. With considerable senior pressure, the RAV line passed—as a more controversial public-private partnership (P3). The minister of transportation called the TransLink board "dysfunctional" and set up a "study" to prove his view. When it did, the minister, Kevin Falcon, had new legislation passed: the South Coast Regional Transportation Authority Act. This legislation reduced the powers of local mayors, with administration largely left to an appointed board.

The one remnant of local input following the reform was a Mayors' Council, with the responsibility for overall budget approval, but no say on operations. The results have been interesting. The RAV decision produced lawsuits by local business owners seeking compensation, yet the line was ultimately completed and has proved very popular. However, the even less accountable TransLink board has had nothing but problems getting their budgets approved by the Mayors' Council—particularly when it involves the possibility of doing so via the local property tax.[74] That was made even more difficult by the province announcing that the Evergreen Line—to be built over the middle years of this decade—would also be Skytrain technology (again over light rail), and that the locals would need to provide their share of the costs. Continuing local balking at this has led to major funding messes, as TransLink seeks both new and rebuilt infrastructure (especially bridges).[75]

In July 2015, the results of the provincially-mandated Metro plebiscite were announced, for which voters were asked to pronounce on a mayors' plan for implementing a regional sales tax of 0.5% to go towards $7.5 billion in new revenue over the forthcoming decade. As noted above, despite major public spending for a Yes vote (around $7 million), the plebiscite resulted in a 52% victory for the No.

Contemporary Greater Vancouver: Challenges Not Yet Met

Simply put, much of the early success of regional planning in British Columbia was tied to reforms carried out by local governing structures. Whether locally inspired before World Wars One and Two, in the 1940s with the provision allowing for adjacent municipalities to join together to establish regional planning, through the legislation of a first Municipal Act and provisions for official regional plans in the 1950s, or the creation of regional districts themselves in the 1960s, the first three decades of regional planning in British Columbia were closely linked to structural and governance reforms.

And it worked! It worked so well that regional planning did either commence or continue in the 1960s and 1970s, and perhaps more importantly, often continued (certainly in Greater Vancouver), albeit under a different guise, even when legally abolished in a provincial pique in the 1980s.[76] It did so largely because of a number of governance factors: As Richard and Susan Tindal have noted, "Municipal government reform in British Columbia ... resulted in one of the most imaginative and flexible governing arrangements found anywhere in Canada. The regional structure has provided for a variety of services to be delivered by the regional authority, yet while avoiding the

bureaucratic build-up and duplication often associated with full-blown two-tier regional governments."[77] Former British Columbia municipal affairs minister Dan Campbell contended that regional districts were not regional governments, preferring a regional service delivery definition instead. Yet others, such as Donald Higgins, following the "If it walks and quacks like a duck" test, concluded that regional districts had indeed become regional governments.[78] Bob Bish came to the same conclusion more recently, but noted that the regional system in British Columbia has allowed "the division of responsibility ... between municipalities and the regional government [to be] made by the municipalities themselves."[79] These factors—namely, both local recognition of the value of particular regional solutions, as well as, often, local initiation of them—produced a positive regional experience of planning, with one success often following from the last. It is a view largely shared by Andrew Sancton, even in the context of major urban regions:

> Can a large city-region contain a number of municipalities, establish a regional-local government institution and avoid the pitfalls of two-tier municipal government? This is the biggest structural question facing urban government today.... All ... Canadian city-regions require an institution similar to the GVRD [Greater Vancouver Regional District]: one that is comprehensive in territory and flexible in function. Such institutions do not require large bureaucracies. In fact, they will probably work best if they have no operational responsibilities at all. Their aim should be to provide a forum where regional issues can be discussed, to act as a catalyst for the creation of inter-municipal agreements and special purpose bodies and to enact planning documents with sufficient legal status to coerce municipalities into adhering to broad strategic objectives for the use of land.[80]

The question here is not where metropolitan Vancouver has been, however, but where Greater Vancouver is going. The much less certain future of British Columbia's largest regional structures, as they take on more and more responsibilities, lies on the bedrock of what has been largely a positive, locally inspired policy, governance, and intergovernmental experience. Yet without rejecting the success represented by the past half-century of regional planning and governance in British Columbia, it is nonetheless time to raise serious questions about whether that achievement can endure far into the twenty-first century without democratic reforms.

Citizens in the GVRD are increasingly wondering who is responsible for making more important and more expensive decisions—on transportation, infrastructure, almost certainly on taxation, and maybe on policing and beyond—and have begun to ask questions about who is in charge. Perhaps this is illustrated nowhere more obviously than in the recent past with Greater Vancouver's South Coast BC Transportation Authority.

In creating TransLink, the province recognized that the needs of the Vancouver region were different from those of all other regions in the province. In terms of efficiency and accountability, moving control over transit to a regional body continued the trend of decentralization begun in British Columbia in 1997. However, in terms of accountability, TransLink has created new problems: Initially, it more fully empowered

indirectly elected officials who were two steps removed from their constituents. When the GVRD was primarily a forum for locally elected mayors and councillors to discuss and make voluntary agreements on issues such as regional growth, there was little need for them to be directly elected. But when these same officials are vested with the power to make decisions over taxation and service provision with little provincial supervision, a stronger argument can be made for more accountability. With regional budgets now into the billions of dollars, anything less is politically unsustainable.

Instead, the province reduced accountability even further with its current corporate board structure. In the spring of 2012, they seem to have noted this, adding two regional mayors to the appointed corporate board. Critics argue this is more a cooptation exercise than a reinjection of local democracy. The accountability gap has become a ravine.

The regional plans (the LRSP and its successors such as the Sustainable Region Initiative) were clearly agreed and set out. However, the combination of senior governmental dollars and overt political pressure resulted in regional decisions being over-ridden. The principles of the Community Charter Act emphasized local autonomy. Yet the reality is that its language hides as much as it illuminates.

In sum, BC's regional district system has worked admirably as a planning structure for much of its first fifty years, and it may well continue to provide a highly successful and flexible model of decision-making for another half-century in most regional districts. In metropolitan Vancouver, however, the crunch has come. Here regional planning authorities such as TransLink increasingly lack the mandate to take regional decisions without appropriate mechanisms of political accountability. The province of British Columbia may be forced to recognize that democratic concerns are now central. Whatever the back-breaking straw—perhaps the June 2015 No vote on transit spending - the regional camel in metropolitan Vancouver will be under ever greater structural pressure and citizen scrutiny over its governance.

The most obvious "What next?" in terms of improving accountability for Greater Vancouver—the only regional district with over five hundred thousand residents, and the only region with multiple municipalities counting over one hundred thousand—is democratic electoral reforms. That might imply a shift to a megacity or to some new or other form of directly elected Metro Vancouver authority. This has already been suggested by Smith and Stewart. In spring 1998, a report by the ministry of municipal affairs, *Making Local Accountability Work in British Columbia*, recommended "the creation of a Greater Vancouver Authority, with a directly elected Greater Vancouver Assembly and a regional mayor elected across the whole region." The report noted that "with ... eleven municipal units of 50,000 and more [and] more than half of these at or over 100,000 population size, a shift to direct elections would appreciably enhance local/regional accountability."[81] After Margaret Thatcher's Streamlining the Cities annihilation of the Greater London Council (GLC) and six other metropolitan county councils (*e.g.*. Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, etc.), Greater London has since had forms of regional authority re-established, with New Labour's creation of the Greater London Authority (GLA). Part of the rationale was to provide a broader regional structure to compete more effectively internationally, and the reforms suggest both regional and international benefits (*i.e.*,"Who represents London?" over "Who does what?"). For

Greater Vancouver, the international dimensions of regional governance reform would be a significant collateral benefit.

Other democratic reforms could be envisaged for Greater Vancouver as well: They could include direct elections, which could in turn accompany broader electoral system changes such as some form of proportional representation; they could include electoral spending limit reforms; and they could involve a clearer disentangling of who does what. Bill 31, the Local Government Statutes Amendment Act (1998), recognized local government as an independent, responsible, and accountable order of government. However, subsequent unilateral actions by the province, including general cuts to municipal grants and requiring Skytrain technology in Greater Vancouver, suggested a continued governmental paternalism, instead of the legislative efforts needed to make local governments both more independent and accountable in British Columbia.

Finally, it is arguable that with a clearer link to its regional citizenry, metropolitan Vancouver (either in its current makeup or broadened to TransLink's definition of South Coast BC), might be better able to resist senior governmental pressures and blandishments—at least where these threats and inducements run counter to policies determined by, and for, the region itself.[82] In the past, one of the great successes of local-regional interests and institutions in the Lower Mainland has been the ability to anticipate and recognize the need for change. Failure to do so now—or in its short-to-intermediate-term future—may threaten the prospects for another fifty years of regional planning success in Greater Vancouver—ironically, just as the British Columbia regional district model is being held up as a "best case" for metropolitan governance.

PART 7: The City, Diversity, and Civil Society

The face of Vancouver has changed dramatically as a result of the influx of new immigrants. At the 1911 census, the City of Vancouver was predominantly British at 74%. Thirty years after that, in the 1941 Census, only 6% were reported as visible minorities—mainly Chinese and Japanese. By 1961, with post-war immigration, particularly from southern and eastern Europe, the British mix was still 60% for both the city and the metropolitan region. This increased to 71% if Canadians of recent British descent were added, but by 1981 actual British ethnic origins had dropped to 40% (53% for the Metro region if Canadians of British origin were counted). By 2011, "British-ness" was no longer predominant: fifty years (1961–2011) on from the 1961 shift, new minorities now outnumbered original British settlers. Indeed over half of the Vancouver public school system currently offers English as a second language, reflecting the new ethnic mix. While slower to adapt, the metro Vancouver suburbs, both inner and outer, had by 2011 come to reflect this new, more multi-ethnic, multicultural mix as well.

Most significantly, after almost a century of often official racism—directed variously at the Chinese, Japanese, South Asians, and others—more recently Vancouver has come to embrace its diversity as a strength and source of celebration. That has more slowly begun to be reflected in the politics of the city and the region—locally, provincially, and federally.

Despite the fact that Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto account for 34% of Canada's total population, the three city-regions include 64% of all recent immigrants to the country.[83] This should come to be reflected in political representation, but much like

moving toward broader gender parity, this political change has been more drawn out.

On gender, for example, looking across the Vancouver city-region during the first decade of the 21st century, women accounted for 32.48% of members on city councils in 2002 and 35.67% in 2005 – a remarkably stable figure, with an average of 34.5% toward the end of the 1990s.[84]

In the 21st century, the ethnic makeup of metro Vancouver was as follows:

British Origin	35.9%
Southeast/East Asian	27.88%
Canadian/American	14.15%
Western European	13.78%
Eastern European	10.45%
South Asian	9.94%
Southern European	8.22%
French	6.58%
Northern European	5,89%
Aboriginal	2.82%
All other groupings	under 1.9%[85]

When these figures are compared to representation on Vancouver City Council, we find that four of the eleven (including the mayor) are women (36.4%) and three are Chinese (27.3%). In the BC legislature, there are only twenty-seven women members out of the eighty-five representatives (31.8%). And of BC's current MPs in Ottawa, twelve of thirty-six are women (33.3%) – higher than the Canadian ratio (76 of 308, 24.7%), but nowhere near parity or reflective of the population. Minorities are similarly under-represented in our senior assemblies.

One area where both urban and metropolitan Vancouver's changing makeup has been reflected is in its civil society. From immigrant settlement groups such as MOSAIC and SUCCESS, to environmental organizations like Western Canada Wilderness, West Coast Environmental Law, Greenpeace, and the other local members of the 640-group BC Environmental Network, to socially active entities such as the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU), the Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA), Occupy Vancouver, End Legislated Poverty, the Pivot Legal Society, the Legal Education Action Fund (LEAF), the BC Civil Liberties Association, and a broad range of other social and political NGOs such as the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), Think City, and the like, a growing pattern of significant community engagement has emerged. First Nations have also become major players across this range of local social, environmental, and political matters. That dimension—in BC and the Vancouver city-region—will only expand.

These local social, environmental, and political organizations have contributed to a long list of regional debates: over BC's missing women inquiry; police accountability and oversight; pipelines, tankers, and other environmental issues; transportation, public transit, the protection of urban green spaces and agricultural land, and other development issues; poverty, homelessness, and harm reduction initiatives as an alternative to drug wars; immigrant settlement and Aboriginal justice; and matters

related to regional livability and affordability. Each group has contributed to a broadened and more progressive local-regional discourse. Each represents a case study on the impact of civic social movements. And all reflect a local social and political environment which is valued in the Vancouver region.

The other groups which impact local decision-making include business organizations like the Vancouver Board of Trade and the BC Business Council, as well as local entrepreneurs and developers. This is best reflected in the contributions of developers and businesses to civic election contests: in the November 2011 municipal elections, one contributor, a developer, gave just under $1 million to the rightist Non-Partisan Association. BC remains the most unregulated jurisdiction in Canada on matters of local election financing. In 2014, the same contributor gave the largest amount—to the opposition NPA.

In recent years—since 2002—there has been more capacity on the political centre-left/centre in Vancouver to match, and even outspend, the NPA. From the latter 1930s, the NPA were most successful in Vancouver politics as a by-product of being able to raise and spend considerably more money than their competitors. They also had the advantage of much higher turnout amongst their upper- and middle-class supporters. Some of these in-built advantages began to wane in the 2002 municipal election, however, as near-matching election money was spent by their rivals, and voter turnout—particularly in less well-off parts of the city—increased. Due to the existence of local political parties, Vancouver's voter turnout has remained above the regional or provincial average, at around 34–35%. Community politics, reflecting the health of social capital *and* the continuing role of municipal parties, have helped overcome a pattern of one-party dominance which defined Vancouver for much of the last seventy-five years. In 2014, Vancouver's turnout was 44% – up a further 10%.

PART 8: Vancouver: A Global City?

While Vancouver is an international city of some importance, it does not have a comprehensive strategy by which to coordinate its various promotional efforts or form links with other communities across the globe. The goal of a "global Vancouver" might be achievable—where Vancouver turns from being a "globalized" city beset by the forces of globalization into a pro-active "globalist" city that makes its own mark on the world. Witness Vancouver's goal of becoming the "greenest city in the world" by 2020," for example. But there is much to be done. For starters, there is still the question of "what *is* Vancouver?" From being Canada's third largest city, in 2016 it is Canada's eighth, due largely to having avoided the national trend of megacity-ing itself. For relatively little cost, Vancouver (both the city and the city-region) could better position itself to take advantage of international networks and events, while at the same time building important links within the city-region itself. As noted above, the shifting ethnic makeup of the region offers a basis for such an effort. Actions could include renewing links with existing twinned cities, expanding the ties to new partners reflective of Vancouver's changing international makeup, providing a cohesive policy umbrella for a range of regionally based international endeavours, and creating a Global Vancouver capacity to coordinate such activities.

Vancouver has long been, and continues to be, an innovative international city. Past

councils have supported the peace movement, sponsored international boycotts of unjust companies, and twinned with various cities—including, since 1944, Odessa from the former Soviet Union. These past positions have been strengthened by more recent efforts to: (a) host a sustainable Winter Olympics; (b) become the first North American city to implement safe injection sites; (c) contribute to a strategy to create a livable region; (d) formally support and promote world peace; (e) provide a model of democratic reform; and (f) achieve the Greenest City on Earth moniker by 2020.

Despite its early legacy and more recent efforts, a coordinated approach to promoting Vancouver internationally has largely fallen by the wayside in recent years. This insular position has been detrimental for two reasons: first, it keeps Vancouver from sharing what it has learned with the world; and second, it does not maximize Vancouver's potential to promote itself as a place with a positive "global city" discourse.

Globalized versus Globalist Cities

Much of the literature on world cities maintains that cities are globalized in that they are largely affected *by* global forces. In this view, cities are held hostage to external economic forces that shape civic policy. However, some have suggested an alternative notion of "globalist" cities, where cities can develop proactive strategies in which they become more significant, less reactive, players in the world on issues such as peace; aid and development; social, environmental and economic sustainability; and good democratic governance. Successful global cities become "eager beavers."

Vancouver used to pursue a more globalist position. Although there had been a variety of efforts to reach out internationally, much of Vancouver's early international activity has been tied to its municipal twinning. Vancouver has five formal city twins: Odessa (1944), Yokohama (1965), Edinburgh (1978), Guangzhou (1985), and Los Angeles (1986). Odessa's partnership was developed during the Second World War, owing to its status as an Allied port city and through a connection with Vancouver's Jewish community. Edinburgh was added because of Vancouver's's Scottish community. Early 1980s mayor Mike Harcourt added Guangzhou because of the significant Cantonese population in Vancouver and a desire to connect Vancouver with the opening Chinese economy. Harcourt's Los Angeles initiative was tied to the branding of Vancouver's film industry as Hollywood North. The city has not added any new municipal twins for more than a quarter century. Neighbouring Seattle has more than twenty.

Activity, policy, and institutional support around these global links have varied considerably from particular mayors and councils. Mike Harcourt was activist, and he worked to develop these networks as important parts of Vancouver's positioning as Canada's Pacific gateway and a global portal. Mayor Gordon Campbell dismantled much of the modest institutional and financial support for these activities developed under Harcourt, but then pushed the Pacific gateway theme—for both the city and province—during his decade as BC premier (2001–2011). Vancouver was named a United Nations Messenger of Peace city in the early 1990s, but these international links decayed under mayors Gordon Campbell and Phillip Owen, who preferred more passive approaches that under-utilized these global connections.

Subsequent mayors Larry Campbell (2002–2005), Sam Sullivan (2005–2008), and

Gregor Robertson (2008–present) focused more on local issues, with international efforts directed at the hosting of the 2010 Winter Olympics. The current city administration's focus on making Vancouver the greenest city on the planet by 2020 places urban discourse on a new, more globalist trajectory.

What might Vancouver do to re-invigorate its internationalism? There are at least three initiatives possible:

1. *Initiate a "Global Vancouver" Vision Statement*
   This can address anything from the city's pro-Olympics stance to its aim of becoming the greenest city in the world within a decade. It could be a positive statement about why council might look at Brazilian models of participatory city budgeting or issue statements promoting peace over war. It could also tie into explaining why Frankfurt and other centres have provided an alternative to the failed war on drugs, and why Vancouver is the first city in North America to try a health-defined model built on four pillars, including harm reduction. Such a Global Vancouver strategy could serve as an umbrella under which a number of initiatives often perceived as idiosyncratic could be given some coherence. The branding mantra could be "Global Vancouver."
2. *Expand Vancouver's municipal twinnings*
   There are several large communities in Vancouver which are not reflected in the city's global municipal twinnings: East Indian, Latin American, German, Italian, and Korean all provide examples. Adding urban linkages to some of these communities abroad, in addition to an African twin, would reflect real globalist responses locally and internationally. It would also engage communities within Vancouver—and re-engage ones from existing twin cities—with a re-invigorated municipal international program. With a shift from five to ten international twins, each city councillor could be allocated responsibility for a city. Each councillor would work with a local twin committee made up of ethnic representatives, the business community, arts and cultural representatives, and so on. The mayor would have overall responsibility and a range of formal duties for the new Global Vancouver program. Council might consider an additional five possible new twins which reflect the changing face of Vancouver. Some of these might include:
   a. Mumbai (Bombay), India
   b. Porto Alegre, Brazil
   c. Santiago or Valparaiso, Chile
   d. Rosario, Argentina
   e. Frankfurt, Hamburg, or another major German city
   f. Milan or Florence, Italy
   g. A city in South Africa perhaps, or elsewhere in Africa

   The criticism that engaging in such international efforts is "not the work of a municipality" and a "waste of taxpayers' dollars" can be countered by basing much of the activity within the city's actual communities. This is the approach

used in Seattle. Under a city bylaw, the funding for these twins and much of the activity around them is very limited—approximately $1,500 each, in addition to a small office of international affairs within the mayor's office.

3. *Develop a Global Vancouver Office (GVO).*
   The GVO would represent a one-stop location for all of Vancouver's international activities. Duties would include things like Olympic or Greenest City coordination, arranging study trips to harm reduction cities such as Zurich and Frankfurt, exploring alternative models for transit, governance, and other domains, and providing a location where mayor-led "Team Vancouver" trade, education, and cultural exchanges would be coordinated. The office would liaise with other city departments such as the city clerk (on protocol and the like), and with external organizations and associations. It would also be Vancouver's hub for connecting to the peace and environmental movements in cities around the world.

Providing a small institutional base composed of a director and two to four staff, as well as a small continuing budget ($500,000–$750,000), would allow the office's pro-active work to be done efficiently, while maximizing public understanding of the benefits of such a Global Vancouver strategy. It would also represent a challenge to Vancouver's various communities to get on board.

A globalist approach, rather than a globalized one, offers much more potential for the city to contribute to a collective global future.

PART 9: Finances

The 1976 report by the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities (CFMM), entitled *Puppets on a Shoestring: The Effects on Municipal Government of Canada's System of Public Finance,* represented a fairly accurate account of the state of municipal financing in the mid-1970s. There has been a perennial problem with city financing in Vancouver and other municipalities in the city-region. The ebbs and flows of Canadian federalism have meant that federal and provincial governments have contributed much to this local fiscal dilemma. They have done so not simply by downloading increasing responsibilities to their local governments, but also by simply abandoning—off-loading—urban matters which were their traditional domain. Examples abound in Vancouver, as in other city regions, where a number of policy areas—from drug treatment and homelessness, to transit and infrastructure renewal— now involve city governments and their budgets. Not a single city government has been able to negotiate with the provincial and federal governments to confront this fiscal imbalance in a satisfactory manner. The big question is whether municipalities will invoke their lack of jurisdiction, or of fiscal capacity, to ignore increasingly significant issues that continue to matter to their local citizens. "Slippery slope" and "mug's game" analogies abound as local governments grapple with such challenges. To understand city-regional financing in Vancouver, three entities are briefly examined: the city, Metro Vancouver, and TransLink.

The City of Vancouver

While municipal governments in British Columbia historically relied on funds from senior levels of government, British Columbia municipalities are now almost entirely self-supporting. Local governments generate almost 85% of their revenue from the property tax (45%), property-related taxes (9%), and sales of goods and services to residents (29%). Only 7% of revenue comes from provincial or federal transfers. Between 1995 and 2004, total transfers from federal and provincial governments dropped by 51%. The most dramatic reduction has been in specific-purpose (or conditional) grants from the province, which dropped by 62% since the mid 1990s. Despite these provincial and federal cuts, overall local government revenue in BC has risen by 26% over the previous decade.

Municipalities have averaged almost 20% of operating expenditures on recreation and culture, 15% on environmental services, and 14% on transportation and communication. Lower priority operational expenditures include education, housing, social services, and health. Since 1995, general government, transportation, communication, and protection services, along with the environment and recreation and culture, have had the greatest operational expenditure increases, while health, debt charges, and other expenditures have seen the greatest decreases. In short, increases have been sharpest in the core areas of municipal activity. Reinforcing their low priority for municipal governments, housing and social services have also seen a mild decrease in funding since 1995. This at a time when homelessness and related social service challenges had a negative impact on BC municipalities, especially in metropolitan Vancouver—perhaps Canada's most expensive city in which to live.

In 2012–13 the overall budget for the City of Vancouver was $1.13 billion, with $255 million in capital projects. City capital project priorities were as follows:

Utilities and public works	$82 million
Civic infrastructure	$53 million
Transportation (parking/cycling/roads/transit)	$52 million
Community facilities	$38 million
Parks and open space	$14 million
Housing	$7 million
Public safety	$7 million

Source: City of Vancouver[86]

The city's 2015 operating budget was $1.2 billion; its capital expenditures were set at $306 million.

All cities in BC must balance their municipal budgets by law; however, revenues grow more slowly than expenditures, so property taxes are up almost 3% while services are continuing to be cut. An initial look at the city's recent and current budget suggests more priority given to environmental matters than social sustainability ones. This is perhaps reflective of the current administration's Greenest City Action Plan. Meanwhile, local homelessness may have levelled off in 2012, but it still remains high (around 1,700

in the city) despite an unsuccessful mayoral commitment in 2008 to end homelessness by 2014. Three quarters of the city's homeless are men, 25% are Aboriginal, and approximately 50% are over 40 years old. Eighty-five percent were subject to a form of abuse in their early lives, and 93% have existing mental disorders. Eighty-three percent also have some form of substance abuse. Increasingly, the diagnosis is turning to early support and intervention as a key way forward, but these are more provincial responsibilities and like many provinces, BC has yet to make this a central priority—which may also explain why city budgets are more devoted to matters where investment payback is clearer: on transit and cycling, waste reduction, air quality, and so on.

The city has had some success in partnering with the province—for example, on the purchase of single-room occupancy (SRO) hotels in the city's poor Downtown Eastside—but the persistence of homelessness, and continuing challenges around affordability, reflect a major obstacle to livability in Vancouver.[87] As Anne Golden and the 1999 Toronto Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force concluded, cities recognize the issue and seek to deal with it, but will not make major inroads without senior multilevel government cooperation. Current indications are that they will wait some time.

Metro Vancouver:

The 2012–13 budget for the several agencies of Metro Vancouver was $620 million, up 2% from 2011–12.[88] In 2015, this was set at $657 million. (Budget 2015 in Brief) As a wholesaler of "hard services," various Metro agencies focus on water (the Greater Vancouver Water District, or GVWD), solid and liquid waste (the Greater Vancouver Sewerage and Drainage District, GVSDD), parks, air quality, and regional planning, all with the mandate of delivering the region's services "in a sustainable manner." A smaller portion of its budget (5.8%) is devoted to the Metro Vancouver Housing Corporation (MVHC), tasked with improving affordability. It has had little impact to date.

To comprehend Metro's financing you need to examine separate budget documents, each covered by separate provincial legislation—with some like the Sewerage and Drainage District Act, dating back to the First World War, long before regional districts were established. The South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority (TransLink), established in the late 1990s, is a separate entity with its own budget. Taken together, the GVRD (Metro), GVSDD (sewerage and draining), GVWD (water), and MVHC (housing) represent the following portions of revenue and expenditures for the region:

	Revenues	Expenditures
GVRD (Metro)	10%	($62m)
GVSDD	28%	($200.5m)
GVWD	36%	($223.6m)
MVHC	10%	($36.1m)
2013 total		($620m)

Most of the revenue for the GVSDD and the GVWD comes from user fees, paid directly by member municipalities. GVRD funding comes mostly from a portion of

the local property tax. The latter's responsibilities include parks, air quality, labour relations (for the region and member municipalities), GPS work on the region, regional planning, and 911 emergency services, in addition to other services like the eradication of West Nile virus and the like.

Until recently, much of the history of metropolitan Vancouver has been characterized by a local and bottom-up recognition of the benefits of regional cooperation, as reflected in the separate pieces of provincial legislation on Metro's entities which confirm such local-regional arrangements.

TransLink, however, and ongoing local government disputes with the province over its technology, priorities, and budgets, highlight the altered here and now in the Vancouver-centred region. They also suggested the potential for major changes following the May 14, 2013 BC general election. Following the May 2015 regional plebiscite on transportation and transit, where a new regional sales tax was rejected by voters, the province and the region continue to spar over how to proceed.

TransLink: South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority

At the end of the second-term NDP governments in the late 1990s, a Vancouver-based cabinet minister, Joy MacPhail (finance) convinced her colleagues to link transportation planning with existing regional land-use planning powers. Yet rather than giving both functions directly to the GVRD, the province set up a separate entity, the Greater Vancouver Regional Transportation Authority, which became known as TransLink. Like the other separate authorities, many long established within what is now called Metro, local mayors and senior councillors formed the governing body—via re-appointment from the GVRD—with the possibility of three of the fifteen directors being appointed by the province from sitting MLAs. (These three provincial appointees were never appointed, however, so locals ran the board, even after the NDP lost to the provincial Liberals in 2001.)

For local decision-makers, the considerable cost of developing public transit infrastructure poses a significant dilemma. With 70% of Canadians living in the country's thirty-three census metropolitan areas and over half in its three major cities (2011 census), senior governments, from time to time, turn their attention to local city-regional priorities such as urban transit. The quandary here is that those who help pay the pipers seek to call the tunes. It is an old adage, and one which often conflicts with local determinations on priorities. Vancouver is a good case in point.

After TransLink was set up, there were a variety of proposals, such as a regional vehicle tax, to fund the system. In terms of mass rapid transit, BC entered the game in the early 1980s, prior to its Vancouver-based Expo 86. Originally called Transpo 86, Expo was a provincial initiative. The province, in the midst of a major series of budgetary cutbacks,[89] undertook Vancouver's first mass transit line (the Expo Line) and a world's fair. When then Vancouver mayor (and future BC premier) Mike Harcourt suggested slowing down the transit line development prior to the fair to push for mitigation on some of its neighbourhood impacts, the provincial premier mused that 1986 could involve a provincially-revamped Vancouver should it act against BC's timetable. The city acquiesced.

In the 1990s, left to their own devices, local mayors established a set of regional

priorities for transit expansion; these emphasized light rail and rapid buses as less expensive options, which would be used as a reward to areas in the region that accepted their "share" of regional growth. This was supported by the province during the first NDP (Harcourt) term, under municipal affairs minister Darlene Marzari. When another Vancouverite, Glen Clark, took over from Harcourt as premier, he announced a second mass transit line, insisting on the existing, more expensive automated light rapid transit (ALRT) technology (the Millennium Line). When TransLink was established in the late 1990s, just before the end of NDP power, the province rejected local ideas, such as a vehicle tax ($75 per vehicle, annually) or parking taxes, as ways to help fund the system's expansion. The province did lever a local Bombardier plant to construct the transit line cars as part of their deal, but locals were left with many unresolved issues.

The next BC premier was also a former Vancouver mayor, Gordon Campbell (2001–2011). Campbell was somewhat "all over the map" in local governing policy terms: he passed the Community Charter (effective 2004) emphasizing the local as a recognized order of government and giving municipalities natural person powers; then he passed the Significant Projects Streamlining Act, which reminded locals they could not over-ride provincial priorities on major projects—such as the 2010 Winter Olympics build-up.

Meanwhile, local mayors continued to plan transit regionally. Their priorities, as we'll recall, were light rail, buses, and a transit line to the region's Tri-Cities (Port Moody, Coquitlam, and Port Coquitlam) in the north-east. But along came the Olympics. Local-regional decisions that were previously made now conflicted with senior—both provincial and federal—transit priorities. The construction of a rapid transit connection between Vancouver's airport and downtown was a major part of the commitment made to the International Olympic Committee. This was on a regional priority list, but well after its so-called Evergreen Line to the Tri-Cities. The idea of a Canada Line from the airport in Richmond to central Vancouver had both federal and provincial dollars attached to it. The province wanted the project most, but TransLink mayors were not cooperative and stalled the discussions.

The minister of transportation intervened, insisting both on a major roads expansion as well as the Canada Line, to be constructed as a public-private partnership (P3). To get this he had to squash the mayor-dominated board, which he did with new legislation setting up the appointed Mayors' Council, which left very limited budgetary roles for locals.[90]

The province got what it wanted as part of its 2010 Winter Olympics preparation—but the province's actions produced a much more contrary and critical set of regional mayors. They have resisted almost all senior efforts to impose more transit costs onto local property taxpayers. The result for the early second decade of the 21st century is a major budgetary shortfall for TransLink. With Christy Clark leading the Liberals back to power in 2013 and funding arrangements in question, most assumed something had to give for the political dust to settle—though by then it was the lead-up year to the November 2014 BC municipal elections.

The contemporary TransLink budgetary situation is messy. For example, in 2012

transit ridership was up, but revenues through the regional gas tax were down, resulting in a deficit. The royalties for a P3 Fraser River bridge crossing (the Golden Ears Bridge) were also much lower than anticipated, requiring additional compensation for the private operator.[91] The P3 business model was too optimistic, leaving local taxpayers on the hook.

By autumn 2012, TransLink announced it would have to cut back on a broad range of its priorities.[92] This included over three hundred thousand extra hours of regional bus service planned for the next three years, as well as cuts to rapid bus lines and seabus service. According to the transportation authority's vice-president of strategic planning and public affairs,"It's needed service, we just can't deliver it."

For TransLink, there was no stable form of funding established. The Regional Transportation Commission (part of the new governance structure) rejected a fare increase and called for $80–90 million in efficiencies. At the same time, rising fuel taxes make private automobile use more expensive and produce greater investments in transit, thereby cutting down on gridlock. Yet these taxes are also applicable to buses and trains, causing revenues to go down precisely as costs are rising to match the increase in transit use. The agency's CEO has called for more cooperation between TransLink, the province, and the Mayors' Council, but the dynamic created by removing locals from the picture made such budgetary cooperation unlikely. Mayors had been asked to help fund TransLink by sacrificing a portion of their local property taxes for two years, but in 2012 decided against this after the province refused alternative funding sources. A significant rethink of Vancouver's transportation planning and governance is in order, in particular following from the spring 2015 plebiscite, which failed to produce local buy-in for a new sales tax to fund transit. Hitting a rewind switch will become more complex; it *might* involve punting transit governance back to the locals, though historically it has also resided with the province. In December 2015, the province turned down a request from municipal leaders in rejecting a TransLink governance reform that would have devolved control back to Metro-area mayors.

In British Columbia, all civic elections were held in November 2014, and anyone looking for a pattern here would need to look no further than the term "incumbency" – including by acclamation. Across Metro Vancouver's twenty-one municipalities, for example, the majority of mayors and local political parties were returned. Even where a sitting mayor did not run—opting for a successful federal nomination as in the case of Surrey's Diane Watts—her hand-picked successor and party retained power locally. As these elections follow recent shifts to four-year municipal terms of office—increasingly the Canadian norm—so the next civic election cycle will take place in autumn 2018.

The Economist, which has listed Vancouver as one of the top three most livable cities in the world, recently also called it "mind-numbingly boring." That may be the least of Vancouver's challenges moving toward 2020. The election of a more urban-focused Justin Trudeau-led Liberal government in Canada (2015–2019) suggesteds some potential for shifts in the city-regional multilevel governance landscape. Whether all city-regions are equally capable of leveraging such change to their advantage will depend on their intergovernmental skill sets.The morphing of the new Trudeau's urban infrastructure program to a P-3 led model will mean more contentious uptake. And

in "Vancouver" the federal decision to green light Kinder Morgan's $8B TransMountain's tar-sands heavy oil pipeline—from Edmonton to Burnaby —against the wishes of many local First Nations and Vancouver-area Cities will be reflected in much political acrimony throughout 2017 and beyond. In Spring, 2017: BC's Court of Appeal ruled that bylaw efforts to ameliorate Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain Pipeline development by the City of Burnaby (BC's third largest municipality) were superceded by Federal authority, which delegated pipeline decision-making to Canada's National Energy Board. Long-serving Burnaby Mayor Derek Corrigan called the federal override an outcome of the continuance of British North America Act 1860's constitutional thinking.[93] Corrigan called for a major update to reflect Canada's now urban reality-and to better reflect the increased roles our municipalities undertake.[94]

The reactions of cities like Burnaby and Vancouver to such challenges will test the capacity of local governments to set and sustain agendas which serve their own sustainability. With strong local support it will correspond to the rise of cities.

NOTES

1 Andrew Sancton, *Governing Canada's City-Regions: Adapting Form to Function* (Montreal: IRPP, 1994). At pp. 98–100, Sancton notes that "all … Canadian city-regions require an institution similar to the GVRD."

2 See, for example, Robert Bish, *Regional District Review: Issues and Interjurisdictional Comparisons* (Victoria: University of Victoria, Local Government Institute, 1999) and R. Bish and E. Clemens, *Local Government in British Columbia,* 4th edition (Richmond: UBCM, 2008), particularly ch. 4, "Regional District Governments," pp. 45–64.

3 On Ken Cameron, see Ken Cameron, Michael Harcourt, and Sean Rossiter, *City Making in Paradise: Nine Decisions That Saved Vancouver* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2007).

4 The application of the Vancouver model in Masdar City, Abu Dhabi does little to calm democratic concerns. See "The Vancouver Model," February 15, 2010, in *Architrix,* http://architrixstudio.com/blog/the-vancouver-model/.

5 Peter Self, *Administrative Theory and Politics* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972).

6 See, for example, Frances Bula, "Vancouver's Emerging New Face: Visible minorities will become the majority in the next two decades, StatsCan study says," *Vancouver Sun,* March 10, 2010, p. A1ff. Currently, Vancouver's visible minority population is at 49%. Its city council has one (of eleven) members who is from a visible minority. See Kristin R. Good, ed., *Municipalities and Multiculturalism: The Politics of Immigration in Toronto and Vancouver* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

7 See Statistics Canada, *2011 Census,* initial reports (February and March 2012). See also Shaughnessy Sturdy, "From Government to Governance: The City of Toronto's Role in Immigrant Settlement Service Coordination since the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement," paper presented at the BC Political Studies Association Annual Conference, Burnaby, BC, May 7–8, 2015.

8 For more on such "Cascadian" definitions, see P. Smith, "Branding Cascadia: Considering Cascadia's Conflicting Conceptualizations – Who Gets To Decide," *Canadian Political Science Review,* vol.2, no.2, (June 2008), pp. 57-83.

9 For much of the past fifteen years I have discussed, assessed and written about politics and governance in the Vancouver region with colleague Kennedy Stewart (School of Public Policy, Simon Fraser University and Member of Parliament for Burnaby-Douglas). A good deal of what follows draws on this collective work. While he is not responsible for this version (he is now engaged otherwise as a Burnaby MP), I am grateful for the ongoing conversation.

10 See, for example, Donald Gutstein, *Vancouver Ltd.* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1975).

11 See, for example, Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900–1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

12 On some of this First Nation history see, for example, P. Smith, "Aboriginal Peoples and Justice," in *Law, Politics and the Administration of Justice* (Victoria: Pacific Policy Press, 2012), pp. 320–343.

13 See Craig Davis and Thomas Hutton, "The Two Economies of British Columbia," *BC Studies,* no. 82 (Summer 1989), pp. 3–15; Michael Howlett and Keith Brownsey, "Introduction: Toward a Post Staple

Economy," *Canadian Political Science Review,* vol.1, no. 1 (June 2007), pp. 1–7; and P. Smith, K. Ginnell and M. Black, "BC: Communities and Local Government," in M. Howlett, D. Pilon, and T. Summerville, eds., *British Columbia Politics and Government* (Toronto: Emond Montgomery, 2009).

14 On the changes in the Lower Mainland and BC economies, see M. Howlett and K. Brownsey, "British Columbia: Public Sector Politics in a Rentier Resource Economy," in M. Howlett and K. Brownsey, eds., *The Provincial State: Politics in Canada's Provinces and Territories* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1992), pp. 265–295; and P. Smith, "British Columbia: Public Policy and Perceptions of Governance," in James Bickerton and Alain-G. Gagnon, eds., *Canadian Politics.* (Peterborough: Broadview, 1994), pp. 506–526.

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Other Cities: Social Movements and Barcelona, Madrid

Ann Marie Utratel

How has activism in Spain produced new political platforms that are victorious in municipal elections? Are there stories, lessons, methods or tools that can be shared or translated to other contexts? How might these support the growing movement in France?

CommonsPolis—a civil society initiative to create dialogue between progressive municipalist movements and city governments, and European citizens—held an encounter described as "a common space for exchange; cities in transition and citizen struggles" in Paris on November 24, 2016, at the offices of the *Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation (FPH)* and with the collaboration of the *Utopia Movement*. Spanish activists from a variety of regions were invited to share with their French counterparts their recent experiences of entering the municipal public administrations, and their efforts to make the political process more participatory and inclusive for citizens. The event was held in Spanish (Castellano) and French, with simultaneous interpretation. I went along with Stacco Troncoso as observers from the P2P Foundation. We were invited to attend, listen, and share our P2P/Commons perspective about the coming political landscape.

The Spanish context was outlined in a handout offered at the event, which described the most significant breakthroughs of the last two years (2015-16). In May 2015, the new citizens' coalitions which had emerged from the street-level movements were successful in a number of large municipal elections. The path of these citizens' coalitions traces back to reactions against the failures of Spain's post-Transition bipartisanism, and their victories indicate a shift in mindset, culture, and power. These new, municipalist "non-parties" are outgrowths of the 15M *indignado* movement and "*las*

CommonsPolis

"Common space for exchange; cities in transition and citizen struggles"
Event held in Paris on November 24, 2016
Sponsored by - FPH, Utopia Movement,

mareas" (tides), citizens' initiatives around housing, health, education, culture and urban ecology. They build on prior political traditions of self-management and governance, while also drawing influences from the de-growth, ecology and free/libre movements and applying mindful use of technology and media.

The event began with a brief introduction by Vladimir Ugarte, who described Commonspolis as a mixture of personal and professional developments. Sergi Escribano, originally from Spain, was living in France and observing the tremendous changes shaking up Spanish civil, and political, society. Meanwhile Vlad, originally from Uruguay, brought a Latin American perspective on the political environmental and cultural crisis worldwide. As they witnessed the local governance initiatives taking shape under a municipalist ethic in Spain, they decided to do something about it—but instead of writing a grand manifesto, they would first proceed by listening. This event was created in support of that intention, and to explore the question of how such a shift would scale or transfer to another context—how can the municipal experiences of Spanish activists help inform the next steps elsewhere, in France for example?

From bipartisanism to municipalism: Spain's Political Landscape

We spent the day together in a clean, modern room with light wooden paneling and lots of windows facing an interior courtyard at the FPH offices. The atmosphere was friendly and familiar, and a number of people had either previously met or corresponded, so the morning started with upbeat conversation and coffee. The organizers called us to sit in a circle to begin, and for the next several hours, the story of the municipal victories in Spain unfolded.

Members of *Barcelona en Comú*, *Marea Atlántica* and *València en Comú* started by sharing their perspectives on what provoked the crisis and its reactions in Spain, and the relationships and patterns that they see emerging among the resulting different movements and parties.

A brief look at Spain's most recent forty years set the context for the stories that would follow. The post-Franco years were marked by the rise and fall of Spanish bipartisanism. The power structures of the dictatorship were largely preserved in one of the two dominant political parties, Partido Popular or the People's Party (PP), supported by old-guard power players and the Catholic church. Meanwhile, the more moderate and steadily center-leaning Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), the Socialist Worker's Party, swiftly abandoned Marxism in the late 70s. In the early 2000s, Spain adopted the Euro with great expectations but, after a decade of speculative action, the quality of day to day life began to deteriorate. Prices went up, but salaries stayed flat. While neither party was solely to blame, neither was innocent. Corruption became more prevalent and obvious. Unprecedented construction speculation culminated in the devastating housing bubble, triggering "the crisis" marked by rising incidences of mortgage foreclosure and eviction, and rampant unemployment.

As we know, this political/economic crisis provoked a widespread activist reaction in Spain, beginning in 2011 with the eruption of the 15M movement. Five years later, a large part of this activism has since moved indoors from the streets and squares to government posts, but this did not come easily. Power and influence struggles persist,

both internally among activists with different missions, and as a by-product of the constraints felt in being a minority power. A relatively low number of seats in parliament poses an obvious disadvantage for those activists now working within government. Progress is often hamstrung by the institutional rigidity of government structures, not to say the baroque quality of Spanish law.

So, how did these activists manage to grab the power needed to break the bipartisan stranglehold? In 2014, 5 Members of European Parliament (MEPs) from *Podemos* were elected, evidence of a strong resistance to bipartisanism. The kind of changes *Podemos* triggered started on a local scale with municipal platforms, creating networks for every city to work for local change. These platforms are the "how", but not the "who", of change; it's important to remember that any one party, *Podemos* included, is a part of the platform, and not the whole.

On the practical level, many people who felt indignation in response to the crisis indeed became *indignadas*, activists not just in their own lives but also in electoral politics."Las Mareas", or the "tides", are citizen-activist groups formed throughout Spain after 15M, each acting in a specific sector and often identified by color (green for education, white for health, etc.). Mainly, they help create or safeguard access to different public services hit by austerity policies. La Marea Atlántica, formed in 2014 in A Coruña, Galicia, was formed with another goal in sight. Building on a long tradition of local leftist politics, *La Marea Atlántica* intended to develop a participative municipal administration. They collected 2,500 signatures towards presenting candidates for city council and also mayor, the latter of which they won in the 2015 elections. There is a special cultural significance in this win: the mayor, Xulio Ferreiro, is the first in office who speaks the local language (Gallego).

As they describe themselves, La Marea Atlántica has several currents. They incorporate the ideals of 15M, but for the platform to be successful, they stress that everyone involved must work together. For example, the platform should not be considered as a projection of Podemos in particular, there are a number of parties represented. It's a political space where many come together, what they call a "political proposal".

Marea Atlántica's online instruments have been created to enable all types of citizens' participation. "Mareas abiertas" (open tides) is a key element: there are no party-imposed quotas, any individual can participate. The campaigns are completely self-financed. And they continue to develop more participatory, inclusive projects, such as *Co-Lab*. The website describes *Co-Lab* as "a recent social innovation project with a mission to improve quality of life for people and have a more egalitarian citizenship, through mechanisms of collaborative, open and re-usable knowledge production."

But the truth is, they sometimes have difficulties in keeping it all up. The daily management is hard work, and it doesn't sustain itself without a lot of input. Maintaining a high level of interest and engagement in people sometimes becomes challenging in the flow of action between activism and institutions, even when the processes are open and participatory.

Why have a such wide range and high number of people in Spain turned to activism? Not long ago, many people were working hard just to pay the mortgage, only

to see their job security and financial stability slip away. People started going "underwater" on their mortgages, and the ugly spectacle of police-enforced home evictions proved to be too much to bear without resistance by those affected and their friends, neighbors and communities. 2009 saw the beginning of the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* or (PAH)—Platform for People Affected by Mortgages—in Barcelona. Through civil disobedience and direct action, people take part in opposing evictions, often putting themselves physically between law enforcement and homeowners—the banks take the property, but the cops take the people.

PAH has successfully prevented well over one thousand such evictions. One of their founding members, Ada Colau, became a spokesperson of *Barcelona en Comú*, and more recently was elected the mayor of Barcelona. Where 15M once had people in the streets and squares chanting "no nos representa" — "they don't represent us" — now, in Ada Colau, they have a mayor who emerged from the movement itself. The "en Comú" movements in other cities including València are municipal platforms that have gathered a good deal of public interest and support. From the en comú movements in these two cities, Barcelona and Valencia, many reflections and indeed, even warnings were shared.

En Comú in València is a platform of the streets, now in the transition to electoral politics and campaigns. With its roots in street assemblies, food sovereignty campaigns and the student and housing movements, en Comú identified a shift: people moved toward thinking in terms of "ours", rather than "mine". They've also crowdfunded their own "improvised" campaign and gained 33 seats in the local parliament. But being in the minority, like La Marea, they've got a vertiginous climb ahead. With the political will to survive, the members of VEC stress that it's worth the trouble of persisting. Although the process is full of problems, they're committed to keeping on, moving forward, not losing hope. This is the moment for reality checks but also going back to the roots of the organization, to recuperate what people have in common while also confronting an administration that mainly seeks to take care of itself.

Barcelona en Comú are often asked to tell their story, and they do so "warts and all", with all of the problems and challenges along with the successes. Yes, they did win in the Barcelona elections, but with 11 seats (out of 41) in city assembly, it's clearly not enough to govern a city; the change is local and limited, for the moment. While they may form part of the government, the ongoing question is how to be part of a government that doesn't *want* you to make changes. So, within the small space between simple legislation and doing nothing at all, BeC is attempting to do something different with the many limits and problems at the government level.

Through their organization's creation and continued evolution, they have come to understand that the change in political discourse has taken place on both the right and the left. Extensive changes are occurring in traditional politics. The left, however, seems to communicate in abstracts, which creates rather than solves problems at the local level. People do not want abstract terms, they want concrete solutions. This must be discussed, but not in the accepted, unquestioned, persistent ways. Results should come by treating concrete problems, being realistic, and going through phases at the local level, growing real participation among people. The PAH platform, for example, has been built step by

step, acknowledging every little victory that adds up to something (previously) unimaginable. And finding the appreciation for the small steps is part of the change.

Keenly aware of the masculine style of typical political discourse, along with its implications, the movements in Spain have been working to feminize the discourse and encourage more and better participation. Bringing others into the platforms depends on something mentioned multiple times: an ethical code, designed for open participation and the encouragement of real politics with people creating their own platforms - implementing radical democracy. Participatory conversation creates political change, and the feminization of politics is not only about the political work itself, it also means a change of style.

But these municipal platforms are not solely designed for local citizens; it was made clear, they must be part of a multi-level structure capable of operating at the national, and even transnational, levels. To make this happen, the municipal platforms must coordinate among themselves and beyond. They need to present viable political alternatives that channel the rising resistance to recent right-populist political developments such as Brexit and the election of Trump.

Crucially, each of these new municipalist coalitions has based their work on their "*codigo etico*", the ethical code which shapes everything they do in the platforms, participation in institutions. This ethical code is developed from existing experiences, and acts as both the glue and the attractor for participants. Its main principles are:

- No revolving doors (no cycling through public/private positions)
- Salary cuts
- Participative program
- Open primaries — no party quotas, and open to anyone
- Voluntary/citizen self-financing, and rejection of institutional or bank financing

Caveats and cautions were offered about the problems found in making municipal change. Hard limits, even something like a "glass ceiling", were described. Some of this is surely due to the experimental nature of this new institutional style grating against the very durable, quintessentially neoliberal, crisis produced by the established political powers. Opposition is not easy, and neither have been these first moves from the streets into municipal chambers. They said it again and again: for all the progress made in Spain, there's no formula for entering these institutions.

Winning is not the same as gaining power; to gain effective power takes a very empowered citizenship, and citizens are starved of power. Broadening citizen participation is obviously important, but this must be done within the local context, and will create something different in each location — so, again, "recipes" are impossible. While it's true that the regime crisis has led to a growth in political and urban "lab" environments, making the leap into the municipal government is not simple, and successful attempts at change are slow and hard won. Even the new methodologies employed can cause problems.

Because of all this, the *codigo etico*—code of ethics—was described as indispensable. New government is, as has been learned, not always an effective government, and

political organizations can be prone to inter-faction disputes. Think inclusively—how might a single, immigrant mother of several children, for example, be encouraged or enabled to participate, and why? For a positive reception to some kind of *marea social*, or citizens' tide movement, there must be real solutions and a clear path to participation or there will be no way out of the crisis.

With so much of what's familiar and concrete being constructs of neoliberalism—business, management, government — the path towards reconstruction from the bottom is difficult, and more so with a repressive legislative architecture. On top of it all, there's another difficulty. This hard, neoliberal Europe has also produced a rapidly rising, bottom-up, citizen-level force from the right which must be watched and considered closely.

But, what do the movements find when they ask the people what they want? The people are still outraged and anxious. They want assurances of security, to finally get out of the economic crisis. What happens when those who've moved into municipal government want rupture, but what the people want is restoration? People say they want to "go back to the way things were", but not only is that impossible, things were not really so good — but memories are short. This is the key of the extreme right, this ideological message. What's needed is more empathy.

In conclusion, those presenting from the various movements in Spain all shared that their processes have been a qualified nightmare at times, and that navigating through the crisis has been very hard. But at the heart there remains a source of hope and motivation - *sí se puede*.

Widening the Conversation

In several small, multi-lingual groups, we had some animated discussions about the enthusiasm, curiosity and doubts in reaction to the initial expositions. What clearly came across were ideas about promoting self-management, the need for exercising caution with the existing paternalism in society, and providing more visibility to self-management practices. People discussed encouraging social empowerment to correct, rather than tolerate, constant institutional blockages, as well as how to promote more social income and participatory budgeting.

Even with some notable differences in the French context, there is a clear need for municipal learning and "unlearning" within concrete, multi-scale, autonomous movements; a need to find ways to resolve the eventual failures, and to put forth proposals that people can use. Strengthening bottom-up narratives and nurturing inclusivity in political practices are fundamentals. Without this shift towards change that remains in service of the community, people will eventually lose confidence.

Instability fomented the change in the Spanish territory, and that original energy continued to provoke changes in the context of the social movements. A strong focus emerged, along with a greatly increased local participation. Investigations into the crisis—what caused it, how to address it—provided a springboard from which people began thinking and working collectively, always keeping those ethical codes in sight.

The trajectory of personal transformation can lead into a political one, and ideas turn to politics. But how would those in the French context follow the work done in

the Spanish municipal arena? By introducing the virus of change into the institutions. Study the length of time before elections, and find a way to anticipate what will be needed, and communicate it. Work to avoid power struggles, and work to make those personal transformations integrate into the platforms. This includes feminization to induce noticeable differences in governance—it's important to dismantle patriarchal constructs, i.e. the tendency for the loudest to be heard, and for the longest time. Oh, and another thing—resolve the tension between just talking to people about problems, and changing things so that communication becomes empowerment.

But what about the fact that people have long adopted completely neoliberal behaviour patterns, right from primary school—how is it possible to address these limitations? At this point, *how many people outside of these specialized groups really know how to work in a participatory style anymore*? The dialogue has been long lost, and must be recovered, including a change in values. The tension between power and counterpower has to be acknowledged, and differences between "collective" and "commons", where the commons is a search for construction among people.

Later in the day, some more clues and tools came through from the activists from Spain in an additional round of group work, some more conceptual and some more concrete. Keeping up a good level of critique was cited as a key component, and to avoid forming "bubbles". Sustainability, in the material sense, can mean using local and complementary currencies, or instigating more activities, rather than just talks—having more action take place in the communities (eg. garden cultivation and instructions). As far as inclusion, we need more work on "feminization": get more women to participate, and change the grand-scale masculine logics and ideas for something more feminine, closer. Be inclusive of groups with fewer resources (eg, youth groups) and reach out to those former- or non-activists who feel excluded, cynical or disinterested. Make it all more open to the "others", and work to maintain that level of inclusion.

Feminization, as it was described, can be a difficult, slow process of experimentation. Knowing this, it's a good practice to create a protected environment for experimentation, and foster something slower but deeper. Create other forms of organization that are participatory from within the institutions: introduce techniques like speaking in turn, or request participants to give just one sentence, in quick rounds - things that encourage better participation. The goal is to break the usual tendencies for certain people to dominate and certain people to remain silent - time to shake up the comfort zone.

What about all the people who are used to just voting and dropping all the responsibility on the elected officials? And the question of enabling people's capacities in the spirit of commons—how can this be done? With education, making every action more visible and creating spaces for discussion—actual, physical spaces. De-localize the decision-making within the platforms. Make proposals to the people, show them the ways to co-create communities using participatory principles, including codes of ethics. Someone could lead by example and propose a work group with specific rules and context, so everyone knows how to participate. Debate questions openly, eg. how to define the urban commons? Technical questions come up, and questions of tech, which is the means through which a large dominion of civic and political information is controlled. Think about how to make the technical solutions compatible with the political ones.

In the final afternoon discussions, there were several proposals following on the earlier dialogues. Why not hold the next *European Commons Assembly* in a "rebel" city, one undergoing commons-friendly changes, to see more potentially concrete changes and proposals in action. And with the EU elections coming in 2019, more work needs to be done within the commons political network, focusing on "free, fair, sustainable" principles with visible alliances around the different commons - knowledge, social justice, ecology, etc. It's time to open some common spaces for action where people can learn to make, do and live differently, and discover how to exchange experiences around common development and management ("gestion en común").

Change-making in France: a reaction

The question that was opened for exploration at the end of the day: exactly what aspects of the citizens' platforms in Spain might be portable to France? Although it's understood that the process and results are still in flux, there is ample space for change and a strong desire to experiment with what can be replicated at different scales. So, how to mobilize now - what kinds of tips and tricks might be viable in the French sociopolitical landscape?

In 2014, Spanish activists said "let's take the city"—a seemingly impossible challenge. One year later, municipal elections were won by *Ahora Madrid*, and en Comú in Barcelona and València—and although these new parties and representatives may face hostility from inside, the spirit of "*sí se puede*" has been successfully validated and propagated. With a strong commons culture in France, the possibilities are wide open. How to organize and mobilize? The advice offered was: organize for what already exists, don't over-politicize, keep to the needs of people in the communities, and work up from small steps.

While there are apparent cultural differences in the French and Spanish contexts, some form of "viral" idea sharing could promote a cultural change towards more widespread citizen engagement, particularly in municipal politics. In Spain, people organized in and from the public squares, where in France this kind of expanded organization may not yet have taken root fully—although *Nuit debout* certainly offers us a good view on how it could develop—but, that said, it was acknowledged that a movement has been born in France with roots in an economic crisis, even if different from that in Spain. For a young person, joining Uber is a lot cheaper and faster than obtaining a taxi license, but this easy entry could have a high cost in eventual precarity.

Conclusions. Where do we go from here?

All the municipalist players from the Spanish territory are working multi-scale (local, national, regional, and now in international dialogues). The coalitions are non-partisan, though inclusive of established political parties. They all want to end the isolation presently perceived at the city level, merging more towards an ideal of the "networked rebel cities". Overall, the key point made for the French activists was the need to create and implement a common ethical code for participation. Meetings such as this one should obviously evolve to be more diverse and representative of the public at large, as the movements themselves are. As the meeting drew to a close, it was noted pretty

bluntly—*if we don't get our shit together, the far right will*, in terms of gathering massive support by addressing the concrete needs of people.

As commoners and activists concerned about caring for our neighbours and the environments which sustain us, the responsibility falls on all of us, beyond Spain, beyond France. We are the stewards of change, and this change needs to go beyond boundaries to engage real needs with viable, common-sense solutions. The community empowerment, network logics and feminization of politics displayed by municipalist platforms such as *València en Comú*, *Marea Atlántica* and *Barcelona en Comú* could inspire new bottom-up electoral coalitions in surprisingly different contexts. Let's spread the word and show the world what happens when concerned citizens decide to take the power back.

Biographical Notes on Contributors

DIMITRI ROUSSOPOULOS is a political activist and writer, public speaker and community organiser. He has published some 15 books, ranging from international politics to urban ecology, and local democracy. President of the Institute of Policy Alternatives of Montréal, and co-president of the Sierra Club Québec.

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BILL FREEMAN is an award winning Canadian author. He has written 20 books, three plays, several television documentaries and educational film scripts for both children and adults and a number of articles. He is a past chair of The Writers Union of Canada (2004-05).

Bill has written extensively about cities. *The New Urban Agenda: The Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area* (Dundurn Press, 2015), and his most recent book, *Democracy Rising: Politics and Participation in Canada* (Dundurn Press, 2017).

He went on to complete a PhD in Sociology and taught at McMaster, Vanier College, in Montréal, York University and Centennial College in Toronto.

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PATRICK J. (PADDY) SMITH, did his PhD in Government at the LSE and is now Director, Institute of Governance Studies and Past Chair/Professor of Political Science and of Graduate Urban Studies at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia.

He has served on the national boards of the Canadian Political Science Association and the Institute of Public Administration of Canada, as well as founding President of the BC Political Studies Association.

He has authored/edited more than a dozen books—and more than 75 related articles—on such issues as political parties and elections, the Canadian constitution, security intelligence, anti-terrorism and human rights, urban and metropolitan governance, public policy, ombudsmania and open government, public sector ethics, Aboriginal justice, global cities and cross-border issues/Cascadia, multi-level governance, gender and politics, democratic reform. He is from Utopia, Ontario—a community founded by his great-great grandfather in the 1840's; his 175 year old family farm still operates there,and has lived/worked/studied in hamlets, villages, towns, cities and global city regions

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A native New Yorker now living in Extremadura, Spain, Ann Marie Utratel is a co-founder of Guerrilla Translation (guerrillatranslation.org), is on the P2P Foundation/ Commons Transition core team (commonstransition.org), and has collaborated with the Goteo/Platoniq team. She works closely with a great number of people creating change as seen through the lens of the commons.

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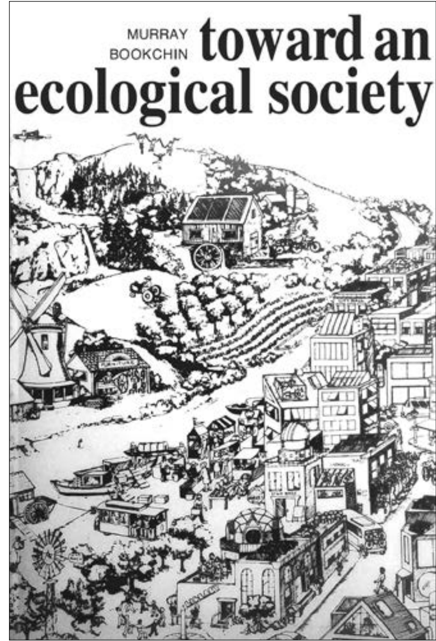
Toward an Ecological Society

Murray Bookchin



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Murray Bookchin is a much sought after speaker, a teacher, and author of many articles and books. His books include, *Our Synthetic Environment*, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, *The Spanish Anarchists* and *The Limits of the City*.

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THE RISE OF CITIES
Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver And Other Cities

DIMITRIOS ROUSSOPOULOS

With Bill Freeman, Patrick J. Smith, Shawn Katz and Ann Marie Utratel

IN THE LATE 2000s human society entered a new urban epoch in which the majority of human beings live in cities. Whilst the city has historically been viewed as the foundation of democracy and citizenship, the geo-political spaces of modern cities are widely misunderstood despite their key role in shaping contemporary global society. How and why have cities become the command centres of the world economy? Does globalization menace cities as we know them? Are cities able to exercise democratic control and strategic choice when multinational corporate competition increasingly limits the importance of place? *The Rise of Cities* offers intriguing responses to these questions by analyzing how cities coalesce, develop and thrive, and how they can remake themselves for better for worse.

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DIMITRI ROUSSOPOULOS is a well-known urban activist. He has worked in the field for over thirty years in several different cities, organising grassroots democratic opposition to mega-urban development and the destruction of community spaces. Through his public speaking and prolific writings he has pioneered novel approaches to urban democratization and new definitions of citizenship in the city.

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