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Cities of and for Pluralism: The Role of Canadian Municipalities in Multiculturalism Initiatives

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Managing international migration and the social change that it brings about is one of the most important contemporary global public policy challenges. Canada has been a leader in the development of institutions and policies to manage ethno-cultural diversity (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002, 121; Kymlicka 2003). Beginning in 1971, through its decision to adopt a policy of official multiculturalism, a model that would become internationally recognized, the federal government established a broad normative framework to govern ethno-cultural relations and the long-term immigrant integration process in Canada. This framework informs a “bundle” of policies, programs and legislative commitments at the federal, provincial and municipal levels.¹

The way in which official multiculturalism is implemented in Canada has evolved a great deal since it was first adopted as the federal government's policy. For instance, whereas programs that funded cultural festivals and heritage language maintenance were more common in the early stages of the model's evolution, initiatives that address more structural barriers to ethno-cultural equity such as anti-racism initiatives are more prevalent today (Ley 2007). Arguably, the model's flexibility is one of its chief strengths. Will Kymlicka (1998) aptly describes multiculturalism as “a policy in continuous evolution, involving an ongoing renegotiation of the terms of integration in Canada” whereby elected officials define the policy's legislative framework “within which more specific issues of multiculturalism are settled on a day-to-day basis” (Kymlicka 1998, 104).

Today, because the bulk of Canada's immigrants choose to settle in its major city regions, many of the “day to day” issues of multiculturalism are “renegotiated” and “settled” in only a few cities. In fact, in 2006, 68.9 percent of Canada's immigrants lived in urban and suburban communities in its three largest metropolitan areas – Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver (Statistics Canada 2007a, 5). Furthermore, since, beginning in the 1970s, there

has been a steep upward trend in the number of immigrants who are “visible minorities,”² Canada’s largest metropolises have experienced a dramatic shift in the ethno-cultural composition of their populations in a relatively short period of time.

Thus, Canada’s largest metropolises have become central places where pluralism is experienced – they are highly important *places* of pluralism in Canada. It is within this broad context that Canadian municipalities in these diverse city-regions have begun to take on a central role in the management of ethno-cultural diversity. Municipal officials, “street level bureaucrats,” (Lipsky 1976) and local leaders in civil society negotiate many of the “day to day decisions” arising from multiculturalism.

Nevertheless, as globalization has increased the economic, social and cultural importance of major metropolitan areas, municipal systems in Canada largely continue to reflect their 19th century origins (Lightbody 1995) when the country was primarily rural. The highly concentrated and urban nature of immigrant settlement patterns necessitates a rethinking of the place of municipalities within Canadian federalism in the interest of enabling municipal governments to contribute to building socially sustainable cities that are successful *places* for pluralism.

Drawing upon the experiences of highly diverse urban and suburban municipal communities located in Metro Vancouver and the Greater Toronto Area³, this paper describes the important role of municipalities in multiculturalism initiatives. It begins by providing a brief empirical portrait of the place-specific dimensions of the ethno-cultural diversity of these two city regions. It then describes and offers a typology of the ways in which municipalities vary in their efforts to adapt their services and governance structures to ethno-cultural diversity. Next, the paper discusses the factors associated with success – the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of municipal responsiveness to immigrants and ethno-cultural minorities. Finally, the paper concludes with a brief discussion of how Canada’s performance in managing ethno-cultural diversity might be improved as well as how the Canadian experience might inform efforts to manage and accommodate ethno-cultural diversity in other societies.

Canadian cities as places of diversity

The current focus of Canada’s multiculturalism policies on political and civic integration as well as anti-racism efforts (Ley 2007, 10), responds to profound changes in the empirical reality of the ethno-cultural composition of Canadian society and to structural barriers to inclusion. Demographic shifts in the ethno-cultural composition of the Canadian population resulted from changes in Canada’s immigrant selection policies and practices, which were racially biased until 1967, when the “point system” of immigrant selection was adopted (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002, 43). Before 1961, Europe was the source of 90 percent of Canada’s immigrants (Statistics Canada 2003, 6). However, by the 1990s, the leading source of immigrants to Canada was China followed by India, the Philippines, Hong Kong,

Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Taiwan (ibid, 7). Prior to 1961, only three percent of Canada's immigrants came from Asia (ibid, 6).

Due to these changes in the source countries of immigrants, Canada has experienced a three-fold increase in its "visible minority" population since 1981 (Statistics Canada 2003, 10). In 2001, only three of every ten visible minorities were born in Canada (ibid). In addition, there has been an upward trend in the relative number of immigrants who are visible minorities with 52 percent, 68 percent, and 73 percent of the immigrants who came to Canada in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, respectively identifying themselves as visible minorities (ibid). Three-quarters of all immigrants who arrived in Canada between the 2001 and 2006 censuses self-identified as members of a "visible minority" (Statistics Canada 2008, 2). Furthermore, Statistics Canada projects intensification of the link between the "racial"⁴ diversification of Canada and immigration. It predicts that, if current immigration trends continue, between 19 and 23 percent of the population will be a member of a visible minority group by 2017 (Statistics Canada 2005, 6).

However, these demographic trends also have important geographical dimensions. Canada's visible minority and immigrant populations (which largely overlap) are concentrated in its three largest metropolitan areas – Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. Together, these three metropolitan areas are home to almost 70 percent of Canada's immigrants (Statistics Canada 2007a, 5). In 2002, the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)⁵ alone received close to half of Canada's approximately 230,000 immigrants (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2003, 3 and 25). Statistics Canada also predicts that immigrants will continue to choose to settle in large urban centres. By 2017, the Toronto CMA will be home to 45 percent of the entire Canadian visible-minority population, which will become the "visible majority" since non-whites will become a majority there (Statistics Canada 2005, 7). Together, Canada's three largest cities – Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal – will be home to a remarkable three-quarters of the country's visible-minority population (ibid, 6).

In Canada, an increasing suburbanization of visible-minority and immigrant populations is another clear geographical trend. Many immigrants are now settling directly in suburbs in Greater Vancouver and the Greater Toronto Area. Furthermore, immigrant settlement in these city regions tends to be concentrated in only a few municipalities. In 2006, the city of Toronto was home to 59.8 percent, and Mississauga, Brampton and Vaughan, to 28.8 percent of the Toronto CMA's recent immigrants (Statistics Canada 2007b, 2). Together, Vancouver, Richmond, Burnaby and Surrey are home to 74.7 percent of the Vancouver CMA's recent immigrants (ibid). In fact, immigrants and visible minorities form more than 50 percent of the population of several suburban municipalities in these regions.

Table 1 illustrates the demographic impact that immigration has had on urban and suburban municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area and Greater Vancouver upon whose experience the examples to be discussed here and conclusions to be drawn are based. The diversity of these locales is illustrated in relation to the national and provincial scales.

Table 1: Profile of Diversity at Different Scales

Political Unit	Population	Foreign-Born (%)	Visible Minority (%)
Canada	31,241,030	19.8	16.2
Ontario	12,028,895	28.3	22.8
Toronto CMA	5,072,075	45.7	42.9
Toronto	2,476,565	50.0	46.9
Mississauga	665,655	51.6	49.0
Brampton	431,575	47.8	57.0
Markham	261,573	56.5	65.4
British Columbia	4,074,385	27.3	24.8
Vancouver CMA	2,097,965	39.6	41.7
Vancouver	571,600	45.6	51.0
Richmond	173,565	57.4	65
Surrey	392,450	38.3	46.1
Coquitlam	113,560	39.4	38.6

These data are taken from the 2006 Census (Statistics Canada 2007c).

The changes in the ethno-cultural demographics of Canada’s largest metropolises have been dramatic indeed. Prior to 1961, less than three percent of Toronto’s population was in the “visible minority” category (Doucet 1999, 3). Toronto, once known to be a very homogeneous city with a largely British and highly Protestant population (ibid) is now Canada’s most ethno-culturally heterogeneous metropolitan area. The demographic shifts in the ethno-cultural composition of Vancouver’s population were similarly striking. Metropolitan Vancouver’s non-European population – most of which is of Asian ancestry – increased a dramatic 422 percent between 1971 and 1986 (Olds 2001, 85). In Canada, questions of inter-ethnic equity and harmony, as well as immigrant integration, have very important spatial dimensions.

Whereas the goals of Canada’s multiculturalism policy have evolved in response to these changing demographics, its spatial and jurisdictional implications must now be addressed. Several questions have become germane: Since the multicultural model of diversity management implies a public role in accommodating and managing diversity, what are the democratically-elected governments closest to these dramatic social changes doing to adapt their services and governance structures to ethno-cultural diversity? Have they been “responsive” to ethno-cultural diversity as the federal *Multiculturalism Act (1988)* legislates? Furthermore, what (if anything) do patterns of immigrant settlement imply for the role of municipal governments in Canada?

Places for diversity? The municipal role in multiculturalism initiatives

Canadian municipalities vary extensively in their efforts to adapt their services and governance structures to accommodate ethno-cultural diversity in a way that reflects the normative principles of “official multiculturalism” (Tate and Quesnel 1995; Wallace and Frisken 2000; Edgington and Hutton 2002; Good 2005; 2006; Graham Philips 2006). The municipalities that I have studied and depicted in *Table 1* fall into three groups: responsive,

somewhat responsive and unresponsive (Good 2005; 2006). The two urban core municipalities - Toronto and Vancouver - have been responsive. Of the suburban communities, Markham, Richmond, Coquitlam and Surrey have been somewhat responsive, and Mississauga and Brampton have been unresponsive to the social changes in their communities. *Table 2* summarizes how the cases vary:

Table 2: Municipal Responsiveness to Immigrant and Ethno-cultural Minorities

	Responsive	Somewhat Responsive	Unresponsive
Level of Policy Activity	Comprehensive	Limited	Highly limited
Policy Style	Proactive	Reactive	Inactive
Level of Institutionalization	High	Medium	Non-existent
Immigrant Settlement Leaders' Assessment	Positive	Varies	Negative

Municipalities vary in four related ways:

First, they vary in the extent to which they have been comprehensive in their efforts to address barriers to the fair inclusion of immigrants and ethno-cultural minorities in municipal affairs. In other words, municipalities vary in the extent to which they have adopted a wide range of measures to increase access and equity with respect to governance and services and have been consistent across departments and service areas. Examples of municipal initiatives include: employment-equity initiatives, anti-racism policies, adapting services culturally and linguistically, immigrant-settlement policies, and efforts to encourage more inclusive elections.

Second, they vary in the extent to which support for their multiculturalism initiatives is institutionalized in the municipal civil service, on council and in governance relationships. These institutions include special units in the municipal civil service, special advisory committees in the civil service and on councils, and ongoing informal relationships that bridge the public-private divide.

Third, they vary in their policy styles – whether they are proactive, reactive, or inactive in the multiculturalism policy field (Wallace and Frisken 2000; Good 2005; 2006). Proactive municipalities plan their responses to social change, whereas reactive municipalities react to community pressure and ethno-cultural relations crises. These elements are related insofar as the institutionalization of support for the adaptation of municipal services and governance structures fosters a proactive, anticipatory policy style and the failure to do so leads to reactive policy-making. Proactive municipalities are “responsive” to immigrants and ethno-cultural minorities because they “manage” diversity on a day to day basis, direct their efforts at accommodating diversity at a more structural level and have a more long-term view than “reactive” municipalities. On the other hand, “reactive” municipalities

“manage” diversity on an as-needed basis. Their multiculturalism initiatives tend to follow crises in ethnic relations.

Fourth, not surprisingly, municipalities also vary in the extent to which immigrant settlement leaders consider the municipality’s approach to be responsive to the concerns of their communities. Notably, immigrant settlement leaders consider municipalities responsive to the extent that they adapt their services and governance structures along the model of official multiculturalism.

Explaining variation in municipal responsiveness to immigrant and ethno-cultural minorities

Municipalities vary significantly in the extent to which they adapt their services and governance structures to ethno-cultural diversity. What explains “responsive” municipalities’ relative success in this respect? The answer lies in the emergence of a broad consensus that multiculturalism policy efforts are an important local goal coupled with an exceptional leadership effort to overcome weaknesses in Canada’s municipal institutions. In Canada, municipal autonomy is highly limited. Municipalities lack independent constitutional status and are an exclusive provincial responsibility under section 92.8 of the Canadian constitution. As such, municipalities are legal creations of provinces. Their responsibilities and fiscal powers are delegated to them through provincial statute and provinces can change municipal boundaries unilaterally. Although many consider Canada to be one of the most decentralized federations in the world, relative to other countries, Canadian municipalities have little power (Courchene 2007). Their legal frameworks tend to be highly restrictive and they rely primarily on property taxes and user fees to fund local services. The Canadian federation is characterized by strong provinces and very weak municipal institutions.⁶

At the municipal level, local leaders are also limited by the political economy of cities. Many local leaders perceive a need to compete with other cities for residents and for businesses. According to Paul Peterson, for this reason, municipalities privilege their “economic interest” above all else which leads to a focus on economic development goals rather than redistributive ones (Peterson 1981). Thus, the dominant political coalition at the local level tends to be what John Logan and Harvey Molotch call a “growth machine” that pursues development at any cost (Logan and Molotch 1987). Other policy agendas make it onto the local agenda only when they either support growth or address issues that threaten a city’s ability to grow (ibid).

Finally, in Canada, municipal decision-making structures are weak. To varying degrees, Canadian municipal institutions are governed by weak mayor systems in which executive and legislative power is shared. Coupled often with a lack of parties at the municipal level,⁷ it is difficult for local mayors to provide city-wide leadership. To the extent that mayors can provide leadership, it is through their coalition-building efforts on council and in the community as well as their access to the media (Sancton 1994).

Thus, given the many weaknesses of Canadian municipal institutions as well as the constraints inherent in their place within the political economy of cities, a central concern is how the capacity to manage social change develops. As urban theorist Clarence Stone summarizes the fundamental question of urban politics within an American context: “the power struggle [in cities] concerns not control and resistance but gaining the power to act - *power to not power over*” (Stone 1989, 229). Similarly, in Canada, the question of capacity is central. How does the capacity to manage dramatic social change emerge in Canada’s immigrant magnet city-regions?

Urban regime theory contributes to one’s understanding of how some Canadian municipalities have been responsive to immigrants and ethno-cultural minorities despite their institutional weakness. This theory, which is the dominant theory in the urban politics literature (Mossberger and Stoker 2001), argues that local capacity emerges through coalition building across the public and private sectors whereby local leaders pool their resources to implement locally developed agendas. Furthermore, according to urban regime theorists, due to the business community’s control of many of the material resources in local communities, it is a central partner in these coalitions (Mossberger and Stoker 2001). Urban-regime theory draws one’s attention to how local resources are distributed across sectors in local communities and to the opportunities for cross-sector co-leadership and cooperation on issues of importance to local communities. Urban regimes consist of a capacity, a set of participants and an ongoing relationship that bridges the public-private divide (Stone 1989). Others have observed that upper levels of government are often important participants in urban coalitions (Leo 1997; Good 2007), since they possess both the resources and the legal authority to address issues of importance to local communities.

Canadian municipalities do not have formal mandates to adapt their services and governance structures to ethno-cultural diversity and to “manage” diversity. As such, provinces do not financially assist municipalities in their multiculturalism policy efforts. However, as the diversity of responses to social change attests, formal legal structures only tell part of the story. Therefore, local leadership matters to municipal responsiveness to ethno-cultural change. How and why have local leaders developed the capacity to respond to social change in “responsive” municipalities?

“Responsive” municipalities have institutionalized support for their multiculturalism initiatives despite the scarcity of resources. They have done this in several interdependent ways:

First, they have established separate units in their civil service to facilitate access and equity in governance and service delivery as well as to “manage” diversity. The City of Toronto’s Diversity Management and Community Engagement Unit and the City of Vancouver’s Equal Employment Office are examples of such units.

Second, they contribute to community capacity building by funding community organizations that serve immigrants and ethno-cultural minorities. Over the long-term, such programs create the capacity for civil society and the municipality to co-lead on immigrant settlement and diversity management. For instance, the City of Toronto established the Access and Equity Grants Program. However, the cities of Toronto and Vancouver have also benefited from the federal and provincial governments' efforts to build capacity in immigrant settlement and ethno-cultural relations. Their civil societies are much more developed and better resourced than those in suburban communities. In this way, the place-specific implications of decisions by upper levels of government have had an indirect and positive impact on local governance in these places. The federal government's settlement programs and multiculturalism programs have contributed to these two cities' responsiveness to immigrants and ethno-cultural minorities.

Finally, local leaders in responsive municipalities have established governance relationships that support their efforts in equity policy. Given the importance of the business community to local coalitions, local leaders have framed these objectives in ways that appeal to the business community.⁸ Immigrant and ethno-cultural minority preferences and organizations have been incorporated into productive urban coalitions or "regimes." Both Toronto and Vancouver have ventured well beyond their mandated limits through the creation of innovative formal and informal governance institutions. For instance, in Toronto, local leaders formed the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC), a public-private coalition that emerged from the ground up to build capacity to integrate skilled immigrants into the metropolitan area's workforce. The business community is a central participant in this initiative. TRIEC began as a local initiative and has now become a multi-level governance arrangement that includes participation from all three levels of government (Good 2007). Vancouver has established the Hastings Institute, a not-for-profit city-owned corporation that provides employment equity and diversity training to private- and public-sector (non-municipal) organizations based on programs developed for the city. Vancouver's multiculturalism efforts complement its economic-development objectives reflected in a local elite consensus that the city's economic fortunes are tied to its connections to "Pacific Rim" countries (Olds 2001). The local "growth machines" recognize that immigration fuels population and economic growth in these cities.

Given the insufficient attention paid by upper levels of government to many local concerns including immigrant settlement issues, a broad-based urban autonomy coalition emerged in Toronto to advocate for the empowerment of the city and/or metropolitan area within Canadian federalism. Local leaders sought a new status or "new deal" for Toronto within Canadian federalism. Although no consensus exists about what precise status Toronto requires or about its boundaries (Keil and Young 2003), many local leaders support the general goal of urban autonomy. Local leaders in Toronto have advocated for new funding arrangements for immigrant settlement with success. In part due to local efforts, the city of Toronto's important role and stake in effective immigrant settlement was recognized in the Canada-Ontario Agreement on Immigration (2005). Thus, in Toronto, local leaders link

immigration to broader questions of the place of Canada's municipalities within Canadian federalism. Furthermore, local immigrant settlement leaders in Toronto agree that the city should play a greater role in the process of immigrant settlement and integration. Building municipal capacity to settle immigrants is part of a local strategy to assert the autonomy of the municipal corporation.

In stark contrast, due to the highly limited nature of municipal resources, municipalities in suburban places resist expending resources on adapting services and governance structures to immigration. Due to their newness relative to urban core municipalities, suburban municipalities tend to have weak policy-making capacity. Furthermore, civil society (and particularly the immigrant-settlement sector) is not as well organized and resourced in suburban communities relative to urban core communities. For these reasons, suburban municipalities do not take a broader leadership role in the community on matters of managing diversity unless they must. Unlike the "responsive" urban core municipalities, municipal officials in suburbs stress and appear to accept the limitations of municipal government.

In Canada, the suburban communities that have been "somewhat responsive" to immigrants and ethno-cultural minorities have taken on their role in reaction to a trigger in the community. In particular, the political dynamics that tend to arise in suburban municipalities with a concentration of a single immigrant group – what I have termed a "biracial municipality" elsewhere (Good 2005; Good 2006) – push the diversity management issue onto the municipal agenda. Suburban municipalities such as Richmond, BC and Markham, ON – where Chinese immigrants have settled in large numbers – have experienced backlashes against immigration. Long-standing residents in these municipalities tend to feel that immigrants are redefining the community in ways that challenge existing cultural norms and, in some instances, exclude them. For instance, conflicts have arisen around the development of Asian malls and the lack of English signage in these malls, as well as due to the housing-design preferences of some Chinese immigrants. Where the ethno-specific social capital and institutions exist, this backlash in turn mobilizes the immigrant community whose ability to act collectively is strengthened by its spatial concentration. In these communities, the municipality must involve itself in bridging the immigrant and long-standing communities.

In "somewhat responsive" municipalities the primary response tends to be a "races relations" or an "intercultural" advisory committee to address issues reactively as they arise. Furthermore, these municipalities focus on "diversity management" to a greater extent than to access and equity initiatives. For instance, in response to an intercultural misunderstanding that reached "crisis" proportions, the City of Richmond has developed a media watch program that monitors Chinese-language newspapers to ensure that the city's actions are understood. In the absence of major race-relations crises, highly diverse, "multiracial" (Good 2005; 2006) municipal suburban communities have been unresponsive to social change. In general, these municipalities focus on celebrating diversity rather than on addressing more structural issues of access to services and participation in governance.

The ethnic configurations of municipal communities influence their responsiveness to immigrants and ethno-cultural minorities by affecting residents' perceptions of immigrants as well as by influencing the development of civil society (Good 2005; 2006).

Becoming a place for pluralism: lessons for Canada and from the Canadian experience

In their edited collection of case studies on the impact of social diversity on cities in the North and South entitled *The Social Sustainability of Cities* (2000), Mario Polèse and Richard Stren argue that one can consider the management of a city “successful” if it encourages “social sustainability”. They define “social sustainability” as “development (and/or growth) that is compatible with the harmonious evolution of civil society, fostering an environment conducive to the compatible cohabitation of culturally and socially diverse groups while at the same time encouraging social integration with improvements in the quality of life for all segments of the population” (Polèse and Stren 2000, 16). They continue: “Urban policies conducive to social sustainability must, among other things, seek to bring people together, to weave the various parts of the city into a cohesive whole, and to increase accessibility (spatial and otherwise) to public services and employment, within the framework, ideally of a local governance structure which is democratic, efficient and equitable” (Polèse and Stren 2000, 16). What Canadian policy makers refer to as “multiculturalism policies” contribute to building socially sustainable cities.

The examples of “responsive” and “somewhat responsive” municipalities described above suggest that municipalities can contribute to guiding the positive evolution of civil society by convening and engaging their communities, through grants programs, and through governance arrangements. Furthermore, through their employment equity policies, some municipalities lead in integrating ethno-cultural minorities and immigrants into the economy. When municipalities culturally adapt their services and programs, they create public places for inter-ethnic interaction (through recreation programs, for instance) and provide resources to immigrants in their efforts to integrate (e.g. English as a second language programs offered in libraries).

However, the Canadian case suggests that local politics and contexts matter. The above survey of municipal policies and policy styles demonstrates clearly that some municipalities are more willing to get involved in managing and responding to social change than others. All of the suburban municipalities that chose to develop multiculturalism policies did so reactively. The “unresponsive” suburban municipalities might follow suit only if a major race-relations crisis were to develop. Such crises are influenced by the ethnic configuration of the local community. As the suburbanization of immigration continues, this uneven and often reactive approach to multiculturalism-policy development will only become more problematic. The general lesson is that in the absence of clear direction from upper levels of government, local factors and contexts will result in variation in the extent to which municipalities contribute to “social sustainability” through multiculturalism initiatives.

In addition, the Canadian experience indicates that local capacity is a central concern. Successful municipal responses to diversity require strong local institutions. Although capacity-building efforts are most needed in newer immigrant-receiving communities, resources and institution-building remain a concern for all Canadian municipalities. Municipal institutions must be strengthened. Furthermore, efforts must be made by governments to build institutions in civil society to steer urban and suburban communities in the direction of social sustainability. All levels of government, regardless of jurisdiction, can play a role in building capacity in civil society.

In the absence of strong public (municipal) institutions, local leaders have formed governance arrangements to develop the capacity to manage social change. In Canada, given the poor levels of political incorporation of visible minorities and immigrants on local councils and in the electoral process (Good 2005; Siemiatycki 2006), governance arrangements serve as a mechanism through which immigrant and ethno-cultural minority preferences can enter local decision-making processes. However, since the business community possesses more resources than other sectors in local communities, it is not only important to capacity building but also has a greater influence on decision-making as a result. In Canada, we see the influence of the business community in local discourses that stress the economic case for immigration and efforts to settle immigrants effectively. In fact, the case has been made so well that many mid-sized Canadian cities are actively creating strategies to compete to attract and retain immigrants with the support of their local business communities. It is important that these discourses do not overtake other discourses focused on access and equity for all immigrants.

In multilevel systems of governance, the question arises of which level of government should do what. In Canada, the uneven adoption of multiculturalism-policy frameworks at the municipal level, coupled with the clear importance of tailoring multiculturalism initiatives to local communities, suggests that in the interest of policy effectiveness, all three levels of government have a role to play in multiculturalism. A central challenge is how to encourage a degree of consistency in efforts to develop multiculturalism initiatives while also allowing room for local innovation. This could be accomplished if provinces were to introduce broad standards for multiculturalism-policy efforts at the municipal level that were sufficiently flexible to allow municipalities to tailor their programs to local needs. Another possibility would be to create metropolitan institutions to encourage inter-municipal cooperation on multiculturalism efforts.

A case could also be made that municipalities should play a greater role with respect to the design and implementation of programs to settle and integrate immigrants that are currently offered by upper levels of government, since local officials arguably have a better understanding of their community's needs. However, were local governments to take the formal lead in these areas, the Canadian experience suggests that mandates in multiculturalism policy would have to be coupled with access to new resources. In Canada, to the extent that municipal governments have expended resources to tailor their services

and governance structures to meet the particular needs of their diverse population, they have done so without formal authority in this area and without additional public resources.

Since the federal government has been most actively and consistently involved in this policy field, and since it arguably has a “national interest” in how effectively immigrants are settled, the question as to what ought to be the nature of the federal-municipal relationship in this area also arises. More generally, both levels of government would benefit from opening the lines of communication. In many municipalities, especially the “responsive” ones that engage with their diverse communities proactively, city officials possess unparalleled knowledge about their communities’ needs and challenges that could be valuable in the design of federal programs.⁹ In addition, the federal government develops and administers policies that support immigrant integration and ethno-cultural equity in a variety of departments all of which have implications “on the ground” in cities.¹⁰ Municipal leaders are uniquely positioned to observe how the effects of these decisions intersect.

Regardless of how one answers the question of “who should do what?” in the multiculturalism policy field, a central lesson from the Canadian experience is that effective responses to diversity require governance mechanisms that sustain cooperation among levels of government, among government departments, and with civil society. In Canada, the effectiveness of multiculturalism policies would be enhanced by a greater level of coordination among the three levels of government.

Cities, then, are clearly important *places* of pluralism. In the interest of social sustainability – creating cities for pluralism – countries must design institutions and policies that address the place-specific dimensions of local multiculturalism challenges and support grassroots efforts to manage social change equitably.

Endnotes

¹ For instance, at the federal level, it is legislated in the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988)* and the *Employment Equity Act (1986)*. It also informs multiculturalism programs and immigrant settlement programs offered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. What current multiculturalism-informed policies and practices have in common is that they all involve a *proactive government role* in facilitating ethno-cultural equity in accessing and participating in social, economic and political institutions.

² Federal policies and Statistics Canada adopt the *Employment Equity Act (1986)*’s definition of “ visible minorities” as “persons, other than Aboriginal people, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour”.

³ The paper draws upon field research conducted between 2003-2005 including close to 100 interviews with local leaders - including mayors, councillors, municipal civil servants, and leaders of organizations in civil society - in these city-regions.

⁴ “Racial” is in quotation marks to acknowledge the socially-constructed nature of “race”.

⁵ According to Statistics Canada, “[a] census metropolitan area (CMA) ...is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a large urban area (known as the urban core). A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more must live in the urban core. A CA must have an urban core

population of at least 10,000. To be included in the CMA or CA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the central urban area, as measured by commuting flows derived from census place of work data” (Statistics Canada n.d.).

⁶ Although there is some variation across provinces and one is beginning to see the adoption of more permissive legal frameworks (Tindal and Tindal 2009), municipal systems in Canada are informed by constitutional conventions that restrict autonomy. The principle of municipalities as “creatures of provinces” is a powerful “constitutional doctrine” that downplays the significance of local democracy and (municipal) autonomy, and implies that the federal government’s relationship with municipalities must be mediated through provinces (Magnusson 2005). Furthermore, although legal frameworks governing municipalities are becoming somewhat more permissive, fiscal constraints have increased in the last 20 years. In the 1990s, upper levels of government downloaded some of their fiscal burdens on municipal governments as they attempted to get their fiscal houses in order. This was particularly the case in Ontario (MacMillan 2006) where several of Canada’s largest cities are located.

⁷ Vancouver and Montreal both have political party systems. However, they are not integrated with provincial and federal party systems.

⁸ In this way, local discourses reflect a country-wide trend in multiculturalism policies to what Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Christina Gabriel call a shift toward “selling diversity” (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002).

⁹ Recognition of the importance of place-specific knowledge to the successful integration of immigrants is why the federal government established and funds a number of research centres in major cities across Canada under the umbrella of the Metropolis Project.

¹⁰ This would be controversial in Canada, since provinces tend to guard their responsibility for “municipal institutions” carefully. Nevertheless, recent developments in Ontario suggest that direct federal-municipal funding in this policy area might become possible in the future should the political will exist. For instance, the new City of Toronto Act – the *Stronger City of Toronto for a Stronger Ontario Act* that came in effect in 2007 - allows the city to enter into intergovernmental agreements with the federal government directly.

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