Shaping the Metropolis: Institutions and Urbanization in the United States and Canada

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Density Balance Index
Proportion of the population that lives in low-density neighbourhoods

0 = no sprawl
100 = all sprawl

Large and small U.S. metros score high on the index with scores increasing over time, while Canadian cities score low and have held steady or are decreasing.
Selected Canadian cities

Selected American cities
Density drives mobility

Americans drive more than Canadians
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Central city-metro population ratio</th>
<th>Average population (Per 100,000 people)</th>
<th>Suburban GPGs (Average population Per 100,000 people)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canada</strong></td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>48,950 (2)</td>
<td>22,331 (1.9)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>United States</strong></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>17,184 (5.8)</td>
<td>10,919 (5.7)</td>
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*GPG = general-purpose government

**Note:** Nationwide, the average population is considerably smaller in the United States than in Canada, while the number of GPGs per 100,000 people is considerably higher. Excluding central cities from these measures reveals a similar relationship. The calculations pertain to all US metropolitan statistical areas and Canadian census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations.
Local government in U.S. metropolitan areas is complex, with many residents living outside of municipal jurisdiction and receiving services from independent special districts.

What proportion of Canadians live in unincorporated areas?
In a Canadian province...

1. Permanent meritocratic public service
2. Executive
   - Premier and cabinet
3. Unicameral legislature
   - Whipped vote → Law

In a Canadian province, party elites and organized interests are integrated into the Centralized executive. Party and public service elites are integrated into the Permanent meritocratic public service. Policymaking is insulated from local interests, and there are no checks and balances. This leads to a Westminster government with Decisive & Resolute, Programmatic policy.
How a **policy idea** becomes law

In a U.S. state...

1. **Senate**
   - Committees as gatekeepers, coalition-building through bargaining

2. **House**
   - Committees as gatekeepers, coalition-building through bargaining

3. Organized groups, local interests

4. Reconciliation

5. **Executive**
   - Governor

6. Court challenge / Ballot initiative

**Separated-powers government in American provinces**

- Ideas come from outside
- Part-time legislators have few resources
- Assent reached through bargaining
- Weak and sometimes divided executive is reactive, not proactive
- Many checks and balances

**Indecisive & Irresolute, Particularistic policy**
1. Nineteenth-century urbanization

**MINNESOTA**

1854+ State facilitates incorporation, annexation using special legislation

1872 When legislature becomes overloaded, constitutional prohibition on local special legislation

1881 Constitutional home rule

**ONTARIO**

1849 Baldwin Act sets out standards for incorporation in general law

Legislative committee applies Baldwin Act standards

1906 When legislature becomes overloaded, jurisdiction is transferred to the Ontario Railway and Municipal Board

**Particularistic policy, Devolution**

**Programmatic policy, Provincial oversight**
2. Great Depression, 1929–39

**MINNESOTA**

1923–33 Legislative dithering over metropolitan sewage system

1930 Farmer-Labor Olson wins governorship

Widespread municipal insolvency

1932–34 State Planning Board studies municipal organization, metropolitan government and planning, taxation

1930–38 Legislature dithers

1938 Republican counterreaction; window ends

**ONTARIO**

Widespread municipal insolvency

1932 Fiscal collapse of City of Windsor

Provincial capacity-building:

1932 OMRB reconstituted as OMB
1935 Dept. of Municipal Affairs created

1935:

Windsor annexation,
Plumptre report on metropolitan Toronto,
strong fiscal oversight

**Programmatic policy, Provincial oversight**
### 3. Postwar boom, 1945–75

#### MINNESOTA

1940–59 Massive incorporation boom on Twin Cities fringe (51 new incorporations)

1959 Minnesota Municipal Commission created (weak copy of OMB)

1961–67 Crises mount: groundwater contamination, collapse of private transit provider, central cities decline


#### ONTARIO

General legislation: 1946 Planning Act, 1947 Conservation Authorities Act

Municipal reorganization:
1953 Metro Toronto (reorganized 1957, 1966), 1964–74 Local Government Review

Regional plans and servicing:
Niagara Escarpment Plan, Parkway Belt Plan, OWRC, Design for Development

#### Indecisiveness

#### Programmatic policy, Provincial oversight
Multi-level urban governance

Vancouver, British Columbia

Enabling & protecting

Portland, Oregon

Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota

Toronto, Ontario

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