

CHAPTER EIGHT

Livable Neighbourhoods, Towns, and Cities

Canada's towns, cities, and neighbourhoods are fascinating places. Ranging in size and character all the way from the Atlantic in the east to the Pacific in the west and the Arctic in the north, they are filled with a vast panorama of individuals, institutions, facilities, programs, activities, and delights.

Everything is there in one form or another: schools, hospitals, banks, insurance companies, homes, offices, gardens, religious institutions, corporations, governments, small businesses, recreational endeavours, art galleries, museums, concert halls, parks, restaurants, and most of all, people.

Also there, although far more difficult to detect, are the cultures of these towns, cities, and neighbourhoods. These cultures result from the fact that past and present generations of Canadians have combined all the various activities in which they have been and are engaged—economic, social, political, educational, artistic, athletic, technological, environmental, and so forth—to form wholes that are greater than the parts and the sum of the parts. This is what gives these cultures their distinctiveness and identity, since no two are the same.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to see these cultures as wholes because they are composed of far too many parts, and the ordering process and organizational principles used to combine all the parts together to form dynamic and organic wholes are equally difficult to discern. What one can see, however, are some of the most important symbolic parts that constitute these cultures. The most obvious example of this in the Canadian case is hockey. Not only does hockey exist in physical and material form in every town, city, and neighbourhood across the country, but also it plays a pivotal role in shaping the character and identity of the cultures of these

places. This makes it possible to get a *sense* or *feel* for what these cultures are like in the holistic sense, through one of their most distinctive and representative parts.

For many Canadians, hockey is, was, and always will be their game and their passion. We are constantly reminded of this during the myriad radio and television broadcasts of hockey games in Canada, as well as Rogers' Hometown Hockey project, Scotiabank's Community Hockey Sponsorship Program and Heroes of Hockey Day, Kraft Hockeyville, books like Ken Dryden and Roy McGregor's *Home Game: Hockey and Life in Canada*, and numerous other publications and events. This is reinforced by the fact that many Canadians played hockey at a local rink or ball hockey on the street. If they were good enough, they might also have played for a junior or senior team, and, if they were exceptionally talented and worked incredibly hard, possibly even an NHL team. More likely, however, they coached a hockey team or some other sports team where they grew up or live today. There are even those who continue to play hockey well into their seventies and possibly even their eighties.

There is much to be learned from the example of hockey that is relevant to getting a sense or feel for what the cultures of the country's towns, cities, and neighbourhoods are like in the all-encompassing sense. And it is not only hockey or some other athletic activity such as curling or baseball that provides this. The country's artists, scholars, and other types of creative people play a key role here as well, since they are skilled at selecting specific parts of these cultures that are symbolic of the whole and therefore "stand for the whole" in the fundamental sense discussed earlier. This makes it possible for them to communicate a great deal of insight into what local and municipal cultures are like as wholes or overall ways of life through exposure to some of their most salient and revealing parts, much as Harold Innis did when he selected fish and fur as the focus for his own valuable insights into the nature of the Canadian economy during a very distinct period in the country's development.

Two artists who have been particularly effective at giving Canadians a sense or feel for what the cultures of the country's towns, cities, and neighbourhoods are like in the all-inclusive sense are Mordecai Richler and Alice Munro. Richler did so by writing about growing up in a specific neighbourhood of Montreal around St. Urbain Street, which he was able to contrast with other neighbourhoods such as Westmount and Outremont, in his popular book *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (later made into a movie). Alice Munro did so by writing in her book *Lives of Girls and*

Women about growing up in and near a small, mythical town called Jubilee, located somewhere in Huron County in southwestern Ontario. (Jubilee is believed to have been inspired by the town of Wingham, where Munro herself grew up.) What emerges from both books as the stories unfold is a sense or feeling for what the cultures of these places were like as wholes at a very specific time through exposure to some of their most symbolic and representative parts.

What is true for Richler and Munro and their two books is also true for many other Canadian authors and their books, as well as for other types of artists and scholars and their works. This is what makes the writings of creative people like the two aforementioned literary giants and many others so valuable. The country's libraries and bookstores, as well as millions of Canadian homes, are filled with literary masterpieces and materials of many different kinds that shed a great deal of light on the cultures of Canada's neighbourhoods, towns, and cities.

And this is not all. Often the smaller the place, the more is revealed about its culture and its character. Stephen Leacock illustrated this fact in his book *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*. Many believe the town Leacock was writing about was Orillia, where he had grown up and spent most of his youth, although this was cleverly disguised in the book. Nevertheless, it irked many people in Orillia who were identified as characters in the book, especially when Leacock depicted them in a satirical way.

What does all this have to do with Canada in the twenty-first century? Actually, a great deal. There is no better place to start the exemplary process advocated earlier—as well as to illustrate how essential it is to take a cultural and chronological approach to all this—than with Canada's towns, cities, and neighbourhoods. Not only are cultures easier to understand, experience, and identify with at the local as opposed to the national level, but the country's towns and cities are growing rapidly in size and stature and thus playing a stronger and more powerful role in Canadian development. If Canada's towns, cities, and neighbourhoods lack the resources, infrastructure, and capabilities required to be vital, viable, dynamic, livable wholes comprised of many interrelated parts, no developments at other levels will make up the difference. This is probably why two of Canada's most respected and distinguished authors, Northrop Frye and Jane Jacobs, talked at length about the importance of Canada's neighbourhoods, towns, and cities—in the case of Jacobs, especially neighbourhoods—in the development of Canada and its culture.

There is another compelling reason for commencing this exemplary process at the local or municipal level. If Canadians can get the cultural development of the country's towns, cities, and neighbourhoods right during the remaining decades of the twenty-first century, they will likely get most other things right as well, not only at this level but also at the provincial, territorial, regional, national, and international levels. This is because the country's towns, cities, and neighbourhoods have a great deal to teach us about what is most essential and worthwhile in life, how life and living can be addressed most effectively, what being a responsible citizen of Canada actually means, and what changes are required in lifestyles, attitudes, behaviour, and ways of life.

Regardless of where they eventually end up, what they work at, or how they live their lives, the rootedness, connectedness, and experiences young people are exposed to in their families, homes, schools, churches, synagogues, mosques, gymnasiums, rinks, soccer fields, and so forth play an indispensable role in making them who they are as adults. These places are where friendships are formed, associations are made, and a strong sense of identity, belonging, citizenship, and pride of place is fashioned and cultivated. It is also where people learn a great deal about the specific cultures they are immersed in and the many different activities, events, organizations, and so forth that constitute these cultures.

These experiences are often replayed much later in life at the thousands of reunions that take place across the country every year. There isn't a day goes by that reunions of one sort or another don't take place in neighbourhoods, towns, and cities all across Canada for sports teams, schools, choirs and bands, ethnic, religious, spiritual, and charitable organizations, environmental groups, and virtually everything else. They provide opportunities for Canadians who shared many bonds and connections in the past to reminisce about old times, exchange information on what friends and colleagues are doing today, trade email addresses, telephone numbers, and business cards, and make plans for the future.

As every Canadian knows, friendships and associations formed in childhood and youth often last for decades and even a lifetime. These relationships can—and often do—play a crucial role in finding jobs and securing contracts later in life, learning about important investment, travel, recreational, and culinary opportunities, meeting spouses, and developing networks and support systems of one type or another.

As a result of these and other activities, Canada's towns, cities, and neighbourhoods are ideal places to learn about the rights and responsibil-

ities of citizenship, thereby addressing one of the most important objectives for Canada's governments and its educational system and institutions. Giving back is a fundamental aspect of the responsibilities of a citizen, although doing so will probably occur in a different place than where most Canadians grew up because of today's high rate of mobility and occupational turnover. Nevertheless, giving back is critical, regardless of where Canadians live and work, especially if the country is to thrive and prosper. There are certain responsibilities associated with being a Canadian citizen, such as improving the quality of life and well-being for future generations, participating in a variety of worthwhile social events and humanitarian causes, beautifying homes, gardens, and neighbourhoods through landscaping, public art, and murals, making improvements in specific aspects of local life, and so forth. Having experienced and benefited from such experiences while growing up, many Canadians find themselves in a position where they are able to provide similar opportunities for their children, grandchildren, relatives, friends, young people, and those who are less fortunate than themselves.

Margaret Thatcher, former prime minister of the United Kingdom, once said that there is no such thing as community, only collectivities of individuals. How wrong she was! Like culture and cultures, community and communities reside at the heart and soul of what is most important and worthwhile in life. This fact has become steadily more apparent, now that more than fifty percent of the world's population lives in urban centres of various shapes and sizes. In Canada, more than half of the country's population lives in four huge, rapidly expanding urban centres—the Montreal area, the Greater Toronto-Golden Horseshoe area, Calgary-Edmonton, and Vancouver. Many more Canadians live in smaller but equally important urban areas such as Winnipeg, Halifax, Moncton, Regina, Saint John's, Ottawa, and others. Moreover, all predictions indicate that the proportion of Canadians living in urban areas will continue to grow.

This means that future generations of Canadians will have to develop the rootedness, grounding, values, and sense of identity needed to be responsible citizens in these urban settings. It also means that the large majority of Canadians will be looking to the country's neighbourhoods, towns, and cities to solve their economic, social, environmental, educational, recreational, and technological problems, and to address their individual and collective needs. They will expect these places to provide fulfilling jobs, a decent standard of living, an excellent quality of life, more

meaningful career opportunities, a great deal more environmental sustainability, affordable housing, and greater safety and security. If Canada's urban centres are not able to provide the infrastructure and resources required for the country's citizens to live happy, healthy, safe, and creative lives in the years and decades ahead, developments at other levels will not close the gap.

And this raises a very interesting question. What is it that makes Canada's neighbourhoods, towns, and cities "*livable*?" Why is living and working in one Canadian neighbourhood, town, or city exciting and exhilarating whereas living and working in another is difficult and demanding?

Jane Jacobs addressed questions like this as one of Canada's and the world's foremost authorities on urban development. What she emphasized above all else was the need for a *balanced, diversified, and integrated* array of social, economic, artistic, recreational, spiritual, educational, environmental, culinary, and other opportunities and amenities, especially at the neighbourhood level. Possessing these resources close to home and within easy walking distance helps to make urban life much more livable, especially when these resources are fully integrated into other aspects of local life.

Many factors contribute to this. One is stimulating jobs and job prospects. Another is superb social programs and educational institutions. Yet another is outstanding libraries, hospitals, and health care facilities and services. And still others are effective transportation and communications systems, numerous pedestrian walkways, suitable land-use and life-work arrangements, a variety of housing styles and types, memorable public squares and spaces, beautiful buildings, excellent restaurants, and exquisite parks and gardens. Think, for example, about what Butchart Gardens, Stanley Park, Point Pleasant Park, and the Royal Botanical Gardens mean to Victoria, Vancouver, Halifax, and Hamilton-Burlington respectively. To this should be added a variety of athletic, commercial, and shopping possibilities, historic buildings and monuments, favourite haunts and hideaways, the availability of farmers' markets like those in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ottawa, and Fredericton, stimulating ambiance, and captivating ways to idle away the day. All these factors, and others, contribute to livable urban environments in Canada, both now and in the future.

This is an area where Canada and Canadians are already demonstrating a great deal of international leadership and doing a significant amount of pioneering and exemplary work. The creation and development of the

Creative City Network of Canada in Vancouver in 1997 paved the way for much of this. For almost twenty years now, this organization has been promoting the need to invest more heavily in the creative potential of Canadians and the development of cultures at the municipal level, as well as conducting numerous workshops and summits across the country to bring people, institutions, and urban experts together to understand how this can be achieved in fact. As a result, this remarkable organization is well-known across the country and around the world for “kick-starting” the movement and commitment to “creative cities.” It is also being actively embraced in other parts of the world that are anxious to capitalize on its expertise and emulate its achievements in this area.

The same holds true for Richard Florida and his pioneering work on urban development. Interestingly, Florida came to Canada from the United States to work at the Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto. He is well known throughout the world for his valuable research and writing on “the creative class” and the dynamic role it plays in urban development. His books and research into this matter in general—and his popular book *The Rise of the Creative Class: How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* in particular—document in detail how creative people in many towns and cities across the country and around the world—artists, designers, activists, inventors, animators, advertisers, architects, doctors, lawyers, town planners, and so forth—are providing the impetus that is required to broaden and deepen developments in all areas of urban life. This is helping to create the wealth, well-being, and sense of belonging, identity, and accomplishment that are required to make towns and cities livable, dynamic, and unique rather than lethargic, static, and dull.

The arts have a crucial role to play as well. For one thing, they bring an enormous amount of joy and happiness into the lives of millions of town and city dwellers across the country and throughout the world by conveying “the highest quality to your moments as they pass,” as Walter Pater so astutely expressed it. Many Canadians will no longer locate in urban settings that lack a diversity of artistic undertakings and institutions, especially art galleries, museums, theatre and dance companies, symphony orchestras, art centres, festivals, concerts, plays, and so forth.

The arts also contribute a great deal to the social cohesion and well-being of Canada's urban environments. They do so through their ability to engage large numbers of people in the artistic process as audience members and active participants. They also contribute significantly to the

economies of these places. This occurs through their ability to generate billions of dollars of investment and expenditure on hotels, restaurants, capital facilities, equipment, ticket sales, clothing, transportation, tourism, and the like. They also attract business, industry, and skilled workers. Like citizens, many corporations will not locate in towns and cities that are devoid of stimulating artistic endeavours and aesthetic experiences.

The arts also make indispensable contributions to the attractiveness of the country's neighbourhoods, towns, and cities, both at present and hopefully to an even greater degree in the future. They do so through a variety of activities and programs, not just the activities and programs of large, professional performing and exhibiting arts organizations. Community arts centres and arts councils, neighbourhood arts festivals, murals on the sides of buildings, buskers on city streets, and the architectural, environmental, horticultural, material, and culinary arts add richness, vitality, originality, diversity, and distinctiveness to Canada's urban landscapes. So do the artistic works of children and young people. Is there anything more delightful than a children's art exhibition at the local arena, a high school play, a youth choir singing at the civic centre, or an annual music night?

To this must be added the contribution the arts make to safety, security, harmony, and cross-cultural fertilization, understanding, interaction, and exchange. The arts bring people, ethnic groups, and cultures together in humane and peaceful rather than violent and inhumane ways. This will be increasingly important for Canada and the world in the years and decades ahead as racial, ethnic, and religious strife, tensions, differences, and conflicts escalate and populations become more unstable, diverse, and heterogeneous in character.

While the arts are capable of making substantial contributions in all these areas, their contributions do not end here. Recent research is revealing that the arts contribute to the development, livability, and authenticity of Canada's towns, cities, and neighbourhoods in other significant ways.

One of these ways is through the energy, vitality, and creativity they inject into all aspects of local life. By creating many of the concepts, contents, contexts, styles, methods, and techniques that are required to initiate and facilitate change and stimulate creative place-making and place-keeping, artists and arts organizations pave the way for many other developments. It is not surprising in this regard that urban planners and policy-makers are increasingly focused on the role that "the creative

industries” play in urban development—creative industries such as the arts, social media, advertising, and micro-enterprises that produce “clustering effects” and “convergent possibilities” that link various segments and sectors of communities, towns, and cities together.

Equally important are the contributions the arts make to revitalization, revival, renewal, transformation, and change. This has been demonstrated time and again in cities across the country in recent years—cities as geographically separated as Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Moncton, Halifax, and St. John’s—where dynamic arts organizations and stimulating cultural hubs, corridors, and districts are injecting new life into areas of these cities after decades of disinterest or neglect. These organizations, corridors, hubs, and districts involve large concentrations and constellations of artistic, athletic, media, heritage, entertainment, commercial and gastronomic resources located in key areas in the downtown core or surrounding suburbs. Inspired by artists, arts administrators, town planners, politicians, developers, and citizens, they are doing a great deal to rejuvenate many Canadian towns and cities.

Consistent with the experience of countless towns and cities across the country and elsewhere in the world, as well as much of the contemporary evidence, there is an interactive, reinforcing, and reciprocal—rather than unilateral and parasitical—relationship between the arts, neighbourhoods, towns, and cities. The arts energize and enrich Canada’s urban centres. In return, these places broaden, deepen, and intensify developments in the arts. All individuals and institutions benefit from this process and the profuse economic, commercial, financial, and non-financial rewards that are derived from this.

Recognition of this fact should open the doors to a dramatic increase in funding for the arts at the municipal level. This funding should come from all levels of governments—federal, provincial, territorial, regional, and municipal—as well as corporations, foundations, and private donors. While funding from capital budgets, partnership programs, and special reserves is important, funding should come principally from annual appropriations and general revenues. *And it should be for operating as well as capital purposes.* Funding that produces physical facilities but does not provide for high-quality programs will not suffice.

There is a great need for some strategic rethinking here. Rather than viewing funding for the arts as an *expenditure* that must be tolerated, it should be viewed as an *investment* that must be embraced. It is an investment capable of producing multiple, cumulative, and long-term

benefits, as well as eliciting and activating other possibilities. Funding that generates clustering and integrative effects and activates other opportunities—such as funding for renewal and revitalization, transformation and change, creation of cultural hubs, cores, and corridors, facilitation of experimental and experiential works, training of skilled workers, and so forth—plays a pivotal role in municipal development and decision-making and is imperative if the objective is to inject new life and vitality into Canada’s neighbourhoods, towns and cities and make them more viable, exciting, and dynamic in the future.

Arts animators, administrators, entrepreneurs, and activists capable of creating new programs and projects, initiating change, and engaging large numbers of people in the artistic process have a particularly important role to play here. There is simply no substitute for well-trained and highly creative people who are skilled at getting people involved in a variety of artistic and cultural activities and stimulating other possibilities. As Charles Landry, one of the world’s leading authorities on the development of the arts and creative cities, states, “wealth in cities is created less by what we produce and more by how we use our brains and add value through knowledge and imagination. Cities now have one crucial resource—their people. Human cleverness, ingenuity, and creativity are replacing location, natural resources, and market access as urban assets. We need to provide the conditions to unleash this.”

Nothing does this better than arts education. Education in this area, especially when it involves outstanding instruction by skilled teachers and is combined with involvement by a variety of community-based organizations and individual artists, provides the foundation for other developments. When the arts are decimated by funding cuts—much as they have been in many educational institutions across the country in recent years—the result is the loss of important programs and courses as well as apathy and neglect. This prevents the arts from making their full contribution to the development of healthy, vigorous, sustainable, and civilized towns and cities.

Not only do music, drama, dance, the visual arts, and other art forms unlock the ingenuity inherent in Canadians at all ages and stages in life, but they also help to ensure that they engage in positive and constructive rather than negative and destructive forms of behaviour. They also provide training opportunities for future generations of artists, as well as educating discerning and discriminating audiences. Without a comprehensive and compelling education in the arts, judiciously designed to produce

concrete outcomes and practical results, it will not be possible for future generations of Canadians to live decent, humane, and fulfilling lives.

Toronto provides an excellent example of the type of artistic renaissance and cultural transformation that is needed and possible in many parts of Canada at the municipal level. This artistic renaissance and cultural transformation is being driven by a broad array of artists and arts organizations and is stimulating a great deal of commercial, industrial, residential, tourist, and entrepreneurial activity. Included in this renaissance and transformation are recent renovations of the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Royal Ontario Museum, and the Ontario College of Art and Design; creation of the Distillery District and Liberty Village in former (and long neglected) industrial areas; creation of a "cultural corridor" along Bloor Street that is linking the Royal Ontario Museum, the Bata Shoe Museum, the Gardiner Museum, the University of Toronto, the Royal Conservatory of Music, Koerner Hall, and other institutions together; and captivating developments in and around Ryerson University that include the remarkable make-over of Maple Leaf Gardens and a host of other innovative accomplishments in the Yonge and Dundas area. These developments are producing myriad social, commercial, educational, and aesthetic benefits for residents and visitors alike.

Artscape is playing a very active and valuable role in this process. This is yet another Canadian organization that is rapidly becoming well-known internationally for its pioneering work in urban development, renewal, revitalization, and reform. This is especially true with respect to the way it is bringing artists and other creative people together with developers, planners, and citizens to create spaces and places that engage citizens fully and actively in a planning and development process designed to meet the needs and interests of people and not just corporations and developers in both capital and operating terms. Commencing with its inventive Wychwood Barns project, Artscape has been successful in creating or contributing to the development of a number of key cultural hubs and corridors in different parts of Toronto. Included are the West Queen West area around Parkdale and Crawford Street, the resurgence and revitalization of Regent Park, and, more recently, the creation of a major cultural hub in the Junction and Weston region that is building bridges between many artistic, social, industrial, developers,' and citizens' coalitions and constituencies.

These developments are being reinforced by the Daniels Corporation, which has been active in Toronto for many years in creating and building

condominiums intimately connected with the arts and culture, such as the redevelopment of Regent Park in conjunction with Toronto Community Housing. One of its most recent projects is the City of the Arts located in the Toronto Waterfront area at the foot of Jarvis Street and Queens Quay. It is providing its Lighthouse Tower and other residents with a convenient “connectivity package” that includes a variety of benefits provided by Artscape, the Toronto International Film Festival, and North by North West, such as passes to art galleries, workshops, and presentations by artists, film screenings, exclusive productions, and opening night celebrations. This is helping to make condominium life more enjoyable than it was in the past.

These and other developments have put Toronto on the international map as one of the most stimulating, interesting, and enjoyable places in the world in which to live and work. Over the last several decades and particularly during the last few years, Toronto has been recognized as one of the most livable cities in the world—if not *the* most livable—by the United Nations, The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Metropolis* magazine, Mercer’s Quality of Life Ranking, and others. Most rankings are based on a variety of criteria, such as safety, security, education, health care, environment, recreation, political stability, walkability, preservation of heritage sites, and others.

Toronto was also ranked “the best city in the world for youth” in a survey commissioned by the New York-based Citi Foundation. This survey delved deeply into employment and growth statistics in addition to the strength of government programs, educational institutions, and entrepreneurial opportunities for people in the 18-to-25 age range. It revealed that Toronto was the most effective city in the world in terms of providing jobs, business opportunities, and entrepreneurial possibilities for young people. This is one of the most pressing requirements in Canada and the world today because of the high rate of occupational turnover, unemployment, underemployment, and precarious employment among youth.

Developments similar to those in Toronto are taking place in other Canadian cities such as Montreal, Vancouver, and Calgary that also rank high on international rankings and ratings. Montreal, for instance, is quickly acquiring a reputation as one of the most attractive and enjoyable cities in the world in which to live and work (as well as visit), due primarily to the development of the Quartier des Spectacles, which includes La Vitrine, Place des Arts, the Musée d’Art contemporaine de Montréal, as well as equally important developments in Old Montreal like the well-known

Notre Dame Basilica, Montreal Museum of Archaeology and History, Centre d'histoire de Montréal, Arsenal Contemporary Arts, and, more recently, the Cité Mémoire, which enables residents and tourists alike to journey through time by means of the project's after-dark tableaux. This complements such cherished institutions and landmarks in this city as the McCord Museum, the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Sainte Catherine Street, Galeria MX, and the Montreal Arts Council, which is one of the oldest and most successful and active arts councils in Canada and the world.

In recent years, this has been enhanced by the development of a great deal of street art and murals, thereby contributing to the aesthetic appeal and character of Montreal. Particularly important in this regard are developments by such organizations as Être Avec Toi (Ê.A.T), which is composed largely of a “who's who” of famous graffiti and street artists from Montreal and other parts of the world, as well as MASSIVart Mural Festival, which is concerned largely with painting murals on the sides of buildings and other significant structures. Due to developments like this, Montreal was the first Canadian city to be added to Google's street art gallery with more than 150 major murals in place, thereby contributing to Montreal's rapidly evolving reputation as an “artistic city” of major importance and considerable stature in the world.

Given the contributions the arts and culture make to the development of neighbourhoods, towns, and cities in all parts of the country—many of which strike at the heart and soul of what urban life, living, and development are all about, both at present and even more so in the future—the role of the arts and culture in Canada's municipal development should be seen in a new light. Rather than being viewed as “the icing on the cake” and “an afterthought,” as has all too often been the case, the arts and culture should be viewed as the *centrepiece* and *spearhead* needed to propel Canada's neighbourhoods, towns, and cities to lofty heights.

This is especially true for culture. Seeing and treating culture in this way is consistent with conclusions arrived at recently by a number of international organizations and agencies, such as Agenda 21 and the Global Task Force on Local and Regional Governments. This is what the Task Force had to say about culture in its 2014 report: “*Culture will be key to the success of sustainable development policies, as driver and enabler of development and people-centered societies. A holistic and integrated approach to development needs to take creativity, heritage, knowledge, and diversity into account. Poverty is not just a question of material con-*

ditions and income, but also the lack of capabilities and opportunities in cultural terms.”

These sentiments were reinforced by three internationally known and distinguished experts on culture and sustainable urban development—Nancy Duxbury, Jyoti Hosagrahar, and Jordi Pascual—in a 2016 paper, “Why Must Culture Be at the Heart of Sustainable Urban Development?” Here is what these authors had to say about this matter: “In the context of defining a new people-centred and planet-sensitive sustainable development agenda, cities are transformative platforms. To create a new culturally sensitive urban development model, the role of cultural policies and values in sustainable development must now be recognized, supported, and integrated into planning and policy in a systematic and comprehensive way.”

The authors went on to single out local cultures for special treatment and attention in a companion piece entitled “How Local Cultures Contribute to the Sustainable Development of Cities.” Their thoughts on this matter resonate strongly with the point made earlier that understanding and developing local cultures is the key to urban development in the future: “Local cultures encompass the traditional, long-standing, and evolving cultures of a territory as well as the cultures of new arrivals to the area—and the evolutionary and hybrid transformations that evolve from living and creating within culturally diverse contexts. Local cultural vitality and its dynamic transmission are desirable ends in themselves.” The authors go on to say, “We all need to learn about the past of our city, so that we can ‘own’ it and propel this identity and local knowledge into the future. Local cultures allow citizens to gain ownership of the city, and to meet and learn from one another—in short, culture is a means through which citizens feel they belong to their city.”

It follows that if Canada’s neighbourhoods, towns, and cities are to be exciting places in which to live, work, and enjoy life to the fullest extent in the future, it will be necessary to broaden, deepen, and intensify municipal cultural development well beyond its present level.

Many resources will have to be created and cultivated to make this a reality. These resources have to do with coming to grips with environmental deterioration, poverty, homelessness, unemployment, lack of suitable and affordable housing, the aging population, escalating religious and ethnic tensions and divides, racial prejudice, complex transportation and communications problems, insufficient and crumbling infrastructure, and so forth.

These resources are urgently needed to address environmental problems, upgrade and expand transportation and communications systems, eradicate poverty and homelessness, enhance ethnic, racial, and religious tolerance, and improve the welfare and well-being of Canadian citizens. They are also required to ensure greater emergency preparedness and training on the part of police forces, hospitals, governments, schools, and voluntary organizations, as well as to create many more facilities, programs, and cures for people suffering from debilitating diseases and illnesses, to integrate immigrants, refugees, and newcomers more fully into Canadian society and culture, and to make life and living enjoyable for all people. If children, young people, adults, and seniors do not feel safe in their homes, communities, streets, subways, buses, and neighbourhoods—and if they do not feel secure in the places where they live, work, worship, and study—no amount of resources deployed in other areas or at other levels will make up the difference.

Some fundamental changes will be required in the way Canada's towns and cities are financed and administered in the future if these and other requirements are to be met. Municipal governments currently lack the constitutional authority, financial resources, taxation powers, and institutional mechanisms that are needed. There is an old adage in Canada that the federal government has the money, the provincial governments have the power, and the municipal governments have the problems. There is a great deal of truth to this. While battles are constantly being waged between the federal and provincial governments over money and power, municipal governments are compelled to struggle with a whole host of difficult problems. However, as more Canadians look to municipal governments to solve their problems and when federal and provincial governments expect municipal governments to deal with a rapidly expanding array of complex environmental, social, safety, security, health, and transportation issues, municipal governments find themselves in an awkward and challenging position. With limited ability to raise revenues and more demands and responsibilities being placed on them, municipal governments face the worst of all possible worlds. This problem can be traced back to the British North America Act of 1867, which made municipalities the responsibility of the provinces and territories and gave them few powers of their own. While this worked well enough when the country was primarily rural and agrarian in nature, it is no longer desirable or effective now that three-quarters of the Canadian population is living in towns and cities.

This is why there have been strong and vocal demands in recent years for a “new deal for cities” and a very different system of municipal financing, administration, and development in the future. These demands are being voiced by an expanding number of municipal planners, policy-makers, civic servants, and local politicians, as well as by newspapers, community groups, and some corporate leaders. They are also being voiced in numerous studies and reports, such as those conducted by the Conference Board of Canada, the Urban Development Institute, the Canadian Urban Institute, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and others. The consensus in these studies, reports, and organizations is clear and unequivocal. Without a new system for dealing with municipal finance, governance, and management, Canada will pay a steep price. As Anne Golden, former head of the Conference Board of Canada, once said, “The plight of cities is not simply a problem for urban dwellers. How effectively Canadian cities work determines the overall success of Canada.”

The short-term solution to this problem is to increase municipal revenues. This can be done in a number of ways. The most obvious way is through increased property taxes, especially as property values have risen much more rapidly than the amount collected in property taxes in recent years. Other ways to increase municipal revenues include increased user fees on publicly owned and operated buildings, programs, and services such as waste collection, treatment, and disposal; the creation of more lotteries and similar fund-raising schemes; and the selling off of municipal assets and properties. Still other ways include increased taxes on corporations and developers, as well as larger transfers of funds from the other levels of government.

Of these alternatives, many citizens and municipal politicians prefer increased transfers from other levels of government. There is a reason for this. Many Canadians and municipal politicians feel that property taxes are already too high—although this will have to be revisited in the future if present trends concerning the value of people’s properties continue—and municipal governments depend too heavily on this source, since more than half of their revenue comes from taxes on property. As well, there are limits to how much revenue can be generated through user fees, licensing fees, lotteries, and so on. In addition, many Canadians are reluctant to see municipalities rely more heavily on raising taxes on corporations and developers because they think this would put corporations and developers in an even stronger position to influence municipal policies.

This explains why more funding from the other levels of government is

the most attractive alternative, especially in the short term. It is also the case that the federal and provincial governments have in recent years downloaded numerous programs and responsibilities to municipal governments and therefore should be paying a much greater share of the cost. There are many examples of such downloading. Over the last few decades, the federal government has retreated from the leadership role it once played in providing funding for social housing, largely as a result of attempts to rein in budgetary deficits. It also placed eligibility restrictions on Employment Insurance and eliminated the Canada Assistance Plan, the only national anti-poverty program that was cost-shared with the provincial, territorial, and municipal governments. The provincial governments have likewise disengaged from many social responsibilities and downloaded programs to the municipalities with little or no compensation in return. This has caused a "social deficit" and "infrastructure gap" that is a sore point among most municipal leaders and governments today.

Another possibility is for municipal governments to sign more partnership and cost-sharing arrangements with other levels of government. There have been a number of examples of such agreements, including the Urban Development Agreement that was signed between the city of Vancouver, the province of British Columbia, and the federal government to cover various economic, social, and community development costs in Vancouver, as well as the Winnipeg Development Agreement between the city of Winnipeg, the province of Manitoba, and the federal government to promote downtown revitalization and create an employment equity program that focused on jobs and the training of Indigenous groups, individuals with disabilities, visible minorities, and women.

As these possibilities suggest, it is not difficult to visualize new partnership and cost-sharing agreements that could be worked out to advantage between the federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to address a panorama of possibilities, concerns, and needs at the municipal level. Another viable possibility would be for the other two levels of governments to provide municipalities with GST rebates for such programs as green infrastructure projects, water and sewage treatment, renewable energy generation and energy control systems, public transit, and the development of more energy-efficient homes, factories, buildings, and offices.

As valuable as these solutions may be in the short term, there is no substitute for putting municipal governments on a much firmer long-term

financial foundation. If Canadian municipalities are to remain competitive with their counterparts elsewhere in the world, they need to be able to access a much larger share of the public financial pie in the future. This should come from legislative changes that make it possible, for instance, for municipal governments to share fuel, gasoline, and sales taxes, as well as to impose taxes of their own on the sale of alcohol and tobacco as well as on institutions such as hotels, restaurants, and retail establishments that benefit immensely from municipal services but pay little of the cost of providing these developments and services. The experience with similar arrangements in the United States and many European countries indicates that when municipal governments possess the authority to impose taxes like these and actually do so in fact, the entire community benefits from the impetus this provides to commercial, industrial, and tourist development and the strengthening of local economies and cultures.

While increasing the tax-levying capacity of municipal governments is a necessary step in the right direction, ultimately it may be necessary to change the legislative arrangements that govern the relationship of the country's federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments. A good example of this was the willingness of the Ontario government in recent years to empower cities to require builders to include affordable housing in all new residential developments. This "inclusionary zoning capacity," as it was called, required developers to set aside a certain percentage of all new units for low- and moderate-income households as part of the affordable housing strategy devised by the provincial government.

What is also required is a much more inclusive and cooperative approach to municipal planning, policy, and decision-making in the future. In the past, this approach has often been partial, partisan, piecemeal, and exclusive, rather than systematic, equitable, comprehensive, and sustainable. This must change. If Canada's neighbourhoods, towns, and cities are to prosper and be livable in the decades ahead, the emphasis will have to be on creating urban centres that possess a rich and diverse array of cultural resources and opportunities that are fully integrated into Canadian culture and accessible to all Canadians.

What we are talking about here is "the new urbanism" and "smart growth." This is based on taking a cultural and holistic approach—rather than a partial and specialized approach—to municipal planning, policy, and decision-making. The emphasis should be on building neighbourhoods, towns, and cities that are inclusive and creative rather than segregated, segmented, and imitative. This means creating urban spaces

capable of conserving and not only consuming resources, protecting the natural environment and local habitats rather than destroying them, and refreshing and revitalizing people at every opportunity. This can only be achieved by focusing on the entire “culturescapes”^{*} of the country’s neighbourhoods, towns, and cities and consequently the collective statements they make to themselves and the rest of the world.

Seen from this perspective, Canada’s urban environments really are cultures composed of many interrelated and diverse parts—economic, social, environmental, recreational, technological, scientific, educational, artistic, spiritual, and the like. Not only do these parts vary significantly from one another in many ways, but also they vary significantly in the way they are combined together to form wholes and overall ways of life. To be effective, all the many different parts must function effectively and be fully integrated into the whole, and harmonious relationships must be established between and among these parts. This is, in the final analysis, the essence of “livability,” today and even more so in the future. Livability encompasses the individual and collective experiences, feelings, and fulfillment that result when people live together, share the same space together, inspire each other, and imprint their needs, interests, ideas, and actions on a very specific piece of the world’s geography.

It follows from this that culture and cultures enter into municipal development and decision-making in a very different way than all other activities. Whereas all other activities are parts of the whole—notes in the melody, so to speak—culture and cultures are the cement that binds all the various parts together to form wholes that are greater than the parts and the sum of the parts. This is what makes it possible to talk about the cultures of Canada’s towns and cities and mean something profound, powerful, and practical by this. It is also what makes culture *the* most important factor in municipal development and decision-making. It is culture in general—and cultural cohesion, bonding, and creativity in particular—that ensure that Canada’s urban environments are stimulating and coherent wholes, rather than merely random, disconnected, and unrelated parts.

Every individual and institution in Canada has a valuable role to play in this process. This includes teachers, social workers, athletes, artists, charitable organizations, environmental agencies, and educational institutions

^{*} The concept of culturescapes is discussed in detail in my book *The Age of Culture* (Rock’s Mills Press, 2014).

as well as lawyers, politicians, business executives, corporations, and governments. It is the sum total of all individuals and institutions in Canada—and especially their efforts, initiatives, and actions—that will determine the quality and state of the country’s neighbourhoods, towns, and cities in the future. This is why the exemplary role that Canada is capable of playing in the world of the future should begin at the municipal level in the geographical, cultural, and public sense. If it doesn’t work at that level, it likely won’t work at any other level.