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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

most urban areas on our planet, the quality of the environment does not contribute as much as it could, and should, to man's cultural and social development.

We have, therefore, two responsibilities, the one quantitative and technical and the other qualitative and human. They cannot be separated and are mutually complementary; they constitute in fact a single challenge to be faced. Canada, in common with most other nations, is fully aware of the magnitude, the urgency and the complexity of what needs to be accomplished in planning and in management....

On its own part, conscious of its need to find solutions for human settlement problems on its own territory, Canada, in June 1971, established a Ministry of State for Urban Affairs. This department has the authority to undertake research in the field of urban affairs, to elaborate and implement policies of urban development and to co-ordinate the actions of the main participants in the urban scene. In addition, each of the ten provinces has a department of municipal affairs and has created a variety of planning bodies, and each of our principal cities has its urban planning service.

With respect to the growth and distribution of the world's population, Canada recognizes the necessity of further studies in this field and invites all countries to intensify their preparations for the United Nations Conference on Population, scheduled for 1974. Canada considers it a duty to participate actively in this effort.

Canada recognizes that research on problems of water supply, sewage treatment and waste disposal has high priority in tropical and semi-tropical areas, but asks this conference to recognize also the importance of such questions and of comparable research in Arctic and sub-Arctic regions.

Canada is also prepared to support the United Nations in its search for a global system of detection and anticipation of natural disasters. Although Canada recognizes the difficulties of such a task, especially as regards the exchange of information which may have strategic implications, it is prepared to participate in such studies as it has done all along.

Among the proposals for international action, Recommendation 137, entitled "International Program for Environmental Improvement Areas", in our view deserves special attention. This proposal to institute an international program whereby designated zones would be the object of a concentrated and sustained effort to improve their environment offers a rare opportunity to innovate, to try new formulas for planning and development and to test their effectiveness.

By adopting this proposal, the Stockholm Conference would set in motion a planning process, not only among nations interested in establishing such areas in their own territory but also in the United Nations Secretariat itself. Groups of experts might be brought together for consultation on conception and management. Their studies, as well as contacts made by the Secretariat with nations willing to participate in the program, would make it

easier for governments to decide on the choice of zones, on priorities and on strategies of implementation. An information-exchange system should also be organized. Canada would like to offer a major contribution to the success of this whole undertaking.

It may be expected that at some time in the future the need will be felt for an international conference at which interested countries would wish to evaluate the program and seek agreement on many points. Such a conference would also help to convince world opinion of the value of such a program based on pilot and experimental projects throughout the world.

Canada is already involved, at all levels of government and through continuing co-operation between them, in experimental projects in human settlements. One of our major considerations is the possibility of reducing urban needs for energy, and we intend to carry forward research in this field.

With a view, therefore, to ensuring the success of the program proposed in Recommendation 137, Canada proposes the holding of a United Nations Conference on Pilot Projects in Human Settlements. Canada would be pleased to organize such a conference and to act as host country, and suggests that it be held in 1975.

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