

CANADIAN WOMEN AND CITIES

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Canada



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Executive Summary

This document puts forward a Canadian position on the OECD proposal to hold a conference on Women and the City. The paper is based on the idea that Canada will best be able to contribute to the purpose of this conference by describing its "best practices" in a limited number of areas of particular innovation.

The central focus of the document is therefore a brief description of existing practices in these three areas: women's housing as a continuum, urban safety, and the use of human rights legislation to expand women's accessibility to urban services and facilities.

The first section of this paper describes the context within which these "best practices" were developed in Canada. This contextual material is of two kinds: statistical material relating to women in Canada and a description of the social and political context for urban policy-making. We also look to the future by thinking about the ways in which current research is leading us to reconceptualize the city.

In addition to describing the three areas of Canadian best practice, we have included ten specific case study proposals relating to these three areas. These proposals for case studies correspond to requested input on the conference proposal.

Résumé

Ce document présente la position canadienne relative à la proposition de l'OCDE d'organiser une conférence sur le thème : Les femmes et la ville. L'article est fondé sur le concept que le Canada pourrait contribuer à cette conférence en décrivant ses «meilleures pratiques» dans un nombre limité de domaines d'intérêt particulier.

L'objet du document est donc de fournir une brève description des pratiques existantes dans les trois domaines suivants : évolution du logement des femmes, sécurité en région urbaine et utilisation de la législation sur les droits de l'homme en vue d'accroître l'accessibilité des femmes aux installations et aux services urbains.

La première partie de l'article décrit le contexte dans lequel ces «meilleures pratiques» ont évolué au Canada. Deux genres de documentation sont utilisées : des statistiques sur les femmes au Canada et la description du contexte social et politique de l'élaboration des décisions dans les milieux urbains. On y examine en outre des perspectives d'avenir en étudiant comment la recherche actuelle se traduira par une nouvelle conception de la région urbaine.

Outre la description des trois domaines de meilleures pratiques au Canada, on y propose dix études de cas connexes. Ces dernières répondent à la demande d'observations sur la proposition relative à la conférence.

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1. Introduction

This document puts forward a selection of Canadian "best practices" in the area of women and cities. It describes three policy areas: a continuum of women's housing, policy initiatives relating to urban safety and the use of human rights legislation to expand the accessibility of urban services and facilities to women.

In order to be clear about why these areas have emerged in Canada, this document also provides a context for the policy areas described. This contextual material is of two kinds: a statistical profile of Canadian women and a description of the social and political context for urban policy making. In addition to briefly describing the three policy areas chosen, suggestions are made for more detailed case studies to document the social, political, economic and administrative processes at work in the various areas.

Finally, we point the way to the future in looking at the ways in which current research is reshaping the way we think about cities, about the work that goes on in cities and about the ways lives are lived in cities.

It is important to emphasize the consequences of our decision to focus on a small number of Canada's "best practice" examples. This was done because it was felt to be the most useful format for international sharing of national and local experiences - we would learn most from other countries' best practices, from what they felt were their most innovative policy areas, and therefore this is what we should put forward from Canada. But this has consequences that are sometimes uneasy to live with. There are all kinds of interesting policies that we would like to discuss but which do not fit within the three areas. On the other hand, it means one is only talking of successes and not of failures and these can be very useful to examine. Despite these feelings of unease, we maintained our preference for the model of presenting a limited number of policy areas felt to be Canadian best practice.

Canadian women and women's organizations are making some important contributions in their efforts to develop sustainable, human scale urban environments. Among other substantial contributions, they have built specialized housing, challenged unsafe features of cities while identifying safer alternatives, and have begun to employ human rights legislation to further challenge the basis upon which urban development decisions are made. Women have done so, in part, by taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by the structure of the Canadian state and its democratic traditions (O'Neill and Sutherland, 1990), and in part, by taking seriously insights developed within feminist organizations (Adamson, 1988). Before describing three areas of innovative practice that may be of use to urban policy makers in other countries, it is important to set the scene by highlighting some major characteristics of the Canadian experience. These involve first, the manner in which women activists have taken advantage of the opportunities, albeit limited and somewhat fraught ones, to establish partnerships with government resources; second, the careful nurturing of feminist insights to maintain a link between theory and practice; and arising out of the second is the growing, but still very modest, recognition that differences among women - in terms of "race", ethnicity, class, ability, sexual orientation -- have not been addressed at all adequately.

2. Context

A. Statistical profile on Canadian women and cities Some general statistics on women in Canada

Women in the labour force and their contribution to the formal economy

The growth of two-earner families has been one of the most important socio-economic changes in Canadian society, especially over the past two decades (Rose and Wexler, 1993). In 1993 almost 61% of married women in Canada were in the paid labour force, up from 50% in 1981 (StatsCan, Historical Labour Force Statistics 1993, cat. 71-201). The most spectacular increases in women's labour force activity took place among mothers in two-parent families with pre-school children: by 1991, almost 57% were employed, over 2/3 of them full-time.

Women's earnings have become increasingly essential to the family economy. The 1980s were characterized by declines in average male earnings (controlling for the cost of living) and over half of Canadian two-earner families would have fallen into poverty during this period had it not been for the contribution made by wives' earnings (Moore, 1989).

Women's paid work is central to the nation's economy. Women accounted for 48% of the workforce in 1991 (StatsCan, 1993, Women in the Workplace, 2nd edn., cat. 71-534) and for 39% of fulltime, full-year workers (Brenda Baxter/CMHC compilation of published stats.). Women's employment incomes accounted for 33% of all employment income earned in 1990, up from 30% in 1985 (StatsCan, Census of 1991, cat. 93-932). However, although Canadian women have made progress in closing the gender gap in earnings, they still earned much less than men: in 1990, among full-year, full-time workers, women's earnings averaged 67% of those of men (Baxter/CMHC).

Women have also increasingly been creating their own jobs: self-employment increased three times as fast among women as among men from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s (Baxter/CMHC). However, women still only represented 29% of all those self-employed in 1990, and they were more likely to own very small, unincorporated businesses (StatsCan, cat. 71-534, Table 1.13).

Living arrangements, housing tenure and housing need

Canadian households have become very diverse in their structure and the growth of women-headed households is a major element of this trend. In 1990, for instance, among families where all children were under 18, some 532 000 or over 15% were headed by a female lone-parent. Of these, nearly three-quarters lived on their own (compared with 93% of two parent families with all children under 18); the rest shared accommodation with other census families. An estimated 658 000 elderly women (compared to 210 000 elderly men) and 764 000 non-elderly women (compared to 852 000 men) lived alone (StatsCan, Family Incomes: Census Families 1991, cat. 13-208, Text Table 1).

The 1991 census indicates that just over 3 million Canadian women were the primary financial maintainers of their households. This category is a diverse group, since it includes lone parent families and those where the husband is not employed or is not a major

contributor to household income, as well as women who live alone. (Table 1, (drawn from StatsCan, Census of 1991, cat. 93-330, Table 2) can thus give only a general indication of the housing situations of households maintained by women compared to those maintained by men. The rapid development of the condominium tenure form in recent years has undoubtedly helped more women - headed households to own their own homes (see Table 1). However, it is notable that in every age group, women-headed households are much less well-off and are much more likely to be renters than male-headed households. Since 35% of all renter households spend more than 30% of their income on shelter (Baxter/CMHC), we can reasonably infer that this percentage is much higher for women renters.

Among lone parents (both sexes) with all children under 18, 66% were renters in 1990. The figure for women is undoubtedly higher. The remainder of lone parents owned their homes, generally (63% of owners) with a mortgage (StatsCan, 1990, cat. 13-218, Table 4.9)

According to CMHC's most recent data, 32% of Canadian families are considered to be in "core housing need" (often because they have to spend more than 30% of their income in order to be decently housed). Of these 309 000 core needy families, 56% are lone parent families, almost all of them female-headed, and on average they spend 47% of their income on shelter costs. Two-thirds of the core needy are renters, and two-thirds of these renters are lone parents (CMHC, Le point en recherche et développement, octobre 1993, no 12).

Poverty of women-headed households

Although Canada has made great progress in reducing poverty among the elderly, it is still a major problem, especially among elderly women who live alone. Overall, in 1990, over two out of five unattached women (elderly and non-elderly combined) had incomes below Statistics Canada's "low income cut-offs" (usually referred to as the "poverty line") (Baxter/CMHC).

Poverty is most acute among lone-parent families headed by women, in which at least one child is under 18. In 1989 there were over half a million such families and 56% of them were below the low income cut offs. (Poverty rates among female lone parents with no children under 18 were much lower, at 20%). (Oderkirk and Lochhead, 1992; (Spector and Klodawsky, 1993). The Canadian situation compares unfavourably with that of five European countries studied by Smeeding and Rainwater (cited in Oderkirk and Lochhead, 1992, see Tables 2, 3).

Poverty among female lone parents is closely related to their difficulties in obtaining employment, since in all Canadian provinces social assistance rates paid to lone parent families are far below the poverty line (Spector and Klodawsky, 1993). During the 1980s the position of female lone parents with children under 16 actually worsened with respect to their access to paid employment: hard hit by recession and economic restructuring, their participation rates fell behind those of mothers in two-parent families (Le Bourdais and Rose, 1986; StatsCan, cat. 71-534, p. 11). The contrast was greatest for women with at least one child under 3: in 1991 57% of mothers in two-parent families but only 31% of lone mothers were in employment (StatsCan, cat. 71-534, Table 1.4).

TABLE 1

HOUSEHOLDS IN CANADA, AND PRIMARY MAINTAINERS, BY SEX, 1991						
HOUSEHOLDS BY AGE OF HEAD	ALL HOUSEHOLDS	% FEMALE	FEMALE MAINTAINERS		MALE MAINTAINERS	
			OWN	RENT	OWN	RENT
TOTAL	10018625	30.1	1336015	1673355	4936030	2046150
Under 25 years	466810	46.9	18205	199675	45060	201625
25 - 34 years	2220105	29.3	189820	457526	852100	712920
35 - 44 years	2366450	24.8	281680	303300	1328435	446755
45 - 54 years	1672275	20.2	216550	170375	1037565	243510
55 - 64 years	1381530	25.9	208005	148260	837205	184960
65 - 74 years	1162135	36.7	238485	187615	580120	153950
75 years and over	748970	52.1	183266	206605	255550	102425

Source: Statistics Canada, Housing Costs and Other Characteristics of Canadian Households, 1991 Census, Cat. 93-330

Table 2: Percentage of households with incomes below the poverty line. *		
	Single parents with children under age 18	Couples with children under age 18
United States, 1986	53.3	17.9
Canada, 1987	45.4	12.6
West Germany, 1984	25.5	7.1
United Kingdom, 1986	18.0	16.6
France, 1984	15.8	10.0
Netherlands, 1987	7.5	7.2
Sweden, 1987	5.5	5.0

Source: Smeeding, Timothy M. and Lee Rainwater, *Cross-National Trends in Income Poverty and Dependency: The Evidence for Young Adults in the Eighties*. Prepared for the JCPS Conference, Washington D.C., September 20-21, 1991.

* Low income measures are calculated from the Luxembourg Income Study Household Survey Data Files and are defined as the percentage of households with heads aged 20-55 having incomes below 50 percent of the median income (of households with heads aged 20-55). Income is post direct taxes and public transfers.

Table 3: Gap between single-parent family income and the poverty line,* by major source of family income and gender of parent.						
Gap	All income sources		Government Transfer Payments		Wages and Salaries	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Below the poverty line:						
-20,000 and over	0.5%	0.4%	1.1%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%
-10,000 to -19,999	11.5%	3.5%	24.4%	10.0%	3.4%	1.1%
-1,000 to -9,999	30.4%	10.3%	58.3%	40.5%	14.8%	2.7%
-1 to -999	2.3%	1.0%	2.1%	5.1%	2.2%	0.2%
Above the poverty line:						
0 to 999	2.6%	1.8%	2.3%	3.9%	2.6%	1.5%
1,000 to 9,999	19.2%	15.6%	8.8%	27.8%	25.8%	13.7%
10,000 to 19,999	13.8%	17.8%	2.4%	9.0%	20.7%	19.2%
20,000 and over	19.7%	49.7%	0.7%	2.3%	30.5%	61.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Consumer Finances Microdata, combined income years 1987-1989.

* The Centre for International Statistics considers Statistics Canada's 1986 based Low Income Cut-Offs as the poverty line.

Access to childcare

Access to good quality affordable childcare is important for most Canadian families with young children but especially so for lone parents since it is a condition *sine qua non* of their gaining access to employment and thus to escaping poverty. In Canada, pressures from community organizations and women's groups have led to a phenomenal increase in the provision of licensed childcare spaces (in centres, mainly non-profit, and in family homes) since the mid-1970s but by 1990 there was still only one licensed childcare space for every five preschoolers whose mother is in the labour force. Most parents use the "informal system" of paid babysitters or extended family members (Mackenzie and Truelove, 1993; Rose, 1993), or make arrangements to work a different shift from their spouse so that one parent is always there to take care of the children (StatsCan, 1992, Les régimes de travail des parents et leurs besoins en matière de garde des enfants, cat. 89-529F). Clearly, lone parents have fewer options and more complicated time-budgets to juggle in order to get their children to and from childcare.

Moreover, childcare is expensive, even with the state subsidies available to low-income families. Lone parents with pre-school children, using some form of childcare, spent on average 12% of their income on it in 1988 (StatsCan, cat. 71-534F, Table 5.2)

Household time budgets

Information from the 1992 General Social Survey (GSS) indicates that 34% of women employed full-time and in dual-earner families, whose youngest child was under age 10, experienced 'severe time crunch', compared with 16.3% of similarly situated men and 25% of women with only older children or without children (Frederick, 1993, pp. 6-9).

Examining time use data from the same survey, it was estimated that employed women devote on average 23 hours per week to household chores, compared to men who average 14.2 hours per work in similar activities (Lero and Johnson, 1994, p. 21). The value of household work in Canada was \$284.9 billion or nearly forty percent of the 1992 Gross Domestic Product, according to a summary of 1994 Statistics Canada data (Mothers are Women, 1994).

B. Major Characteristics of Social and Political Context

The numerous instances of women's grassroots activities in urban Canada have profoundly influenced women's understanding of, and their actions with regard to, how change occurs in cities. Because so many women with and without young children are in the labour force, it is impossible to escape the obvious fact that doing both production and nurturance well requires changes in urban form and processes (Mackenzie, 1988). Yet current approaches to urban growth fail to recognize the unique contribution that women make as agents of economic survival and socio-cultural change.

Canada is a federal state made up of ten provinces and two territories. Specific powers are constitutionally assigned to each level of government. The provinces have authority over land and resources. By tradition they delegate power to municipalities to plan and manage

urban development but they retain the power to make policies that broadly direct this and to approve specific plans.

Using insights gained as activists, especially in the present climate of uncertainty, rapid change and economic restructuring, Canadian women have begun to use the government apparatus in new ways. This has meant focusing demands at the level of government which appears most responsive to a specific concern, and developing a partnership with that level of government to pressure for change at another. Another version of that strategy has been the 'inside-outside' approach whereby women's groups pressure politicians and bureaucrats while maintaining contact with them so that the insiders can point to the pressures as a justification for acting in a particular way. In addition, initiatives have been started within government, and have helped to mobilize women's groups to articulate further demands (Bégin, 1990). Key elements have been the relatively numerous 'femocrats' (comparable to the situation in Australia, see Watson, 1990), and the machinery of government (for example, Status of Women Canada, a department of the federal government, or the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, a national "arms length" advisory body) which has been set up to structure women's concerns.

The result has been a series of balancing acts involving three levels of government - the federal, provincial and municipal - working in varying degrees of partnership with the NGO sector made up of feminist groups, grassroots community associations, and feminist academics. Evidently, the Canadian experience relating to women and urban environments has been highly varied and decentralized.

While sometimes the relationship between government structures and women's actions in Canada might be called a partnership, there have been and continue to be tremendous frustrations and areas of deep concern and suspicion. Some women's organizations have found themselves severely affected when taken-for-granted funding is withdrawn as part of a general retrenchment of government support for equality-seeking groups. Other organizations have rejected government funding because it so restricts and threatens what their members regard as essential links between providing services and working toward structural change in the political arena (Lamoureux, 1990; Adam 1992).

In Canada maintaining linkages between theory and practice has been seen as very important and some successes, even if limited, have been achieved by using several tactics. One has been to try to keep women's organizations in touch with women in government planning and policy positions, and also with women who are teachers and students in universities. The principle is that women situated differently will have particular perspectives and skills to bring to mounting actions and research initiatives. Information about initiatives is passed around through modest but regular publications such as Atlantis, Herizons, La Gazette des Femmes, Recherches féministes, Women and Environments, Resources for Feminist Research, as well as newsletters of non-governmental organizations (for example, the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and the Canadian Women's Studies Association), and the various provincial and federal advisory councils on the Status of Women.

In the field of urban environments it has been especially important to keep theory linked to practice because much of everyday life ('practice') takes place in urban settings, and is where

federal, provincial, regional and local government policies (which are built on theories) take effect.

It is a characteristic of Canadian feminism that in all kinds of writing -- including poetry, prose and academic treatises -- women of varied "race", ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation have made a point of urging that theory and practice be closely integrated in any action or inquiry purporting to be gender-sensitive or feminist. This is perhaps principally a way of saying that they do not trust cognition to be the only or even the most reliable source of knowledge. It is also a way of saying that theory is not necessarily esoteric but that it is also a form of speculating about daily life. Women have demonstrated a preference for anchoring understanding of urban services in the material bodies that carry the signs of gender, "race", ethnicity, class and ability, and in the symbols that help us to interpret experience.

It would be entirely erroneous to suggest that the Canadian experience has been a successful one in the recognition of differences among women. Rather we wish to suggest that this is an area in which the women's movement in Canada is now fully and explicitly engaged.

There are some differences in Canada that have imposed themselves throughout history. The English-French difference is one example, with women's groups in Québec, largely francophone, and women's groups outside Québec largely anglophone, differing in their perspectives and, sometimes, in their priorities, yet upon occasion working together or exchanging information (Vickers, 1993). Class differences have also been a focus both for analysis and for action. So too the recognition of the specific issues involving aboriginal women has brought forward the question of recognizing multiple differences in a context of working towards equality (Silman, 1987; Canadian Woman Studies, 1989). Elderly women (Canadian Woman Studies, 1992; Resources for Feminist Research, 1982) and women with disabilities (Canadian Woman Studies, 1993; Resources for Feminist Research 1985) have also brought forward new challenges in terms of the recognition of diversity and in terms of rethinking links between accessibility and equality.

The major issues at the present time relate to the differences of "race", ethnicity and immigration status. The recognition of these differences has led to an important movement of creating new organizations based on specific "race", gender and class positions, such as the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women, the Congress of Black Women of Canada and the Native Women's Association of Canada. These groups act to widen the movement for equality claims and to pressure for state resources for their particular constituencies. It has also led to factions developing within the women's movement and suspicions of various organizations' motives and aims (Agnew, 1993; Stasiulis, 1990; Canadian Woman Studies, 1994).

The impacts of these challenges on urban issues have been various, for example in terms of the way new services and structures are conceptualized and put into place. The recognition of difference has been a powerful argument for the creation of specialized urban services such as housing cooperatives developed by and for women of particular ethnic minority groups, and aboriginal women's services against violence.

3. Canadian Women and the Built Environment: Some Achievements and Some Insights

Three areas have been selected to illustrate Canadian best practice; 1. the continuum of women's housing; 2. urban safety initiatives; and, 3. human rights and the built environment.

A. The Continuum of Women's Housing (See Case Study Proposals, 1-4)

The significant opportunities afforded to Canadians under federal and provincial social or third sector housing programs, including the development of community non-profit, public housing and cooperative housing, have been of tremendous benefit to those women able to take advantage of them (Wekerle, 1994b). A direct result is that Canada has the largest and most diverse stock of housing developed and managed by and for women of any OECD country. Women's groups have emerged as new actors in the housing system, developing social housing to fill gaps in both shelter and service provision. Women's organizations have developed a continuum of housing, ranging from a national network of battered women's shelters, transitional housing where women may live for a specified time period and receive enhanced support services, and permanent affordable housing. They serve a diverse population, often of the most marginalized women: lone parents and their children, elderly women, immigrant, visible minority and aboriginal women, teenage mothers, and abused women (Wiesenthal et al, 1992; Spector and Klodawsky, 1993; Peters, 1990; McClain, 1991).

Canadian women's housing projects have been developed by direct service providers serving women, by women's organizations such as the YWCA, and by women's housing advocacy groups. Although projects are publicly funded, women's groups which develop housing choose the architect, the location, the design and amenities, within the constraints of funding allocations. Federal and provincial social housing programs have provided start-up funds and access to long term government subsidized mortgage loans. A key feature of these programs is that housing subsidies are made available at least to some residents and, in some cases, to all residents. Many cities have supported these projects by offering municipally owned land or other services. Governments have taken the role of enabler of these decentralized locally responsive housing projects, working in partnership with grassroots community organizations (Avery, 1989; Wekerle and Novak, 1988; Morissette, 1989).

Women's housing projects have given women the opportunity to become active agents within a housing system that traditionally has excluded them as developers, builders, managers, or owners of housing (McClain and Doyle, 1989). There have been substantial benefits: women's organizations have gained skills in housing development and they control and manage a stock of new affordable housing that meets the needs of women. They have pioneered new housing models that incorporate essential service components including childcare, life skills training, and participatory housing management. Women residents have gained affordable housing that provides a stable base on which to build their lives and those of their children. Through involvement at all stages of the housing system - initial formulation, design, resident selection, and on-going participatory management - residents learn new skills and gain self-confidence in their own abilities.

B. Urban Safety Initiatives (see Case Study Proposals, 5-7)

The December 6, 1989 murders of 14 women in Montreal (Malette et Chalouh, 1990), galvanized national consciousness about the problem of violence against women. It also energized community activists and professional women in communities such as Halifax-Dartmouth, Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg and Vancouver to work with municipal governments to examine more fully the steps that local governments might take to make cities and neighbourhoods safer for women (Klodawsky et al. 1994; Andrew, 1995). Toronto's earlier actions in this area, with Women Plan Toronto, Metro Toronto Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) and the City of Toronto's Safe City Committee gave these newer efforts salient models for action (Whitzman, 1992).

Among women concerned with urban safety issues, the METRAC safety audit kit and the guidelines recommended in the City of Toronto's "Safe City Report" (City of Toronto, 1988; METRAC, 1989) have become important tools. The kit provides a straightforward check-list to enable groups concerned about a particular environment to assess a range of design characteristics, including lighting, sightlines, alcoves, entrapment areas and so on. It takes seriously the notion that "women have expertise about cities -- and what causes problems in them -- that traditional experts don't have" (METRAC, 1989, 3), and has been used in a number of high profile safety audits. In Toronto, it was used to evaluate the regional transit system (in 1989) and a major city park (in 1988). The Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities initiated a revision of the audit for application to post-secondary education campuses (1991). Safety audits have spread and are being used in other places, the audit kit has been revised for use by francophones (Ville de Montreal, 1993), for women with disabilities, for rural women and women immigrants (WACAV, 1993).

Transportation systems in large Canadian cities have become sensitive to a gendered analysis of their services (Wekerle, 1993). Largely through concerns for women's safety issues, and this because of a desire to maintain ridership, numerous physical design changes have been made to existing facilities and greater concern is being paid to safety issues in the planning of new facilities. In addition, service delivery has also been influenced, and this has led to the introduction of demand stops for night time bus use, in some cities.

A central theme emerging from all of these efforts is that violence, and the fear of violence, prevents women from full and equal participation in the social life of their communities and threaten our understanding of what should be the democratic functioning of our society. Not merely a question of personal convenience or inconvenience, this situation calls into question the status of citizenship in a democracy (Klodawsky et al., 1994).

While all women frequently experience violence, the nature and extent of the violence, the impact of certain settings and the opportunities for getting help will vary depending on where a woman is positioned in society. In all of the various reports generated about "women and safety", the argument emerges that municipal plans and policies must better integrate the concerns of women, by asserting that there are important interrelations between the built environment and social relations. Planning, housing, transportation policy and social welfare issues are therefore seen as being areas in need of, and capable of, improvement through local government action.

C. Human Rights and the Built Environment (see Case Study Proposals, 8-10)

A third area where Canadian initiatives have borne fruit is with regard to the emerging linkages between human rights legislation and the built environment. To some extent, the adoption of a federal Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms in 1982 has been a significant impetus for linking human rights concerns with issues that have not previously been considered in this manner. In practice, however, many of the specific cases of interest have been challenged under provincial human rights legislation. Our concern here will be to highlight developments which have the potential to significantly influence women's equal access to services and facilities in cities (Novac, 1990).

Over the past few years community groups have drawn attention to the prevalence of discrimination and harassment of women tenants, usually by landlords or janitors. Discrimination typically entails refusing to rent to women while harassment of a woman tenant takes diverse forms ranging from intimidation and threats aimed at getting her to move out, to the currying of sexual favours as a condition of carrying out essential repairs.

The province of Québec has developed perhaps the most sophisticated use of human rights legislation to combat such problems. In the mid-1980s women members of a local housing rights committee in Montreal were spurred to action after a survey revealed that two-thirds of women tenants in inner-city neighbourhoods had faced some form of housing discrimination and/or harassment in the previous four years (Comité logement Rosemont, 1986). The major motives were the presence of children, being on social assistance, and the gender of the tenant. Being a member of a visible minority or having a disability made the probability of discrimination even higher.

Subsequently, they established a research, lobbying and community resource group, Information-Ressources Femmes et Logement (IRFL). Working with other housing activists and the Québec Human Rights Commission (CDPQ) their objective was to improve the legal protection afforded to women experiencing housing discrimination and harassment. One of the first results of the groups' work was a first-time definition of harassment in housing in a 1987 law regulating conversions of rental units to condominiums. Subsequently, the CDPQ set up a working group on discrimination in housing which has produced a key position paper on harassment. In 1993, the human rights tribunal convicted some landlords of discrimination against prospective tenants because they were in receipt of social assistance benefits, because they were lone-parent families, or because they were poor.

In some provinces, exclusionary zoning practices have been used to restrict the types of household that are able to live in areas zoned as "single family". One result has been to discourage alternative household arrangements such as, for example, two single mothers and their children (Wekerle and Novak, 1991). Because of a successful challenge to such by-laws in 1989 on human rights grounds, the province of Ontario has since banned them.

Also in Ontario, a bill passed in mid-1994 is intended to ensure that community official plans and by-laws are not used to forbid owners of single-family and row houses from developing ancillary rental apartments. This measure is seen as a breakthrough in stopping people from using zoning associated with physical structures and land to mask what are, in effect, practices that exclude people.

Finally, a department of Ontario's provincial government, the Ontario Women's Directorate, has funded action research on the sexual harassment of women tenants in order to develop recommendations for action (Novac, 1994a,b).

In other provinces too, human rights legislation is being used to challenge various aspects of zoning. A common practice in Canadian cities has been to require a minimum distance between various types of special needs housing, such as refuges for battered women or housing for people with disabilities. In 1990 in Manitoba, the distance provision was deemed to violate the equality provisions of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Another Charter case, in Nova Scotia in 1993, declared that "residents of public housing, the majority of whom are women, are a disadvantaged group protected by the Charter of Rights", a decision that paves the way to challenging any municipality attempting to restrict the amount of social housing within its jurisdiction (Hulchanski, 1993). These decisions and challenges are still relatively isolated and fragmented but there is a growing sense that the use of human rights arguments and legislation has potential as a way of establishing women's full citizenship in the urban environment.

4. Reconceptualized Cities: Moving to the Future

Conceptualizations of cities are emerging in women-centred research and practice that are distinctly different from the familiar ones we have long been working with from urban analysts, planners and policy makers. In part, cities are described as:

- Spatial expressions of the state of relations between the genders and not a gender-neutral space where planning for families and households is done as if these contained generic people (Andrew and Milroy, 1988; Milroy, 1991a; Gurstein, 1993; Wekerle, 1984).
- Places where both "woman" and "man" have many other significant attributes such as "race", age, ethnicity, and ability that intersect each other, are non-hierarchically aligned, and influence urban spatial structures and functions (Kofman and Peake, 1990; Séguin, 1993; McClain and Doyle, 1984).
- Places where public and private spheres are connected along a many-stranded network, and indeed where the very idea of separate public and private spheres is challenged rather than taken as given. Indeed cities are characterized by the interconnections between economic and socio-cultural phenomena and cannot be analyzed in terms of only one or the other (Andrew, 1992; Masson et Tremblay, 1993; Klodawsky and Mackenzie, 1987; McClain, 1993; Spector and Klodawsky, 1993; Milroy and Wismer, 1994).
- Sources of evidence that women can and do act on their own behalf to eliminate inequitable laws and practices associated with city living (Wekerle, 1993b; Klodawsky et al, 1994).
- Places where the majority of social services are provided by women and for women and children, and consequently should not be treated generally, either as if consumption was generalized across the population or as if the level of provision was unrelated to women's employment (Prentice, 1988; Mackenzie, 1984; Mackenzie and Truelove, 1993; Burke and Spector, 1991).

- Sources of evidence that work needs to be defined much more broadly to include not only "employment" but also domestic work and the work done in communities. Women have shown from their experience that before and after paid work there is always domestic work and for some, there is also the work of participating in the life and health of the community. Seen from the vantage point of the majority of women, work is a muddle of all three types: the amount of participation in any one of them may fluctuate over a lifetime, and the same tasks may be done in any of the three -- for pay, for family, or for neighbours (Milroy and Wismer, 1994; Milroy, 1991; McClain, 1989).
- Places where the content of local politics can be made to include zoning to permit childcare, issues about personal safety in public spaces, zoning for mixed uses, elder care, violence at home against women and children, shelters and transitional housing for battered women and children; public transit, and so on. What has ordinarily been labelled "political" is being revised; the almost exclusive concern of local politics with production and ownership issues is being mitigated (Wekerle, 1994; Whitzman, 1992; McClain, 1993).

These conceptualizations should be widely discussed, tested and explored more deeply, in the interests of changing the way community development and planning are done.

Case Study Proposals

A. Housing

1. Overview of the Continuum of Women's Housing
2. Entre Nous Femmes Housing Society (Vancouver)
3. Payuk Inter-Tribal Cooperative (Winnipeg)
4. Atenlos Native Family Violence Services and Zhaawanong Shelter (London)

B. Safety

5. Overview of Municipal Initiatives Relating to Women's Safety in Canadian Cities
6. Toronto Area Efforts to Make Cities Safe for Women
7. Dartmouth's Initiatives

C. Human Rights and the Built Environment

8. Overview of the Emerging Set of Issues Related to Human Rights and the Built Environment
9. Québec's Experience with Human Rights Legislation
10. Intensification and Inclusivity: An Ontario Case

1. Overview of the Continuum of Women's Housing

The significant opportunities afforded to Canadians under federal and provincial social or third sector housing programs, including community non-profits, public housing and cooperative housing, have been of tremendous benefit to those women able to take advantage of them. A direct result is that Canada has the largest and most diverse stock of housing developed and managed by and for women of any OECD country. Women's groups have emerged as new actors in the housing system, developing social housing to fill gaps in both shelter and service provision. Women's organizations have developed a continuum of housing, ranging from a national network of battered women's shelters, transitional housing where women may live for a specified time period and receive enhanced support services, and permanent affordable housing. They serve a diverse population, often of the most marginalized women: single parents and their children, elderly women, immigrant, visible minority and aboriginal women, teenage mothers, and abused women.

Canadian women's housing projects have been developed by direct service providers serving women, women's organizations such as YWCAs and women's housing advocacy groups. Federal and provincial social housing programs have provided start-up funds and access to long term government subsidized mortgage loans. Larger cities have supported these projects by offering municipally owned land or other services. Governments have taken the role of enabler of these decentralized locally responsive housing projects, working in partnership with grassroots community organizations.

The case study would give an overview of this housing, indicating the initiatives, the role played by different levels of government funding mechanisms, the population served and the nature of specialized services offered in association with the housing.

2. Entre Nous Femmes Housing Society (Vancouver, British Columbia)

Entre Nous Femmes Housing (ENF) was established to develop child-oriented, low-cost housing for single parent families. The founding members met at an annual symposium for single mothers in the early 1980s. The group's success in achieving its goal is nothing short of remarkable. Since incorporating in 1984, eight projects have been completed in various Vancouver-area communities. Each building is named for the mother, grandmother or great-grandmother of the Society's long-time members.

ENF provides secure homes for more than 250 families. As one long-time resident says, *Alma Blackwell [the name of the building] has a small town quality that comes from the security of knowing everybody, the feeling that it's safe for the kids to be outside.*

The group's mandate has always included "more than housing". Most of the buildings have been designed to ensure that parents can keep an eye on their children as they play outside, there is space for strollers at the bottom of the stairways. One building includes a child care and "we'd love to have one in every building," says a board member.

There has always been a commitment to strong tenant participation in the operation and management of ENF buildings. Tenants are represented on the board of directors of the Society and are involved in hiring staff, tenant selection and the design of new buildings.

The Society also takes a role in increasing employment opportunities for residents. Training in property management was offered through a federal job creation grant. Current positions in training programs and openings for property managers and other staff are advertised first to tenants. Every effort is made to organize work and training schedules to take into consideration the many responsibilities of single parents.

In addition to the enormous impact it makes on residents' lives, ENF's holistic approach to housing also contributes to understanding the importance of women's community economic development strategies.

The case study would examine the history and present functioning of Entre Nous Femmes Housing.

3. Payuk Inter-Tribal Co-operative Limited (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

Canadian aboriginal communities have originated a number of housing projects developed by aboriginal women for aboriginal women. Payuk Inter-Tribal Co-operative Limited, in Winnipeg, Manitoba was completed in 1989. There are 47 housing units in a 7 storey apartment building that was newly constructed and two renovated houses. Funding for the \$4,625,000 project was provided by the province of Manitoba.

Objectives of the projects were to provide safe and supportive living conditions for aboriginal women and children and to offer affordable housing to these low income aboriginal families. Most residents are single parents. All housing co-operative members participate in some way in the operation of the buildings. Participation opportunities include a resident board of directors and committees on membership, environment, children's activities, finance, skills and education, health and recreation, and special events. Payuk Inter-Tribal Co-operative provides aboriginal women with long-term secure housing that is controlled and managed by them.

The case study would examine the history and present functioning of Payuk Inter-Tribal Cooperative.

4. Atenlos Native Family Violence Services and Zhaawanong Shelter (London)

A case study of housing developed for aboriginal women is particularly interesting given the very important urban migration of the aboriginal population in Canada. In the case of aboriginal women, one of the reasons for urban migration (besides seeking better educational opportunities for themselves and their children) is because they are the victims of harassment or physical abuse and therefore the provision of housing along with the supportive services in urban settings is particularly important. This case study would look at a particular example in London, Ontario that combines shelter and counselling services.

The Atenlos Native Family Violence Services was set up about ten years ago. It is situated in the City of London, Ontario but these services and the shelter are used by aboriginal women who live, not only in London, but also in nearby reserves and surrounding rural communities from the broad region surrounding London. The Zhaawanong shelter provides 18 beds. Atenlos offers counselling services for women in abusive relationships, for men who have assaulted their partners and for children who are resident in the shelter. Trained volunteers at Atenlos provide peer support, child care and outreach activities, as well as doing fundraising for the service.

The case study would examine the creation and the functioning of this service, looking particularly both at the ways linkages are made between the shelter and the counselling components and also at the regional use being made of these services.

5. Overview of Municipal Initiatives Relating to Women's Safety In Canadian Cities

There have been recent initiatives in most large Canadian cities relating to questions of women and urban safety. This case study would do an overview study of these initiatives looking at a number of important dimensions.

In a number of these cases, the first activity was the writing of a report to document local conditions and resources and to formulate recommendations. The case study would examine both the reports and on-going activity that has followed from the recommendations.

A first dimension would be to look at the origins of these initiatives, to determine who were the initiators and what, if any, were the particular conditions associated with the initiation. A second dimension would be to examine the role of women's groups, other community groups,

municipal government and other levels of government in the initiatives. A third dimension would be to examine the policy areas in which activity has taken place (policy, transportation, planning, social services, etc). Finally, the case study would examine the extent of municipal involvement in the on-going activities, in terms of financial, administrative and political involvement.

6. Toronto Area Efforts to Make Cities Safer for Women

Toronto's multiple initiatives to create safe cities for women are significant in the variety of actors and activities that have been involved, both in collaboration and independently. Women Plan Toronto is a group of female built environment professionals and community activists whose early efforts to raise consciousness and spur action to link women and built environment concerns helped to generate two municipal initiatives: the Safe City Committee of the City of Toronto and the Metropolitan Toronto Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC). The former is a committee of the City of Toronto set up to monitor the recommendations of a report commissioned by its council in 1985. METRAC is an advocacy agency established as a result of the wide-ranging and feminist report on public violence against women and children, and was the agency charged with carrying out its many recommendations.

Since their establishment, these agencies have been involved in a wide variety of efforts to place safety for women on the agendas of the local governments, including sensitizing planners to the issue and conducting safety audits in conjunction with various departments of the City and the Region. As well, researchers not directly connected with these agencies have been inspired to pursue related issues in further depth. In many of these developments the role of the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University needs to be acknowledged.

The case study would examine the range of activities initiated in the Toronto area, the ways in which they were organized and their impact on women's lives in the Toronto region.

7. Dartmouth's Initiatives (Dartmouth, Nova Scotia)

The task force on violence against women in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia makes an interesting case study in that Dartmouth is a relatively small community, although situated immediately beside Halifax and therefore part of a larger metropolitan area. It therefore, offers an interesting comparison with Toronto, in terms of actors involved and areas of activity designated.

Dartmouth is also an interesting example because the task force initiative came very much from the municipal government, and was seen by the municipality as being one element in its Healthy Communities activity. The municipality also hoped to get the other levels of government involved in this activity and therefore intergovernmental links are present in this case study.

Dartmouth municipal council set up an independent Task Force, composed of 15 people representing the residential, business and professional community, including legal, municipal, health, education, community services, minority and linguistic sectors. The report made a

series of recommendations covering both services relating to domestic violence and questions of public violence.

The case study would look at the process by which the Task Force formulated its recommendations and then examine the extent of the on-going activity that has resulted from the Task Force. An evaluation would be made of the municipal input and on-going involvement.

8. Overview of the emerging set of issues related to human rights and the built environment

This case study would give an overview of the emerging linkages between human rights legislation and the built environment. To some extent, the adoption of a federal Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms in 1982 has been a significant impetus for linking human rights concerns with issues that have not previously been considered in this manner. In practice however, many of the specific cases of interest have been challenged under provincial human rights legislation. Our concern here will be to highlight developments which have the potential to significantly influence women's equal access to services and facilities in cities.

The case study would put together information on the variety of cases, examples, legislation, etc. across the country where the link is being made between issues of human rights and women's rights in the context of questions relating to women's lives in cities. The case study should document the initiation of these examples, the details of the specific case as well as the larger issues raised by these cases (intensification, harassment, accessibility, etc) and will conclude by reflecting on the opportunities and limitations offered by using human rights legislation to attempt to improve the conditions of women's lives in Canadian cities.

9. Human Rights and the Fight Against Discrimination and Harassment in Housing: A Québec Case Study

The past few years have seen increasing attempts by community activists in Canada to get provincial legal systems to fully outlaw discrimination against and harassments of tenants because of gender, presence of children, being on social assistance, being poor, being a member of a visible minority or having a disability. In the case of women, discrimination typically entails landlords refusing to rent to women while harassment of a woman tenant, by landlords or janitors, takes diverse forms ranging from intimidation and threats aimed at getting her to move out to the currying of sexual favours as a condition of carrying out essential repairs.

By helping individuals to take their cases to human rights commissions, and by working cooperatively with these commissions, community groups are helping and cajoling human rights commissions to push their mandates to the limit. The experience of past failures - in a system where 96% of housing is allocated by the private sector and the legitimacy of state intervention in this process is far from universally accepted (Echenberg and Porter, 1990) - has taught groups to use human rights codes and charters of rights not only to combat housing discrimination against individuals but also to try to establish before the courts that collective rights to housing are essential conditions of full citizenship. This is a tortuous process in a liberal democracy where equality rights are generally defined only with reference

to individuals. Nonetheless, considerable progress is being made in a number of Canadian provinces. Nowhere is this progress more encouraging than in the province of Québec where the human rights commission (CDPQ) - acting in concert with women's groups, housing rights and an umbrella organization of immigrant and ethnic minority associations - has increasingly taken on an advocacy role in combatting discrimination and harassment in housing.

In the mid-1980s, a survey initiated by women members of a local housing rights committee in Montréal - which has the highest percentage of tenants and the highest poverty rates of any major Canadian city - found that 75% of women tenants in inner-city neighbourhoods had faced some form of housing discrimination and/or harassment in the previous four years (Comité Logement Rosemont, 1986). Their findings spurred them to obtain government funding to establish a research, lobbying and community resource group called Information-Ressources Femmes et Logement. Working with other housing activist groups and with the CDPQ, their objective was to improve the legal protection afforded to women experiencing housing discrimination and harassment. For example, the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (enacted in 1975) recognizes a person's right to privacy and freedom from harassment in their home but this had yet to be translated into legal practice. One of the first results of the groups' work was a first-time definition of harassment in housing in a 1987 law regulating conversions of rental units into condominiums (Pilote, 1990). Subsequently, the CDPQ set up a working group on discrimination in housing which has produced a key position paper on harassment (CDPQ 1993), and in Québec's new Civil Code (in force since January 1994), harassment in housing is explicitly defined and punitive damages can be awarded to victims. IRFL regards this as a major step forward (Dallaire, 1994).

In addition, in 1993 the human rights tribunal obtained some convictions against landlords for discrimination against prospective tenants because they were in receipt of social assistance, because they were lone-parent families or because they were poor (Droits et Libertés, déc. 1993 and fév. 1994). Although appeals are likely, these are landmark cases because they clarify the notion of discrimination based on "social condition" (Sylvestre, 1994).

This concertation between IRFL and the CDPQ shows how an action started at the grassroots level can be taken up by a powerful government body, and how the two types of organizations can work together to effect important changes to the legal framework governing a key dimension of women's experience as tenants in the housing markets.

Yet--and this is characteristic of community groups in Québec--Information-Ressources Femmes et Logement has retained its independence from the state while maintaining a partnership with the CDPQ. It belongs to and works with an anti-discrimination umbrella organization which has developed multi-media tools for other women's groups and housing committees, and has prepared with the CDPQ, a leaflet for women explaining how to avoid housing discrimination. In addition, IRFL recently started negotiations with one of the province's major association of landlords' of large apartment buildings. A series of fact sheets is being produced for landlords and tenants, setting out the rights and responsibilities of each (La Causeuse, 1993, 1994).

The specific situation of ethnic minority women is also being addressed. A CDPQ study showed definitively that racial discrimination was rampant in Montréal, and that minority women (especially those with large families and thus more limited options) bore the brunt of it

(Garon, 1988). Meanwhile, umbrella organizations of immigrant women and ethnic minority groups have helped refugees waiting for permanent resident status to use the Rental Board to challenge successfully a regulation that limited access to the public housing waiting list to Canadian citizens (Collectif des femmes immigrantes du Québec, 1990). They have also pointed to hidden forms of discrimination in public housing such as the exclusion of extended family households that often form a key part of the resource system of immigrant women.

Women's groups, ethnic minority associations and other community groups are now acting in concert with the CDPQ as well as with Québec's Ministry of Immigration and Cultural Communities, to take on an increasing role in advocacy, publicity and popular education about housing rights and about the illegality of discrimination and harassment. Such public advocacy is an essential complement to the seemingly arcane and inevitably individualized human rights complaints procedures. Activities range from press conferences and press releases (CDPQ 1990) to videos and workshop guides (CDPQ 1992) to poster campaigns in the métro (subway) system. It is to be hoped that this work survives future rounds of government cutbacks that are looming on the horizon.

10. Intensification and Inclusivity: An Ontario Case

There is a scissor movement occurring in Ontario having to do with land use and human rights. On the one hand there are pressures by numerous groups including women's lobbies for denser urban land uses, and on the other for eliminating zoning and residential building practices which have the effect of discriminating against some people's use of land even though protecting use by others. The combination can be expected to make urban areas better adapted to combined parenting and employment because of decreased distances and mixed land uses, as well as cutting down some of the barriers that have been put up to restrict access to housing.

This represents an important shift in emphasis. Ordinarily various legislative practices have been used to protect ownership privileges across urban areas. The momentum now appears to be towards using these practices at least some of the time to seek inclusivity based on human rights. The overall effect of these initiatives on urban form in Ontario is expected to be a gradual intensification of urban residential land use via the introduction of secondary apartments within houses and more variation in the residents of each area because renters and owners will be less segregated.

A number of challenges to land use practices using human rights legislation could be discussed in depth, including the following:

1. In 1989 by-laws restricting the number of unrelated people living in a single dwelling were struck down. These by-laws had been used to control group homes related to various social services, student accommodation, among other household groupings.
2. In 1990 the practice of designating multi-dwelling buildings for adults only was struck down. This was argued to constitute discrimination both on the basis of family status and age. The matter of housing for women and their children was at the core of the test cases.

3. A bill which is expected to be passed by mid-1994 will amend the planning regulations to require that community official plans and by-laws permit owners of single-family and row houses to make rental apartments within these properties as of right anywhere in a municipality.

The case study would look at these examples of the use of human rights legislation, examining particularly those groups, agencies and individual actors who played important roles in bringing these issues to judicial and political activity.

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