Local Implications of a National Housing Strategy: The Case of Toronto

April 27th, 2021
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### Today’s Talk

- **What** is the National Housing Strategy (NHS)?
- **How** is it different? Federal Metagovernance (Bradford 2014)
- **Why** does it matter? Implications for Municipalities
- **Where** to go? Recommendations
The NHS: An Introduction

• $40 billion dollars over ~10 years (since expanded)
  • 15% increase over previous ten-year average

• Three significant focuses:
  • Federal-provincial-territorial (FPT) agreements - $13.7 billion (down ~12%)
  • Combatting homelessness - $2.2 billion (up 62%; recently increased to ~$4.7 billion)
  • Direct support for building and renovations - $6.8 billion (new; recently increased to ~$16.8 billion)
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What Changes?

• In terms of mechanisms? *A lot*

• Nobody works alone

• Long-term contracts and provincial partnerships down; flexible, ‘steerable’ arrangements are prioritized

• New, ‘place-based’ policy
How To Interpret the New Federal Role?

- Ottawa is working as a *metagovernor* (Bradford 2014)

- Managing the ongoing work of governments and society, rather than complementing it

- Using financial leverage to empower local communities and ‘co-steer’ affordable housing policy
Example #1: Reaching Home

• Ottawa selects a local Community Entity, and tasks it with funding distribution
  • Here? The City of Toronto

• A separate Community Advisory Board oversees spending
  • Here? The Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH)
  • Together? The Toronto Housing and Homelessness Service Planning Forum (THHSPF)

• Ottawa sets goals and guidelines
Example #2: Housing Development

• Most programs invite applications; some require governmental partners

• Program design incentivizes beyond-minimum affordability commitments

• Ottawa influences location, affordability, and ownership of tens of thousands of units, with minimal commitment
What Does It Look Like In Practice?
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- What do new mechanisms, new building funds, and new homelessness funds mean for Toronto?
First: A Newly Available Role

• Most programs invite municipal applications

• $1.34 billion for Toronto Community Housing came through the National Housing Co-Investment Fund (previous photo)

• Cities like Toronto can build or rebuild ambitiously, but must opt-in

• There’s no backup coming!
Second: A New *Partnership* Role

- Most non-FPT programs either require additional governmental partners, or score co-partnered applications more highly
Third: A (Quiet) Federal-Municipal Relationship

• Some programs invite (or require!) direct intergovernmental coordination between Ottawa and municipalities

• Reaching Home: An available relationship

• Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI): a mandatory relationship
Three Implications

• A new role as an applicant

• A new role as a partner

• A new role in delivering federal policy

• How to respond?
Recommendations: Be *Entrepreneurial*

- Billions of dollars are available
- Get out there and *get them*
- Enormous advantages built into NHS programs for municipalities
Recommendation: Be the *Leader*

- Dozens of local groups seeking these funds

- Who understands government? *You do*

- Who is an invited partner? *You are*

- Who can *plan* and *coordinate*? *You can*

- *Be a metagovernor*
Recommendation: Be a Housing Nexus

• Housing funds and planning have to be coordinated vertically (between governments) and horizontally (between developers)

• Cities need *institutional capacity* to leverage their position

• A ‘one-stop shop’ for affordable housing

• Look to Shelter Services and the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness
Conclusion

• Canada has its first ‘National’ Housing Strategy, but most of it is *local*

• No panacea: not much change in spending, but a big shift in *mechanisms*

• Cities will have to *rise to the occasion* (or at least delegate effectively)

• *Informal* powers are still *real* powers, and can get a lot done without even having to *think* the word ‘negotiation’
Thanks!

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