



ONTARIO

DEPARTMENT OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

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ADDRESS BY:

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ONTARIO DEPARTMENT OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

"PLANNING FOR ONTARIO'S FUTURE"

CANADIAN CLUB, TORONTO

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1968.

Mr. Chairman, Gentlemen:

I deem it a privilege to be invited to speak to this most distinguished group. But I must admit to some trepidation when I noticed from your list of speakers that I am sandwiched between an internationally-known Director of the Arts and an equally well-known Army General. Both have many more years of experience than myself.

Municipal Affairs can be said to have some connection with the Arts; I doubt very much whether our problems are related to those of National Defense - Although we have often felt that our combined security guard - elevator despatcher - ground floor greeter might well be sometimes equipped with a fixed bayonet.

A number of urgent issues face me in the Municipal Affairs portfolio. I am as impatient as anyone to get answers and to apply solutions. At the same time, I want to do my best to see that the policies to be adopted, and the actions to be taken, are well thought out and that they will not undermine the fundamental values we cherish in our society. In other words, I am trying to temper impatience with care and to remember that movement without direction is not necessarily progress.

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Measured by almost any criterion, we are a Province that is moving and that is making progress. We in Ontario are proud of the advances we have made in our standard of living. Not all of our success is the result of our own efforts -- but we have tried to take full advantage of the opportunities presented to us. Not only do we enjoy the advantages of a high standard of living but we are also a magnet for immigrants from other provinces and countries, and our thriving economy has the confidence of large investors, both domestic and foreign.

Yet prosperity also has its problems. In a way, this prosperity and the growth which accompanies it, is complicating -- if not causing -- most of our urban and rural problems. Now, obviously, I am not going to advocate that we solve the problems produced by prosperity by foregoing prosperity itself -- but I do think we should recognize the price we must pay for the good things we have.

We should also try to understand what we must do in order to minimize the social and financial costs of the advantages we enjoy. We must guard against inequity in the way these costs are distributed over various groups in our society. We must refrain from foisting on the next generation an unfair burden of the cost for what we want today. The onus is on us for no oracle will come from a far place -- not even from Ottawa -- with a whole set of solutions to the vexing issues that threaten to do us in.

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The best I can do at this juncture is to try to outline some of the more pressing problems so that you will know how I see them and perhaps you will get some idea of my view of priorities.

In its fourth annual review, published in September of last year, the Economic Council of Canada predicted an increase of 5.8 million people in Canada's urban population between 1966 and 1980. The review goes on to state that:

"Regionally, the largest absolute urban gain is foreseen for Ontario. Over the next 14 years, this region is expected to add about 2.3 million residents to its cities and towns, or rather more than twice the current total for Windsor, Hamilton, Ottawa and The Lakehead."

The review points out that by 1980 Ontario is expected to experience a 31% increase in total population, a 42% increase in urban population, and a 70% increase in large-city population.

Take land alone.... The Economic Council of Canada suggests that upwards of 500,000 acres will be necessary to accommodate the physical expansion of Canada's 29 largest urban centres between 1961 and 1980. Thirteen of these centres are located in Ontario! If the projections prove correct, Ontario's urban development may easily occupy better than another 200,000 acres in the next 12 years. If our urban expansion between now and 1980 continues to take land out of agricultural production at current rates, more than half a million acres might be involved.

Our future urban expansion will also involve staggering financial costs to our economy for housing, factories, shops, offices, schools, roads, water supplies and transportation facilities, as well as for sewerage, recreational facilities and all of the other items our urban civilization demands. This is big business! We can't afford to make too many mistakes! The quality of life for all of us lies in the balance.

Our primary objective must be, **at all levels** of government, to ensure that housing is made available which the average wage earner (\$5,000 - \$6,000) can afford to buy or rent.

While our world has **changed** and is changing, and as we -- all too often, begrudgingly -- accept the fact that the ways of the past are not always adequate for today's needs, the basic principles upon which our society is founded are not necessarily outmoded. I am deeply concerned about preserving the rights of the individual. In this connection, The Ontario Municipal Board -- which reports through me to the Legislature and which is often criticized -- has been a vigilant and valuable guarantor of individual rights.

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I am equally concerned about fostering local autonomy in matters of primarily local significance: conserving our resources of land, the countryside, places of historical and cultural value, and recreational waters; maintaining a sound relationship between private and public enterprise, and keeping firmly in mind our responsibility to those who will follow after us.

We are faced with the urgent necessity of planning and building our future communities within the resources available and without sacrificing our democratic values. The job cannot be done unless we do plan, unless we plan wisely, and unless we plan now.

This is going to demand a much better understanding on the part of many decision-makers in both urban and rural communities of what planning really is. It **will** also demand a much greater acceptance of the responsibilities of government to plan. We accept this principle. Our responsibilities were enunciated by the Prime Minister in his "Design For Development" speech 18 months ago.

I am looking for further ways of impressing upon people the necessity of preparing - of planning. It would be a sad admission of defeat if the Provincial Government were compelled to assume the planning responsibilities that should be discharged by our local and regional communities.

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I am concerned, too, about the form of our future urban communities. We could permit our larger cities to become still larger and to coalesce with other big cities that are extending out across the countryside to meet them. But, such a pattern -- or lack of pattern -- presupposes urban development at a relatively low density. This uses up much more land to accommodate a given population. It also makes the open countryside that much farther away from many urban dwellers, and may well increase the cost of essential services beyond that of more compact development.

Having regard to the social values we seek and with due concern for the financial costs involved, we must decide whether Metropolitan Toronto should continue to grow at its present rate relative to the rest of the Province. (The Mayor of Toronto has been reported as questioning the desirability of an unending expansion of Toronto. To a non-Torontonian this came as rather refreshing thinking.)

If Toronto's population is allowed to increase, and if more compact development is desirable, the existing urbanized land in Metropolitan Toronto could be redeveloped at much higher densities. As an alternative, a number of so-called satellite cities or towns could be built as integral parts of the metropolitan community. But, who should plan and build them? Personally, I am not convinced that government must carry the full responsibility. I believe that private enterprise can and will have a significant role to play -- and will do a better job than the politicians and the Bureaucrats.

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If a substantial part of future urban growth is to be funnelled away from Metropolitan Toronto, there are many questions to be answered. For example, we must decide where growth should go - into existing urban communities or into new communities. One, or two, or three centres could be designated for urban growth to a million or two million population in the next couple of decades, ... or should we develop new cities or towns on the Canadian Shield, rather than on productive farmland? How is development to be encourage to locate where we think it should go? Who is to decide? On what basis? Who is to pay? If we decentralize our future urban development, what will be the impact on industry? On commerce? On the provision of higher education?

Most of the questions I have asked so far relate to new development. We must apply these same questions to our existing urban communities and to preventing older areas from deteriorating in quality. We must define the sharing of responsibility for rehabilitation between the residents and the appropriate public agencies. We must also deal with the matter of individual rights as against expropriation for the common good. We must determine provincial government action where local progress or methods are deemed unsatisfactory. The people in any area are far more important than their neighbourhoods -- but the quality of the physical environment cannot be ignored. These questions merely indicate the range and depth of some of the issues that I see before us.

One of the important values mentioned earlier was local autonomy in matters that are primarily of local concern. I believe strongly that the community should have both the authority and the responsibility to make effective decisions. Such decisions would be made within the context of overriding provincial policies and standards. This, of course, raises another set of questions relating to our local government system.

Lest I be misunderstood, let me try to make it clear that my concept of local autonomy does not imply that each of the existing local municipalities in the Province has the right to continue unchanged through eternity. Perhaps effective local autonomy can be achieved only in municipalities that are large enough in area, population, and financial resources to be meaningful units of municipal organization.

One of the attributes of local government that is often emphasized is its accessibility to the public it serves. There would seem to be no reason why a desirable level of public accessibility cannot be achieved in larger units of local government.

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We must determine the kind of local-government structure that we need. How far does the principle of local autonomy require the Province to go in perpetuating the existence and boundaries of a Township, laid out a century and a half ago, that is now experiencing urban development? How big should the units of local government be? Should these be two-tiered structures of local government or only single tier?

In passing, I wonder whether we should retain the institution of the Planning Board or should it be optional - or scrapped? This same question applies to many of our other local boards and commissions. And we must also determine the degree to which the Province should supervise the operation of local government.

A series of local government reviews has been initiated in various parts of the Province. Some of these have been completed and the reports published. Metro Toronto is an accomplished fact, although its form is not unchangeable forever.

A few weeks ago, I announced the Government's intention of inaugurating changes in the Ottawa/Eastview/Carleton County/Cumberland Township Area. This was the area covered by the first of these local government reviews.

The recommendations of other completed reviews are now being studied with a view to deciding the most appropriate action to be taken. These studies also contribute substantially to the overall body of knowledge through which decisions will ultimately be made affecting the whole Province.

The Ontario Committee on Taxation (The Smith Committee) included in its recent report a chapter on Regional Government and recommended that the Provincial Government complete a study of this question over the next five years. The Government has invited submissions from interested groups and individuals. We expect to receive a wealth of very helpful information, observations, and suggestions on this important question. The target date of five years hence to complete a study to rationalize local government in Ontario seems to be reasonable and attainable.....

I should point out that it is already apparent that the regional boundaries suggested by the Smith Committee have not met with universal acceptance -- to put it mildly.

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The form, function and government of our urban and rural communities are matters of great significance. They affect the quality of the physical environment in which people live, the attractiveness of Ontario for investment, the price we have to pay for the services we demand -- and the manner in which a great many decisions are made that affect the way people will live.

Events are pressing hard on us. Population projections do not indicate merely what may exist in 1980 -- They reflect what is happening right now. The increase in the use of automobiles, which will produce the hair-raising figures for a decade or so hence, is taking place today. As most government people ... and many taxpayers ... fully appreciate, the rising costs of the public services required to serve the future population are being grappled with now in the budgets of government at all levels.

We cannot afford the luxury of taking a leisurely approach to coping with the responsibility of designing and building the cities and towns of the future. Thousands of decisions are being made across Ontario every day -- right now -- that, cumulatively, will dictate the shape and quality of the neighbourhoods and communities where we will live in the future. While most of these decisions are small ones, there are large ones, too. Among these are the exciting proposals for the development of Toronto's Lakefront,

the CN-CP Union Station Redevelopment fitting into an overall downtown plan, and the prospects of a large new community within forty miles of Toronto.

Various cities and towns are anticipating sizeable expansions, large new industrial and commercial developments are being built and others have been decided upon, major highways have been planned, and large water-supply and sewerage projects are going ahead.

The important thing, as I see it, is to ensure that there are adequate plans and policies to guide these decisions, so that the physical results will be co-ordinated and will contribute to the emergence and maintenance of the kind of communities we want for ourselves and our families.

To this end, Gentlemen, the questions I have posed today - and there are many more - must be answered - must be answered soon and correctly. To do this, we have the resources, we have the skills - and I think we have the will.