The Growing Importance of Municipal Empowerment in the Canadian Federation and the Need for a “Big Cities Collective”

Lauren Bech-Hansen – Dalhousie University

The Canadian federal-provincial system of government is recognized as one of the most unique in the world. While the founding fathers originally envisaged a relatively centralized system of government, reflecting their desire for a powerful national authority, political realities soon deemed that a more decentralized form of government would prevail. Influenced by both domestic and international factors, the Canadian federal system evolved throughout the 20th century. Provincial governments increasingly asserted their rights to attain the jurisdictional powers necessary to achieve their goals, and demanded to be placed on a near-equal footing with the federal government. The process by which this unfolded was long, grueling and conflict-ridden, but was essential if Canada were to function in the face of intense regionalism. The process reached in culmination in the Constitution Act of 1982, which enshrined the two-tier federal-provincial system.

Seemingly forgotten as federal-provincial jurisdiction has evolved in Canada is the third level of government: municipalities. And despite their enduring existence in the Canadian political economy, municipal governments have historically been excluded from constitutional recognition, and have “never enjoyed the independence that one often connects to a level of government.” Indeed, while the federal and provincial governments relish in autonomous power, local governments have been subordinately constitutionalized as “creatures of the province”, and are fiercely limited under provincial authority. Municipal subordination has become increasingly problematic in an era of globalization that has introduced new consumer demands that heavily burden local governments. Such developments and challenges often fall outside of municipal jurisdiction, yielding a strong rethink of the current federal system. The empowerment debate becomes more complicated in the Canadian system, in that unrelenting regionalism poses a challenge to a “one size fits all” reform. Particularly, rapid urbanization has precipitated the influence of major urban regions as the drivers of national and global economic growth,

underscoring the necessity for urban-municipal independence. But the outputs of globalization in Canada highlight an irrefutable reality: municipal governments increasingly suffer the consequences of a flawed political system in which they have remained restricted. Together, these realities supplement the assertion that the current approach to municipal authority is in dire need of reform.

Despite this subordinate relationship, many municipal governments across Canada have been exposed to, and influenced by, many of the same kinds of forces that have contributed to the devolution of powers to the provinces from the federal government – chiefly among them the migration of both people and economic activity away from rural areas to cities. Yet to this day, the subordinate role of municipalities remains a central barrier to their capacity to effectively respond to these new concerns and reach their full potential. Much literature has been published centered around the municipal subordination in the Canadian federal system in which a clear consensus emerges: the growing importance of local government – and large cities in particular – demands that they be recognized and further acquire the appropriate authority to meet amplified challenges, and further bolster Canada’s global position. In an era that has been deemed as belonging to the metropolis, the big cities of Canada need more political and economic clout.

This paper will broadly examine several issues to advance the argument for providing “big city” governments with the appropriate autonomy needed to respond to the pressure of contemporary urban needs. It will firstly examine the nature of the relationship between the provincial and municipal governments, providing a backdrop that is characterized by a deep-rooted dependency. The second section seeks to bolster the case for reform through a discussion of the pressing demands that challenge municipal governments in the 21st century, and specifically highlight the disproportionate prosperity of the largest cities. The third section builds on the rampant disproportion between the “have” and “have-less” regions that characterize the Canadian political economy, and explores the challenges this poses to the paradigm of municipal empowerment in the Canadian context. The paper will then reconsider the present-day reforms, and introduce a proposed solution – the formation of a “Big Cities Collective”. It will conclude with a call for collaborative federalism and an exploration of how a return to this era may be forthcoming.

---


A Culture of Control and Dependency: The Relationship between Canadian Municipal and Provincial Levels of Government

Historically, the Canadian political system has been fraught with conflict between the federal and provincial governments as self-interest and regionalism inevitably prevailed. In the face of these realities, the political imperative of keeping the country intact necessitated a more or less decentralized form of federalism with substantially empowered provincial governments, a process which culminated in the Constitution Act of 1982. Municipalities, on the other hand, have been consistently excluded from constitutional recognition, and subject to an inferior classification reinforced by 19th century legislation such as the Baldwin Act (1849) that grants provincial governments full authority over municipal matters. And because Canada’s municipal system was “developed for a political economy characterized by staples extraction and a small, scattered population that was primarily rural,” local governments traditionally have had little responsibility, and relied quite heavily on provincial financial support and guidance. In some respects, this extensive provincial fiscal oversight could be seen as beneficial; local governments were granted the rights to limited, yet stable, self-source revenues (mainly the property tax) and held to tight budgets, preventing the likelihood of monetary predicaments at the local level. Yet in the 21st century, this dependency continues to underpin the provincial-municipal relationship despite the changing political, economic and social landscape, and contributes little progress towards meaningful self-sufficiency.

The strains of this hierarchical arrangement first became evident in the early years of the 20th century. Primary responsibility for the provision of basic public infrastructure services (such as roads, transit, waste systems, etc.) has long been the domain of municipalities, and for the most part, local governments are the “majority or sole funder of these major public works.” But with the effects of significant immigration and swift industrialization throughout the 20th century, mounting pressure was placed on many local governments ability to fund dramatic expansion of this necessary infrastructure. While provincial governments began to acknowledge the crisis faced by cities, the passing of local governments by passing Local Government Acts and City Charters did little to solve the municipal plight. The status quo of municipal subservience continued to be reinforced by their limited own-source property tax revenue, which insufficiently

---

10Inwood, Understanding Canadian Federalism
11Côté and Fenn, “Provincial-Municipal Relations In Ontario”
12Inwood, Understanding Canadian Federalism, 231
13Slack, “Provincial-Local Fiscal Transfers in Canada”
15Côté and Fenn, “Provincial-Municipal Relations In Ontario”
supported their infrastructure needs. Further aggravating the situation, provincial grants were, and today remain, unreliable sources of long-term fiscal support, as the “provincial governments’ interests in the municipal level [tend] to vary over time, ranging from benign neglect to active interference”. Reinforcing municipal subservience, these provincial grants are provided with rigid conditions that limit the municipal governments’ ability to spend the funds on locally determined objectives. Instead, the provinces produce grants that are contingent on municipal spending in ways that meet or support provincial policy goals.


Since the post-Second World War era until the contemporary moment, the Canadian nation and the world alike is being fundamentally transformed through the process of globalization. In the beginning of industrial expansion, the roles of municipal governments were primarily concerned with community housekeeping, while larger policy issues remained debated in provincial and federal parliament chambers. Still, all municipalities, large and small, have witnessed repercussions of these global changes. More so than ever before, local governments are being burdened with heightened responsibility, but lack the independent means to effectively address new these challenges. The contemporary system is becoming increasingly characterized by such developments: particularly, technological and economic changes, and swiftly growing populations are contributing to turmoil in Canadian governance structures. Adding to the pressure for reform has been the accelerating rates of immigration to metropolitan areas, resulting in an increasing number of service delivery burdens seeping into the municipal sphere, such as: fiber optic networking and communications convergence; Olympic and other sports infrastructure; environmental cleanups; increased health care costs arising from aging and pollution; tort and other liability for building inspection and airport crashes; increasing public

---

17 Ibid., 232
19 Ibid.,
21 Christopher Leo, "Deep Federalism"
sector wage costs; alternative fuel and advance transit technology; treatment for drug and related, mental, environmental and other illness; new regulations such as airport rescue.22

There are among countless other demands that could not have been imagined at the time when the founding fathers first conceived the political structure of the new country, yet these changes are progressively altering the traditional roles of municipalities and complicating the interactions between the levels of government.23 By the 1960s, the population of Ontario had grown to 7 million people, but existing local governance structures in the province hampered the ability of cities to manage this new growth on top of the aforementioned responsibilities.24 Compounded by provincial fiscal disengagement and downloading practices, “the municipalities [were] forced, by legislation or practicality, to fill [this] void resulting from the federal and provincial abdication.”25 The mounting strain between a growing obligation and inability to effectively manage stimulated a renewed municipal voice in pursuit of more decision-making and fiscal powers to deal with these rising challenges.26

In response, a myriad of governance reforms have since been introduced in an attempt to empower cities and enhance service coordination (e.g., creation of regional governments; creation of coordinating bodies such as the Federation of Municipalities; charters of various types; federal gas transfers; specified provincial grants, and other legislation). While “charters” for cities may appear on face to offer municipal governments appropriate powers, these charters are rarely as beneficial as initially conceived.27 In comparing a Canadian charter city to an American charter city, the failures of the current federal system become apparent. American charter cities are broadly more autonomous than Canadian charter cities – while the charter generates a superficial sense of local authority, the legal status of the municipal governments still remain subordinate and subjective to conventional provincial legislation.28 At a first glance, it might seem that provincial legislatures have recently 'loosened the grip' on municipalities, but the “rules and regulations set out by the province both on the standards for services and the collection of taxes and user fees

23Christopher Leo, ”Deep Federalism”
24Côté and Fenn, “Provincial-Municipal Relations In Ontario”
27Andrew Sancton, ”The False Panacea of City Charters? A Political Perspective on the Case of Toronto”, The School Of Public Policy Research Papers 9, no. 3 (2016).
28Ibid.,
suggests that provincial control has not declined" as much as is supposed. And quite possibly the most important impetus for increased municipal autonomy is the sheer magnitude of economic restructuring associated with worldwide urbanization. The McKinsey Global Institute has stated that the 21st century will belong to the cities: We are quite simply witnessing the biggest economic transformation the world has ever seen as the populations of cities in expand and enjoy rising incomes—producing a game changing new wave of consumers with considerable spending power. Meeting demand from these new consumers will necessitate an investment boom in buildings and infrastructure.

Further, major urban areas around the globe are advancing their “role as the dynamic motors that drive innovation, growth and trade.” These urbanized regions “hold dense concentrations of human capital that increasingly are required by the knowledge-based economy,” which reinforces their role as the drivers of national and global economic growth. Not only do cities produce and attract skilled workers and competitive business, the world’s top 100 cities also generate 30 percent of the global GDP. And in Canada, the top six metropolitan regions (Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Montreal, Edmonton and Ottawa) are home to nearly 50 percent of the Canadian population and produce almost half of Canada’s national GDP. The United Nations has predicted that this rapid urbanization will not slow anytime soon. The UN estimates that by 2030, 60 percent of the world’s population will live in cities, therefore proliferating the world’s economic growth.

As the engines of economic competitiveness evolve from natural resources and manufacturing to technology- and knowledge-based service industries, certain Canadian cities have become globally competitive. These urban regions “attract global foreign direct investment, which boosts productivity and growth, supports capital formation and job creation, increases tax revenues, and provides “spillovers” such as access to more advanced technology.” And while the

29Slack, Enid “Provincial-Local Transfers”, 7
32Thomas J. Courchene, "Global Futures For Canada’S Global Cities", 3
34Ibid.,
37Côté and Fenn, “Provincial-Municipal Relations In Ontario”, 19

Federalism-e
top six Canadian cities undoubtedly have the potential to become influential players on the global stage, “these opportunities can be easily squandered if [Canada does not] invest wisely in developing infrastructure and a culture that would attract high quality talent.”

It is important to consider, especially within Canada, that each region has a disproportionate mix of resources, human capacity, and opportunity. The provincial legislatures are not always the most adept at adequately assessing the strengths and weaknesses of each individual municipality: cities know their problems best, and should therefore be empowered to implement suitable solutions to their distinct needs. As municipal governments continue to be severely limited in their autonomy as creatures of the province, municipalities will continue to lack the adequate tools, independence, and sustainable and predictable revenue streams needed in order to design and implement strategies, proportionate to their capacity, to achieve long-term prosperity. In the 21st century, the outputs of urbanization validate that the status quo is no longer a workable option: “the implications of these developments are momentous and have not been given the attention they deserve.” As the Mayor of Montreal Dennis Coderre once remarked, “I don’t understand why our destiny should be controlled by the government in Quebec City or Ottawa... as a true metropolis, Montreal should have the autonomy to decide where it should spend its money.”

A Key Challenge to Reform: Regional Concerns and The “Have-Less” Municipalities

Despite the growing consensus for greater municipal autonomy in 21st century Canada, there are nonetheless valid concerns about the implications of officially recognized municipal empowerment, namely the aforementioned disproportionality that dominates the Canadian political landscape. There are only a handful of large, urban-center cities in Canada among a broader field of 4000 municipalities of varying sizes, decision-making capacity and economic importance. The smaller municipalities in the Canadian political economy range from relatively under-resourced, to severely dependent on the provinces, and will often strategically take on joint ventures with surrounding areas to form a metropolitan region with more competence and political influence. While large metropolitan areas in Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec have experienced an influx of people and economic activity, many smaller communities in these same provinces - and especially across poorer provinces such as Newfoundland and Labrador - have faced increased outmigration and “displayed a continuity of dependence on

---

38Côté and Fenn, “Provincial-Municipal Relations In Ontario”, 19
39Christopher Leo, ”Deep Federalism”
40Ibid.,
42Christopher Leo, ”Deep Federalism”
outside funding and assistance to be sustainable and improve.”\textsuperscript{43} Certainly, outmigration from small towns and rural areas has accelerated over the last twenty years, leaving local governments struggling to provide adequate services in the context of a declining tax base.\textsuperscript{44} In light of these realities, constitutionally empowering all 4000 municipalities may be of limited utility, since many municipalities may be simply too small, too economically precarious, and too unsophisticated to handle a substantial increase in political and financial autonomy.

In a “have-less” province such as Newfoundland and Labrador, which is not only geographically isolated but also socially and politically, local government development has been gradual at best.\textsuperscript{45} During periods of mass migration in the 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} century, Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as many other “have-less” provinces in the East, North and central Canada, did not reap the same benefits as the wealthier provinces in the so-called “golden horseshoe”, or in the West.\textsuperscript{46} The provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec had dramatic population increases, predominately in urban regions, and witnessed remarkable economic growth that enabled them with more capacity – and need – for improved autonomous flexibility. Regardless, 21\textsuperscript{st} century modernization has created new consumer demands, and residents in all municipalities, large and small, require more of their local governments who struggle to provide these services. Responding efficiently to these new developments is exceptionally challenging for “have-less” regions faced with a smaller population and a smaller tax base. On the other hand, concern also centers on the capacity of small municipal governments to effectively manage more political and economic clout in their own affairs.

But the current reality is that while the “have-less” regions may not be well equipped to handle increased independence, they might not have a choice. Provincial funding support for local government has been in relative decline for decades, as the funding pressures of health care, education and social services consume an ever-increasing share of provincial tax revenue.\textsuperscript{47} As a result, “municipalities, like never before, have had to create paths to self-sufficiency, regardless of whether they know how or have the resources to do so.”\textsuperscript{48} Municipal governments are to an increasing extent “...asked to do more with less - less money, less people, and less resources.”\textsuperscript{49} Small-town areas are remarkably confronted in their ability to effectively operate within these new realities. Consequently, smaller municipalities continue to fundamentally rely on provincial support – dwindling though it may be – and remain politically weak and fiscally unstable actors. Due to this dependent and subservient relationship, these smaller cities find themselves in an

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{43}Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, \textit{Continuities And Discontinuities}, 1
  \item \textsuperscript{44}Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{45}Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{46}Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{48}Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, \textit{Continuities And Discontinuities}
  \item \textsuperscript{49}Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, \textit{The Umbrella of Protection}
\end{itemize}
undesirable predicament – they require more authority, but are apathetic towards demanding it.\textsuperscript{50} Many small municipalities lack jurisdictional authority “not because they are not ready for the respect that accompanies such an agreement,”\textsuperscript{51} but because they realize their incapacity to handle such autonomy. The smaller municipal political agenda differs greatly from more urban areas: applying this logic to the thousands of other small municipalities across Canada, if an equal amount of authority were to be granted constitutionally to all local governments in Canada, these community-based localities would likely stagnate. But in light of declining provincial and federal support, it is unclear whether they have a choice.

**Pushing Aside the Roadblocks: The Creation of a “Big City Collective”**

It remains relatively uncontested that urbanization has brought about a new urgency for local empowerment. The concern for municipal efficiency has been reflected in a number of new reforms, such as the creation of “charter cities” and increased fiscal revenues. And although all municipal governments have been affected in one way or another, it is an irrefutable reality that the most immediate concern remains with the metropolitan cities, “where the pace of urban expansion was the most dramatic in the country.”\textsuperscript{52}

It has been said that “despite the legal framework in which they are defined, municipal governments can be taken more seriously by other orders of government if they self-organize and help show the provinces/territories and the federal government the way forward.”\textsuperscript{53} If the case made in this paper is valid – that thousands of smaller Canadian municipalities require more authority and are apathetic toward demanding it, but may have no meaningful alternative but to do so eventually – should the case for reform not instead be made by more motivated entities with a real interest in pursuing immediate reform? That is, should Canada’s largest urban municipalities be the ones to “show the way forward?”

Reopening the Constitution is probably a non-starter. The political environment in Canada is simply not amenable to resurrecting constitutional debates at this time, and some experiments in local government restructuring are happening without need for constitutional reform.\textsuperscript{54} And as argued above, granting equal constitutional empowerment to each municipality would create difficult challenges across Canada’s political landscape in the contemporary moment.

\textsuperscript{50}Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, *The Umbrella of Protection*
\textsuperscript{51}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52}Thomas J. Plunkett, ”Structural Reform Of Local Government In Canada”, 42
\textsuperscript{54}Action Canada, *Empowered Cities: A New Path To Collaborative Federalism*
As previously discussed, city charters for Canada’s big cities are inherently superficial and restrictive. Although charters may enable local governments with some mechanisms to enhance efficiency, they remain under the same subjective control of provincial legislation as the other small municipalities in the province. Andrew Sancton (2016) neatly discredits the charter model for Canadian urban cities: Virtually none of the desires that Toronto expected would be served by a city charter have been fulfilled. Quite the opposite, it would appear that the dreams once imagined by charter-city proponents have been snuffed out, and there is no longer any real political voice anywhere advocating for more autonomy and taxing authority…⁵⁵ What of potential collective efforts to seek municipal empowerment? One attempt to this end was the establishment of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities’ “Big City Mayors’ Caucus” (representing 21 Canadian cities ranging in size), whose objective is to “provide a forum for the mayors of Canada’s largest cities to conduct national advocacy on common issues of importance.”⁵⁶ This network, however, has to date proved itself prone to member interest conflict, ultimately inhibiting the push for a coherent urban agenda.⁵⁷ This incoherency is likely due to a conflict of interest: the political agenda for urban cities differs considerably to the agenda of lesser localities as a result of widespread disparities. Only six of Canada’s cities constitute as a “globally competitive city”. Compared to smaller municipalities, the six ‘big players’ hold the political and economic capacity to manage increased independence, and urgently require it to meet their distinct demands and bolster the Canadian economy. It seems that the values held by the more powerful players will often trump the needs of the smaller, less capable cities.

This is why a more limited “Big Cities Collective” may be a better alternative. Action Canada (2014) initially conceived the proposal for a “Big Cities Collective”, comprised of Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary and Toronto.⁵⁸ This essay will instead suggest a “Big Cities Collective” comprised of the six most affluent Canadian cities (Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary, Toronto, Edmonton and Ottawa). Because these six areas face similar demands stemming from the processes of urbanization, and further demonstrate the most capacity to drive forward the Canadian economy, the likelihood of the entire group agreeing upon a more limited range of reform proposals would be greatly enhanced. Coherency in an urban political agenda will only augment the challenges undertaken by municipalities in maneuvering the federal system in the 21st century.

As has been argued in this paper, Canada’s largest urban municipalities deserve recognition and authority commensurate with their increasing importance and contribution to the trajectory of the Canadian economy. A “Big Cities Collective” would set out a new roundtable only for Canada’s

---

⁵⁵Andrew Sancton, "The False Panacea of City Charters", 1
⁵⁶Federation Of Canadian Municipalities - Overview", City Of Toronto, 2016, http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=e3e8fe581b7ff310VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD&vgnextchannel=56f632d0b6d1e310VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD.
⁵⁷Kancir, “Empowered Cities”
⁵⁸Action Canada, Empowered Cities: A New Path To Collaborative Federalism
most powerful cities, creating a framework within which they can coordinate, compromise, and distinguish common goals that need to be addressed by all levels of government. Such an entity would have the potential to "transform the power dynamics and the consultations practices between the three orders of government."\(^{59}\) Results may not be immediate, but if the Big Cities remain committed and organized, the other levels of government would find it difficult to ignore this central, unified voice.\(^{60}\) The new roundtable would steadily gain political weight and influence as the ascendency of the urban city proliferates. A "Big Cities Collective" is also flexible enough to gradually include other cities as they continue to restructure and develop in the context of urbanization.\(^{61}\) One would also anticipate that the success of this entity would encourage the provinces to recognize the desirability of greater autonomy for municipalities generally, thus inspiring a wider range of municipalities to also assert their appeal for more authority.

**A Call for a Return to Collaborative Federalism**

Urbanization will continue to reshape the Canadian political and social environment, and disturb the balance of power between the three levels of government, and between municipalities themselves. The rise of new demands that blur jurisdictional lines will only contribute to incoherency and confusion in the Canadian federal system. Similar to the evolution of federal-provincial relations throughout the 20\(^{th}\) century, the 21\(^{st}\) century presents new circumstances in which municipalities will require more authority, flexibility and autonomy. Regionalism and municipal disparities present a challenge to a "one size fits all" reform, defeating the proposition for constitutional empowerment in the given moment. It is further evident that charters are not always as efficient as they seem. But the developments stemming from urbanization set the stage for an alternative model; that is, they advance the possibility for a renewed approach to collaborative federalism.

Collaborative federalism, as defined by Cameron and Simeon (2002), is "the process by which national goals are achieved, not by the federal government acting alone or by the federal government shaping provincial behavior through the exercise of its spending power, but by some or all of the 11 governments and the territories acting collectively."\(^{62}\) This same principal must be applied to the current state of Canadian political affairs where the ascendancy of municipal governments, urban ones in particular, is strengthening. The proposition of a "Big Cities Collective" could help bring forth a renewed era of collaborative federalism, and provide a framework by which the future of municipal governments, large and small, can form a collective approach to addressing their distinct demands effectuated by the changes of the 21\(^{st}\) century. That is, a "Big Cities Collective" will provide benefits to the more affluent urban centers that are in dire need of

---

\(^{59}\)Action Canada, *Empowered Cities: A New Path To Collaborative Federalism*

\(^{60}\)Ibid.

\(^{61}\)Ibid.

greater autonomy; it will sustain the balance of power and refrain the ‘big city agenda’ from silencing the smaller urban agendas; and (assuming it is effective in enabling urban governments the appropriate capacity to thrive), will encourage the “have-less” municipalities to evaluate their own potentials, capitalize on them, and collectively pursue similar autonomy as the greater urban regions. As municipal governments continue to recognize that significant progress comes from the formation of a locally determined agenda, similar to what the 20th century provincial governments did, the momentum behind a more collaborative approach will only get stronger.63

It is noteworthy to recognize that the recent federal election was marked by the growing voices of municipal governments across Canada. For many municipalities, the election became a platform to push their demands, primarily concerned with infrastructure matters, economic prosperity, and insufficient funding from the other levels of government.64 The Trudeau administration has already demonstrated a number of initiatives dedicated towards supporting the urban agenda – “for Canada’s towns and cities that had suffered from the lack of an urban agenda over the past decade, this should mean a new and improved working relationship with Ottawa.”65 Trudeau has established a solid mandate that will hopefully progress a respective, cooperative, working relationship with the municipal governments. And perhaps most commendable, Trudeau has appointed to the Cabinet Canada’s first-ever Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, a role that will allow municipalities to have a stronger voice in the federal government. Praiseworthy as the Trudeau commitment to a more collaborative approach may be, it is vital that municipalities commit “to firmly but positively [pursuing] a vigorous, respectful and cooperative approach to the new federal government.”66

As Canada and the globe alike continue to evolve through processes of globalization, the federal structure will have no choice but to face the reality of local challenges, and reform to accommodate for the purpose of efficiency, sustainability, and prosperity.67 The Canadian political economy is not yet prepared to wholly engage in a formal redistribution of power, but the federal system is adaptive enough to appropriately endow local governments the authority that they need, particularly through a collaborative approach.68

65Ibid., 2
66Ibid., 2
67Ibid., 68Ibid.,
Conclusion

The McKinsey Global Institute posits that “in a world that appears to be increasingly ungovernable, cities – not states – are the islands of governance on which the future order should be built.” The time has come for this reality to be recognized in Canada – a country which, the international Forum of Federations notes, stands almost alone in failing to grant important measures of autonomy to the large cities. A “Big Cities Collective” would provide an encouraging model for improved local government leadership and enhanced intergovernmental relations between all levels of government. It would do so by ushering in an era that would give big cities the political weight they need to address the challenges of the 21st century, which include all kinds of national issues such as poverty, pollution, poor service delivery, and conflict. Complimented by the growing municipal voice in the national agenda, expedited by the new Liberal initiatives, a “Big Cities Collective” may just be the catalyst to the return of collaborative federalism. While disparities relating to scale remain a central issue in Canada, a “Big Cities Collective” is a potentially promising approach to pushing aside the roadblocks that currently stand in the path of municipal governance reform in Canada.

70 Action Canada,, Empowered Cities: A New Path to Collaborative Federalism
71 Ibid.
Bibliography


[http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=e3e8fe581b7ff310V/nVCM10000071d60f89RCRD&vgnextchannel=56f632d0b6d1e310VgnVCM10/000071d60f89RCRD](http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=e3e8fe581b7ff310V/nVCM10000071d60f89RCRD&vgnextchannel=56f632d0b6d1e310VgnVCM10/000071d60f89RCRD).


