



THE STATE OF NATIONAL URBAN POLICY IN CANADA

Name of national urban policy	No national urban policy – sectoral and subnational policies relevant to urban development do exist
Date of national urban policy	Not applicable
Explicit or partial	Not applicable
Legal status (e.g. act of the legislature, executive order, administrative guidance, etc.)	Not applicable
Previous/secondary policies	<i>Caucus Task Force on Urban Issues 2001; Urban Development Agreements 1995</i>
Stage of development	Feasibility
How developed (e.g. through a participatory/stakeholder process, or act of parliament, etc.)	Not applicable
Implementing body	National/federal, subnational/provincial and territorial governments with cities and municipalities
Government system	Federal
Type of national urban agency	Subnational agency: metropolitan/local authority
Implementation mechanism (e.g. committee, involvement of multiple agencies, national-local co-ordination)	Not applicable

Current national urban policy

Canada does not have a national urban policy, as cities and municipalities are a provincial responsibility (OECD, 2015). Policies related to urban development are implemented through national sectoral policies and through subnational policies. Federal/provincial/territorial First Ministers Conferences or Meetings (FMMs) are held regularly to exchange information and ideas, and often provide the opportunity for governments to find common purposes and chart general policy directions. Much of the work in intergovernmental relations takes place in a growing number of councils of federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for developing co-operation in specific policy sectors, from the environment to social policy.

The federal government sectors that affect urban development include infrastructure, monetary, economic and housing policy (through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) (UN-Habitat, 2015). Infrastructure Canada contributes indirectly to urban development by serving as a key infrastructure funding partner, working with provinces, territories, municipalities, the private sector and non-profit organisations, as well as other federal departments (OECD, 2015). It assists municipalities by providing funding for local infrastructure projects through the Federal Gas Tax Fund (GTF) which is a legislated permanent source of federal funding for municipalities. Other federal departments, such as the Regional Development Agencies* (RDAs), also contribute to the urban development by assuming the leadership in regional economic development. Through their mandates, RDAs contribute to urban economic development by supporting cities' innovation eco-systems and by attracting foreign direct investment. RDAs also play an important role in local economic intelligence gathering and policy advocacy for the inclusion of a regional perspective in national policy making.

The 2016 national budget plan does include urban-related investments in public transit, waste and wastewater services, and affordable housing (McGregor, 2016). Under this plan, during summer 2016, the Prime Minister of Canada and the premiers of the provinces of British Columbia, Québec, Alberta and Nova Scotia announced a series of new infrastructure agreements, in particular in the areas of public transit and water.

Previous national urban policy and developments

Starting in 1995, the federal government established Urban Development Agreements with some cities in the Western provinces. These agreements aimed to address issues unique to each city by improving co-ordination among the federal, provincial and municipal governments (OECD, 2010). However, all Urban Development Agreements had been terminated by 2010 (Doberstein, 2011). An Urban Aboriginal Strategy was developed in 1997 to respond to the needs of Aboriginal people living in key urban centres. Through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, the Government of Canada aims to increase the participation of indigenous peoples in the economy.

In 2001, the Prime Minister's Caucus Task Force on Urban Issues recommended that Canada establish a national "urban strategy", a long-term funding stream for affordable housing, transit and infrastructure, and an urban ministry. While the suggestion of an urban ministry was rejected because cities are under the responsibility of provinces, the Task Force's recommendations did influence subsequent infrastructure policy (Spicer, 2015). In December 2003, the Prime Minister created a Cities Secretariat within the Privy Council Office and gave the Parliamentary Secretary special responsibilities for cities. In July 2004, the Cities Secretariat was combined with Infrastructure Canada. As well, the government established an External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities. In 2004/05 "New Deals" for cities and communities were put in place. The objectives were to ensure predictable long-term funding for communities of all sizes, provide more effective programme support for infrastructure and social priorities, give communities a stronger voice, and to improve the co-operation between federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments. To meet these objectives, municipalities were given additional resources, both through larger shares of taxes and higher transfers. In addition, the government agreed to consult formally with municipal representatives prior to every federal budget.

NOTE

* There are six RDAs in Canada: the Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD), the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), the Canada Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec (CED), the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario), the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor) and the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario (FedNor). The six RDA have recently been all grouped under the responsibility of the Innovation Science Economic Development (ISED) portfolio.

Bibliography

- Canada's Major Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade (2010), "A call for a National Urban Strategy Targeted Toward Canada's Largest Urban Centres", p.3, <http://halifaxchamber.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/A-Call-for-a-National-Urban-Strategy-Targeted-Toward-Canada%E2%80%99s-Largest-Urban-Centres-Nov-2010.pdf> (accessed 17 August 2016).
- Dewing M., W.R. Yound and E. Tolley (2006), "Municipalities, the Constitution, and the Canadian Federal System", www.lop.parl.gc.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/bp276-e.htm (accessed 17 August 2016).
- Doberstein, C. (2011), "Institutional creation and death: Urban development agreements in Canada", *Journal of Urban Affairs*, Vol. 33(5), pp. 529-548, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9906.2011.00566.x>.
- Dodson, J. et al. (2017, forthcoming), *The Global State of National Urban Policy*, prepared for UN-Habitat, April 2016, draft.
- McGregor, J. (2016), "Federal budget 2016: Liberals push deficit to spend big on families, cities", *CBC News*, 22 March 2016, CBC/Radio-Canada, Ottawa, www.cbc.ca/news/politics/federal-budget-2016-main-1.3501802 (accessed 31 May 2016).
- OECD (2015), "Regional Outlook Survey Results: Canada", unpublished.
- Office of the Prime Minister (2016a), "Prime Minister announces new infrastructure agreement with British Columbia", <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/06/16/prime-minister-announces-new-infrastructure-agreement-british-columbia> (accessed 17 August 2016).
- Office of the Prime Minister (2016b), "Prime Minister of Canada and the Premier of Quebec announces a new infrastructure agreement", <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/07/05/prime-minister-canada-and-premier-quebec-announce-new-infrastructure-agreement> (accessed 17 August 2016).
- Spicer, Z. (2015), "With a propensity of Liberal MPs representing major urban centres, expect the Liberal Party's priorities to reflect those of Canada's urban populations", *Policy Options*, 30 October 2015, Montreal, <http://policyoptions.irpp.org/2015/10/30/will-trudeaus-urban-agenda-look-like/> (accessed 31 May 2016).
- UN Habitat (2017, forthcoming). *A Consolidated Report of Regional National Urban Policy Reviews (Africa, Arab States, Asia and Pacific Europe and North America, Latin America and the Caribbean)*, Nairobi: UN Habitat.
- UN-Habitat (2017, forthcoming), "NUP Regional Report: Western and Eastern Europe and North America." Nairobi: UN Habitat.