

New Vista Opens For Town Through Directed Effort

Idealism, Common-sense Must Wed To Kill Slums Of Future

By MICHAEL JACOT

Each month a dozen square miles of rural land is being turned into city.

For 10 years Canada has been the fastest growing country in the world. In the Fifties a million dwellings were built in this country. Our cities grew 10 per cent a year. Sixty per cent of our population crowded into those cities and their suburbs. Automobile registrations doubled. Wage earners began to live 15, 25 or 30 miles from work. Sometimes more.

Growth has slackened now but has by no means abated. Cities and towns are still spreading out over new ground at a rate of nearly 100 square miles a year.

Urban municipal councils spend half their time on matters dealing with physical growth. Nor is there any sign that the growth will cease. The Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects predicted in the 1957-1982 period some 3.7 million more houses would be built at a total cost of about \$40 billion. A study recently completed by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada shows that Calgary, Edmonton, London, Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Ottawa-Hull will each more than double their housing stock by 1970, and the last three will triple it.

But the time has come for assessment and a sober look at the future. Several studies such as that of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada have enabled architects, builders, government officials and community leaders to analyze Canada's growth. They are often appalled at what they find. They see a kind of patchwork quilt with isolated examples of well-planned subdivisions and individual buildings but, for the most part, a land scarred with haphazard building and planning.

Here, in summary, are the highlights of their findings:

(1) Millions of acres of our cities, farms and woodland have been spotted in the last 10 years by indiscriminate building. Each year in the last 10, thousands of acres of first-class agricultural land has been turned

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(built in 1954) looked like slums almost before they were occupied. How could they help it, being ugly, unimaginatively planned, the same plan used for every exposure... and garish colors shouting for attention? Good design would have cost no more.

(3) Even in the better planned developments we continue to raze the trees and deface each street with millions of feet of overhead wiring. And in the best planned developments, the planned area is generally small and there is no effective master plan for a larger area.

(4) Alan Armstrong of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation reports that nearly all our towns show six main defects: congestion of space at the centre; congestion of traffic, including the passage of heavy traffic along unsuitable roads; areas where industry and housing are badly mixed; large areas of obsolete and overcrowded housing; insufficient open space and inadequate schools.

What's Good Planning?

"What we have done—and are still doing—up to Canada," sums up Jacques Simard, president of the Community Planning Association of Canada, "may take a hundred years to undo. Perhaps it may never be undone. But there is still time to shape the face and soul of our country if we will only decide what we want."

The phrase "good planning" crops up repeatedly in these studies. What is it, and who are the "planners"? They are often architects, builders or men trained in planning at some foreign university. There is no school for planners in Canada although four universities offer courses.

"The professional planner must know something of economics, sociology and engineering," says Fred G. Gardiner, chairman of the municipality of Toronto, and better-known as the "supermayor". "He must be enough of an idealist to know what his region should have; enough of a realist to know what its taxpayers will stand for; enough of a philosopher to refuse to become frustrated when his nobly-conceived plans for the future are filed away on a shelf, and to wait a more opportune time for their acceptance."

"Good planning reflects the feelings and the needs of the people," adds Norman Pearson, Burlington, Ont., town planner. "It is not a rubber-stamp blueprint thought up in some university."

Space To Be Luxurious

Most Canadians do care about space. They have grown used to it and expect it. Most of them aspire to bigger lawns, bigger driveways and broader highways. Yet there will come a time when space will be a luxury even in Canada. Planners are trying to increase the density of dwellings in our communities, without sacrificing comfort and beauty.

"Small lots horrify Canadians but, if professionally laid out, they can look better and be more useful than the sprawling lawns of some suburbs," says Mrs. Jennifer Joynt of the School of Planning and Urban Design, California. She has experimented with small private courtyards, which are artistically interesting, safer for children to play in, and decidedly a closer unit of the home.

Coupled with public likes and dislikes is the matter of what the public is willing or able to pay. Dr. Albert Rose, of the School of Social Work, University of Toronto, and vice-chairman of the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority, points out that Canadians are spending an increasingly smaller proportion of their incomes on shelter.

However, Dr. Rose adds, most families, in what might be described as the most monotonous residential environments could not afford to live elsewhere.

Cost, as it affects the individual or the municipality is indeed a major restriction to planning.

"We need more parks, larger green areas, and we need to take down the ugly overhead wiring, but the crux of the problem is financial," says Scarborough, Ont., Reeve A. M. Campbell. "It costs an extra \$275 a lot to put wiring underground. It costs irretrievable agricultural value that are threatened by urbanization, and protect those areas for future generations."

A Canadian Institute of Urban Studies should be set up at a metropolitan university to serve as a clearing house for information and study in this field.

A professional school or school of landscape design should be set up in Canada, encompassing such subjects as earth-moving, drainage and road technique, as well as horticulture, arboriculture and principles of design.

Every possible measure should be taken to encourage diversity of size and nature among new dwellings.

The provinces of Canada should launch economic analyses of those regions undergoing fastest urbanization, with the view of establishing regional planning, in consultation with federal and municipal authorities.

The provinces might ascertain the benefits or disadvantages for Canadian conditions of a general change from taxes levied on land and improvements to a system of real property tax on site value only.

Public Support Needed

Whether or not any or all of these steps are taken, community planning must, in the end, have public support. And each program will have to temper imagination with realism. "If you have a couple of hundred square miles you can plan a model community," says Toronto's Fred Gardiner. "But the practical difficulty with which we are faced is that most cities have been around for years. "We must strive for a compromise between the acme of perfection, which is rarely attainable, the examples of poor planning which we have before us, and the structure of the city which already exists."

There is now a qualified planner for every 50,000 urban Canadians. Such a population should have four or five, says the RAIC report, but the situation is much improved over 15 years ago when some cities and even entire provinces had not one planner.

However, no planner in Canada—unlike many in Europe—is an arm of local government. He is an advisor only.

But having a planner in a community is not enough, unless problems are tackled on a regional basis. In many cases, city, suburbs and country can no longer be regarded as separate in planning terms. Yet communities continue to develop in their own way, which is not necessarily the best way for the whole area.

In Ontario a valley was zoned as a park. A neighboring planning board had approved a factory, and wanted roads to run through the valley for delivery trucks. Both projects died.

In B.C. a new residential development banned all service stations. But, of course, the residents needed service, so a "gasoline alley" sprang up just outside its boundaries.

There Is A Solution

Co-ordinated planning could have solved those problems. Dr. Pleva of U.W.O. says: "There is a partial solution to the problem in Ontario, the county system, although archaic, still exists. If we could plan for a whole country at a time we could achieve some success. The counties have the necessary powers but they are rarely used."

The planners and their communities are further handicapped by laws dating back to the horse and buggy age. Ontario alone has 350 different zoning laws, many of them a century old. Even recent laws are cumbersome. One municipality demands two thicknesses of brick in its houses; a neighboring municipality, one thickness.

Some municipalities permit only brick or concrete construction—a well-meaning attempt to avoid eyesores and fire hazards. But today such a bylaw excludes the attractive timber ranch-style house.

"It is commonly laid down that an access road allowance must be 66 feet wide with all buildings set back another 25 or 30 feet from that road line," says the RAIC report. "These provisions sterilize 1,000 square feet of land that some families should be allowed to enjoy."

Some planners have suggested that prospective new subdivisions be landscaped entirely before building begins, and the new homes, factories, shops and churches be fitted into this scheme. Instead of vice versa as is presently the custom.

There is still time "to shape the face and soul of our country," says Jacques Simard. How should we go about it? Here, from the RAIC and other studies, are a few suggestions:

Every municipality should have vigorous and steady programs for removal of housing that cannot in conscience be redeemed, and for creation of public housing for less fortunate citizens.

Flexibility Needed

Subdivisions should be planned not only for present needs but should be flexible enough to accommodate the changing population as predicted by the planners.

Provincial and federal governments should identify areas of irreplaceable agricultural value that are threatened by urbanization, and protect those areas for future generations.

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A Planner Speaks
John Parkin is co-founder of Canada's largest architectural and engineering firm. He has won nine Massey medals in architecture and is an honours graduate of the University of Manitoba. He was president of the Canadian Conference of the Arts, and a permanent member of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada's recent survey of residential environment. He says:

"If the metropolis today is fragmented and dispersed, it is because of our misplaced values and our willingness to tolerate—even to encourage—patterned disorderliness. The most serious impediment to Canadian planning today is the lack of support from Canadians."

Senior Provincial Planner Named First Director For Richmond Hill



F. HAROLD DEEKS

Richmond Hill, for the first time in its long history, has its own town planner. The position was discussed earlier in the year when the municipal budget was being prepared. An amount sufficient to take care of a qualified man was allowed for by town council after discussion with the planning board, which has since occupied months in the search for a suitable appointee. A short time ago the board recommended to council the engagement of F. Harold Deeks, head of the Planning Design Section of the Community Planning Branch under the Ontario government. The appointment has since been confirmed and Mr. Deeks took over on November 1st.

Richmond Hill's new planner admits that the challenge of Richmond Hill, which has grown from a population of 6,677 in 1956 to 16,191 in 1961, intrigues him. He stresses that while the town's extraordinary growth calls for something more than usual in the way of planning, yet the opportunity to introduce beauty into the planning is greater than usual. The town's location on its hilltop, he declares, gives great scope for efficiency plus imagination in charting its future growth.

The new planner brings a wealth of experience to his new job. He holds the degree of Master of Architecture (Community Planning) from the University of Manitoba and has completed courses in Public Administration, Traffic Engineering, Community Planning, Law and Practice and Administration at the University of Toronto. Incidentally, he is one of approximately five or six in Ontario who holds his particular degree in architecture.

His earlier architectural experience was obtained in Winnipeg, Regina, Sault Ste. Marie and Toronto. In the latter city he was associated with the leading firm of John B. Parkin Associates. Much of his earlier architectural work was on classical buildings—one of them being Winnipeg's largest Romanesque building, the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral, where he was responsible for the chapel. During the architectural phase of his career he worked on many types of buildings, all the way he says, from industrial plants to TV stations to hospitals and schools.

Turns To Planning
He turned his knowledge to the planning field in 1954, joining the Community Planning Branch of the Ontario Government as Special Projects Planner, and becoming particularly responsible for the development and building of Manitowadge, Ontario's first planned new town for a mining community.

Acted For Minister
In 1957 he was given special assignments on which he reported directly to the Minister of Planning and Development. These included conducting special investigations into matters such as the Federal-Provincial Housing Projects of Repenture Park South in Toronto, and being chairman of the Space Committee for office reorganization composed of the Deputy Minister and Branch Directors. He later supervised the redeployment of staff and the construction program.

Named Design Head
In 1958 he was named to the Civil Defence Administrative Committee, advisory to the Minister, and as chairman he toured the four western provinces of Canada and the States of Washington and California, investigating all aspects of civil defence. In addition, he conducted a series of detailed enquiries into all aspects of Ontario's civil defence.

Challenge - Repeat Challenge
The last question in the interview which covered the career of Richmond Hill's new planner was a fairly obvious one. Why did he want to come to Richmond Hill? Because, he said, few towns in Ontario offered the same opportunity and the same challenge. The Hill's rapid growth has left many things to do. The chance to correct errors caused through that growth was great—the chance to build for the future was equally great. And, said Mr. Deeks, the opportunity to work with people—the people who actually were the town and whose homes and incomes and happiness were of prime importance, was perhaps the biggest thing of the whole.

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SCARBORO TOWNSHIP
Federal and provincial governments have agreed to build a \$4,719,000 low-rental housing project in Scarboro. Reeve A. M. Campbell said that he expects work to begin this fall. The project is expected to house between 1,500 and 2,000 people.
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