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THE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

A Statement to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, on June 8, 1972, by the Honourable Victor Goldbloom, Minister of Environment for the Province of Quebec.

Man's environment has two essential components: the natural environment, and the one which man has constructed. In all societies, man is becoming more and more urbanized. It is, therefore, incumbent upon him, as he domesticates nature in his cities, to learn to respect it and to establish his cities in better relationship with the natural environment.

These two aspects of urban ecology apply to all human communities throughout the world. In fact, all urban settlements are essentially similar, and the social problems brought about by urbanization are common to all: anonymity, stress, solitude, cultural shock, promiscuity, alienation, etc. The same is true of ecological problems.

Indeed, Canada, through its own experience, has become convinced that the deterioration of the environment is in large part related to urbanization. It is in and from the major concentrations of population that pollution loads arise which threaten to overwhelm ecosystems. It is man, rather than the environment, that must be perceived as the critical and determining element.

Basically, each city, town or village is a group of men, women and children, living in close proximity to one another in order to increase their potential contacts, to widen the scope of their interrelations and to improve the quality of their economic development. Man has built cities for many reasons, among them to satisfy his basic need to communicate with others. The resulting constructed environment is nothing more than a complex of facilities, a series of assist mechanisms to simplify and amplify individual activities. These mechanisms are like tools; we wish them to be efficient, and we evaluate their efficiency according to the degree of communication or productivity which they make possible. At present, urban systems are not only of low efficiency but very often have a negative effect, even to the point of interfering with human communication.

It goes without saying that efficiency alone is not enough. In building urban systems, man surrounds himself with a constructed environment which influences his behaviour, for better or for worse. Unfortunately, in