



# Imagining Canada in 2100

**A PAPER PREPARED BY THE COLLEGE OF FELLOWS TO  
STIMULATE DISCUSSION AND DEBATE WITHIN CIP**

JANUARY, 2025

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Land acknowledgement

As Fellows of the Canadian Institute of Planners, we acknowledge our responsibility to the unceded, unsurrendered, and Treaty Lands of Canada. We recognize the importance of learning from Indigenous ways of knowing and being in order to practice planning in an inclusive way.

College Co-chairs – Paul Bedford, FCIP, RPP and Mark Holland, FCIP, RPP

Project Lead – John Farrow, FCIP, RPP

Co-ordination and editorial oversight – Glenn Miller, FCIP

CIP Liaison and Conference Planning – Melanie Hare, FCIP, RPP

Demographics – Russell Mathew, FCIP, RPP

Contributions (from West to East)

### B.C.

Ken Cameron, FCIP, RPP with comments from Richard White, FCIP, RPP, Hugh Kellas, FCIP, RPP and John Steil, FCIP, RPP. Mike Harcourt, an Honorary Member of CIP, provided comments on the homelessness issue.

### Prairies and The North

Alberta - Sasha Tesenkova, FCIP, RPP and Doug Leighton, MCIP, RPP

Saskatchewan - Ryan Walker, MCIP, RPP, Brenda Wallace, MCIP, RPP, Alan Wallace, MCIP, RPP

Manitoba – Donovan Toews, MCIP, RPP and Jino Distasio, MCIP, RPP

The North (Leslie Cabott, FCIP, RPP) plus First Nations (Leslie and Melanie Hare)

### Ontario

Dan Leeming, FCIP, RPP and Eric Turcotte, FCIP, RPP (Environment and Climate Change);

Nick Tunnacliffe, FCIP, RPP and another Ontario Fellow\* (The Economy);

Alex Taranu, FCIP, RPP and John Farrow, FCIP, RPP (Housing Transportation and Infrastructure);

Wayne Caldwell, FCIP, RPP, Mark Seasons, FCIP, RPP, John van Nostrand, FCIP, RPP (Rural, Agriculture and Resources);

Marni Cappe, FCIP, RPP (Governance and Institutional Capacity).

### Quebec

Ray Tomalty, MCIP, RPP

### Atlantic Canada

Jill Grant, FCIP, RPP

\*This Fellow is not named owing to potential cross-examination concerns outside the scope of this report. Note also that adjustments and additions have been made to this report since it was distributed for comment.

# Table of Contents for “Imagining Canada in 2100”

<b>PROLOGUE: IMAGINING A CANADIAN POPULATION OF 100M IS NOT A NEW IDEA .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION: THE RATIONALE FOR “IMAGINING CANADA IN 2100” .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: HOW WE GOT HERE: CANADA’S PROSPERITY IS LINKED TO IMMIGRATION .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CHAPTER TWO: SIX TOPICS OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE .....</b>	<b>14</b>
TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION .....	14
CLIMATE CHANGE .....	17
THE ECONOMY .....	19
HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE .....	21
GOVERNANCE .....	24
IMMIGRATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS .....	25
<b>CHAPTER THREE: REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES - 2025-2060.....</b>	<b>28</b>
BRITISH COLUMBIA .....	28
THE PRAIRIES AND THE NORTH.....	34
ONTARIO .....	44
QUEBEC.....	54
ATLANTIC PROVINCES .....	60
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: CHOICES CONCERNING FUTURE GROWTH .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>75</b>
APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF INITIATIVES AIMED AT EXPANDING CANADA’S POPULATION .....	75
APPENDIX 2 – SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL FROM JOHN VAN NOSTRAND, FCIP, RPP .....	76
APPENDIX 3 – THE QUEST FOR SUSTAINABLE MUNICIPAL REVENUES.....	77

## PROLOGUE: IMAGINING A CANADIAN POPULATION OF 100M IS NOT A NEW IDEA

The ambition for Canada to dramatically grow its population to 100 million by 2100 is an idea that has been percolating in various forms for many years<sup>1</sup>. Although the motivation for proposing different visions for Canada's future has varied, most agree that 100 million is less a target than a way to express an aspiration to achieve an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable existence. Regardless of how the number is interpreted, the common denominator is a recognition that immigration has played – and will always play – a critical role in the country's current and future prosperity.

But perspectives on the role of immigration are changing. Until very recently, it was not unreasonable to assert that Canada enjoyed a reputation as an open, welcoming society capable of offering citizens and newcomers alike an enviable quality of life<sup>2</sup>.

The first decades of the current century, however, have challenged this aspirational world view on a number of fronts, calling into question our collective ability to sustain the momentum of rapid growth made possible by higher levels of immigration, which date back to a policy shift in the 1960s coinciding with the lead-up to Centenary celebrations that reflected a commitment to higher immigration numbers and the introduction of new standards to assess potential immigrants.

Over the past five decades, Canada's economy, and our sense of national identity, has transformed beyond recognition. We have also become aware, as never before, that Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples is changing; that meaningful progress needs to be made on Truth and Reconciliation, requiring the planning profession to embrace a new world view. In addition, there is increasingly visible evidence that the threat of climate change – what some have called an “existential threat to the world” – is already having devastating impacts in every region of the country.

While most newcomers still settle in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec, growing pains that strain the ability of government and key institutions to renew our physical and social infrastructure are increasingly evident. These trends are apparent in communities large and small, in all regions of the country<sup>3</sup>. Canada is also facing a widening economic divide between

---

<sup>1</sup> A short summary of other visions for a “larger Canada” is included as Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> The historical record confirms that Canada's treatment of immigrants has been, at best, uneven, and frequently troubling when viewed from the perspective of the present day.

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026a-eng.htm>) notes that although Toronto (29.5 %), Montreal (12.2%) and Vancouver (11.7%) continue to receive more than half of all immigrants, that share declined in recent years, with Montreal experiencing the most significant decline.



‘haves’ and ‘have-nots.’ Nowhere is this divide more obvious than in the matter of housing choice and affordability.

In short, there is growing recognition that quality of life in our cities, towns and rural communities is under threat. Canada’s future prosperity and good fortune cannot – and should not – be taken for granted<sup>3</sup>.

Our purpose in bringing forward this report for discussion by the College is to stimulate discussion within CIP on the need to address policy development that affects the future of our rural and urban communities more broadly, and with a longer-term perspective. We also acknowledge that continuing to rely on immigration to grow Canada’s population is not universally popular.

It is our view that discussions about Canada’s future should reinforce our ongoing commitment to undertaking a journey that involves both Truth and Reconciliation as well as embracing Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

We also recognize the possibility that even modest population growth may see the proportion of Francophones as a percentage of Canada’s total population decline over the long term. Although this is beyond the traditional purview of planners, our profession remains committed to supporting institutions that reinforce and enhance the founding cultures of Canada.

How we explore options for the future *must* be different from how we did so in the past. Today, we are more conscious than ever of the need to address climate change, sustainability, demographic changes and long-term commitments to major investments. The primary goal of this report, therefore, is not to offer prescriptions but to encourage our professional colleagues to think and act differently, longer-term – and with purpose.

The authors of this report believe that Canada’s planning profession has a role to play in contributing to debates about the challenges and opportunities we face today, and in the years to come. This is the impetus for “Imagining Canada in 2100.”

---

<sup>3</sup> David McKinnon, a former Canadian ambassador, made this point in a recent opinion piece, asserting that Canada is guilty of resting on its laurels when it comes to making the most of our human and physical assets. Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-the-age-of-canadas-exorbitant-privilege-is-ending-now-we-have-to/>

## INTRODUCTION: THE RATIONALE FOR “IMAGINING CANADA IN 2100”

The Canadian Institute of Planners’ College of Fellows launched “Imagining Canada in 2100” (and a parallel initiative entitled “The Evolution of Canadian Planning”) in early 2024 because we want to make a positive impact on decisions affecting the country’s future, and believe that the planning profession has a lot to contribute<sup>4</sup>.

Posing the question, “What kind of place will Canada be at the turn of the next century?” cannot realistically lead to definitive answers. The purpose of this report, we emphasize, is to launch a conversation, initially within our profession, then subsequently with others who share our interest in affecting decisions with respect to public policy over the long-term.

Our immediate goal is to inspire Canada’s planning profession to think about the country’s long-term future beyond the traditional planning horizons found in most community planning studies.

The challenge in thinking longer-term is that:

- In an increasingly competitive world, growth cannot be taken for granted. Sustainable growth needs to be planned for and be responsive to a variety of potentially conflicting values affecting the economy, the environment, and demands for equitable outcomes across society.
- Planners are skilled in addressing complex challenges such as the impacts of climate change, or determining how to build tomorrow’s infrastructure to withstand climate change, facilitate the construction of housing, or plan for jobs and economic development.

Our ambition is to lay the groundwork for encouraging our planning colleagues to actively contribute to discussions on matters of national importance. This will require connecting with government, business and civic leaders to address linkages affecting the values and needs of local communities. These linkages are often indirect and not easily dealt with.

Other jurisdictions and international agencies are beginning to engage in research and policy development that looks far ahead on a variety of global issues. It is therefore important for Canada’s planning profession to stay up to date with the latest thinking as well as to be better placed to prepare the next generation of planners. We believe that, through this initiative, and a parallel project entitled “The Evolution of Canadian Planning,” which compiles available knowledge on the development of planning in Canada in order to make this knowledge widely available, as well as other ongoing CIP initiatives, the College of Fellows can contribute to these necessary discussions.

---

<sup>4</sup> “Fellowship in the Canadian Institute of Planners is the highest honour the Institute can bestow upon a planner. This distinction recognizes excellence, identifies prominent role models, promotes advances in planning practice and draws leaders to the forefront of planning in Canada.” Retrieved from the CIP-ICU website, October 22, 2024

The year 2100 is now a mere 75 years away but if changes to how the nation's policy decisions are to be made, and priorities chosen, there's no time to waste.

### **How This Report Is Organized**

The inherent challenge with attempts to look far into the future – in this case, to 2100 – is the certainty that there will be more uncertainties. This report, written by a group of experienced planners who have prepared plans at every scale in every region of Canada, tries to strike a balance between what can reasonably be forecast and alternative scenarios that provide “best guesses” about the likely impact of what futurists call “unknown-unknowns,” concludes with a set of questions that we hope will form the basis for discussion and debate within the profession.

The content reflects contributions from more than 25 Fellows from different regions of Canada who responded to questions organized under six topic areas, outlined below.<sup>5</sup> Decisions made by governments today in every sector will inevitably have an influence on the lives of future generations; this report is divided into five chapters as follows:

#### **Chapter One – How We Got Here: Canada's Prosperity Linked to Immigration**

Acknowledging that this report's description of Canada cannot realistically reflect the experience of Indigenous peoples, who have been stewards of these lands since time immemorial, it is our intention to begin an engagement process in 2025 to address this shortcoming.

This chapter briefly reviews factors in recent history influencing Canada's development as an urban/suburban nation, and highlights Canada's historical dependence on immigration.

#### **Chapter Two – Topics of National Importance**

This chapter presents short summaries of nationally important topics taken from more than 25 contributions from Fellows. These are issues that we believe will influence Canada's trajectory over the coming decades:

- Meaningful engagement with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and moving towards Truth and Reconciliation;
- Climate change, environment and the need to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions;
- The economy and the investment needed to achieve sustainable economic development;
- Housing, transportation and infrastructure;
- Governance, emphasizing the challenge of managing urban agglomerations at the regional scale; and
- Demographic trends, and the interplay with immigration policies.

---

<sup>5</sup> A number of senior members of CIP also contributed to this report. Their contributions are noted in the Acknowledgements section.

## Chapter Three – Regional Perspectives - 2025-2060

This chapter presents regional perspectives that address Canada’s prospects for the period 2025-2060, a timeframe selected to represent the outside limit of conventional forecasting methods (typically used for regional infrastructure and capital planning purposes). The content of this chapter is primarily based on input from CIP Fellows from across the country who volunteered to answer a common set of questions related to their region’s physical geography and environment; economic prospects; housing, transportation and infrastructure; governance; rural development and agriculture.

The five regions are:

- British Columbia
- The Prairies (Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba) and The North (Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut)
- Ontario
- Quebec
- Atlantic Canada (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador).

## Chapter Four – Alternative population scenarios 2060-2100 to explore “what-ifs”

This chapter presents alternative scenarios that imagine directions for future growth from the present to around 2060, and then to 2100. The scenarios combine recent forecasts prepared by Statistics Canada, with “best guess” evaluation of the impact of the “big picture” topics outlined in Chapter Two as well as insights from “regional perspectives” presented in Chapter Three.

## Chapter Five – Questions for debate and discussion, and concluding thoughts

This report concludes with a set of questions intended to foster debate and discussion within the profession. This final version of the report reflects feedback following a presentation of a draft report at the 2024 AGM of the College of Fellows. It is anticipated that the topic will continue to be discussed, at the 2025 CIP/OPPI conference, and beyond.

## Appendices 1, 2 and 3

Appendix 1 summarizes various initiatives addressing the need for Canada to greatly increase its population. Appendix 2 summarizes a power point detailing a vision for a national growth strategy by John van Nostrand, FCIP. Appendix 3 outlines some of the possibilities for recalibrating how municipalities are funded with more sustainable sources of revenue.

## CHAPTER ONE: HOW WE GOT HERE: CANADA'S PROSPERITY IS LINKED TO IMMIGRATION

It is important at the outset to acknowledge that any attempt to explain how Canada grew to its current population of more than 40M does not do justice to the histories of Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Inuit and Métis), who have occupied what is often referred to as “Turtle island” since time immemorial.<sup>6</sup> These histories must come from Indigenous people themselves as part of a broader-based engagement process. Acknowledging this, Chapter One begins by briefly sketching how two inter-related realities combined to establish the basis – for better or worse – for how Canada developed.<sup>7</sup>

First, although Canada's massive land mass comprises an extraordinary diversity of landscapes, climates and resources, roughly only 12 per cent of Canada's land area is arable or habitable due to the ruggedness of the terrain.<sup>8</sup> In British Columbia, the proportion of arable or habitable land is even lower, at approximately five per cent.

Second, the push to overcome these constraints in the 19<sup>th</sup> century led to an extraordinary period of government-sponsored land surveying that began in the 1870s and continued through to the 1920s as the government sought to facilitate the arrival of immigrants in the West and to prepare for construction and related growth in the transcontinental rail corridor. The survey process contributed to some of the more controversial aspects of Canada's history, resulting in significant negative impacts on Indigenous peoples which are still being felt today. The distinctive architecture of the organizational templates established by surveyors are nevertheless still visible in today's land use patterns. Much of the layout of Canada's municipalities, regional-scale plans and thousands of residential subdivisions found in every community in the country can be traced back to the patterns established through the original surveys.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Turtle Island is a name given to the continent of North America by the Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking peoples. Métis communities began to make their presence felt as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>7</sup> “All Canadians...Indigenous and non-Indigenous, need to learn that the history of this country did not begin in 1534, or even with the arrival of Vikings centuries earlier.” Murray Sinclair. Retrieved from The Globe and Mail, September 21, 2024

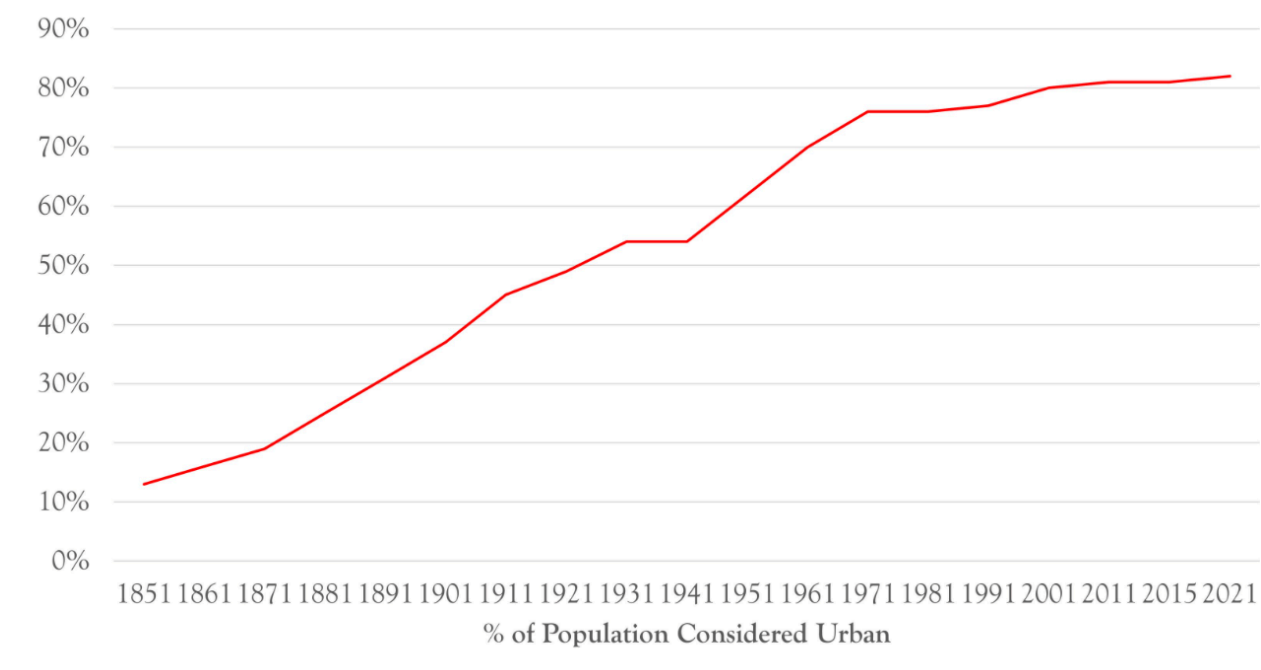
<sup>8</sup> According to the Canada Year Book, Canada is the second largest country in the world, covering almost 10M km<sup>2</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The square grid system (known as the Township model) was used in Atlantic Canada and Ontario, while Quebec relied on the French seigneurial system, distinguished by long narrow lots fronting on major rivers like the St. Lawrence. The Western provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and some parts of British Columbia) were laid out by Dominion Land Surveyors, whose standardized grid of townships and sections were larger to suit the needs of large-scale farming. The process of surveying was seen as a necessary investment for major infrastructure projects such as Canada's transcontinental railway network, while also facilitating the orderly development of early settlements. See descriptions in <https://natural-resources.canada.ca/maps-tools-and-publications/geodetic-reference-systems/canadian-spatial-reference-system-csrs/100-years-geodetic-surveys-canada/9110> and <https://uwaterloo.ca/earth-sciences-museum/resources/mining-canada/three-men-who-unlocked-west>

## Canada is an Urban Nation, but Also Rural

As the Canadian academic Alan F.J. Artibise noted in his classic 1988 essay, despite a vast territory that “evokes images of an immense, unsettled wilderness,”<sup>10</sup> Canada is also “an urban nation,” resulting from historically high levels of urbanization, where cities serve as increasingly important economic drivers. In addition, Artibise suggested, “Virtually all the fundamental issues of Canadian life are evident in the urban areas. Problems of growth and decline, of power allocation, of conflict between ethnic groups or classes are all found in (Canada’s) cities.”

This high level of urbanization has been the reality since the 1930s, making Canada – if only in the minds of statisticians – one of the most urbanized nations on earth. Or, as David Gordon has shown in his research, much of what Statistics Canada defines as “urban” is, in fact, “not rural.” Since at least the 1960s, Canada has increasingly developed as “a suburban nation,”<sup>11</sup> with a significant percentage of its population living in suburbs.



<sup>10</sup> Alan Artibise, “Canada as an Urban Nation,” published in *Daedalus*, Vol 117 No 4, 1988

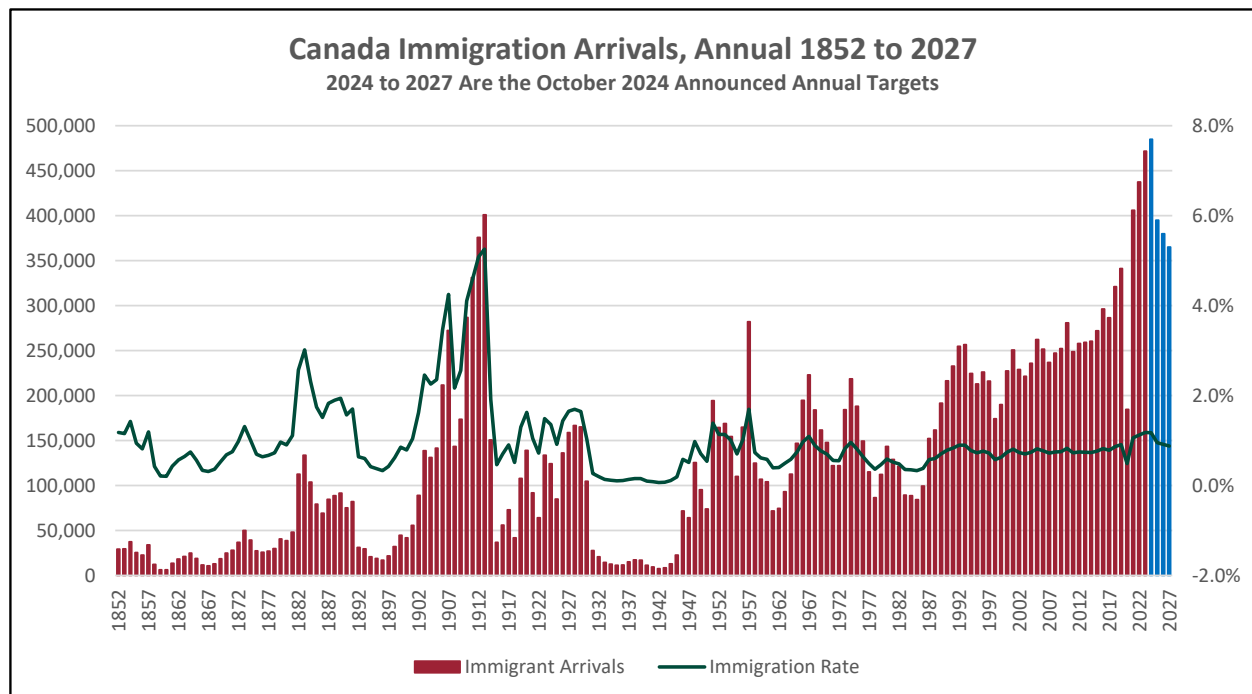
<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from <https://schoolofcities.utoronto.ca/research/canadian-suburbs-atlas/David>. The graph from Statistics Canada, Proportion of the population living in rural areas, Canada, 1851 to 2021 retrieved from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-x/2021002/98-200-x2021002-eng.cfm>

The only “new” cities to emerge have been places created on the fringes of the original settlements, largely dominated by swaths of single-family dwellings and acres of employment lands.

So, some 150-plus years after Confederation, Canada still has only half a dozen urban regions with populations larger than one million, with more than half of Canada’s population concentrated in the Quebec-Windsor corridor. In contrast, the U.S. population not only grew to more than nine times the size of Canada’s, but has more than 50 large metros distributed across the U.S. able to serve as destinations for job seekers. This also defines the relative size of the two neighbouring economies, resulting in the need for ambitious Canadian companies to export their products and services to the U.S. Another implication of this imbalance is that the range of opportunity for newcomers to Canada is bound up to a significant extent in the relatively narrow set of choices for places to move to, determined by our physical, social and economic environment.

Much of Canada’s growth in the past has been from immigration. In the future, immigration will be the source of *all* growth.

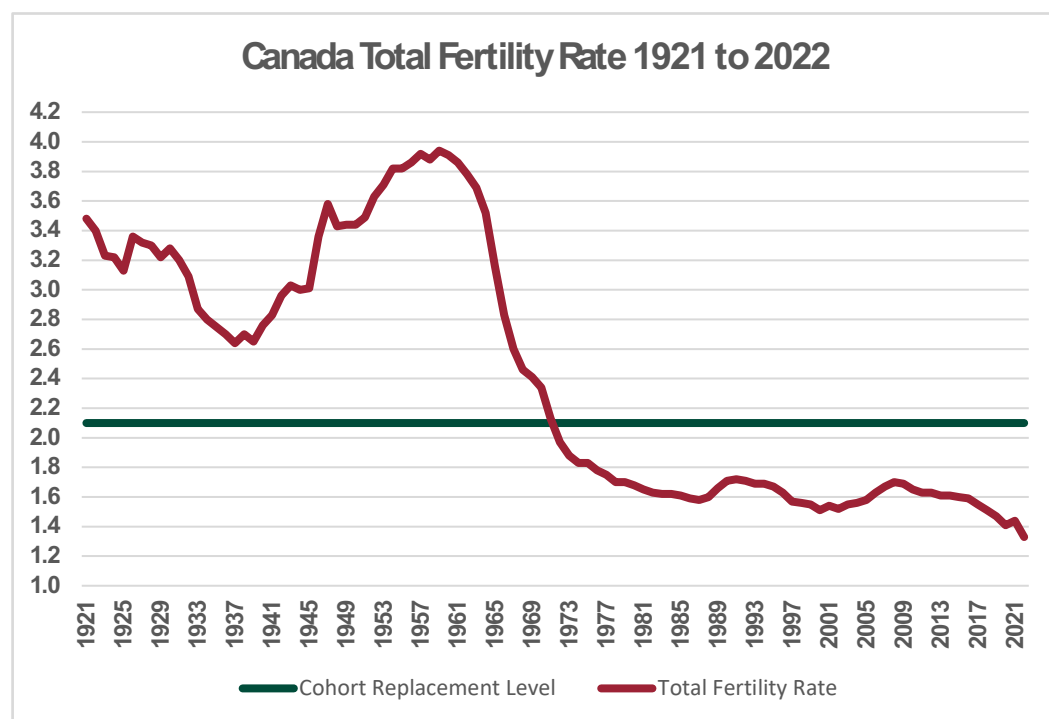
- For the first 50 years after Confederation, despite waves of high immigration (initially from Britain but later on from other European countries as Canada sought to attract large numbers of immigrants with farming backgrounds) and high fertility rates, Canada’s population growth was often hampered by large-scale *emigration* (mostly to the U.S.).
- From 1861 to 1901, about 1.5M immigrants arrived, but 2M emigrated, resulting in a net loss of international migration.





Source: Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0063-01 Historical statistics, estimated population and immigrant arrivals; Statistics Canada, Annual Demographic Estimates

- Post-war growth saw a combination of high levels of immigration and high fertility rates (Baby Boom years), pushing Canada's population from 14M in 1951 to 18M in 1961, reaching 20.3M in 1967, the Centennial year.
- Following a change to what Doug Saunders calls a “maximizing Canada” approach in the mid-1960s, the principal source of newcomers shifted away from Britain and Western Europe. In every year since 1971, a majority of Canada's immigrants have been non-European. Over the past 30 years, India, China and the Philippines have consistently been the largest source of immigrants<sup>12</sup>.
- In nearly every year from 1946 to 1989, Canada's natural increase (births minus deaths) accounted for most of the population growth, and far exceeded the level of permanent immigration. In every year since 1990, immigration has been the source of a majority of growth, as natural increase continues to decline. As natural increase approaches zero, (possibly in 2025), and despite increased longevity, immigration will account for all population growth in Canada. By 1972, the total fertility rate had dropped below the replacement rate of 2.1, reaching a record low of 1.33 in 2021.



Source: Fertility in Canada, 1921 to 2022, Claudine Provencher and Nora Galbraith, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 91F0015M, 2024

<sup>12</sup> In his book “Maximum Canada,” Doug Saunders uses the term “maximizing Canada” as a form of shorthand to describe Canada's transformation from “inward looking” public policy with respect to immigration to “outward looking.”

- Without continued high levels of immigration, Canada's population could be in decline by mid-century, exacerbating fiscal and economic challenges for governments (federal, provincial and territorial) as they struggle to address revenue shortfalls related to an aging population and a shrinking labour force.
- Having recently passed the 40M population mark, maintaining a 0.9 per cent immigration rate (about 370,000 annually today, rising to 700,000 annually by 2100) – other things being equal – would see Canada's population reach 75M by 2100<sup>13</sup>.
- However, Statistics Canada reports that Canada is once again having difficulties retaining immigrants, including those with the highest skill levels and education, who leave after a generation, having failed to achieve their desired standard of living despite their qualifications - "surviving vs living." Canada loses between 50-200K people annually, mostly immigrants who move on to the U.S.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> This is explained in detail in Chapter Four.

<sup>14</sup> <https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/statistics-canada-immigrants-leaving-data> (retrieved Sept 1 2024)

## CHAPTER TWO: SIX TOPICS OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Taking inspiration from commentaries provided by Fellows who volunteered to contribute to this report, this chapter presents short summaries of nationally important topics taken from more than 25 contributions from Fellows (and CIP members). These are issues that we believe will influence Canada's trajectory over the coming decades:

### **TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION: Preparing for a Different, More Positive Relationship with Canada's Indigenous Peoples, and Prioritizing Indigenous Input**

As noted earlier, the pace of positive change within and among Canada's Indigenous peoples has been rapid in recent decades, particularly with respect to the capacity of First Nations and other Indigenous communities who benefit from improved education opportunities, partnerships that stimulate economic development and the resolution of long-standing disputes over land rights. Much still has to be done, especially in the areas of improving the quality of living conditions (included a lack of safe drinking water) and housing, both on reserves and in cities.

Although it is possible to identify positive steps forward, it will also be important to ensure that Indigenous cultures are recognized as distinct and different from community to community. There are nevertheless certain cultural traits that distinguish Indigenous cultures from "colonial" cultures. Key among these differences is respect for long-term, multi-generational thinking (the assumption being in many Indigenous cultures that decisions should anticipate the needs of at least seven generations). An Indigenous worldview is more likely to embrace the role of nature as part of the cycle of life, with a focus on process rather than hard deadlines to deliver outcomes.

*Influence up to and by 2100:* Leading up to 2100, Indigenous groups will have more influence and be better educated, more assertive of rights, and influential on government policy. Current decisions are in their favour, and they have a strong desire to participate in economic development and gain prosperity. In British Columbia, both the federal and provincial governments are actively supportive of developments that will establish a sustainable economic future through, among other steps, facilitating a process of returning lands that had been taken from First Nations.<sup>15</sup> In addition, major infrastructure projects such as investments in new sources of hydro in B.C. and Northern Ontario that rely on access to Indigenous lands will likely not happen without Indigenous consent/partnerships.

The City of Vancouver's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) protocols in 2023 (the first municipality in Canada to do so) reflects an increased commitment by municipal governments on a path to Truth and Reconciliation, best demonstrated in B.C. but evident across the country. The implications of these protocols and

---

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.squamish.net/senakw-funding/>

recommendations are far-reaching and increase the influence of the Indigenous peoples, politically and economically.

*Indigenous World Views:* With many Indigenous communities across Canada, there is a diversity of cultures, traditions, governance, values and settings of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

It is important to recognize the distinct nature of these cultures and the multiple voices and perspectives – there is no one “Indigenous perspective.” In particular, there are different ways of seeing and being between First Nation and colonial communities; distinct values/ways of being/seeing that must be understood but may also lend themselves well to the concept of community planning over the long term. In some instances, these approaches do not lend themselves well to our conventional planning concepts and processes or understanding of “growth.” Distinct aspects of the Indigenous ways of being include:

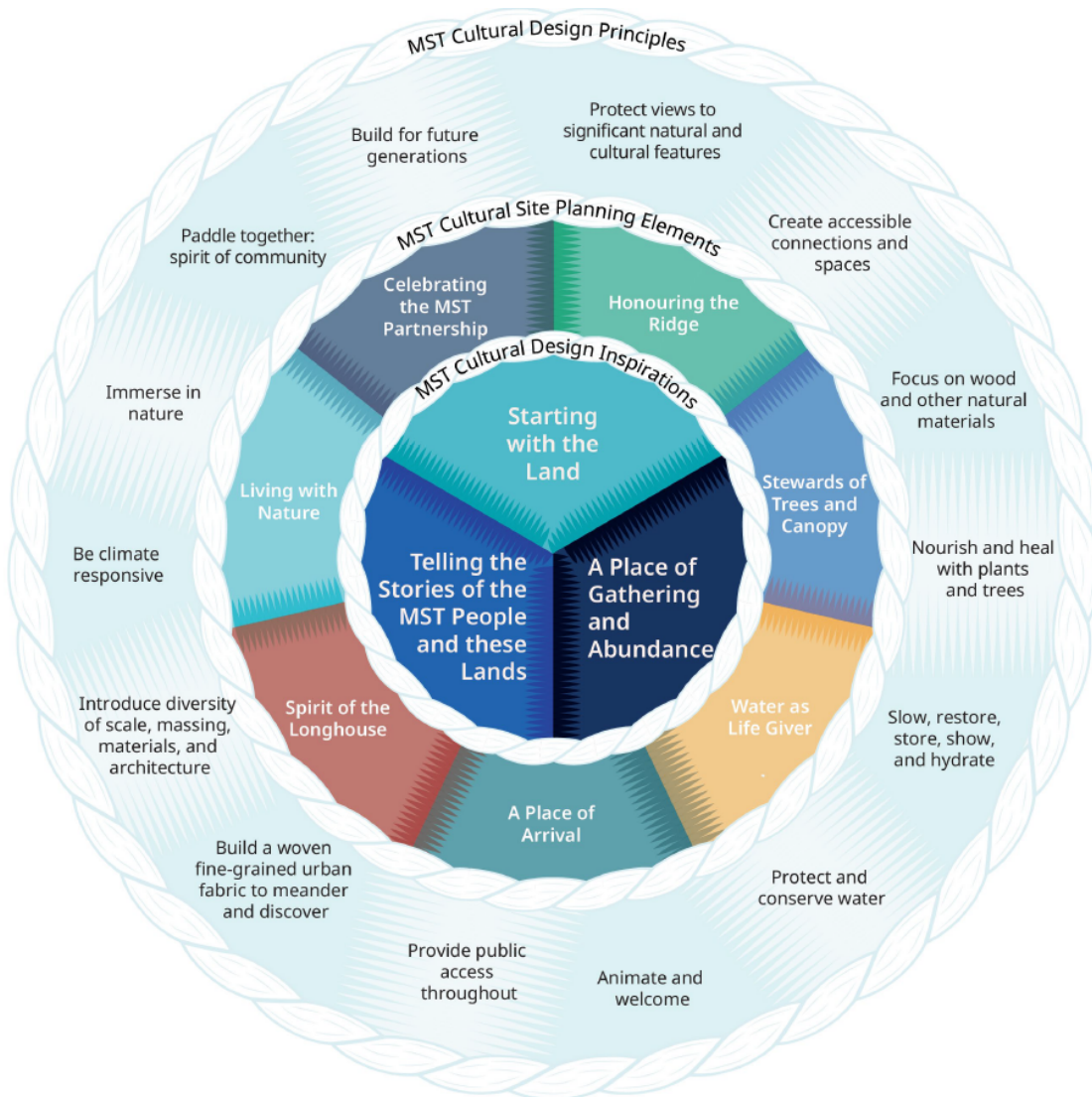
- Spiritually-oriented society versus a scientific, “evidence-based” approach.
- “Seven generations” thinking has always meant planning for the long term – defined by a multi-generational timeframe rather than a political or near-term ‘infrastructure planning’ horizon.
- An understanding and belief that we are all part of one integrated ecosystem, not a hierarchical, human-dominant system; this is often represented in the four elements or directions and cycle of life.
- Time is non-linear, and process drives the outcome rather than deadlines.
- Inter-generational living, working and learning is embedded in all things.
- Land “ownership” is not an Indigenous concept. Land is understood as sacred, belonging to all beings.
- Many of these communities/community members come from trauma settings – but that is changing.

On the economic front, the Canadian Council of Aboriginal Business for PAR Certification (Progressive Aboriginal Relations) outlines four principles that would seem applicable to the work of planners. These are:

- Respect and Recognition
- Community Investment
- Lasting Relationships, and
- Building Opportunities through Partnership.

These could be helpful in finding common ground to support economic reconciliation. Turtle Island, and within that, Canada, has been stewarded with care by Indigenous peoples since before recorded history, which is why answers to specific questions will need to come from Indigenous peoples themselves.

## MST Cultural Whorl



The MST Cultural Whorl is a product of the first-ever cultural interpretive plan created for the purpose of guiding the design process of First Nations-led development projects in downtown Vancouver. The MST Partnership comprises the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

*Next steps toward Indigenous Engagement for Imagining Canada in 2100:* Gaining insight, perspectives and thoughts about Canada 2100 from the First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples is critical and needs to begin in earnest following publication of this initial report.

The Canada 2100 project going forward should initiate a dialogue with Assembly of First Nation, Inuit and Métis National organizations/representatives and or Elders from these communities. These initial discussions will shape the format and nature of any further engagement activities. Specific commentary related to the regions examined in the report follows in Chapter Three.

There are clearly more questions than answers when it comes to engagement with Indigenous peoples. The need to engage meaningfully with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples will continue, ideally in concert with CIP's overall plans to do so.

### **CLIMATE CHANGE: the Environment and the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels**

The impacts of climate change are already re-shaping maps of future provincial, national and global migration and growth. The primary impact of climate change is heat followed by drought, crop failure, flooding, wildfires, other severe weather events. As all of these effects increase in severity they will be felt globally, but at first as an aggregate they will have the most profound effect on the Caribbean, South-East Asia, Middle East, areas of Africa, and Brazil, where it is predicted that extreme heat, rising sea levels and drought could possibly render some areas uninhabitable by 2050.

As a developed country and the source of a great deal of the carbon that has produced the climate crisis, Canada and its communities have a dual responsibility. First, we must continue and enhance Canada's leadership in reducing its carbon emissions by 2050, not only through international cooperation and support for affected countries and their people, but also through efforts in each Canadian community to reach the emission reduction goal. Second, we must protect our population and ecosystems from damage by mitigating the effects of climate change which we are experiencing today and can expect to become increasingly severe<sup>16</sup>.

As areas of the planet become increasingly less comfortable for human occupation, Canada could be considered a relatively more desirable destination for migrants, bearing in mind that the global growth rate is predicted to slow after 2050 (population estimate 9.8 billion), then peak in 2086 (10.4 billion) and decline to 10.3 billion by 2100, with a growth rate at 0.1 per cent (UN Population Division Report, 2022).

---

<sup>16</sup> "Adapting to climate change's effects is as important as fighting it," Charles Brindamour and Blair Feltmate. Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/commentary/article-adapting-to-climate-changes-effects-is-as-important-as-fighting-it/#:~:text=To%20protect%20communities%20and%20the,quarters%20of%20a%20million%20Canadians>, December 28, 2024

Although it is currently impossible to predict the extent to which Canada will be successful in attempts to mitigate impacts on its diverse ecosystems or to adapt patterns of growth in the coming decades, climate-related extreme weather patterns are now frequent.

The reach of climate change is no longer confined to wilderness areas, but is being experienced increasingly in our cities, affecting the economy directly through infrastructure damage but also indirectly through the cost – and, increasingly, restrictions imposed by insurance.

For the past 25 years, Canada has been experiencing a warming trend that has seen every year since 1998 exceed the 20<sup>th</sup> century average rise in global temperatures. The Canadian Arctic is warming ever faster, with predictable downstream impacts. Wildfires are devastating millions of hectares of forests on an annual basis, along with increased threats from insect-borne disease; some regions are experiencing drought, while others are facing floods. The melting of glaciers, reduced snowpack and drought are reducing the volume of fresh water available for agriculture and cities alike. Problems ranging from unseasonal cold snaps to extreme heat are affecting soft fruit production and wine-growing in the Lower Mainland and southwest Ontario as well as further east in Prince Edward County to Quebec and Atlantic Canada. It should also be noted that both Saskatchewan and Manitoba are experiencing positive impacts related to climate change resulting from higher temperatures and longer growing seasons for agricultural activities.

Both the west and east coasts of Canada are being facing the prospect of rising sea levels, which in turn increases the risk of flooding in the interior. This raises questions for policy makers regarding whether it still makes sense to invest in physical protections versus a willingness to accept that certain areas are beyond saving.

From a resource perspective, greater demands can be expected on rural resources across the country and this will make it difficult to maintain the current ratio of “urban-rural” balance at 20 per cent. The Ontario Farmland Trust is concerned about the loss of farmland in Southern Ontario. And although B.C. and Quebec historically have had some of the strongest controls to protect farmland, pressures to redevelop scarce farmland are likely to continue.

Adding a climate change lens magnifies these concerns. For example, according to Agriculture Canada, “Increased temperatures, longer growing seasons, shifting precipitation patterns and an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme events from climate change will bring challenges to Canada's agricultural sector.”<sup>17</sup> Notwithstanding these concerns, it is worth noting that Ontario is expected to be a net food exporter in the coming decades.

---

<sup>17</sup> <https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/environment/climate-change/climate-change-impacts-agriculture> Retrieved August 7, 2024.



Although this litany of bad news related to climate change is hard to take, there are signs that the built environment and transportation, which collectively account for 35 per cent of GHG emissions are beginning to transition away from fossil fuels<sup>18</sup>.

Canada is committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050; and there is increasing evidence of a drive to de-carbonize the economy led by public and private investments to support increased reliance on electric vehicles. Wind and solar power are also seeing increased levels of investment from both government and institutional investors such as pension funds, although both of these power sources have limited potential as base load energy; both New Brunswick and Ontario are heavily dependent on nuclear power, with the latter committed to investing in the development of small nuclear reactors.

There is also an uptick in the application of systemic solutions such as district heating and cooling investments powered by low and non-carbon energy sources such as geothermal and waste heat recovery from urban sanitary sewer systems. However, the jury is still out on whether the oil industry world-wide will be able to follow through on investments in biofuels and carbon capture. Looking to the future, there is therefore a need to consider how Canada can best continue to mitigate the effects of climate change on its citizens.

### **THE ECONOMY: The Economy is the Basis for Sustainable Growth**

To date, a key element of Canada's economic history has been the exploitation of natural resources, which has frequently been accompanied by environmental damage. "Sustainable growth" means growth that is socially, environmentally and economically sustainable in that it meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

The state of our economy is one of many factors that determine the quality of life for human settlement. Economic growth also determines income levels as well as the level of government revenues available to cover the costs of infrastructure and social services. All governments have to meet fixed costs (the need to feed, educate, police, support the health of residents, defend borders, care for the environment, maintain existing infrastructure, and provide new, climate-resistant infrastructure.) These same governments are also faced with escalating demands for additional services.

Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of Canada's economy has never been more important. This includes determining how Canada is likely to perform as one of three inter-connected North American economies. Prospects for Canada's economy are inextricably intertwined and, to a considerable extent, dependent on the fortunes of the U.S. economy. At more than 23 trillion dollars, the U.S. economy is 10 times larger than ours.

---

<sup>18</sup> <https://natural-resources.canada.ca/transparency/reporting-and-accountability/plans-and-performance-reports/departmental-strategies/the-canada-green-buildings-strategy-transforming-canadas-buildings-sector-for-net-zero/26065>

To a significant extent, the “rules” that govern cross-border economic ties are defined by formal agreements between the “three amigos.” The signing of CUSMA (Canada, United States, and Mexico Agreement) – the third such agreement in the modern era – came into force in 2020, superseding the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) signed in 1994 and the original U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed in 1989. All versions of these agreements acknowledge the importance of supporting the integrity of integrated supply chains for manufacturing (e.g. automobiles). There is also a considerable degree of mutual inter-dependence with respect to critical minerals and resources required that will enable a successful transition to electric vehicles and other high-tech investments.<sup>19</sup>

Canada continues to seek to enhance its reputation for knowledge-based activities (finance, insurance, high tech, and pharmaceuticals) while on the other hand, Canada’s reliance on the exploitation of natural resources such as fossil fuels, minerals and timber reflects concerns about foreign ownership and weaknesses in terms of our ability to add value to such resources before they are exported. As history has shown, resources are also vulnerable to global forces beyond Canada’s control. There are persistent concerns that Canada has low levels of worker productivity, over-reliance on public sector employment, as well as growing income inequality.

Although Canada’s economy has historically depended heavily on agriculture as an export commodity and a way to feed the nation, pandemic-related weak links in global supply chains highlighted the changing dynamics of food production. Supporters of the sector counsel that Canada needs to improve productivity and increase its capacity to fill gaps in the supply of food in times of scarcity, which could be an important factor in the future.<sup>20</sup>

Of immediate concern is the need to respond to the needs of an aging population (and resulting increased spending for social services such as health care). Will this spur demand for well-qualified immigrants or result in increased competition for scarce government resources to invest in infrastructure? Will we be able to continue to attract and retain immigrants in the face of rapidly changing job prospects and rising housing costs that collectively affect quality of life?

If cities are to meet their potential as hubs for entrepreneurship and innovation, will the government be able to sustain or enhance investments in post-secondary education and also fund research and development? The rapid development of AI on the economy, and its impact on future job prospects is still being determined, as are topics such as the management of data and the potential use of AI to anticipate future conditions.

These and other challenges such as a rapidly shifting geopolitical environment could well define the strength and resilience of Canada’s future economy – and particularly the success of our

---

<sup>19</sup> In the short time since this report was drafted, Canada’s economic prospects have entered a period of uncertainty in the face of promised high tariffs on Canadian goods and services exported to the U.S. by the incoming U.S. administration.

<sup>20</sup> “As the World Warms,” Craig Alexander. Retrieved from Globe and Mail, August 6, 2024

cities. From that perspective, policies that support sustainable and inclusive growth in cities could well prove crucial to long-term economic success. Less well understood is whether Canada's rural population will thrive or continue to erode in the years ahead. Quebec's proactive policies to preserve the economy and culture of its rural communities could well serve as an object lesson for the rest of Canada. It is no coincidence that the percentage of Quebec's population living in rural areas is higher than anywhere else in Canada. Having said that, economists foresee relatively slower growth within that province – in part due to government policies aimed at preserving the French language. This will likely see Quebec's traditional share of Canada's population decline over time.

## **HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Although the term “housing crisis” appears everywhere these days, community plans also address the need for jobs and investment as well as resources to deliver retail goods and other services, which is why it will be important to acknowledge the many other policy threads that influence the success of future efforts to provide an appropriate mix of housing.

For most of Canada's history, housing was considered to be primarily the responsibility of individual households who, for the most part, had the income needed to purchase or rent a suitable home in a private market operated by builders, developers, trades and financial institutions. Home ownership and long-term tenancies were considered an important value for its role in building cohesion for communities and financial equity for families. Home ownership was extended beyond the traditional single-family home to include condominium properties in multi-family developments. The needs of households for whom home ownership or rental was out of reach or inappropriate were addressed, to a greater or lesser degree, by government-assisted housing programs.

It is now clear that this model for the provision of housing is not able to produce the amount, type and tenure of housing necessary to meet the needs of Canada's population. Housing prices and rents have gone well beyond what is affordable for many households, and the ability of the private market to produce housing in sufficient supply is in question, notwithstanding the creation of a number of government programs and initiatives with that objective. Homelessness remains a significant and growing problem in communities of every size and location. Reliance on food banks has also grown to alarming levels in communities of every size.

As well, recent high levels of immigration have compounded the country's housing problems and run the risk of creating a backlash against new arrivals in a country that aspires to grow in part through immigration<sup>21</sup>. A rethinking of Canada's approach to housing from first principles will be required if the needs of the existing population and new arrivals are to be met constructively.

---

<sup>21</sup> These problems have been compounded by commentary that conflates economic migrants, refugees and young people arriving on student visas.

The housing market in post-war Canada was defined by widespread support for low-density single-family dwellings to accommodate the baby boom generation, one of the reasons Canada became a “suburban nation.” This was augmented by government-sponsored social housing that resulted in iconic mixed income developments in Toronto, Vancouver and other cities. Until the late 1970s, Canada also benefited from the development of extensive purpose-built rental housing portfolios, which provided a degree of balance to the housing market. This ended abruptly in 1972 when the federal government changed the tax rules by removing accelerated capital cost provisions that had allowed corporations to earn a reasonable after-tax yield on rental housing portfolios while simultaneously encouraging those companies to re-invest profits in more housing. Almost overnight, the combination of changes to the Income Tax Act, higher interest rates, the introduction of rent controls and increased federal subsidies for single-family housing, caused this healthy sector to stop growing.<sup>22</sup> The only jurisdiction where purpose-built rental housing continued to be popular is Quebec.

Given today’s reliance on condominium housing, it is worth noting that the first condos only appeared in the late 1960s, and the sector only began to grow significantly in the 1980s. Over the past 20 years, demand for condos (known as strata title properties in B.C.) has been led by small investors, whose investments help developers reach sales targets sufficient to support construction loans. As an increasing percentage of condos were rented out by small investors, this formed an important third leg of the housing market. The downside of this approach is that people renting from individual investors are vulnerable to changing priorities for the owners, including increased interest rates, which can lead to sharp rises in rent levels.

It is also important to distinguish between “affordability” – the ability of the population to either buy or rent suitable housing – and “affordable housing,” a term synonymous with social housing. It is increasingly clear that the private market is not equipped to satisfy the housing needs of many Canadians, particularly those with moderate incomes. The role of governments (federal, provincial/territorial and municipal) to invest in social housing, through the provision of funds and by recognizing the potential to lease government-owned (surplus) land for public benefit, will be one of the principal challenges in the decades ahead.

Inter and intra-urban transportation infrastructure is a critical consideration when speculating about how future citizens should be accommodated. The role that transportation plays in linking all activities means that there are tensions between the changing demands for different types of services.

These demands include the need to support economic activity, and the desire of citizens to make trips for a wide variety of purposes. These needs must be accommodated while meeting the environmental imperative to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions and responding to changing

---

<sup>22</sup> “Home Truths: Fixing Canada’s Housing Crisis,” Carolyn Whitzman, UBC Press, 2024

technological innovations. The additional complication is that infrastructure requires investment in advance of demand and that once in place it has a long lifespan.

Although speculating about how these tensions will be resolved over the long-term is impossible, one element around which planners can usefully speculate is the need and location for the protection of intra and inter-urban corridors to accommodate future needs

In the short-term, many experiments are being made with transit-oriented development and the provision of alternatives to individual car use. These initiatives are in part driven by a desire to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Notwithstanding technological progress being made on powering individual modes of transport, such progress will likely not reduce the scale of transit investment required in urban centres.

Although taking on the risk to construct an east-west transcontinental railway may have helped create Canada as we know it today, the result is that we now have a large, efficient freight network spanning the country. However, a comparable passenger network never materialized, even though there have been many studies on the potential to serve sections of the Quebec-Windsor corridor and Edmonton-Calgary corridor with high speed passenger rail service, none have been able to attract the necessary investment. In a country the size of Canada the need for strategic investment in national transportation links will remain ever present.

Infrastructure is historically a term applied to piped services and transportation but these days includes fibre optics, broadband and other types of infrastructure needed for a modern economy. For the past 30 years, regular reports have focused on “the infrastructure deficit.” The inability to afford to maintain infrastructure is now exacerbated by the need to build new, climate-resilient infrastructure as well as an increasingly urgent need to rebuild or replace existing infrastructure that is “past its best before date.” The relatively recent shift to valuing and protecting green infrastructure to maintain ecosystem health, adapt to climate change and avoid over-burdening traditional infrastructure budgets is a welcoming emerging trend that planners must do more to support.

When making such decisions concerning infrastructure investment for the period to 2100 there is a need to recognize the high level of uncertainty and, therefore, risk. This is especially true when making investments in infrastructure projects that have a long lifespan. However, such decisions cannot be avoided as these are necessary to provide the foundation for a sustainable economy, environmental protection, and maintaining the quality of life for citizens. To make such decisions in a timely manner, recognizing that we will need to replace aging infrastructure as well as invest in climate-appropriate new infrastructure, it will be necessary to assess the degree of risk in order to incorporate appropriate features or measures related to resilience and adaptability<sup>23</sup>.

---

<sup>23</sup> <https://stateofcitiessummit.ca/report> and <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/commentary/article-canadas-infrastructure-deficit-threatens-economic-competitiveness-and/>, retrieved January 2, 2025

## **GOVERNANCE**

Early municipal growth in Canada experienced bankruptcies as the need to supply services outstripped the ability to pay, a phenomenon made worse by a lack of systemic planning and procedures to safeguard the municipal interest. Legislative “guard rails” to prevent this have since prevented this problem recurring (in Ontario, for example, the original role of the OMB was to monitor municipal budgets) but created a continuing challenge as communities grew. The challenge was – and is - how to cover the costs of development expansion. Development charges (allocated to pay for new growth) are now being blamed for increasing cost of new housing so other solutions may need to be explored. Quebec is the only large province that doesn’t rely on some form of “growth paying for growth” financing mechanism, although this could change in future.

The question of how to match municipal revenues with an expanded range of responsibilities that were never contemplated a century and a half ago when the mechanisms of municipal governance were created has been much discussed but so far, there are no solutions<sup>24</sup>.

To add to the challenge, piped infrastructure in many communities not only needs to be replaced but potentially has to be upgraded in order to handle more extreme weather events and other changing needs.

Policy makers in Canada are still haunted by the failure of the federal Ministry of Urban Affairs, a short-lived experiment that tried to overcome jurisdictional boundaries by intervening in areas that were clearly provincial in nature.

Attempts to manage larger, fast-growing urban regions by providing management and decision-making oversight to numerous adjacent independent communities with either formal or informal governance models have often struggled to match the needs of governance with carefully thought out regional plans. In comparison to the U.S. experience, Canada’s record of regional-scale planning is something to be proud of.

The Metro Toronto model established in the 1950s worked well to address physical and social infrastructure needs until the region’s economy outgrew its boundaries. The formation of “regional” governments on Metro Toronto’s borders added complexity to the governance of a growing economic region with multiple municipal governments. Generations later, the provincially-mandated Greater Golden Horseshoe plan established in 2006 also achieved some limited successes but is currently in the process of being dismantled by the current provincial

---

<sup>24</sup> Canadian municipalities are “creatures of the province,” a provision established in 1867 with the passing of the British North America Act. This arrangement was consolidated in 1982 with the passing of the Constitution Act and Charter of Rights and Freedoms, schedules to the Canada Act, 1982. As a result, sources of municipal revenue continue to be restricted to property taxes, user fees and grants from senior orders of government. In addition, municipalities cannot run deficits, so paying down infrastructure debt must be managed within these constraints. (A memo addressing possible options for expanding municipal revenues is included as Appendix 3.)

government. Montreal’s regional plan encompassing more than 80 municipalities has been in place since 2011. In British Columbia, regional-scale plans in the Lower Mainland have also proved effective over many decades.

Typical growth patterns have seen multiple core and suburban communities grow in contiguous fashion but experience has shown these relationships are almost impossible to manage. In the Greater Toronto Area, proposals for a single regional government such as that proposed by the Golden Commission for the Toronto region in the 1990s was perceived as “too large,” and a threat to the provincial government. Questions over ideal models to manage expanding regions will need to be addressed and answered over the coming decades.

Looking ahead, in determining where to put 60M more people, solutions will need to be found. So-called “mega regions” have the benefit of creating critical mass but identifying sources of funding to invest in suitably-scaled transportation and other infrastructure is a problem still looking for solutions.

With the economy still adjusting to the impacts of a global pandemic, leaving uncertainty about the future of remote work, planners in future may want to consider shifting the emphasis of growth to a network of smaller urban centres as centralized workplaces served by transit come under scrutiny. Although not guaranteed, it is possible that smaller centres can be more affordable while still offering the necessary level of appeal for entrepreneurs and employers. Such conditions do not come without cost, however, and could possibly require even higher levels of investment to provide the conditions necessary for success.

## **IMMIGRATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

Government policies affect everything from economic drivers to the potential to attract – and retain – immigrants. In the distant past, there were many decades when more people left Canada than arrived as immigrants – in large part because people’s expectations for a better life were not being met. There are signs that similar trends are beginning to repeat themselves, with rates of emigration from Canada recently reaching record levels.<sup>25</sup> In this regard, a number of demographic trends are combining that will affect the need for Canada to be able to attract and retain immigrants:

As Canada’s economic growth continues to lag many of its peer countries, and as the immigrant-source countries continue their own long-term economic growth, the perceived opportunity to benefit from a move to Canada may narrow, challenging Canada’s ability to attract ever-larger numbers of immigrants.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> “The Leaky Bucket 2024: A Closer Look at Immigrant onward migration in Canada.” Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC), November 2024



Canada's demographic challenges are not unique; the United Nations demographic projections indicate that 75 per cent of the world's population live in countries with fertility rates below replacement level.<sup>26</sup> Low fertility rates are the harbinger of an aging population and eventual population decline. Today, 27 per cent of the world's 240 UN-recognized jurisdictions are already in decline. The global population is expected to peak in 2084.

The impact of such trends on Canada could be stark, with the three largest sources of immigration facing population decline themselves: India and the Philippines will see population decline after 2060, and China is expected to lose 60 per cent of its population this century, declining from 1.41B today to 633M by 2100. Countries that are sources of immigrants today may be competing with Canada to attract immigrants from other areas themselves.

What does all of this mean for "Imagining Canada in 2100"? These trends affect every aspect of this project at the national and regional levels, but the key national patterns include the following. Two preliminary alternatives are suggested:

- 2060 is probably a good break point between the long-term and the very long-term outlook. Almost no matter what immigration policy is tested in the scenarios, the "demographic headwinds" of the last half century of low fertility rates will mean a slower rate of population growth in the last 40 years of the century (2060 to 2100) when compared to the next 35 years (2025 to 2060).
- An alternative view would see more limited immigration (which could reflect government policy but also an inability to continue to attract immigrants due to declining quality of life, climate change). Because of the long-term effect of low fertility, this is more likely characterized as a continuation of current policies and that reaching a population of 100M could only be reached by a much higher immigration rate than is conceived of today.

Another key challenge with immigration policy in Canada is the lack of coordination between the federal and provincial governments<sup>27</sup>. This lack of coordination (and consultation with other governments) is reflected in unilaterally chosen annual immigration targets by the federal government. As a result, provincial governments, and by extension municipalities, can only react when presented with these targets, suggesting that inter-governmental planning is weak or non-existent. This situation will need to be addressed in future as municipal resources and capacity to

---

<sup>26</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2024). World Population Prospects 2024, Online Edition.

<sup>27</sup> Rapid growth, largely through immigration, can lead to significant problems with housing inflation and homelessness unless governments invest in strategies to enhance supply. Canada had high immigration rates in the early 1910s – over 400,000 in 1913 --contributing to the development of 'unplanned suburbs' (Harris, 1999) and crowded tenements (Lang, 1912) that generated public and political angst, alongside pressure for planning. With the advent of the Great War, the federal government severely limited immigration numbers. By the 1920s, in the aftermath of the Russian revolution, interest in planning waned significantly. Renewed growth in the 1950s – through immigration and the Baby Boom—brought planning and actions to invest in housing back into government functions (Hodge et al., 2024) – Jill Grant.

unplanned influxes of population are severely constrained. If spillovers from immigration (particular with respect to refugees and asylum seekers) were better articulated, and recognized, compelling arguments could be made for appropriate intergovernmental transfers.

Historically, most newcomers to Canada gravitate towards the largest metropolitan centres, Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal, with Calgary and Edmonton also attracting certain immigrant populations. New research by the Futures Institute suggests that mid-sized centres have recently shown an ability to benefit from in-migration from other places in Canada (although the proportion of in-migration due to immigrants is not known). Four of the five fastest growing “small metros” are in B.C. (Nanaimo 10 per cent, Chilliwack 12.1 per cent, Kamloops 10 per cent and Kelowna 14 per cent) while Halifax also outperformed large centres (nine per cent).<sup>28</sup> There is also evidence that rates of intra-provincial migration have at long last started to influence population growth in Atlantic Canada, although critics point out that provincial governments there are struggling to deal with the impacts of growth on healthcare, social services and the like.

Given Canada’s relative political and economic stability, quality of life, relatively tolerant society, if Canada is to continue to be perceived as a favoured destination for immigrants, these assumptions require appropriate levels of investment to ensure the assumptions remain valid. History suggests a few lessons: in times of labour shortage and economic prosperity, governments increase immigration levels. When government investment levels and programs address the needs generated by immigration – as they did in the 1950s and 1960s<sup>29</sup> - then population growth contributed significantly to the national economy and society. If governments reduce their investments and rely on the private sector to address the housing and other needs of a growing population<sup>30</sup>, then insufficiencies and tensions occur that result in reduced immigration quotas.

---

<sup>28</sup> Presentation the 2024 CIP/APPI conference in Edmonton by Andy Ramlo, VP Advisory Services, The Rennie Group, reporting annual rates of growth in these municipalities.

<sup>29</sup> Harris, R. (1994). *Creeping conformity: How Canada became suburban, 1900-1960*. University of Toronto Press.

<sup>30</sup> Hodge, G., Gordon, DLA, Shaw, P. (2020) *Planning Canadian communities*. (7<sup>th</sup> edition) Nelson.  
<https://www.planningcanadiancommunities.ca/>

## CHAPTER THREE: REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES - 2025-2060

This chapter presents regional perspectives that address Canada's prospects for the period 2025-2060, a timeframe selected to represent the outside limit of conventional forecasting methods (typically used for regional infrastructure and capital planning purposes). The content for this chapter is primarily based on input from CIP Fellows from across the country who volunteered to answer a common set of questions related to their region's physical geography and environment; economic prospects; housing, transportation and infrastructure; governance; rural development agriculture and resources, First Nations and "other factors."

The five regions are:

- British Columbia
- The Prairies (Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba) and The North (Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut)
- Ontario
- Quebec
- Atlantic Canada (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador).

### **REGIONAL RESPONSES: BRITISH COLUMBIA**

#### **British Columbia**

The economy and prospects for British Columbia have been shaped by its unique geography, which in turn determined responses to land tenure and resulting governmental and administrative arrangements and relationships to First Nations.

The coastal areas of B.C. Zone in the Pacific Ocean can produce catastrophic earthquakes of Richter Scale Magnitude 9 with accompanying Tsunamis. Such quakes are between 250 and 850 years apart in frequency, and the most recent one on the B.C. coast was 324 years ago in 1700. While there are no means of predicting when such an event might occur, building codes are being regularly updated to reduce the impacts of shaking and tsunami, early warning technologies are being developed to shut down vulnerable systems on a few seconds' notice, and emergency management plans are being maintained and updated by provincial and local government.

*Land Tenure:* Apart from the Lower Mainland and Southern Vancouver Island, much of the population is located in valleys between mountain ranges drained by major rivers. More than 90 per cent of British Columbia's land base has never been transferred into private parcels. In earlier times, this was described as "Crown land" and its use and management were directly administered by the Province, which provided permits and leases – and title, where appropriate – for private or community use.

Recent jurisprudence and efforts at Reconciliation have recognized that First Nations have inherent rights and title to land not transferred to private ownership from the Crown. In contrast to the rest of Canada, there are relatively few treaties covering land rights and other aspects of relations between First Nations and the Province of British Columbia. In recent years, treaties and other formal agreements have been concluded between the Province and the Nishga in the Nass Valley, the Tsawwassen in the Lower Mainland, and the Haida in Haida Gwaii (known in colonial times as the Queen Charlotte Islands). First Nations are now the most significant owners and developers of land in the Metro Vancouver and Victoria regions. Federal and provincial governments are formally committed to advancing the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in an ongoing process of Reconciliation. (The City of Vancouver is the first municipality to make similar commitments to UNDRIP.)

Complementing this approach is the patient, tolerant and respectful way in which the First Nations are pursuing their inherent rights. This situation sets the stage for a process of Reconciliation to address the troubled legacy of the settler society's relationships with First Nations, which will entail significant opportunities and challenges and will shape the development of British Columbia's communities both large and small.

*Governance:* In contrast to other parts of Canada, local governments in British Columbia have been created by the Province in response to grass-roots requests from local communities rather than being designed as a system on a provincial scale. As a result, for most of the province's history, a relatively small area has been served by local government – there are no counties, rural municipalities or other forms of local government such as are found in other provinces.

The creation of a system of regional districts in the 1960s was an overlay of regional organization. Regional districts were created by the Province using natural boundaries such as the tops of mountain ranges. The two purposes of these districts were (1) to provide services in unincorporated rural areas where such services are supported by the affected residents; and (2) to enable one or more municipalities to delegate upward to the regional district the responsibility for services where acceptable and appropriate.

Planning is a function of municipal government, conducted without significant intervention by the Province with three important exceptions. The first is the creation in 1973 of the Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR) which limits subdivision and non-farm use of 4.6 million hectares of land suitable for agriculture across the province. The ALR is the most important single factor in the protection of agricultural land and the prevention of urban sprawl in British Columbia's history. It has remained in place for 50 years and appears to have widespread public and political support, which can be expected to continue indefinitely.

The second intervention was the amendment to the Local Government Act in 1995 to enable regional districts to prepare regional growth strategies which provide the framework for long-range strategic plans such as Metro Vancouver 2050.

The third intervention is the adoption of legislation in 2023 directing revisions to local government planning and zoning to promote the provision of housing.

First Nations in British Columbia have governed their own affairs since time immemorial. The adoption of the Indian Act by the federal parliament in 1876 established the framework for the relationship between First Nations and the settler society. First Peoples' settlements and traditional territories, established usually without the benefit of a formal treaty, were planned by early colonial governments; they were typically smaller and often located away from arable lands.

*Climate Change and Mitigation:* Climate change is already having a significant impact on British Columbia's landscape and its communities:

- Changes in temperature and precipitation have increased the incidence and severity of wildfires with consequences for air quality. The melting of glaciers and reduction in winter snow packs in the mountains have reduced the flow of rivers and the availability of water for communities and ecosystems. Flood risks from rivers through snowmelt and freshets are reduced, but atmospheric rivers pose a threat of sudden flooding from smaller rivers and streams at any time of year.
- Past patterns of land use are being altered by changes in climate. The productivity of tree fruit and wine-growing areas is in question and tourism is being affected by deterioration in air quality from wildfire smoke. Agricultural areas created by floodproofing such as Sumas Prairie in the Lower Mainland are increasingly difficult to defend from flooding and consideration is being given to "managed retreat" from such areas, allowing them to go back to their former state.
- The impact of increased temperatures and drought on areas from which British Columbia imports food may provide a need and an opportunity for the province to be more self-sufficient in food production.
- Sea level rise is producing the need to protect shorelines and infrastructure from ocean flooding where this is economically and physically feasible. Other choices will need to be made where flood protection is not feasible; for example, all of Vancouver's Granville Island tourist mecca will be subject to significant flooding within a few decades, requiring a decision on whether to abandon it or attempt costly protection works which could destroy much of its amenity<sup>31</sup>.

The extent and severity of climate change impacts will depend on the success of humanity in curtailing its carbon footprint under the Kyoto Protocol. In assessing the amount and type of preparation that will be needed, it may be useful to consider two scenarios:

- Scenario A would assume the success of global target to, in the words of the Treaty, "hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-

---

<sup>31</sup> <https://ncceh.ca/sites/default/files/Final%20Draft%20-%20Overview%20of%20Canadian%20Communities%20at%20Risk%20EN.pdf> retrieved October 23, 2024

industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.”

- Scenario B would entail the failure of global society to curtail climate emissions sufficiently to avoid a serious degradation, causing the cycle of emissions and climate reactions to spin further out of control.

Responding to these scenarios will inevitably involve a combination of efforts to moderate climate change trends and efforts to mitigate their impacts. As has already been seen, efforts to support carbon reduction goals tend to be seen as general and long-term while mitigation efforts are often more immediate, urgent and localized in costs and benefits.

*Role of the Province in Social and Economic Development:* British Columbia is a trading entity that profits from its location between the major markets in North America and the growing Asia Pacific region with its giant economies of China and India, whose diasporas are well represented in British Columbia’s population. The province’s road, rail and port facilities can expect continued expansion of inbound trade in automobiles and manufactured goods and outbound trade in energy, raw materials and some manufactured goods. Most of this trade passes through the increasingly urbanized Lower Mainland region.

The province can expect continued growth in high technology and communications sectors as a result of its proximity to the United States, its skilled labour force and its currency’s advantage compared to the US dollar.

Continued population growth will result in British Columbia’s population rising from 5.2 million in 2024 to 6.2 million in 2041. Virtually all of this growth will be through international and interprovincial migration, with a corresponding increase in the diversity of the population. The proportion of the population over 65 years in age will increase from 20 percent in 2020 to 25 percent in 2041. All of these changes will have an impact on the amount and type of public services, housing and transportation that will be needed.

Artificial intelligence will have profound but unpredictable effect on all aspects of the region’s economy and society.

#### RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS POSED BY THE STEERING COMMITTEE: BRITISH COLUMBIA

As described above, the following responses with respect to B.C. address the period 2025 to 2060.

### Environment and Climate Change

**Are there significant environmental features that will inhibit urban growth in the Region or shape the direction of urban growth?**

Certain coastal areas will be affected by sea level rise and will have to be floodproofed or evacuated. Development in areas subject to increased flood risk resulting from extreme precipitation events will have to be avoided. Development that already exists in these areas will

have to be floodproofed or evacuated. (Under Climate Change Scenario A these effects will be reduced but not reversed).

**Will climate change encourage a faster rate of growth, or slow it down?**

Climate change itself is not expected to affect the urban growth rate. There is sufficient safe suitable land for urban development throughout the province.

**Will climate change result in pressures that will change the economic base over the medium or long-term?**

Climate change will affect the productivity of a forest land base already compromised by overharvesting. Warmer temperatures will affect the conditions for tree fruit and wine-growing regions. Air quality deterioration from wildfire smoke will affect the quality of grapes and other crops as well as the attractiveness of many areas for tourism. Under Climate Change Scenario A these effects will peak and may gradually decline.

## The Economy

**Do you anticipate growth of the Region's economic base to be faster or slower than the population growth rates suggested?**

Growth rates should be faster as a result of increased productivity due to technological advancement but it may be affected by labour force shortages in key sectors.

**Will there be new opportunities for major growth in tourism?**

Quite the opposite: changes in the air quality and landscape integrity as a result of wildfires and flood risks will decrease the attractiveness of major tourist destination areas such as the Okanagan Valley. Low snow packs are affecting the viability of ski resorts.

**Will the nature of inter and intra-regional transportation for freight and passengers change? Will this pose challenges for some economic activities and create opportunities for others? What are they?**

Challenges posed by the interface between port and urban developments will require careful attention and intergovernmental coordination. If the integration of the Canadian and U.S. economies continues there will be a need to enhance cross-border connections. B.C. is a leader in the implementation of electric vehicle technologies and other forms of low carbon passenger transportation; this may produce new economic opportunities.

**What changes in the rural economy are anticipated and how will these influence the pattern of rural settlement?**

Traditional rural activities such as farming, forestry and fishing will be detrimentally affected by wildfires, deterioration in air quality and increased flood risks. The continued expansion in the ability to conduct remunerative work away from urban areas will boost rural economies.

**Does the Region have a history of being able to attract investment that grows the economic base?**

The region has a proven track record in accommodating infrastructure for continental and intercontinental trade, particularly in energy and raw materials.

## Housing, Infrastructure and Transportation

**Given the age and nature of the Region's housing stock and infrastructure, will the cost of accommodating population growth be slower or faster than in the remainder of Canada?**

Overcoming the serious deficit in housing in relation to the demand and the needs of a changing population will require significantly greater public and private expenditure. In addition, issues such as lengthy approval processes and shortages of skilled labour need to be addressed urgently.

**Is the social infrastructure in the Region robust and does it have a track record of being able to respond to changing demands?**

K-12 educational infrastructure is in serious deficit in rapidly growing urban areas, while post-secondary education is provided in sufficient quantity. Massive investments in healthcare facilities and services are required if the current model for healthcare delivery is retained to serve the aging baby boom generation. The region's track record in addiction support and family services is sub-optimal. The decade-long public health emergency due to opioid abuse will continue. Homelessness has been a key challenge. Efforts by the City of Vancouver and other municipalities, augmented by provincial policies and private funds, are having success with providing more homes, but such efforts have been offset by the impact of federal policies allowing 100,000 new residents per year from increased immigration, foreign students, temporary workers and refugees.

**Will changes in the nature of intra or inter regional transportation significantly change the pattern of residential development?**

Urban areas in the region have shifted toward an automobile restrained transportation system that gives priority to transit, cycling, walking and car-sharing over the solo use of the automobile. Planning for residential development broadly reflects this priority. The potential for cost-effective alternatives to the private vehicle for land transportation between major urban areas seems remote. Demand for water transportation services for coastal areas will be a continuing challenge and a failure to meet this demand may affect settlement patterns on Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast.

**Will First Nations rights issues influence the pattern of urban growth?**

Profoundly. First Nations are important developers of high-density urban spaces on leasehold lands on and off reserves.

## Other Factors

**Does the Federal or provincial government's approach to immigration challenge your Region's current approach to accommodating population growth?**

Immigration is a key driver of housing demand in all urban communities in the region. In the short term this effect is amplified by temporary residents and students on international visas. These can be easily addressed by policy changes.

**Identify significant "unknown unknowns" that have affected your analysis; suggest how these should be accounted for in this report.**

- Impact of AI on social, economic and environmental future and on human relationships.



- Will there be a civil war in the United States or just ongoing and worsening dysfunction?
- What will be the economic and political behaviour of younger people who are shut out of the housing market and believe that climate change Scenario B is the more likely outcome?
- There is also potential for one or more major global military conflicts and famines and natural disasters in other parts of the world may have unknown impacts on British Columbia.

## **REGIONAL RESPONSES: THE PRAIRIES AND THE NORTH**

### **Alberta**

Recent events have raised questions about both the feasibility and wisdom of aiming for a target of 100M people by 2100.

#### **Environment and Climate Change**

Climate change has already resulted in extreme weather events (flooding, forest fires) and potential drought. Urban growth in hazardous areas (e.g. Fort McMurray) may be constrained and hazards will need to be better mitigated. The province is currently making huge investments in flood protection in the Calgary region. Water supply in parts of Alberta will become harder to provide.

#### **Will climate change encourage a faster rate of growth, or slow it down?**

Climate change will encourage a faster rate of population growth in Alberta, which has a more moderate climate than most of North America (and winters are becoming less severe). Alberta has the finances, infrastructure and services to deal with extreme weather events and a history of well-planned communities built to relatively high standards. Most of the province does not have the severe infrastructure deficits common in other areas of Canada.

There will be pressures on some economic sectors, especially agriculture. The federal and provincial governments have invested heavily in irrigation - perhaps without adequate consideration of future water supply from the Rockies. The "Palliser Triangle" in SE Alberta is particularly vulnerable. Many of the 'Dirty Thirties' (dust bowl) soil conservation practices have lapsed or been forgotten. This is seen as a major risk.

There are also studies that suggest agricultural production could increase both north of Edmonton and in the Grand Prairie region as the climate warms.

Settlement along river valleys will continue to be an issue as the frequency and severity of flood events continue to get worse.

## The Economy

**Do you anticipate growth of the Region's economic base to be faster or slower than the population growth rates suggested?**

Alberta's economic base will diversify and grow, create more jobs and therefore encourage the rate of population growth. Alberta already generates a high proportion of private sector jobs and has a youthful and well-educated population. Lower cost-of-living, job opportunities, and relatively affordable housing will continue to attract in-migration from the rest of Canada and internationally. Edmonton was recently ranked (annual Demographia Survey) as one of Canada's most affordable cities. Calgary regularly ranks as being one of the most livable cities in the world.

In the Calgary region, geographical and environmental factors have not been significant barriers to the direction and rate of urban expansion. This trend is shifting as the general population gains more understanding of the cost of growth both in terms of monetary costs and environmental costs. Costs of transportation and housing combined with pressure from higher levels of government through taxes, funding, and other mechanisms will also impact how the region grows.

**Will the nature of inter and intra-regional transportation for freight and passengers change? Will this pose challenges for some economic activities and create opportunities for others? If so, what are they?**

The Calgary region's economic base is diversifying and has recently seen population growth advancing more quickly than originally anticipated. It is probable that the diversification of the economy and Calgary's focus on the tech sector is a significant driver of this change. Further drivers for change in the logistics and warehousing sectors are anticipated. With the acquisition of Kanas City Southern, CP Rail (now CPKC) has rail connections across Canada, down through the eastern seaboard of the US and through Mexico for rail. This, combined with an increase in air cargo, and constraints at the Vancouver port, positions Calgary well to attract businesses that rely on these connections. There are also currently several proposals for regional passenger rail connections to popular destinations both within and beyond the region.

## Housing, Infrastructure and Transportation

**Given the age and nature of the Region's housing stock and infrastructure, will the cost of accommodating population growth be slower or faster than in the remainder of Canada?**

Affordability is a major challenge in the region, particularly in Calgary where over 84,000 households have a need for better housing. Close to 80 per cent of these are renters. Calgary has one of the smallest non-market housing sectors (3.5 per cent of the stock) in large Canadian cities, which aggravates the housing problems of disadvantaged households unable to compete in the market. Rates of annual population growth, often higher than five per cent, create boom and bust cycles with housing demand exceeding the supply especially with respect affordable housing.

**Is the social infrastructure in the Region robust and does it have a track record of being able to respond to changing demands?**

Smart growth principles adopted in municipal plans have contributed to creating higher-density suburbs and densifying inner suburban areas in Calgary, but to achieve the City's goal of accommodating 33 per cent of new growth within the established area by 2039, there is much work to be done. Recently, the City approved over 24 new communities responding to pressure from the development industry. The social infrastructure is lagging behind other types of services and there is a consistent lack of education, health care and community supportive services to meet the diverse needs of a rapidly growing population.

**Will changes in the nature of intra or inter regional transportation significantly change the pattern of residential development?**

Inter-regional transportation could increase population growth, especially in Red Deer but also in Lethbridge and Crowsnest Pass. The current (car-oriented) pattern of residential development is unlikely to change, though Calgary and Edmonton have extensive active and public transit systems. There has, however, been an increasing trend for people to 'vote with their wheels' and move outside city boundaries to satellite towns.

Discussions related to rapid commuter rail connecting Calgary, Banff and Edmonton could change regional growth patterns in the future as well as create new opportunities for tourism growth.

The completion (four-laning) of Highway 3 across Southern Alberta to B.C and Vancouver will create another major E-W transportation corridor. The expectation is that this will become an increasingly attractive area for urban development and tourism. The Crowsnest Pass has the potential to become a resort community similar to Canmore or Fernie BC.

## Government and Institutional Capacity

**Does the Region have the governance and institutional capacity to respond to changing needs and changing demand?**

Alberta and its major cities have the governance and institutional capacity to respond to changing needs and increased in-migration. Alberta has a long history of dealing with economic cycles and encouraging in-migration and growth.

**Does the region have a history of consistently managing urban growth so that in the long term it is environmentally and financially sustainable?**

There is ongoing debate about whether Alberta is consistently managing urban growth and whether this is environmentally and financially sustainable over long-term. Certainly, Calgary Edmonton and other midsize cities are in a relatively good financial position. Calgary and Edmonton both have strong environmental sustainability initiatives planned and underway.

The lack of regional planning resulted in the considerable growth of exurban areas and intensifying a jobs–housing mismatch. If residents of exurban areas continue to commute to jobs in Calgary, relying on their automobiles, the jobs–housing mismatch will impose greater environmental challenges, such as exacerbation of air and water pollution from increasing

automobile use and the loss of natural areas from further peripheral growth. The sprawling of exurban areas may increase fiscal costs by requiring extensive infrastructure investments such as roads, sewer and water lines, schools, police, and fire stations. Strategies to limit the substantial growth of exurban areas in conjunction with regional transportation planning will be required to mitigate the regional jobs–housing mismatch problem.

The growth problems in Calgary are becoming regional; the growth of exurban areas and exacerbation of jobs–housing mismatch will continue to drive up the costs of sprawl, impacting everyone in the region. Adopting policies that follow best practices is of little use without developing appropriate implementation strategies. Under the new regional planning system, the city of Calgary will need to work closely with other member municipalities of the new Calgary Metropolitan Region Board to ensure the successful implementation of the new regional growth management plans and policies.

Regional Planning is still relatively new in the Calgary region. The current plan and organizational structure, however, supports sustainable development. There is currently an air of collaboration and working through issues together that is favourable – however, this collaborative environment is fragile as this may shift in future in response to changes spurred through election cycles.

Under the new Municipal Government Act of 1995, regional planning and the mandatory regional plans were abolished, as was the “watchdog” function of the Regional Planning Commission. In response to the setback in regional planning, Calgary adopted a policy prohibiting the extension of urban infrastructure to rural areas in order to maintain control over regional development. This has been identified as the major source of contention between Calgary and its neighbouring cities and towns.

The result of the weakened regional planning and an oil-driven development boom, development activities “flooded across jurisdictional boundaries into adjacent land-rich, infrastructure poor, tax-hungry municipalities.” Although the regional planning body was dismantled, regional planning efforts continued through a voluntary membership organization Calgary Regional Partnership, founded in 1999. Municipalities in the CMA adopted the Calgary Metropolitan Plan in 2014 and collaborated to promote sustainable regional growth. The plan addressed regional growth challenges, including accommodating growth in more compact settlement patterns and providing diverse housing options.

The Municipal Government Act (Bill 21) in 2015 mandated the establishment of a regional growth management board and growth plan for the Calgary region. Calgary Metropolitan Region Board has the power to approve statutory plans and manage disputes among municipalities. It is expected to have a critical impact on implementation of regional growth plans in the future.

This question is likely best answered by rural “munis” in the region. Having said that, there are some significant competing demands in the region. For example, solar farms seek proximity

to existing transformer stations or high voltage power lines, many of which travel through class one agricultural soil areas which should be reserved for that purpose.

## Other Factors

The federal government's approach to Immigration is creating challenges, especially in terms of rental housing. The increase in temporary foreign workers and international students has created problems and Federal housing policies and programs have not kept up.

We are entering a time of uncertainty, so planners need to be more flexible and proactive (and less rule-bound and ideological). Resilience means anticipating change and being able to adapt. We may see far more asylum seekers and even climate refugees.

Looking ahead, Alberta is likely to experience continued high population growth relative to most other regions of Canada. A solid economy, employment opportunities, relatively low cost of living and taxes, robust hard and soft infrastructure, housing affordability and choice plus welcoming communities will likely encourage further in-migration from other parts of Canada and internationally.

## Saskatchewan

### Implications of climate change for Saskatchewan, especially the pattern of urban and regional development

The impact of climate change has a number of implications for Saskatchewan, both positive and negative across a number of dimensions:

- The province is experiencing an increase in the value of agricultural production as a result of longer growing season.
- There is also potential for opportunities related to additional tourism with visitation to 10,000 northern lakes, attracting both tourists and permanent residents seeking a more tranquil life style. In addition to numerous development proposals on a number of lake resort communities these areas are already experiencing an increase in permanent residents. This is driven by retirees and young professionals able to work remotely and choosing places where they can have a high quality of life immersed in nature.
- The province's climate change-related policies have been aimed at enhancing resilience and adaptation to climate impacts; these include shifts in seasonal patterns caused by more intense weather patterns such as storm events, drought, fires and floods. For practical reasons such as the need to maintain mobility, reducing GHG emissions is not a high priority for many communities in the province.

## The Economy

The main economic drivers are agriculture, potash, uranium as well as oil and gas. There is the potential for the development of scarce minerals required in the green economy for such things as batteries. To support these initiatives, the Saskatchewan Research Council is investing in rare earth mineral processing.

- The growing demand for electricity generated without producing carbon emissions has nevertheless increased uranium mining to fuel small scale distributed electrical generating plants. The Athabasca Basin in northern Saskatchewan has the highest concentration of uranium in the world and is home to some of large mines in Cigar Lake and McArthur River.
- Activity related to uranium mine development has also increased the demand for office space in Saskatoon, leading to a shortage of industrial land to accommodate service industries that have developed connected to mine development and geological exploration.
- The world's largest potash mine is currently being developed one hour east of Saskatoon, confirming Saskatchewan's role as a leading producer of potash.
- Although Saskatchewan is a steady producer of oil and gas, this resource contributes less than 10 per cent of GDP.
- The continuing trend corporate-scale agriculture benefits farms that have global supply chains as well as the capital to invest in improving productivity and processing to invest in value-added activity. The sociological impact of corporate farm production has generated some resistance toward globalization and has also contributed to the decline of many small towns and rural service centres over time.
- Development-ready sites that are planned for growth and fully serviced provide a major stimulus to the province's economy along with progressive policies on electric power to enable private investment in cost-effective supply solutions.
- Saskatchewan has a history of information technology innovations that have had global impact and this continues to support a concentration of tech entrepreneurship, particularly in Saskatoon.

## Housing, Infrastructure and Transportation

- Immigration has been the single most important stimulus for population growth over the years. Without a steady stream of immigrants settling in the province, total population would likely decline. Recent growth has been concentrated in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert.
- Indigenous-led organizations have been responsible for a number of innovative supportive housing projects in the province but housing in many Saskatchewan communities is aging faster than it can be replaced. There is also a lack of diversity in terms of housing types. The sector is dominated by single-family housing in communities outside of the larger cities.

## Governance

- The large number of small municipalities inhibits strategic thinking about growth and investment. There is a need for major governance reform to establish more effective governance and attract additional investment capital. Larger local governments would also allow local communities to represent themselves more effectively to senior orders of government and attract investment.
- *Previous multi-level government initiatives*

In the past, Saskatchewan had success in working on housing at the community level and engaging all five orders of government, the private homebuilding industry, finance, and non-profit sectors. A return to this kind of collaboration would be beneficial.

## Long-term Planning Skills

- The lack of regional-scale roles for graduating planners has had the effect of making beginning planners less optimistic about the future and less willing to develop the visions of what is possible. This is something all communities require. This is a societal issue, whereby people are less optimistic about the future, in contrast to the 1950s when people (generally) had a much more optimistic view of life (made possible by endless new time-saving devices, new cars, larger homes, more entertainment options, more leisure time, etc...). Today people are concerned about growing geopolitical tension, China, AI, lower ethical and moral standards in government, and the rising cost of living.
- Planning skills need to be enhanced in order to address issues which require long-term investments and solutions. The Regional and Urban Planning program at the University of Saskatchewan addresses this need with a course on how planners should analyze and consider major long-term trends. Planners need to show **how** a future can be brighter and spend less time dwelling on problems.

## Manitoba

### Environmental and Geographical Impacts on Urban Growth

*Climate Change Effects* - Manitoba and the Winnipeg area in particular face climate-related challenges and opportunities that will likely affect growth patterns. This first is increased flood vulnerability due to extraordinary rainfall events, even though significant mitigation efforts are in place. The second is that agriculture will benefit from an extended growing season, although more frequent extreme weather events will continue to present challenges.

- Three positive trends can be noted: the agricultural sector is thriving in southern Manitoba. As a result, smaller communities Niverville, Morden, and Macdonald are seeing rapid growth as they respond to expanded manufacturing opportunities related to agriculture. The downside is that this exposes labour shortages in both small and larger communities.

## Economic Growth Prospects

*Growth Strategy and Immigration* - Manitoba historically experiences slow but steady growth through the pursuit of strategies to stimulate population growth by linking to federal immigration programs. The practice of sponsored immigration is seen as essential to avoid population decline. Overall, there is strong public support for immigration, in part due to persistent labour shortages and use of the immigrant sponsorship program.

*Tourism, Investment and Transportation* - Tourism remains stable, with potential for growth that takes advantage of warmer year-round temperatures. Attracting investment capital has historically been a challenge and this continues in the current environment. To counter this, the province is banking on opportunities related to as-yet unexploited potential to mine scarce minerals. The abundance of inexpensive hydroelectric power is seen as a key asset, as is the province's central location within the Canadian context, which benefits the transportation sector.

Other transportation-related opportunities include the potential expansion of Churchill as a deep-sea harbour. Year-round marine access as a result of climate change could also see expansion of Churchill and the development of a second deep-sea harbour in Hudson Bay. Transportation advocates also suggest there is a need to invest in additional road and road corridors, east and west to Saskatchewan, and north-south to the USA, to facilitate the export of agricultural, mineral and oil. There is also a need to improve transport links north to Nunavut.

## Housing and Local Infrastructure

At present, Manitoba is one of the few areas in Canada that has not identified housing shortages as a major concern, although there continue to be challenges related to the provision of affordable housing for the province's lower-income residents.

## First Nations Relations

In recent decades, the province has seen a number of positive developments in terms of relationships with First Nations, which has led to a number of successful investment projects being developed, primarily in Winnipeg. These include the City of Winnipeg's Indigenous Accord, collaborations with the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development focused on support for community health, economic development and environmental stewardship.



## The North (Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut)

For the purposes of this report, Canada's North – also referred to as the “near North” (below the Arctic Circle) – is defined as the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. “The North” is a vast, sparsely populated region comprising almost half Canada's entire land mass.<sup>32</sup>

With 130,000 people spread over more than 3.5M sq km – a high percentage of whom are Indigenous – only the territorial capitals of Whitehorse and Yellowknife have populations larger than 20,000. Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut, has fewer than 10,000.

First Nations and Inuit have lived in the region since time immemorial. The Métis emerged as the third Indigenous community in the North during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Non-Native settlement of the territory now known as Nunavut only began in the 1920s; Inuit currently make up some 85 per cent of the population. In the Yukon, one in five residents is Indigenous while the Northwest Territories is approximately 50 per cent Indigenous.

As has been well documented, basic infrastructure throughout the North such as housing, water, sewage and solid waste systems is either inadequate or in a state of disrepair – or both. The challenge of funding and maintaining all forms of physical infrastructure, especially transportation, is exacerbated by climate change, with high temperatures causing a rapid reduction in permafrost and accelerating the threat of rising sea levels.

Much of the North continues to bear the burden of historical decisions such as residential schools and the loss of language, negatively affecting the social well-being and cultural identity of Indigenous peoples.

## Climate Change

The North is warming four times faster than the global average and this is already affecting the way of life for people there. Rising temperatures and other aspects of climate change are affecting many traditional activities as well access to food. Residents of Nunavut have a saying: “The land is my freezer.” This may not be true in the coming years.

Migration routes for animals and birds are changing; rising water temperatures are affecting fish and their and their lifecycle. The land and ocean are where the Inuit access their protein (caribou, seal, whale). In addition to climate impacts affecting fish and wildlife, ice roads and travel on the sea ice and tundra are creating safety issues.

Permafrost is melting, which impacts infrastructure. Many communities in the Yukon and NWT are built along the ice-rich gravel shores of rivers, which are melting. The integrity of roads,

---

<sup>32</sup> Large areas of Northern Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec are also part of the “Near North” but have different political histories (retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern\\_Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Canada))

landfills, sewage lagoons and buildings are at risk.

Both the Northwest Territories and Yukon have experienced extreme forest fires and flooding in the past number of years.

## Population

The population in the North is far younger than in Canada as whole. In Nunavut, the percentage of youth under the age of 14, at 31 per cent, is twice that of the rest of Canada. Although growth rates in the territory have slowed since 1999 when Nunavut was established, the territory nevertheless has one of the fastest-growing populations in Canada, largely due to high birth rates. It currently stands at slightly less than 40,000.

With a population of 45,000, growth in the Northwest Territories has been slow in recent years, affected by the closure of diamond mines and years of out-migration.

The Yukon's population is about 42,000, but has seen modest annual growth of approximately two per cent over the past five years. The capital city of Whitehorse nevertheless has one of the highest per capita growth rates of cities in Canada, in part due a growing number of government jobs.

## Geography

The North has a coastline twice as long as the Atlantic and Pacific coasts combined. Although the focus of this section is on "the near North," it is worth noting that warming trends are affecting areas further north such as the Northwest Passage, which is frequently ice-free during summer months. This has resulted in an increase in shipping, benefiting the movement of mineral resources as well as tourism. There are also sovereignty issues with this predominantly uninhabited coastline (Russia's Arctic coastline is more heavily populated).

Although large sections of Nunavut, Northwest Territories and Yukon are covered in tundra, the latter territory is also known for its extensive Boreal Forest, which stretches over an area of more than 50M ha.

## Communities

The North is organized around communities. As a result, family relationships and social networks are strong – an essential contributor to resiliency and the capacity for adaptation.

The Yukon has eight incorporated communities and 13 unincorporated communities. All are accessible by road except for Old Crow. The Northwest Territories have 24 incorporated communities and nine unincorporated communities. Many of these places are remote, with no all-season road access. All communities in Nunavut are remote, served by barges or by air. There are 25 incorporated communities and three unincorporated communities.

## Governance

Governance in the North is complex. In addition to territorial and municipal governments, which have much the same powers as provincial and municipal governments in the rest of Canada, there are also a number of Self-Governing Indigenous Governments (SGIGs) <sup>33</sup>. (Agreements can cover more than one Indigenous community.) There are seven in the Northwest Territories and 14 in the Yukon. Adding to the complexity, the federal government also plays a variety of roles, determined by the Indian Act and a variety of independently determined resolutions related to treaties.

The SGIG's negotiate funding agreements directly with Canada as a means of providing services to their citizens. Some SGIGs collect federal income tax if development is on their land.

It is important to note that in the North no resource or economic development decision will be occur without the support and collaboration of Indigenous governments, groups, organizations and businesses, which exert considerable influence and authority over such decisions.

The federal government is responsible for security and is investing \$73B over the next 20 years in a variety of security measures. This can create major economic opportunities for the Indigenous governments and businesses.

## **REGIONAL RESPONSES: ONTARIO**

### Environment and Climate Change

Responses to the questions are intended to strike a balance between “dire prospects” and “reasonable expectations.”

**Are there significant environmental features that will inhibit urban growth in the Region or shape the direction of urban growth?**

Significant factors affecting population growth and the location of that growth include Canada's declining GDP per capita, immigration drivers, an increasing AI and robotic workforce, global security, pandemics, declining global growth rates after 2050, and climate change..

In order to accommodate an estimated increase of 8.7 million by 2060 and 34.7 by 2100, growth in Ontario could follow two possible paths. The first would entail further intensification along its southeastern boundary. The expansion of existing urban centres from Ottawa to Windsor could absorb significant growth particularly in the Kingston to Hamilton corridor. Access to growth

---

<sup>33</sup> Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982

centres in the U.S. could be a potential stimulus. Environmental and geographical features are generally known within this corridor. Areas of arable land and environmental sensitivity need to be avoided and principles of responsible growth adhered to. The Ottawa to Windsor corridor will become significantly hotter due to climate change with multiple reciprocal impacts that would change the shape and rate of change. Ontario currently has 12 days of above 30C; by 2050 this is estimated to be 66 days.

The second direction for growth would be North, away from the east-west primary growth corridor. The Canadian Shield is only 100-200km north of this corridor; a large part of the corridor east of Kingston is close to the Canadian Shield. Ottawa sits entirely within it. Large new urban infrastructure systems are considerably more difficult to build within the Shield, and various climate-related factors must also be considered. The possibility of a north-south growth expansion would have to address such factors as employment opportunities, affordable housing, personal/cultural choices, health and transportation networks and others, including the need to respect the sovereignty of Treaty Lands.

Other factors for consideration for either alternative include:

- Local food production and loss of high-quality arable land: much of Canada's prime productive class 1-3 lands lie within Ontario's southern growth region.
- Increasing rates of disease in many forms of flora and fauna due to climate change (e.g., Emerald Ash borer, West Nile virus, Lyme disease),
- Endangered wildlife habitats and species-at-risk considerations.
- The viability of productive farmlands in northern regions as climate change shifts seasonal durations, perhaps encouraging farming to compete with Indigenous land areas and treaty rights in existing wildlife habitat areas.

#### **Will climate change encourage a faster rate of growth, or slow it down?**

Climate change will shape the map of future provincial, national and global migration and growth; this has already started. Future effects are difficult to predict as the degree of severity of the warming planet is complex and human beings have been slow to implement effective mitigation and adaptation strategies. The use of "aspirational" methodologies of prediction are dangerous, and "status quo" measures as a benchmark for prediction are flawed within in a few years.

Currently, more than 40 per cent of Canada's immigrants settle in Ontario. In-migration has been a prime driver of Ontario's growth, particularly in the Oshawa to Hamilton corridor.

Other factors to consider include:

- Different impacts of climate change in various global regions, other reasons to emigrate from a homeland, such as war, and factors in migrants choosing/being directed to a new destination.
- Rate of migration within Canada itself for those seeking relief from regions hard hit by climate change; what alternatives might Ontario offer?

- Climate change impact on global and national economic drag by limiting finances for immigrant support systems due to climate related infrastructure repair and replacement, increased local health care costs, energy costs, implementation of costly mitigation and adaptation strategies etc.
- The increasing role of AI and robotics replacing the need for a human workforce in many sectors.

#### **Will climate change result in pressures that will change the economic base over the medium or long-term?**

Climate change has already started to alter Ontario's and Canada's economic base. A recent paper prepared by the National Bureau of Economic Research states that climate change will eventually reduce the value of the global economy by *almost one third*. The paper states that, had there been no global warming since 1960, the world economy would be 37 per cent larger than today. We have been carrying this financial burden for decades and only now realizing the climate change surcharge.

As stated above, extreme weather, triggered by heat, is one of the top climate change outcomes. It knows no boundaries and is a most significant factor in determining the economic future of both Ontario and Canada. Ontario is particularly vulnerable in that 80 per cent of its economy is based on the service industry, manufacturing and agriculture, all of which are globally linked and susceptible to various climate change factors.

Long term frequent and intense climate shocks that negatively affect the economy will become harder to bounce back from. As an example, in the early 2000s Toronto experienced a severe weather event in a short burst that flooded a river system resulting in the destruction of a major bridge. This 15-minute weather event resulted in the largest insurance claim in the history of Toronto and the inconvenience of a two-year shut down and new structure construction. However, more recently, in 2022 the USA had \$176 billion in climate-related costs to the economy that directly affected 13 per cent of U.S. citizens.

Climate change shocks within Canada and Ontario are now, and will increasingly be, related to melting sea ice and permafrost melt, coastal flooding, increasing heat causing wildfires, crop failure, and much more.

#### **Other Factors**

Other factors to consider include:

- Damage to capital stock and shortages of labour, related to ongoing climate change effects.

## **The Economy**

The state of the economy is one of the principal determinants of the quality of human settlement, and provided the foundation for Ontario's growth. In addition to providing revenue

for funding urban, suburban and rural growth, the economy has influenced the province's settlement patterns.

The future success of Ontario's economy will determine how we will be able to accommodate future population in terms of the provision of housing, roads and infrastructure as well as social services, schools, etc. The state of the economy will continue to determine where people work and their wealth. A static economy will make reducing the gap between haves and have-nots more difficult.

**Do you anticipate growth of the Region's economic base to be faster or slower than the population growth rates suggested?**

These are uncertain times. Although Ontario has enjoyed relatively steady growth since the 1950s (with ups and downs related to the demise of the auto pact, and NAFTA), historical resilience cannot be guaranteed, particularly in light of rapid technology change, an aging population and complex factors such as climate change. Factors such as housing affordability and congestion could negatively affect the pace of growth in larger urban areas like Toronto.

Ontario's economy is heavily dependent on the finance/international banking sector and providing services to the population and there are issues to be addressed as the percentage of baby boomers with well-funded pensions dies off. Tomorrow's economy will inevitably be affected because the percentage of workers with generous defined pensions will decline. This calls into question Ontario's ability to sustain current levels of services.

At present, economic growth rates track slightly below population growth rates; assuming that immigration policies are adjusted and that improvements can be achieved in worker productivity, then housing prices could decline, which could potentially result in economic growth rates slightly above population growth.

**Will there be new opportunities for resource development?**

There will always be opportunities for resource development. The more important question is, will they be realised? There is potential for more mining in Northern Ontario, and a potential labour force is already in place. But infrastructure costs will be high and progress slow<sup>34</sup>.

Agriculture holds significant potential and is gaining importance, particularly in the face of climate change. While a changing climate could expand the range of available crops, increased rainfall may not eliminate the need for irrigation, as farmers may seek reliable water sources to mitigate climate variability. Additionally, these agricultural opportunities could stimulate growth in processing jobs, further strengthening the sector. The concern is that the continued expansion of urban areas onto agricultural land reduces the sector's potential every year.

There is a huge opportunity for wind and solar power generation in Ontario. Current policies

---

<sup>34</sup> See Appendix 2 for a summary of a proposal by John van Nostrand regarding resource development in the Mid-Canada Corridor. A detailed power point is also available on request.

make it very difficult to tap into this potential. Offshore generation has made the North Sea a major source of electricity for the U.K., yet it is banned in Lake Ontario.

**Will there be new opportunities for major growth in tourism?**

In short, no. As a result of climate change we have to face the fact that the winter sports activities will be almost wiped out by 2100 in Ontario. The need to practice winter sports in other jurisdictions means that there will be less money available to be spent locally, although it could also be argued that hiking, camping and other outdoor recreational opportunities in provincial and national parks could become attractive substitutes. Tourism in places like Ottawa and Niagara are likely to remain as cultural draws.

The main opportunity for tourism growth will likely be in large urban centres, centred on heritage, culture and the arts. But the main urban centre of Toronto is already pricing itself out of that market because of high accommodation, food, sales tax and higher tipping costs.

The challenge for tourism is not only to attract new sources of tourists but to facilitate ways for them to stay longer and thus spend more. First, Northern Ontario and certain rural areas in Ontario have the potential for growth by appealing to increasing interest from urbanites in wildlife and access to the “outdoors.” Second, niche markets that build on existing assets have not yet been fully developed. Opportunities exist to expand the appeal of rural regions such as Prince Edward County to wealthy travelers from elsewhere in Canada as well as internationally. Third, although attracting international (including business) travel through investments in convention facilities and the like gets a lot of attention, the economic payback from fostering sports-related travel for high school and university students should not be underestimated.

**Will the nature of inter and intra-regional transportation for freight and passengers change? Will this pose challenges for some economic activities and create opportunities for others? What are they?**

The need to move goods quickly, efficiently and in a cost-effective way must now include the need to factor in environmental costs. The emergence of sophisticated new technology is providing renewed momentum for rail to compete on all fronts with trucking – which is suffering from labour shortages and increasing costs. This could make inter-modal hubs increasingly important as the emphasis shifts to short-haul trucking versus long-haul. The rail network for freight is fixed but corporate ownerships are in flux. Competition for access to rail rights of way from high-speed passenger service could possibly see new routes created for passenger use. The era of serving both needs on one set of tracks appears to be over.

Transportation serves both goods and people. People create the demand. If the number of people and jobs increase, the demand for transportation (both freight and passengers) will increase. How that increase is met will be largely dependent on the government’s response. It is unlikely that governments will be pro-active in this regard. The alternative would be a coherent well thought out policy of transportation improvements over a long period so that investors can invest.

**What changes in the rural economy are anticipated and how will these influence the pattern of rural settlement?**

The rural economy has evolved and will continue to transform in dynamic ways. While agriculture may no longer be the primary source of employment or wealth in the province, trends such as the rise of remote work open exciting possibilities for city dwellers to explore opportunities in rural areas—both for recreation and more affordable living. Although future growth patterns are uncertain, these shifts may offer rural communities potential opportunities to attract new residents and modest investment, all while safeguarding valuable farmland.

**Does the Region have a history of being able to attract investment that grows the economic base?**

In short 'no'. Most of the investment attracted has been to either bail out failing economic activities e.g. Stelco and Dofasco, or to enable a re-casting of the system so that more money is diverted to corporate interests such as the replacement of family farms by corporate interests.

Although the province has a good track record in attracting investment in key sectors there will be continuing concerns over ensuring that corporate ownership remains predominantly Canadian, which could limit future opportunities. This is particularly true for materials and resources that are part of the supply chain for goods and services supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy (EV battery supply chains are a case in point.) If traditional assets such as quality of life, affordable housing and Medicare continue to be eroded, this could undermine Ontario's ability to attract and retain top talent.

## Housing, Infrastructure and Transportation

**Given the age and nature of the Region's housing stock and infrastructure, will the cost of accommodating population growth be slower or faster than in the remainder of Canada?**

Ontario's ability to continue to build on its considerable industrial assets will need investment in relevant transportation and digital infrastructure to take advantage of its central location with access to North American markets. Legacy benefits such as health care may no longer be sufficient to outweigh growing concerns such as unaffordable housing and potentially a lack of investment in post-secondary education. A recognized shortfall is Ontario's inability to utilize the skills of economic immigrants to supplement an aging population.

Two significant trends in recent decades reflect a recognition that cities have to develop "up" not "out." Although intensification has been somewhat successful, supported by provincial policies such as the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the push to build more housing within existing boundaries has not necessarily provided housing stock that is consistent with demographic needs, for example, delivering tall buildings with too many small units. A further trend that has seen positive results is a push to "urbanize suburbia," along with creating walkable, pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods in contrast to car-dependent development that characterized growth patterns for many decades. Having said that, this movement has not yet shifted the dial in favour of delivering a significantly larger share of higher-density housing in suburban areas.



The urbanization and intensification of lower density, car-oriented, land-extensive development with more sustainable urban forms is still at the demonstration stage and has not become the norm.

**Is the social infrastructure in the Region robust and does it have a track record of being able to respond to changing demands?**

Ontario is still recovering from the impact of severe cuts and reorganizations affecting the province's social safety net. Progress needs to continue to be made on reforming welfare, managing spending, priorities and distribution of healthcare funds, education funding from kindergarten through to post-secondary as well as investment in social housing. The divide between haves and have-nots is a weak spot in Ontario's future prospects.

**Will changes in the nature of intra or inter-regional transportation significantly change the pattern of residential development?**

Ontario has not been able to overcome its historic dependence on government funds for investments in transportation infrastructure. To balance the need to replace aging infrastructure with climate-sensitive investments in new transportation infrastructure, Ontario will need to find ways to tap the resources of pension funds and other entities (comparable to the Quebec model) and become capable of entering into genuine partnerships.

The desire to establish walkable, transit-supportive "downtowns" began in the 1970s when Metro Toronto designated "centres" in Etobicoke, Scarborough and North York. The concept was later extended to a dozen or more suburban communities in the 1990s, including Mississauga, Brampton, Vaughan and Markham, but their ability to match condo development with appropriate employment opportunities has been hampered by a lack of funding for higher order transit.

The provincial Places to Grow plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe was also followed by a progressive Regional Transportation Plan with significant investments in creating an extensive, complex and evolving regional transportation network integrating the heavy rail and bus GO network, higher order and regular local transit and triggered transit-oriented developments around the mobility hubs and major transit stations.

Major transit projects such as GO expansion, Toronto's Crosstown, Finch LRT, Hurontario LRT, Ottawa's LRT lines, Kitchener – Waterloo LRT, York Region Viva and Brampton's Zum systems, the upcoming Hamilton LRT are being accompanied by transit-oriented development. Major examples include projects such as Vaughan Corporate Centre developed around the subway and bus terminal, Mount Pleasant Village developed around the GO station and the transit terminal, Highway Seven and the Queen street transit corridors. A large number of TOD projects are in planning and early development stages in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the Ottawa region as it takes time to build transit and even longer to develop TOD, a relatively recent phenomenon in Ontario.

Initiatives for improvements to the inter-regional transportation network are looking at reducing gas-emitting auto transportation and supporting a broader urban structure. These initiatives include the expansion of GO service to London, Hamilton, Niagara, Barrie, Bowmanville, potential VIA service improvements, and the proposed federal High Frequency train service. These projects require substantial capital investment, long development time, strong political support with commitment from all levels of government. It is hoped that by 2040 and beyond they could have an impact in the growth of accommodation in Southern Ontario.

## First Nations

### **Will First Nations rights issues influence the pattern of urban growth?**

The emerging importance of building trust with First Nations and other Indigenous peoples has profound implications for Ontario's future settlement patterns. There will be a need to integrate Indigenous knowledge and respect for rights into land use planning, environmental protection and other aspects of community development. Unlike the case in B.C., the effects of future partnerships will likely be seen, primarily outside the developed urban areas of the province.

## Government and Institutional Capacity

### **Does the Region have the governance and institutional capacity to respond to changing needs and changing demand?**

The short answer is no. Historically, there has been a poor record of metropolitan governance in Ontario over the past 75 years, due to several factors, such as:

- Municipal governments have struggled to fund the growing service needs of its residents, due to a limited choice of fiscal tools (mandated by the Province). Municipalities are heavily reliant on property taxes, which is a highly visible and inflexible tool. Downloading of certain provincial responsibilities to local governments that began in the 1990s has exacerbated this fiscal challenge. Furthermore, councils have worked within boundaries that are not nimble enough to respond to changing needs within fast-growing metro areas. For example, after Metro Toronto was amalgamated with its constituent local municipalities, it was both too large to address granular neighbourhood issues and too small to deal with regional economic and transportation issues.
- Changing provincial mandates have created an environment of uncertainty and financial instability when it comes to municipal governance (Downloading; Regional government: yes or no; Amalgamations? Greenbelt?).

The federal government has shifted from supporting municipal governments through CMHC and the (now defunct) Ministry of State for Urban Affairs to disinterest and disclaimers (cities are creatures of the province). More recently, there has been an increasing interest from the federal government concerning investment in cities; however, ongoing jurisdictional friction continues. .

Engaged citizens have always been essential to good governance, but most are not clear about "who does what" -- leading to confusion, disappointment, and missed opportunities. Moreover,

expectations of residents have continued to grow. At best, this can foster community cohesion but at its worst, it can lead to social disharmony and resentment.

Creating a good *governance model* is feasible but doesn't guarantee *good governing*.

**Does the Region have a history of consistently managing urban growth so that it is environmentally and financially sustainable over the long term?**

Urban areas have been the focus of growth in Ontario for many years. Since 2000, the population of the 16 Census Metropolitan Areas grew by 29 per cent, compared to only 9 per cent for the rest of Ontario. (Statistics Canada). In 2023, nearly half of Ontario's 15.6 million people lived in the Greater Toronto Area. ([Ontario's Long-Term Report on the Economy 2024](#), chapter 1).

Historic challenges in managing urban growth sustainably stem from under-investment in capital projects, inadequate funding of operating costs, jurisdictional squabbling between levels of government, as well as failures to meaningfully address the long-term consequences of climate change. More recently, provincial initiatives have created uncertainties in managing urban growth. This has occurred through a range of actions, including the use of Ministerial Zoning Orders that over-ride municipal decisions; and others that impact long-term planning, such as: redrawing the Greenbelt; and commitments to expanding 400 series highways (such as 413, that would pass through the Greenbelt).

## Rural Areas, Agriculture and Resources

**Will there be new opportunities for resource development?**

From a resources perspective, agriculture, forestry, mining and tourism will remain critical to the provincial economy.

We should anticipate a more intense, specialized and contested agricultural sector. With anticipated population growth in rural and expanding urban centres there will be greater pressure on farmland and greater need for policies that protect and support this resource. While technology and controlled environment agriculture—including greenhouses, vertical farming, AI, and advanced genetics—will increasingly contribute to food production, high-quality soils will remain a cornerstone of our overall food system.

In addition, with climate change, agriculture takes on more significance in both adapting to climate change and in responding to the global need to feed the planet's population. Indeed, the special farmlands of southern Ontario with their proximity to water sources (groundwater in particular but also preserving the purity of lake-based water against impacts from agricultural run-off) will become even more important in both a national and global context. This will depend on provincial priorities that place agricultural land at the forefront, while strategically managing and limiting urban encroachment to recognize the importance of food production.

**What changes in the rural economy are anticipated, including agriculture and food? How will these changes influence the pattern of rural settlement?**

Managed forests will continue to contribute to the production of timber, tourism and the on-going mitigation of climate change. Renewed efforts will be required to protect and enhance the province's forests and woodlots. Diverse and unpredictable moisture availability and increasing heat will threaten the sector. This speaks to the importance of management, including the selection of species that can handle and counteract the impacts of climate change while providing critical resources in support of the broader provincial economy. Partnerships in support of reforestation with Indigenous communities will be critical.

Specialized technologies point to enhanced mining activities throughout this century. This activity occurs primarily in a rural context and presents opportunities, challenges and risks. Properly managed, some rural communities will see related growth and prosperity. Enhanced environmental protection, as well as strengthened partnerships with Indigenous communities will be critical.

## Other Factors

New financial and management strategies are needed to create sustainable living environments for Ontario's future population. Challenges abound, including:

- more frequent catastrophic events linked to climate change, such as floods, fires, tornadoes, milder and drier winters, etc;
- meeting Canada's commitment to net zero emissions by 2050;
- increasing concentration of populations within urban areas, suggesting the need for greater density within built-up areas and more efficient use of infrastructure;
- continued influx of international immigrants with diverse needs, as Ontario continues as the top destination for newcomers, with the GTA drawing in the most;
- the changing nature of work and work-places, particularly affecting downtowns of major urban areas;
- increasing numbers of unreliable sources of news and information, In general exacerbated by AI and an over-reliance on technology, which creates challenges for governments looking for citizens to support public policy decisions.
- There has historically been a significant divide between Northern Ontario and everywhere south to the U.S. border. In the early 00s, a provincial growth plan for Northern Ontario only succeeded in confirming that the economy of Northern Ontario is and will continue to be dependent on government support for institutions and transportation links.

## **REGIONAL RESPONSES: QUEBEC**

### Environmental and Climate issues

**Are there significant environmental or geographical features that will influence the rate or shape the direction of urban growth in the region?**

Most of Quebec's population is in the St. Lawrence Valley, primarily along the St. Lawrence River. North of the valley is the Canadian Shield, a largely mountainous region not suitable for major population growth. South is the U.S. border. The bulk of population growth will likely continue in the St. Lawrence Valley. The Valley also has most of the best farmland in Quebec; re-zoning the land for urban purposes is regulated by the province, based on its 1978 farmland preservation legislation. The aim is to resolve the tension between growth and the need to preserve the agricultural economy by preventing "leapfrog" development while permitting contiguous extension of urban areas. There is no reason to believe that this tension will dissipate in the coming decades. It may even grow stronger as urbanization proceeds, especially if the global food system is compromised and regional food production becomes a priority to ensure food security. This could put a damper on the political willingness to accommodate growth.

**Will climate change accelerate the rate of growth, or slow it down?**

The warming climate may lead to "climate refugees" from the U.S. (or further south) moving north to Quebec's more moderate temperatures. However, Quebec is hesitant to accept large numbers of immigrants due to concerns over the preservation of the French language and culture. Quebec has had a low fertility rate (compared to other OECD jurisdictions) since the "Quiet Revolution" in the 1960s; this is not expected to change in the coming decades.

Natural increase (births minus deaths) is expected to turn negative in the next decade, after which growth will depend entirely on net migration into the province (in-migrants minus out-migrants). This may pressure the Quebec government (which has significantly more control over immigration than other provinces) to boost immigration targets. However, the challenges related to "Francizing" large numbers of non-Francophone immigrants (i.e., teaching them to live and work in French) are daunting. Quebec's statistics agency anticipates that the population growth rate will slow from about one per cent per annum today to 0.3 per cent by 2040, not quite reaching 10 million by 2060.

**Will climate change result in pressures that will change the economic base over the medium or long-term?**

Climate change may negatively affect agricultural production. Given the concentration of population and industry in the St. Lawrence Valley, the extent of economic impacts of climate change will depend in part on whether water flows in the St. Lawrence are affected by the changing climate. There is a lot of scientific uncertainty around this point due to the complexity of the hydrological system. If flows are reduced, there will be major impacts not only on agriculture, but also on fishing, commercial and recreational navigation, as well as hydroelectricity production.

The frequency and intensity of flooding events will likely increase, and this is expected to have important impacts (damages and loss of property value), but this will likely not affect the economic base. The immense economic potential presented by the forests of Quebec could be affected by climate change if it brings uncontrollable pests that destroy the resource, as it has in British Columbia. The tourism industry will be affected if winter sports decline due to a shorter season, but this could be offset to some degree by more recreational opportunities in the longer summer/fall season. Overall, it seems that climate change will dampen many sectors while opening fewer new opportunities.

The net impact of climate change on the economy will depend in part on the success of adaptation measures, which will in turn depend on the ability of governments to invest in upgrading infrastructure and the rest of the built environment to reduce risks related to novel climate conditions. If climate change negatively affects the economy of Quebec, this could compromise the ability of governments to muster the resources needed to adapt to changing conditions, which would exacerbate **climate impacts**.

## The Economy

### **Do you anticipate growth of the Region's economic base to be faster or slower than the population growth rates suggested?**

This is a difficult question to answer as there are so many moving parts, but in general, it is reasonable to expect that the low birth rate and hesitation around immigration will restrict population growth in Quebec. This may place limitations on the growth of the domestic market and the shortage of labour, dampening economic growth.

### **Will there be new opportunities for resource development?**

Quebec's economy has traditionally been fueled by abundant natural resources. However, hydroelectric development in Quebec has limited future growth potential as most river systems are already dammed. In addition, the province has no fossil fuel potential (besides some minor natural gas deposits). The forestry industry has gradually slowed due to a decline in demand for newsprint and trade disputes with the U.S. The mining potential of the province (which is currently second in Canada after B.C.) remains strong and Quebec's long-term strategy will be to build on this potential in terms of extraction, processing, and final product manufacturing.

Quebec is positioning itself as an EV superpower and has adopted a regulatory and investment strategy to facilitate the expansion of industrial sectors connected to the EV value chain, including the mining of lithium, graphite and rare-Earth metals. This is backed by the adoption of land use policies to facilitate battery production facilities. The province is investing heavily in the infrastructure needed to support this new economic sector. Quebec is also vying to become known for its sustainable tourism industry, focusing on low-impact recreational activities such as hiking, water sports, agri-food tourism, and wilderness camping.

Finally, the province has the capacity to lead Canada in terms of the sustainable transportation industry, including EV production, trains, and buses. In other words, the vision of building a

future for the Quebec economy based on the green economy seems realistic and the necessary investments and policy frameworks are being put in place to realize this potential.

Climate change may shift some resource development attention to the far north, especially if routine commercial passage becomes feasible between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Deep-water ports and less severe climatic conditions may make resource extraction in the far north more competitive in the decades ahead.

**Will the nature of inter and intra-regional transportation for freight and passengers change? Will this pose challenges for some economic activities and create opportunities for others? What are they? Will changes in the nature of intra or inter regional transportation significantly change the pattern of residential development?**

Quebec has experienced a long-term decline in the provision of transportation services to dispersed rural communities – many train, bus, and, as with other provinces, regional air routes have been eliminated, with transport networks concentrating on urban hubs. This pattern of disinvestment is expected to continue in a self-reinforcing pattern as it discourages migration into rural areas and forces an increasingly aged population to relocate to sub-regional centres offering better services.

Approximately half the population of Canada lives within the Quebec City-Windsor corridor; Canada is currently the only G7 country without a high-speed train network connecting major population centres. After years of hesitation, the feasibility of such a service will be re-examined.

Investing in high frequency rail connectivity may have a positive impact on population and job growth in the corridor but this could be overshadowed by larger factors such as immigration levels and trading patterns with other provinces and the U.S. Some residential and business development may occur around station areas but impacts further from stations will be modest. The key challenges in developing such a service will be raising the public and private capital needed and accessing land for new train rights-of-way and stations, especially in urban areas.

**What changes in the rural economy are anticipated, including agriculture and food? How will these changes influence the pattern of rural settlement?**

The cultural heritage of Quebec is strongly associated with its rural areas, where Francophone nationalists insisted on building a strong, well-integrated rural society as a bulwark against the threat of assimilation emanating from Anglophone strongholds in the cities. In the countryside, according to this ideology, Québécois could control their economic and cultural future and, above all, their existence as a people. As in other parts of Canada, however, rural societies have been weakened due to economic changes, especially the abandonment of agricultural lands in the post-war period and the gradual de-population and aging demographics in the countryside as workers migrated to cities in search of employment and a higher quality of life. Impacts of these changes have been especially felt in remote areas and those dependent on natural resources, which are subject to short-term boom-bust commodity cycles in the context of long-term decline.

Nonetheless, the proportion of rural population in Quebec remains higher than in other provinces in Canada and a relatively healthy network of small towns and cities located in rural regions remains. This reflects efforts that have been invested in sustaining rural living as a viable option in the province. Consolidation of agricultural operations into larger entities that can compete globally is expected to continue in the coming decades and economic diversification programs (for which Quebec is internationally recognized) will move investment away from traditional resource industries into rural tourism and the industrial, service, and knowledge economies.

Populations and jobs will continue to congregate in sub-regional hubs where better quality housing, social services, transportation links, and business support will be more available. A culture of innovation will continue to flourish in rural areas and boost GNP growth compared to urban areas of Quebec (which has been the case in recent years). The main challenges will be the provision of adequate and affordable housing in rural growth hubs and the supply of appropriately trained workers. Additional challenges are to preserve high-quality agricultural land on the fringes of growing urban areas, consolidate agricultural operations and fruitfully deploy formerly agricultural lands in rural areas.

**Does the Region have a history of being able to attract investment that grows the economic base?**

Quebec has undergone tremendous changes as it shifts from an overwhelming dependence on agriculture, resource extraction, and low-tech industry to a diversified modern economy. The province has especially boomed in the knowledge sector, which now represents about one third of Quebec's GDP. This reflects the rapid increase in the amount of private R&D spending in AI, aeronautics, media, and other medium- and high-tech sectors. This investment has been triggered in part by billions of dollars in government employment incentives and co-investment through agencies such as Investissement Québec. However, critics have pointed out that Quebec's "dirigiste" industrial policy (where the government exerts considerable control) also has its weaknesses in that it focuses too much on specific sectors that government officials believe are promising while leaving the general climate for investment wanting. The result has been low and stagnant labour productivity, high unemployment, and sluggish wage growth compared to other provinces in Canada and other rich countries.

## Government and Institutional Capacity

**Does the Region have the governance and institutional capacity to respond to changing needs and changing demand?**

Difficult to respond to this: suffice it to say that Quebec is a "have not" province with the highest debt to GDP ratio of any province except Newfoundland and Labrador. The province has failed to address key structural issues affecting the economy (low productivity, high deficits, high unemployment). These factors can dampen the ability of governing bodies and other institutions to respond to change.

**Does the Region have a history of consistently managing urban growth so that it is environmentally and financially sustainable over the long term?**



Scattered development has been avoided to some degree in Quebec thanks to farmland preservation policies. However, densities of suburban development have been low and some environmental policies (e.g., wetland preservation) have been weakly enforced, which has resulted in some egregious growth outcomes. The Montreal and Quebec City regions have had metropolitan planning bodies (and police forces) for some time, which have improved planning frameworks. The province also recently adopted a new framework for managing urban growth that prioritizes compact development that is more efficient economically and transit- and walking-friendly.

Quebec is one of the few provinces that does not use development charges to fund off-site, growth-related infrastructure. This has encouraged low-density fringe development by transferring the financial burden of growth to the general population via the property tax. This is likely to change in the coming decades as taxpayers resist shouldering this burden and municipalities adopt a “growth pays for growth” approach to infrastructure financing. Quebec’s municipalities have also lagged behind other populous provinces in both grey (e.g. piped infrastructure) and green (forests, wetlands etc) asset management practices, which undermines their ability to manage growth efficiently. Both these municipal finance shortcomings are likely to be remedied in future as concerns over the long-term financial and environmental sustainability of municipal operations impose greater discipline. One indirect consequence could be better management of growth and lower associated environmental and financial externalities.

## Other Factors

### **Does the Federal or provincial government's approach to immigration challenge your Region's current approach to accommodating population growth?**

Federal immigration targets have exceeded those set by the Quebec government, with tensions highest with respect to refugees. The closing of the Roxham Road entry point to refugees has addressed this friction somewhat but differences persist due to the problems Quebec is experiencing in accommodating refugees in terms of housing, health care, employment, and language training. A barrier to regular immigration in Quebec is posed by French language proficiency requirements imposed on immigrants, many of whom land in Quebec and then move on to other provinces where French is less important to finding work.

### **Identify significant “unknown unknowns” that have affected your analysis; suggest how these should be accounted for in our work.**

Quebec nationalism could result in the formal separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada. If the Quebec economy ever improves to the point where it becomes a “have” province, the threat of separation will become more prominent (as we’ve seen with separatist movements in other OECD countries). This could have important implications for transportation patterns (e.g., the viability of a high-frequency rail network connecting with population centres in Ontario), trade relations, and growth rates as migration and economic investment adapt to the new political reality.

Another important unknown is the potential for political disruption emanating from the U.S. Extreme political movements could result in the mass migration into Canada of those deemed to be in the U.S. illegally. In addition, termination of free trade arrangements, the rise of protectionist economic policies, lower levels of bilateral cooperation in managing shared assets and environmental issues (such as the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system), and other disruptions that could impact the rate of growth, regional economy, natural environment and standard of living in Quebec.

At a global level, the key unknown is how stable the current system of governance and economic production will be over the coming decades. Many experts are anticipating a major destabilization of the climate regime with catastrophic impacts. Others are predicting dramatic increases in military conflict over diminishing natural resources, especially fossil energy, certain minerals, and fresh water. Both tendencies could result in uncontrollable waves of migrants vying for entry into Quebec (and Canada more generally) as people flee uninhabitable or conflict-ridden zones (or both). Economic polarization is accelerating in the Western world, creating large reservoirs of “economic losers” who have little stake in the current system, which could also serve as a destabilizing force. Criticism of both liberal governance institutions and capitalist production relations are increasing around the Western world and there are doubts as to whether these institutions can survive the major disruptions that are being forecast. If they were to crumble, the types of incremental change forecasted above would be moot and no one is in a position to divine what conditions would emerge in the aftermath of a major disruption like this.

**Is the social infrastructure in the Region robust and does it have a track record of being able to respond to changing demands?**

Quebec has a well-earned reputation within Canada as being a jurisdiction that puts a lot of emphasis on social solidarity, e.g. robust policies, public investment and civil society efforts that have preserved a relatively affordable housing stock; a strong welfare-state where more emphasis is placed on eliminating barriers to education (lowest college tuition in the country, free CEGEPs) and income redistribution than in most other provinces; cooperative economic institutions (e.g., credit unions, worker co-ops, social economy enterprises) are far more plentiful in Quebec than in other parts of the country; a high tolerance for non-traditional family structures, gender identity, and sexual orientation; and a strong sense of “national” identity has preserved a distinctive culture in which most people are proud to participate. There is also a strong emphasis on the “urban commons,” including convivial public spaces (pedestrianized streets, attractive public squares, parks, community gardens) and public services that people of all incomes can rely on, such as high-quality public transit (in urban areas) and low-cost daycare.

Income polarization is less severe and less spatialized in Quebec urban areas than observed in many other parts of Canada (the Gini coefficients of cities in Quebec are substantially lower – meaning after-tax incomes are more equally distributed – than other cities in Canada). All of this makes Quebec socially resilient, with lots of buffering to withstand shocks and adapt accordingly. The most visible social cleavage is between language groups (the “two solitudes”), occasionally flaring up into open conflict when nationalist forces demand protective measures that threaten historically-established English rights and prerogatives. This is a long-standing tension that

compromises social resilience (as it erodes trust) and that is unlikely to disappear over the next 35 years unless Quebec separates from the rest of Canada.

## **REGIONAL RESPONSES: ATLANTIC PROVINCES**

(NEW BRUNSWICK, NOVA SCOTIA, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR)

Some of the earliest interest in town planning in Canada developed during the Progressive Era (1890-1920), as Canada was experiencing significant levels of immigration from Europe alongside rapid industrialization (Grant et al., 2012). In 1912, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia adopted town planning legislation, followed by Alberta in 1913. Most other provinces followed in the next decade.

### **Environment and Climate Change**

With increased risks of drought, wildfire, storms, and sea level rise – is likely to have significant impacts on population and economies in the region. Atlantic Canada has over 40,000 km of coast, According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2021 AR6 report, global mean sea level rise could be approaching two meters by 2100. and is expecting a one meter increase in sea level by 2100. Sea level rise threatens the narrow low-lying isthmus connecting Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. There are regional variations to sea-level rise and it will affect communities in different ways, for example, First Nation communities are particularly affected by these threats due to their limited infrastructure funding and land base. Coastal ecosystems are already impacted by the combination of sea-level rise, other climate-related ocean changes including the isthmus connecting Nova Scotia to New Brunswick.

### **The Economy**

The provinces in Atlantic Canada have distinct economies but have generally experienced lower growth, lower wages, and higher unemployment compared to other parts of Canada. The public sector is the largest employer in the region. PEI relies on agriculture, fisheries, and tourism. Newfoundland and Labrador have economic contributions from petroleum refining, mining, and fisheries: but it has experienced low growth over the last decades. New Brunswick has petrochemical refining, mining, and agriculture. Nova Scotia has the most diverse economy in the region, with contributions from refining, mining, fisheries, shipbuilding, universities, and the retail sector. Halifax and other cities in the region have attracted a growing number of tech start-ups in recent years. The shortage of affordable housing had a dampening effect on growth in the period to 2023.

It seems likely that Atlantic Canada will continue to grow more slowly than other parts of Canada. Governments are taking advantage of federal funding to increase housing starts, but measures to ensure long-term affordability are inadequate. Annual double-digit rent increases persist despite legislated 'rent caps' in Nova Scotia, encouraging workers and students to relocate westward.

**Will there be new opportunities for major growth in tourism?**

All the provinces benefitted from growth in the cruise ship industry along the Atlantic coast. Aside from the drop during COVID, tourism has remained relatively strong in the region and seems likely to continue. Moderate summer temperatures and beautiful beaches and lakes make the region an attractive holiday destination.

## Housing, Transportation and Infrastructure

**Given the age and nature of the Region's housing stock and infrastructure, will the cost of accommodating population growth be slower or faster than in the remainder of Canada?**

In Nova Scotia, from the 1970s until the mid-1990s, the Housing Commission/Department of Housing had a development division that laid out low and moderate-cost lots on land the province had acquired through CMHC land-banking and financing. Selling land at cost to small builders, the provincial housing program had the effect of keeping land and housing prices low, and the supply sufficient to meet demand. After the government ended the program in 1995, housing prices began a rapid upward trend, and large production builders dominated the market.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, parts of Atlantic Canada grew rapidly. Beautiful landscapes, affordable home prices, and friendly communities attracted considerable inter-provincial migration. Nova Scotia exceeded 1 million people for the first time in 2021, growing by 2.8 per cent in 2023. PEI grew 3.7 per cent in 2023, and New Brunswick 3.1 per cent. By contrast, Newfoundland and Labrador grew only 1 per cent that year. By 2024, however, escalating housing prices and insufficient supply, alongside the desperate shortage of family doctors, saw the trends reversing, with more migration to western provinces.

Housing starts have failed to keep up with housing demand, leaving the provinces with an insufficient supply and overly expensive housing. Developers focus on meeting the needs of households with higher incomes, but cannot supply housing to meet general needs. Governments will need substantial investments and programs to maintain long-term affordability if they hope to achieve continued growth.

**Is the social infrastructure in the Region robust and does it have a track record of being able to respond to changing demands?**

The region has good social infrastructure, but like much of the country suffers from shortages of healthcare workers and construction workers. Low wages in the region have made recruitment difficult. Governments discuss these issues at length but have not been willing to make the investments necessary to change the trajectory in the short term. As the population of the region continues to age more quickly than other parts of Canada, challenges may increase.

**Will the nature of inter and intra-regional transportation for freight and passengers change? Will this pose challenges for some economic activities and create opportunities for others? What are they?**

Low traffic volume led to the downgrading of some regional airports in recent years, though the main centres have good connections to other parts of Canada (and in some cases, Europe). One highway connects Nova Scotia to mainland Canada. Rail connections in the region are limited (in

NS and NB) to non-existent (in PEI and NL). Ferries connect Newfoundland and Labrador to Nova Scotia, while ferries and a bridge connect PEI to New Brunswick. High fuel costs make travel expensive. In short, transportation links are weak, and require significant investment to meet future needs.

## First Nations

First Nations communities play an increasingly important role in economic development in the region as they operate commercial projects, fisheries, and community service initiatives. Reserves are likely to continue to expand by purchasing territory and to assert their rights to benefit from local resources.

## Government and Institutional Capacity

Atlantic Canada has a history of socially conservative governments. Economic restraint has tended to be the watchword, and unfulfilled promises common. Like governments elsewhere, leaders respond to the issues of the moment without strategic long-term planning. Policy-borrowing from other jurisdictions sometimes leads to inappropriate programs and investments. Managing resources for environmental and financial sustainability over decades has not been a priority. Improving institutional capacity could improve future outcomes.

## Rural Areas

Rural to urban migration has continued to deplete many parts of the region, though some small towns have thrived. Still, nearly 50% of residents in the region live in rural areas, a higher proportion than the rest of the country. Given the importance of mining, forestry, agriculture, and fisheries in the economy of the provinces, the strength of rural areas will require investment and policies to safeguard local control. Abundant wind resources, and the potential for tidal energy development in the Bay of Fundy, may offer growing opportunities. At the same time, climate change is likely to continue to challenge livelihoods in rural areas.

## Other Factors

Atlantic Canada made important contributions to Canada's economy in the early years of European settlement, before settling into a level of perceived dependency. Federal policies and subsidies have sometimes benefited central and western Canada to the detriment of the East. Tourism and the rise of new technologies has made Atlantic Canada more attractive, but low wages and housing shortages continue to limit the potential for growth. The historic patterns of dispersed settlements, hugging rugged coasts and river valleys, make providing efficient transportation and energy infrastructure challenging.

For much of the last century, Atlantic Canada has grown more slowly than other parts of the country. That situation shifted during COVID, when the Maritime provinces experienced a growth boom. In recent decades, international migration has become a stronger contributor to growth, and has been encouraged both by federal and provincial governments. To reach its target of 2 million people (doubling its 2021 level) by 2060, Nova Scotia will need sustained in-migration.

Later marriage, declining marriage rates, and fertility levels (1.48 per woman) that are still dropping, mean that natural decreases in population have become entrenched. Births may yet fall further: Nova Scotia, PEI, and Newfoundland and Labrador have among the lowest fertility rates in Canada, so the Atlantic region is likely to continue to rely on migration for growth.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CHOICES CONCERNING FUTURE GROWTH

This chapter outlines scenarios that encompass Canada's principal choices concerning population growth in the period to 2100. The analysis in previous chapters underlines that, notwithstanding concerns (political and in the media) regarding current shortages of housing, services and infrastructure, many of the concerns being expressed can be addressed through better planning, coordination and appropriate policy choices. It should also be noted that a combination of continuing downward trends in the rate of natural increase and lower levels of immigration could potentially have negative consequences for the growth of Canada's economy.

Statistics Canada prepared long-term 50-year population projections that explore the impact of various assumptions for migration, fertility and mortality rates, as in "what would be the result if this rate of immigration occurred versus that rate." It should be stressed that population numbers for the latter period are "what-ifs," rather than forecasts, intended to provide insights into possible planning and policy choices, as well as helping to evaluate possible consequences for the two extremes.

A scenario that sees Canada achieve a population of 75M in 2100, based on an immigration rate over the period of 0.9 per cent is – not accidentally – the result of extrapolating Statistics Canada's medium scenario of 62M in 2073 to 2100. A scenario that sees Canada reach 100M by 2100 would represent a midpoint between Statistics Canada's medium and extreme upper limit, providing verification that 100M is a reasonable high scenario.

At the other end of the spectrum, a low or no-growth scenario is especially useful for long-term planning since planning is by definition about accommodating growth and change. The lower scenario provided is based on an extrapolation of Statistics Canada's low growth projection of 47 to 49M by 2073. The result is three scenarios of growth to 2100, which can be conveniently titled as Canada-50, Canada-75 and Canada-100.

Canada's population growth over the next 75 years will be determined in large measure by the policy choices related to annual levels of immigration. Even though Canada can set high targets for new arrivals, and be open and welcoming to newcomers, decisions to migrate are made by individuals. These are decisions not being made in Canada, and necessarily balance perceived economic opportunities, social and cultural ties in both the country of origin and Canada.

As discussed previously, immigration counters downward trends in the rate of natural increase as well as the aging of the population. Further reductions in immigration levels (or extending recent reductions) could have negative consequences for the growth of Canada's economy in the nearer term.

The following analysis focuses on the Canada-75 and Canada-100 scenarios, as these options are the ones where different policy choices have discernible impact.

While the overall growth occurring in Canada is primarily a decision around immigration, the distribution of that growth within Canada among the provinces and territories and to the major urban centres within the Provinces and Territories is the result of a complex set of factors. These factors include provincial and local government planning policies, the local demographic characteristics and the relative economic opportunities associated with intra-provincial and inter-provincial migration. Where international migrants, both permanent immigrants and non-permanent residents, choose to settle is also important to the distribution of growth within Canada. Initial settlement location for many international migrants is a Canadian policy decision as a result of the provincial nominee programs for new permanent residents.

To explore the consequences of alternative courses of action, the two national population growth scenarios are distributed to the provinces and territories, providing two population scenarios for each area. Population is clearly not the only measure of growth or economic viability but population numbers have traditionally been the primary base for policy decisions in the past, so an evaluation can be made of the range of alternatives that will be required.

Statistics Canada's projections look forward 50 years to 2073 at the national level, but only look forward 25 years to 2048 for the 13 provincial and territorial jurisdictions. For Statistics Canada's medium national scenario, it tests six different distributions of population change for the 13 sub-national areas. These are based on observed patterns of migrant settlement and of inter-provincial migration over various time periods such as the most recent five years, most recent 10 years, etc. No one of these six projections lends itself to extrapolation for an additional 50+ years beyond 2048. Each projection is a combination of the lower end in some provinces and the higher end in some others; no single one of the medium projection scenarios represents what might be described as a mid-range share of growth for all provinces at the same time. Because of the very long-term outlook in Canada 2100, it is important to avoid taking a current circumstance and extrapolating it to produce an extreme result. Over a long timeframe there are likely to be unforeseen factors.

The scenarios for the provinces and territories are a set share of national growth applied to the Canada 75 and Canada 100 scenarios. The share of growth applied in each area through 2100 is within the range the six medium Statistics Canada projections to 2048. The exception is Newfoundland and Labrador, where a somewhat optimistic assumption of a small share of growth is assigned, rather than a continuous decline in population that would result from applying any one of the six medium projections.

It should be stressed that population numbers provided here are "what-ifs." The numbers are intended to provide insights into possible planning and policy choices, as well as helping to evaluate possible consequences of high levels of growth coming to pass. The numbers shown should not be considered as forecasts representing a considered view of the most likely level of growth over the coming 75 years. The provincial population distributions are shown at a very general level, but are all together in the first of the charts that follow. The next series of charts, one for each province and territory, provides greater detail on the provincial and territorial



distribution. A population range on each jurisdiction's urban region(s) is provided, and is explained below.

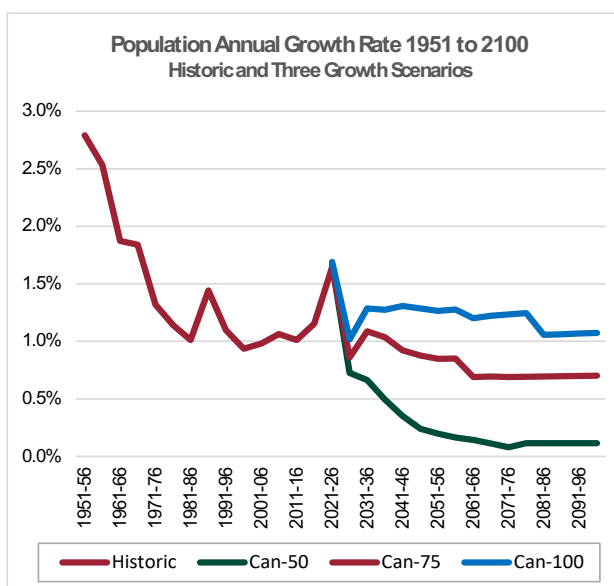
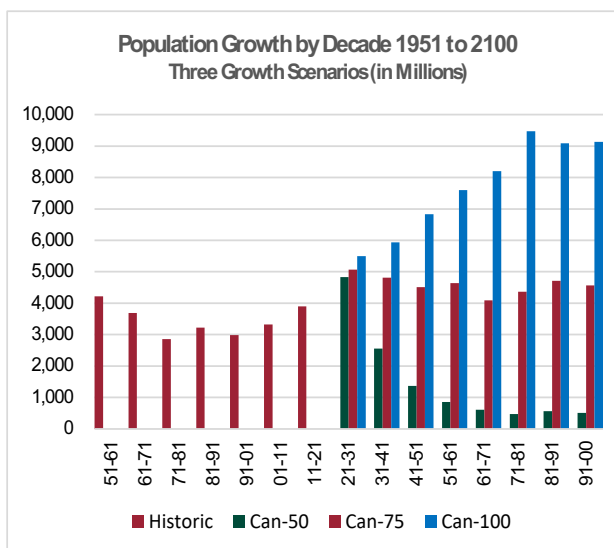
In addition to the provincial and territorial distributions of Canada-75 and Canada-100, the range for urban regions in the provinces and territories is shown. The idea is to provide a very general picture of how large the major urban centres could be at 2100. This is intended as additional information to help consider land use effects of growth and of the potential infrastructure needed to support the growth scenarios. A range has been provided for these areas defined as follows:

- For each area, and for each of the Canada-75 and Canada-100 scenarios, a range is provided; at the lower end, the urban region just maintains its 2024 share of the total population of the province. At the upper end of the range the share of the province's growth over the long-term (since 1951) is applied going forward to 2100. In all cases, applying the share of growth results in a higher population than maintaining the 2024 share.
- Applying the share range to both Canada-75 and Canada 100 initially provides four results for each area. The highest is the share-of-growth approach applied to the Canada-100 scenario and the lowest is the constant 2024 share of provincial population applied to the lower Canada-75 scenario. To keep the outlook range relatively simple, the two middle urban region populations have been combined into a single figure representing the mid-point between them.
- The geographic extent of the urban regions is meant to provide for an area significantly larger than a Census Metropolitan Area in order to include surrounding ex-urbs and areas with a strong relationship to major urban centres. This is a very similar notion to what Statistics Canada defines as Strong and Moderate Metropolitan Influence Zones. The areas are also deliberately quite extensive, recognizing that all of the urban regions would be much more populous than today under either scenario. In the charts following, a thumbnail map by Census Division, or part thereof, is shown for each urban region and the population ranges to 2100 are shown in graphic form. For the larger urban regions, a radius of about 75 km was used as a starting point.
- Thumbnail maps in the following series of charts show the areas included in the urban regions. How the areas have been defined and occasionally combined depends on the specific geography of the urban places in each province.
- A thumbnail map by Census Division, or part thereof, is shown for each urban region and the population ranges to 2100 are shown in graphic form. For the larger urban regions, a radius of about 75 km was used as a starting point.
- At least one urban region has been shown in each of the 13 jurisdictions. It is probably an unnecessary concept to apply in Prince Edward Island, where arguably the entire province could be a single metropolitan influence zone. In the three territories, neither the settlements nor the territorial populations are large enough to be considered metropolitan in character, but to be fair in presentation, the urban region approach has been applied in these areas.

- Thumbnails maps in the following series of charts show the areas included in the urban regions. How the areas have been defined and occasionally combined depends on the specific geography of the urban places in each province.

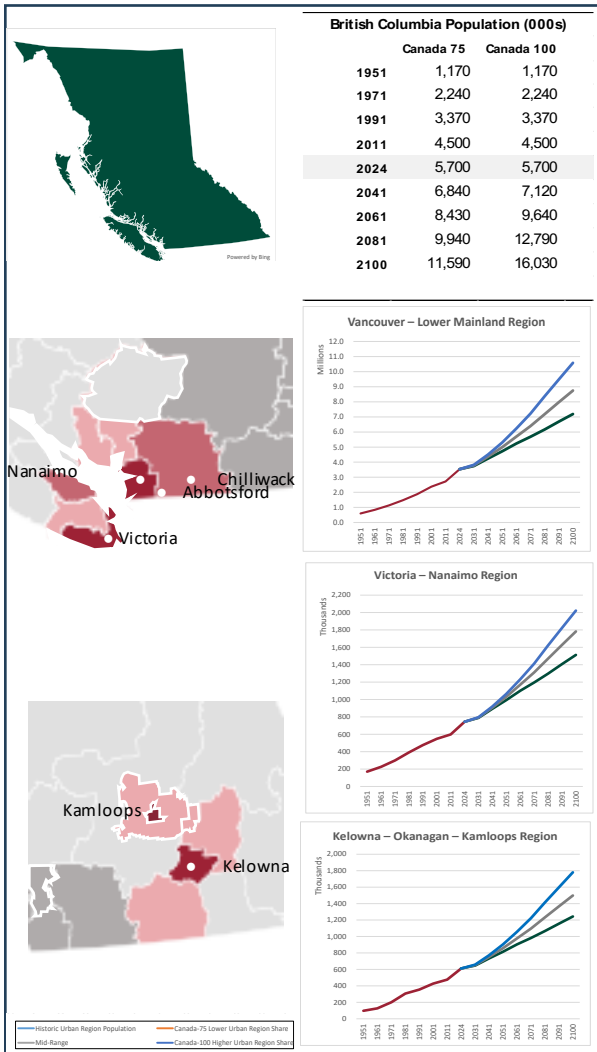


Canada Population (millions)			
	(in millions)		
	Canada 50	Canada 75	Canada 100
1951	14.1	14.1	14.1
1961	18.3	18.3	18.3
1971	22.0	22.0	22.0
1981	24.8	24.8	24.8
1991	28.0	28.0	28.0
2001	31.0	31.0	31.0
2011	34.3	34.3	34.3
2021	38.2	38.2	38.2
2024	41.3	41.3	41.3
2031	43.1	43.3	43.7
2041	45.6	48.1	49.7
2051	47.0	52.6	56.5
2061	47.9	57.3	64.1
2071	48.5	61.4	72.3
2081	48.9	65.7	81.8
2091	49.5	70.4	90.9
2100	50.0	75.0	100.0

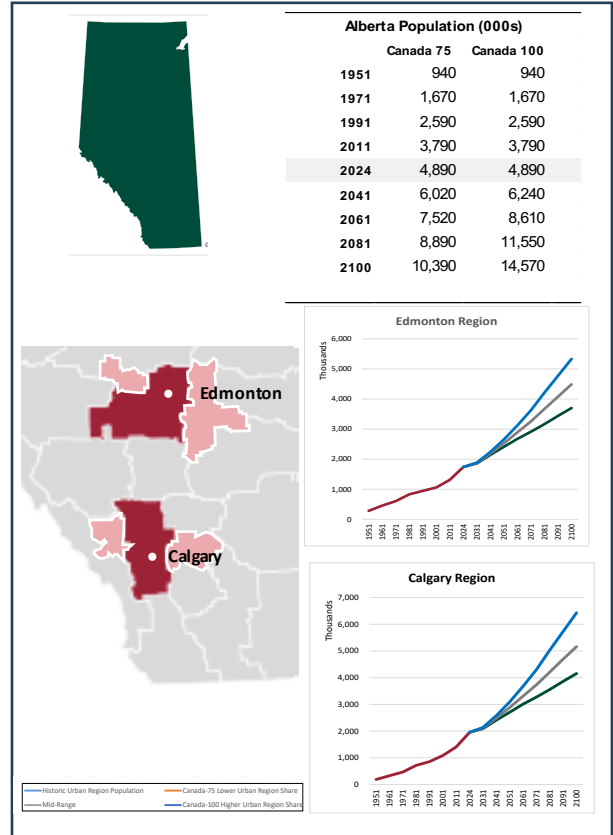


Population by Province or Territory, 1951 – 2100						
Canada-75 and Canada-100 Scenarios (in 000s)						
		1951	1991	2024	2061	2100
<b>Canada</b>	Canada-75	14,100	28,000	41,300	57,300	75,000
	Canada-100				64,100	100,000
<b>Newfoundland and Labrador</b>	Canada-75	362	580	545	582	618
	Canada-100				609	699
<b>Prince Edward Island</b>	Canada-75	99	130	179	251	317
	Canada-100				269	386
<b>Nova Scotia</b>	Canada-75	643	915	1,076	1,381	1,647
	Canada-100				1,522	2,078
<b>New Brunswick</b>	Canada-75	517	746	854	1,080	1,275
	Canada-100				1,182	1,595
<b>Quebec</b>	Canada-75	4,070	7,070	9,060	11,320	13,450
	Canada-100				12,370	16,850
<b>Ontario</b>	Canada-75	4,620	10,430	16,120	22,790	30,570
	Canada-100				25,520	40,870
<b>Manitoba</b>	Canada-75	778	1,110	1,494	2,078	2,725
	Canada-100				2,339	3,667
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	Canada-75	834	1,003	1,240	1,643	2,158
	Canada-100				1,833	2,910
<b>Alberta</b>	Canada-75	940	2,590	4,890	7,520	10,390
	Canada-100				8,610	14,570
<b>British Columbia</b>	Canada-75	1,170	3,370	5,700	8,430	11,590
	Canada-100				9,640	16,030
<b>Yukon</b>	Canada-75	9.0	28.9	46.7	70.7	97.3
	Canada-100				80.9	134.8
<b>Northwest Territories</b>	Canada-75	10.3	38.7	44.7	63.9	85.2
	Canada-100				72.1	115.2
<b>Nunavut</b>	Canada-75	5.7	22.2	41.2	57.1	74.9
	Canada-100				59.3	88.1

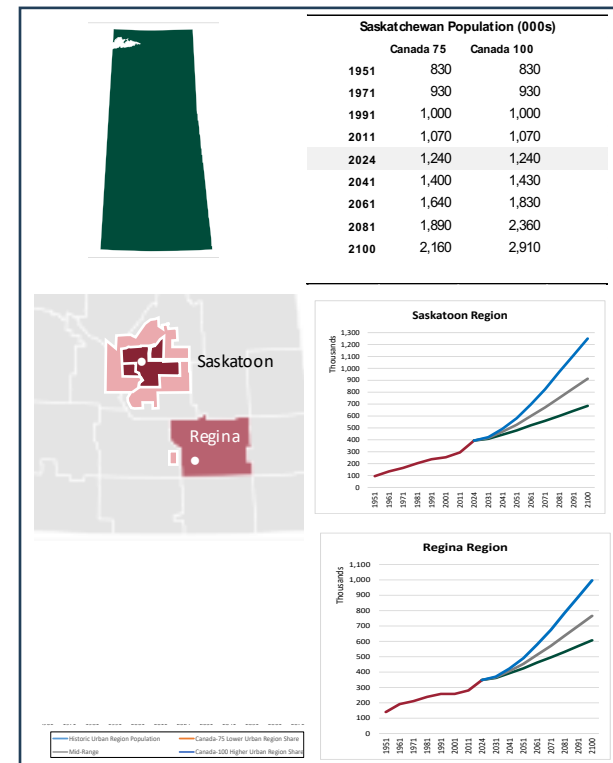
## British Columbia



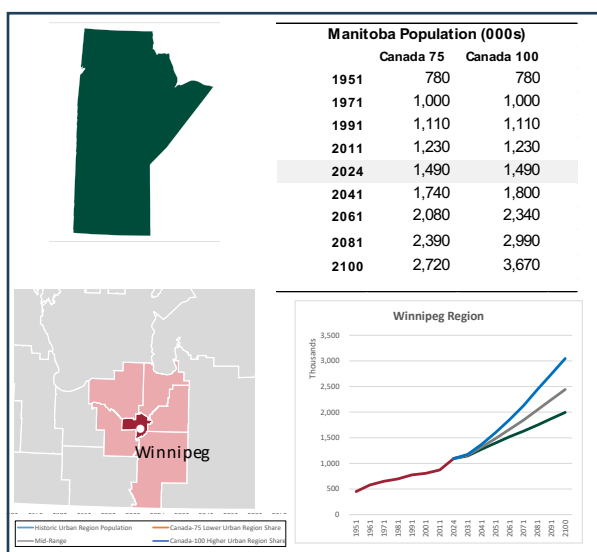
## Alberta



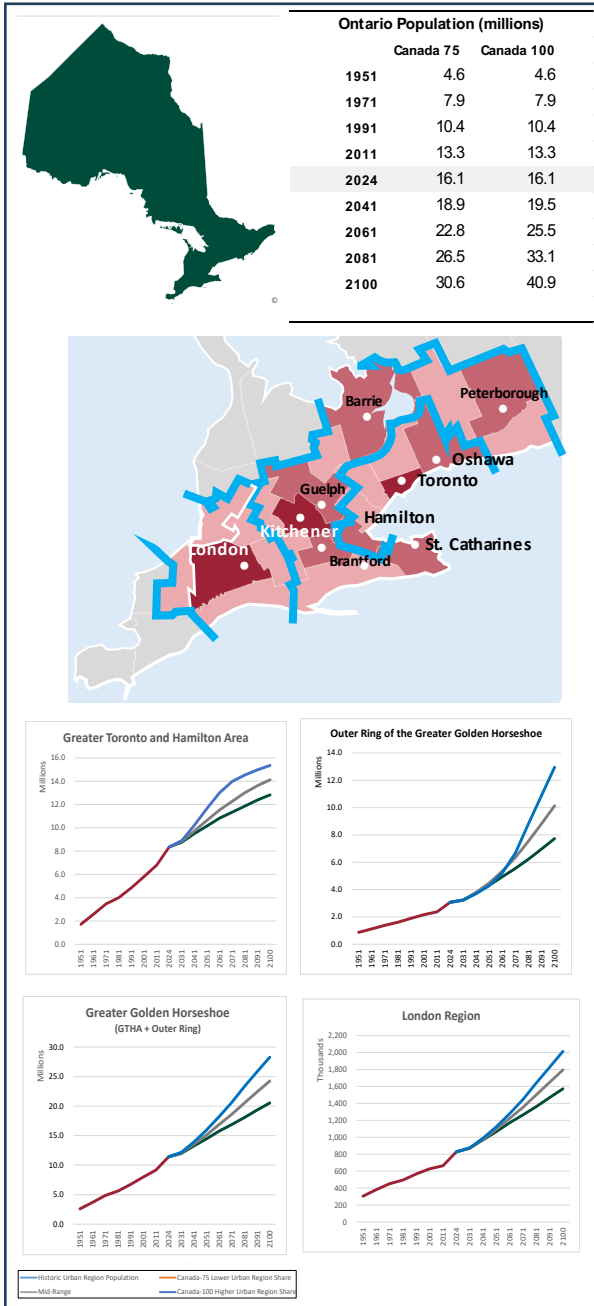
## Saskatchewan



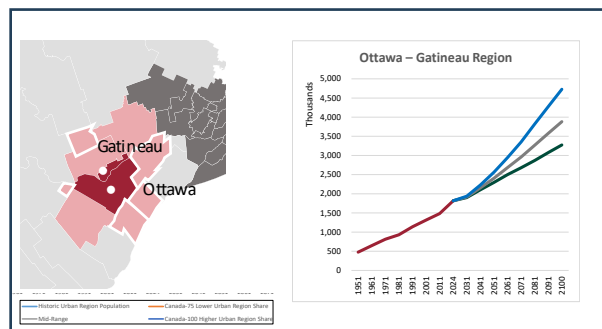
## Manitoba



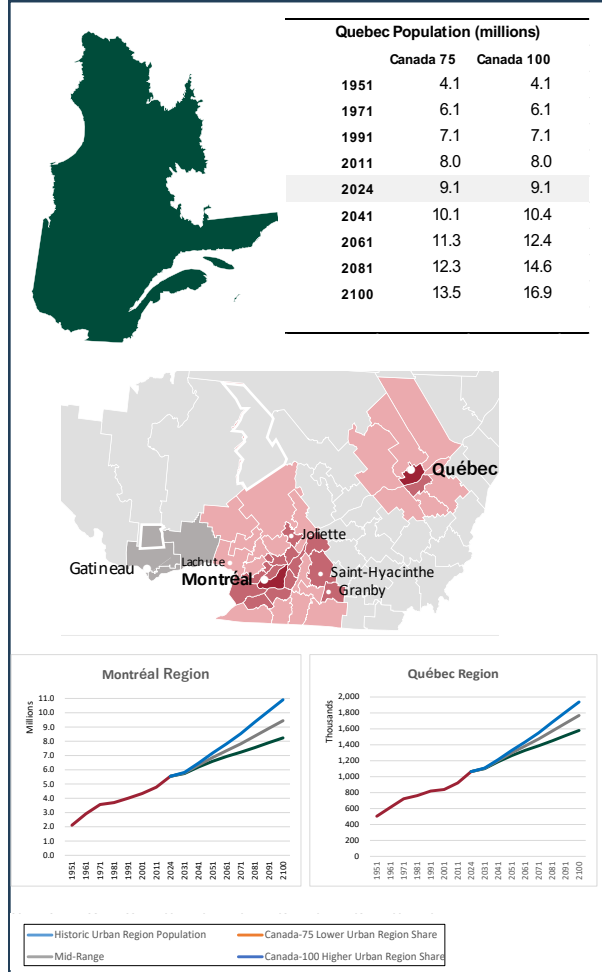
## Ontario



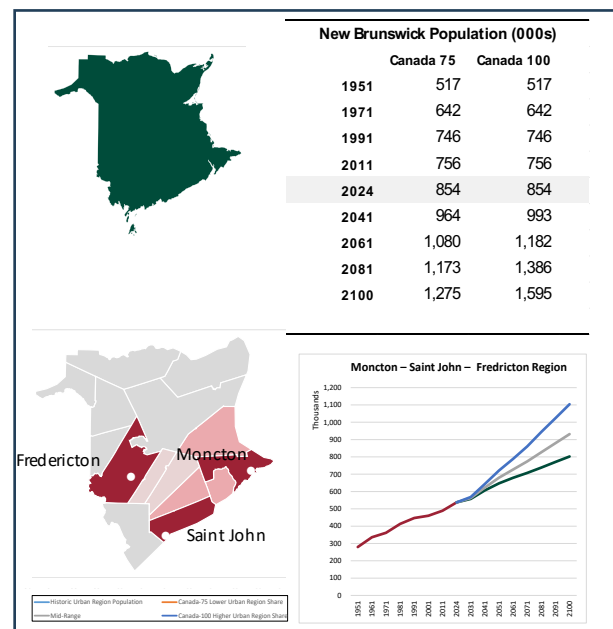
## Ottawa – Gatineau, Ontario & Quebec



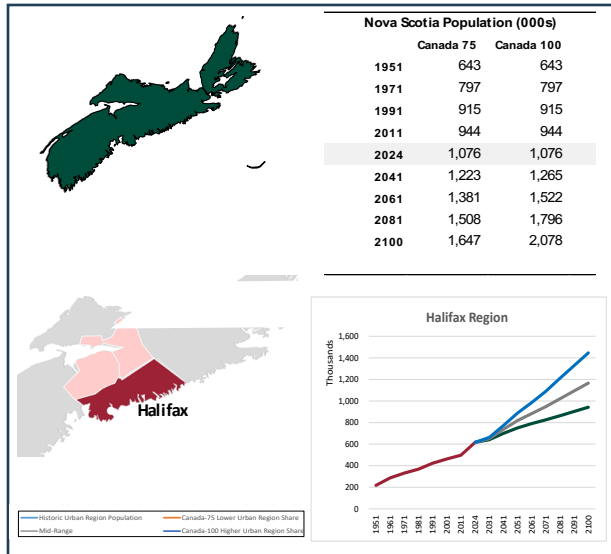
## Québec



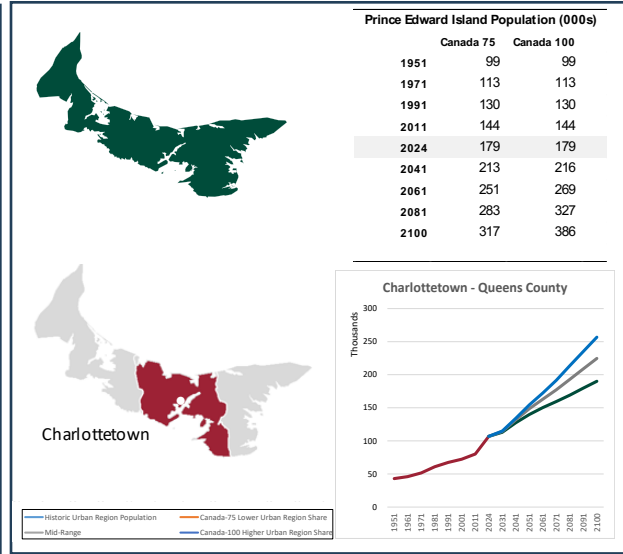
## New Brunswick



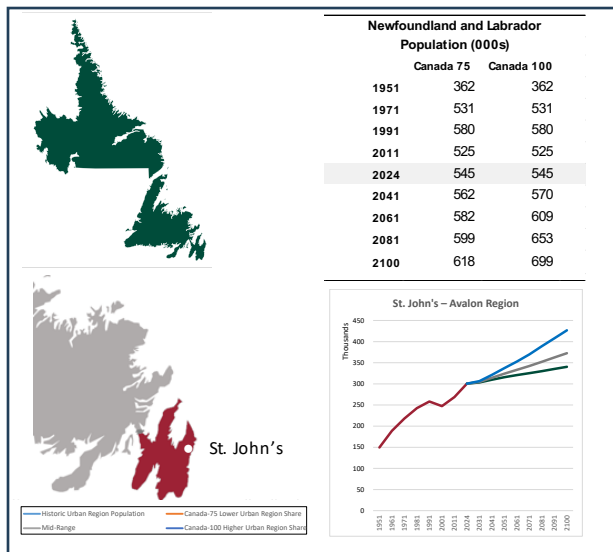
## Nova Scotia



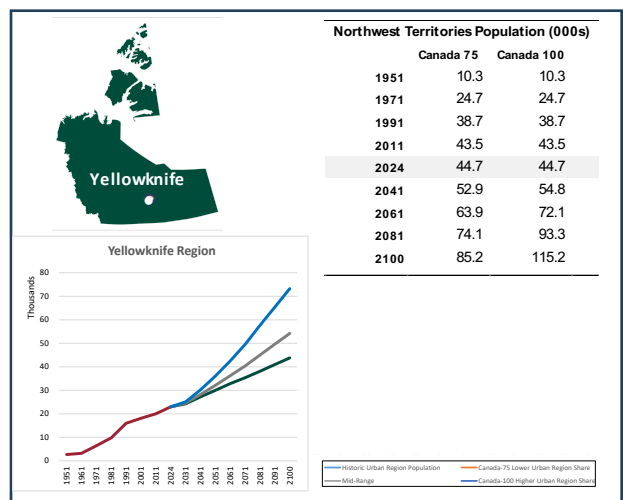
## Prince Edward Island



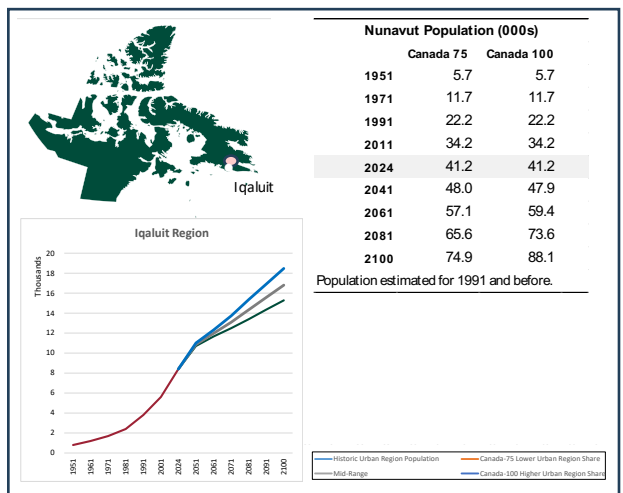
## Newfoundland and Labrador



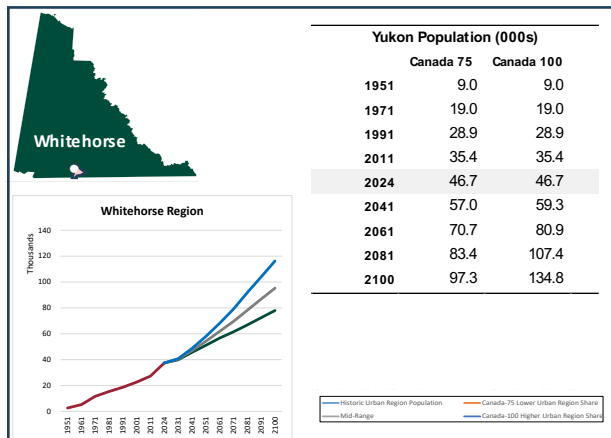
## Northwest Territories



## Nunavut



## Yukon



The trends reflected in these scenarios are that, without immigration, the Canadian population will begin to age and decline after 2060.

Although Canada has traditionally been able to determine immigration levels as a matter of policy, looking ahead it must be recognized that, if Canada wishes to continue to grow through immigration, it will likely have to compete with other jurisdictions that also wish to attract immigrants. This would most likely have significant cultural impacts including the dilution of the influence of “founding” cultures (First Nations, Francophone and Anglophone) as well as impacts on government spending on other critically important policy matters such as Reconciliation, dealing with climate change and other factors affecting a sustainable quality of life.

## CHAPTER FIVE: QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND DISCUSSION

This chapter sets out a number of questions stimulated by the two alternative scenarios presented in Chapter Four to be considered by planners in different regions of Canada. These questions are intended to serve as a starting point for discussion and, we hope, a basis for continuing debate within the planning profession in terms of how planners can meaningfully contribute to solutions and positive change in our communities.

1. How best can Canada make meaningful progress toward Truth and Reconciliation with First Nations and other Indigenous peoples? How – and by whom – will progress be measured?
2. Some regions of Canada are already experiencing challenges with the rapid onset of climate impacts such as rising sea levels, extreme weather events (fire, flooding and drought). Can planners realistically influence the distribution of Canada's population affected by such trends?
3. There are signs that many fast-growing Canadian cities are struggling to accommodate future growth in ways that meet changing standards with respect to sustainability. Should future population growth be directed to existing cities or should attempts be made to establish more environmentally-friendly communities, or even attempt to create new ones?
4. Even assuming that Canada follows a "low growth" scenario, it is likely that major urban clusters will develop in B.C., Alberta and Ontario, which will challenge planners to radically revise their thinking and approach to regional planning. Where are the jurisdictions that we can learn from as the profession adjusts to these challenges?
5. Over the longer term, as the rate of population growth from natural increase slows, can Canada establish a rate of immigration that maintains or improves the quality of life of current Canadian citizens while providing the same quality of life for new immigrants?
6. Does Canada possess the government structure and institutional capacity to facilitate significant levels or rates of immigration in future? Are there constitutional barriers that need to be addressed? Will it be necessary to re-think the responsibilities, revenue and investment requirements for municipalities in order to facilitate appropriate levels of investment in physical and social infrastructure?
7. Later this century it appears possible that world population growth will have slowed and that competition for immigrants from other countries will intensify. Competing to attract immigrants may require significant investment. Are Canadian communities willing to make such investments, and if so, do they have the capacity to effectively manage such investments, or the fiscal tools and resources necessary to get the job done?
8. At a minimum, quality of life in the future depends on the average income per capita being maintained. Does Canada have the ability to grow an entrepreneurial economy that will deliver the level of income necessary?
9. A number of economists have made direct links between Canada's inability to improve productivity with a failure to make appropriate levels of investment in factors of production. Does Canada have the ability to make these necessary investments?



10. Canada as currently constituted has endured for more than 150 years, which more than double the global average lifespan of nations. Can it be assumed that Canada will continue in its present form?

The work of the team involved in this foundational report report, engaging senior urban planners across Canada, has reinforced in the minds of the authors that the issue of the scale and nature of immigration in today's context needs to be thoughtfully planned so that our cities and communities evolve to be sustainable, inclusive, healthy, environmentally-friendly, economically vital places, providing a good quality of life for all.

We believe that urban and rural planners alike have a major responsibility in helping our communities address this; we encourage our colleagues to speak up about these issues.

## APPENDICES

### **APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF INITIATIVES AIMED AT EXPANDING CANADA’S POPULATION**

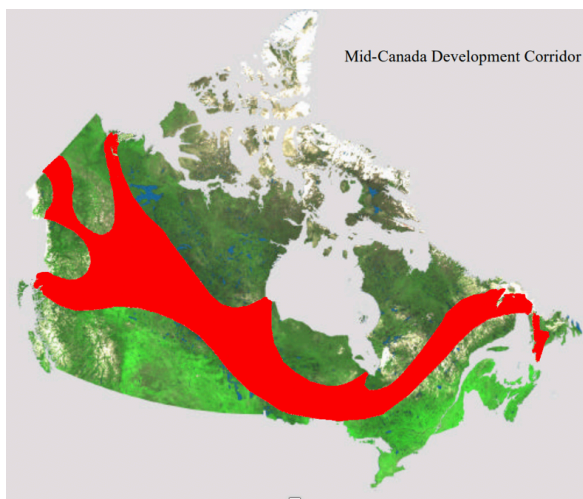
Proposals to increase Canada’s population first emerged in 1904 when Sir Wilfred Laurier (Canada’s controversial 7<sup>th</sup> prime minister) declared that “The 20<sup>th</sup> Century shall be the century of Canada and Canadian development,” insisting that the country’s population of six million would increase tenfold within a generation. The bar was raised to 100 million in the 1960s by General Richard Rohmer, whose resource-based proposal for developing a “mid-Canada corridor” received intermittent support. Discussions about increasing the population continued in earnest with the founding of the non-profit Laurier Project Foundation in 2009 (re-branded in 2011 as the Century Initiative). A year later, the University of Toronto’s Dr Irvin Studin issued a well-received paper claiming that a population of 100 million is a prerequisite for Canada to be globally competitive. This prompted sympathetic responses from a number of high-profile journalists. In 2017, Globe and Mail columnist and author Doug Saunders published the first edition of “Maximum Canada: Why 35 million Canadians are not enough.” (This book was instrumental in provoking development of this project.) In 2014, John van Nostrand updated Rohmer’s work, writing for The Walrus and presenting to CIP’s annual conference and other organizations. (A summary of his current proposal for a National Growth Strategy based on the mid-Canada corridor follows as Appendix 2.) Since re-launching as a registered lobby group, The Century Initiative has continued to push for improving Canada’s capacity to reach 100 million with original research, annual report cards and high-profile conferences.

## **APPENDIX 2 – SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL FROM JOHN VAN NOSTRAND, FCIP, RPP**

### Proposal for a National Growth Strategy

The following text summarizes the principal points described in a power point by John van Nostrand, FCIP, RPP.

- Canada's projected population to 2100 will increasingly be dependent on immigration, rising from 50-60% in 2016, 60-80% by 2050 through to 2100.
- Canada's Indigenous population is forecast to experience the highest rate of growth, increasing from 1.6M (identifying as Indigenous) in 2016 to 2.6M in 2036. First Nations and Inuit communities are represented throughout the Northern Corridor.
- The idea of a Mid-Canada Corridor first proposed by Gen. Richard Rohmer (with Acres Ltd.) in 1967.



- van Nostrand updated Rohmer's concept to depict Boreal Corridor Boréale in 2002.
- 75% of Canada's Indigenous peoples live within the mid-Canada corridor, and 75% of natural resources located within the same geography. The corridor is increasingly temperate and habitable, with permafrost retreating and agriculture/silviculture expanding northwards.
- Canada needs to modernize its two ports that provide access via the Northwest Passage. Norway and Russia already have four. Road and rail transportation routes currently east-west, and could be expanded north-south, to facilitate growth centres. In addition to oil and gas, resources within the corridor include gold, diamonds, copper, chromite, potash, nickel and iron ore.
- Opportunity to reprise concept of financing growth through transfers of crown land, focused on sustainable growth model (moving from remote, under-served geography to strategic investments in infrastructure; flexible planning for population growth; moving from pressure to accommodate worker influx and costly housing etc to less-costly, integrated, sustainable model; moving from boom and bust cycles to economic diversification and post-closure planning; embracing consensual decision-making with First Nations re land use and development; achieving minimal environmental impact.

## **APPENDIX 3 – THE QUEST FOR SUSTAINABLE MUNICIPAL REVENUES**

Canada's municipalities have long been constrained in how they raise revenue to provide day-to-day services and make capital spending plans for the future. The 1867 British North America Act established the principle that municipalities are "creatures of the provinces," which gave provincial governments complete and comprehensive control of the powers, jurisdiction and financial relationship with municipalities. This arrangement was further solidified in the Canadian Constitution Act and Charter of Rights and Freedoms adopted in 1982. Generally, municipalities raise revenue through property taxes, user fees and grants from senior orders of government. This limited revenue menu does not begin to cover the extensive physical, social and environmental needs of modern Canadian municipalities, which are required to provide shelter for a growing homeless population, address food insecurity and fund transit operations and expansion, among many other responsibilities.

Over time, the blurring of lines of responsibility among different orders of government, including the funding of some services and reliance on capital funds from the federal government, has added to a climate of uncertainty<sup>35</sup>.

Without a fundamental change in sustainable revenue for municipalities, challenges related to the provision of basic services and decision-making regarding investments in necessary infrastructure are likely to continue to get worse over the coming decades, further eroding the overall quality of life for existing and future residents. Since Canada's cities (and the municipalities that comprise those cities) are where much of Canada's economic prosperity is created, it is in the interests of senior orders of governments to embrace a new balance of responsibilities and financial relationships that secure sustainable sources of revenue for municipalities to ensure they have the necessary resources to grow the economy and become "masters in their own house."

The University of Toronto's Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance is just one of the organizations that have written extensively on the search for sustainable municipal revenues. In 2020, just before the pandemic, it published a comprehensive report entitled, "In It Together: Clarifying Provincial-Municipal Responsibilities in Ontario."<sup>1</sup> The report concluded: "The Province of Ontario and its municipalities should review the current division of responsibilities for planning, regulating, funding, and delivering key services to Ontarians."

In 2022, in the wake of fiscal disruptions caused by the pandemic, the Institute's director, Dr Enid Slack, re-iterated these conclusions, noting that "Cities have few options to raise revenue. It could be time to think about giving councils more tools to balance their budgets." Although focused on Ontario, many of the principles set out in the 2020 report and the philosophy expressed by Dr Slack could well be applicable across the country, as described below:

---

Retrieved from <https://on360.ca/policy-papers/in-it-together-clarifying-provincial-municipal-responsibilities-in-ontario/> January 22, 2025.

“From the moment they wake up to the moment they go to bed, (municipal residents everywhere) interact with municipal services. The water they use to shower, the garbage they roll out to the curb, the roads they drive on to work, the transit on which they ride, and the streetlights that light up their street – all are services delivered to residents by municipal governments.”

When issues such as a shortage of affordable options for housing, the growing reliance on foodbanks and dependence on federal and provincial/territorial governments for capital funds for essential infrastructure are brought into the mix, it is clear that many of the essential drivers that affect quality of life in Canadian communities need to be re-thought. The challenges are all the more complex because of the need to take account of nationally-driven arrangements such as equalization payments.

In calling for a “re-set” of how decisions affecting Canada’s future, the planning profession is implicitly suggesting that questions concerning sources of sustainable municipal revenues need to be addressed soon than later.