

*Urban Affairs—Budget Forecast*

In the first months of its mandate, the urban affairs ministry addressed itself to creating an effective organization, defining goals and strategies, setting priorities and initiating its functions. These tasks have been accomplished but they are subject to continuing review and adaptation to ensure a continuing effective response to urban issues. The question of goals and strategy is of particular importance to a policy ministry because that really is what its mandate is all about.

The question of what urban future or futures is the correct one for Canada has no easy answer. The urban affairs ministry and the minister are addressing themselves to the drafting of options for the urban future from which Canadians can make a choice. Approximately three-quarters of the Canadian population is now urbanized, and in less than 30 years this percentage will be over 90 per cent. Much of that growth will put the vast majority of Canadians within the perimeters of three or four large centres. The questions for us, and there are many, include the following: Should present urbanization trends be allowed to continue? What are the economic, social and political consequences of an almost totally urbanized population? What will happen to national unity and the national purpose? What will happen to the quality of urban life? There are no simple or fast answers to these questions. They involve personal values, priorities and what trade-offs we are willing to make to achieve a satisfactory urban future, but the ministry is tackling these and other policy issues.

The ministry began its existence with a strong sense of urgency in creating the kind of information and institutional response to enable the necessary accommodation to take place. That is the central direction of its policy development, research and coordinating functions. As I said earlier, the objective of this ministry is to lay the options in the budgets, which are in the motion, and which will be and are being directed toward a policy development, before us.

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The efforts of the ministry are being directed toward the hiring of personnel for the preparation of long-term policies. The major emphasis in the policy is the development of long-term urban objectives. When elaborated, these will provide the focal points for the planning of urban strategies, policies and programs at the federal level and means of working out productive relationships with the provinces. Just as urban objectives will provide a basis for policy options over the longer term, a framework for urban strategy is being studied within the ministry to provide short-term working guidelines for the federal government over the next ten years.

There are other, more narrowly defined projects under way on policy development. These are projects which deal with specific and continuing sectoral issues. For example, transportation in urban centres is under study preparatory to a national trilevel consultation in Edmonton which will take place next month, and a measure to stimulate railway relocation, which was proposed last fall, will be introduced in the House. This program, as the minister has stated on a number of occasions, will have a major impact on urban centres in terms of what it will potentially be able to do in the way of rejuvenating core areas, opening

[Mr. Watson.]

up green spaces in the centre of cities and making available to cities land for housing, services and recreation facilities.

The ministry is working on the policy implications of railway relocation as part of the necessary work-up of ideas prior to introduction of this measure. Practical experience on the issues involved in railway relocation is being gained through the trilevel committee in Winnipeg where railway relocation as envisaged by the federally-financed Winnipeg rail study is a major topic on the agenda of the trilevel action group.

A special task force within the policy branch of the ministry is analysing the short-range factors involved in municipal finance. This is another area that concerns a large number of members of parliament when we see the state of finances of most of our municipalities. Public concern over the availability and use of urban land has led to the initiation of a policy study of possible federal action in regard to federally-owned land, and an announcement on this can be expected in the near future.

The ministry is examining the development of policy proposals to guide the creation of new communities and the managing of the built-in environment in terms of scientific knowledge and technology. Policy development is especially concerned with preparations for the 1973 national trilevel consultation which takes place this fall. The first consultation was starting point. The second will, I am confident, get deeper into the more substantive issues of intergovernmental co-ordination and consultation on urban affairs policies. We are working with this in mind to prepare the federal position. I should note that the urban affairs ministry does not participate in these trilevel consultations by itself: it co-ordinates a federal team effort which includes a number of federal departments, namely, the Department of Transport, DREE, etc.

On the question of urban research, I would like to put on the record a few details. Research is a vital function of the ministry. The research program now under way is guided by certain prerequisites. It must be issue-oriented, it must have sound theoretical and analytical foundations, and it must be applicable to Canadian needs. The research projects have been grouped into a number of broad theme areas related to the scope of individual projects and to the central urban objectives of the ministry. These theme groups include: urban growth and demography, program impact indicators, technology and the environment, the core city, land and housing markets, urban environmental quality, urban government, urban public economy, and urban information and values and systems.

These groups are not meant to be exclusive or to indicate the limits of ministry research activities. Rather, they indicate the current work being undertaken and the more immediate demands for knowledge within the ministry. There are many individual projects within these broad fields. There is, for example, the \$232,000 research contract with University of Toronto researchers to analyse the financial plight of Canadian cities. This is one of the ministry's largest external research contracts. We all know that there is more and more pressure on municipalities for more and better services and yet the municipal dollar keeps shrinking. We must find ways to provide more money for municipalities.