35 VOICES

ON COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP & CO-CREATING CITIES OF THE FUTURE

MARK HOLMGREN

Thirty-five people engaged in the co-creation of this paper. They did so via social media and through an online survey. In the spirit of collaborative leadership, I wanted to invite others who wished to share their ideas, wisdom, and passion with you.

INTRODUCTION

I was halfway through writing this paper when I finally admitted to myself that it would be best to file that draft away in a folder I keep in my Dropbox labelled "Failed Attempts." I keep such pieces because from time to time I revisit them, just in case I was wrong to ditch them or in the hope that some new inspiration might emerge out of what I had abandoned in the past. I mention this because writers tend to throw away more words than ones that end up in their finished pieces.

This time the problem with my earlier draft wasn't so much the content; my consternation was with the process. I had been doing what is my normal practice: explore the ideas of other recognized experts on the topic with an eye on how they could influence and add value to what I wanted to write about. Sometimes major pieces I have written have involved interviewing or having conversations with thought leaders. Doing that for this paper would get the job done, but it hit me that maybe a paper on collaborative leadership and co-creating cities of the future should involve some collaboration and co-creation.

The short story is that I decided to engage my personal and professional network in the development of this paper. The first thing I did was pose a few questions to my Facebook friends and followers. I wanted to see if there would be any uptake. There was. About ten people offered their perspectives and often riffed off one another's comments. That was encouraging, not only in terms of seeing such involvement, but also because their comments and exchanges were compelling. That success prompted me to design a survey and send it off via email to about 100 people, plus I promoted the survey on Twitter, Facebook and my personal blog.

The bottom line was that 35 people (including me!) participated. As you will see later, they had a lot to offer that not only was salient to the theme of this paper but also enriched my own thinking and perspective. My original intent was that I would review what they all had to say, group their ideas into themes and then reference them accordingly as I wrote this paper. To some extent that is what has happened, but I also wanted participants' voices to be heard as much as, if not more so, than mine. To that end, I have included their remarks frequently throughout this paper, verbatim for the most part, and one section of this paper about their vision for future cities is entirely written by those who participated.

OVERVIEW OF THE SURVEY

The survey asked respondents to:

- Identify up to three issues and challenges that cities face and what they imagine will happen if these issues and challenges are not effectively addressed.

- Identify up to five attributes/qualities of an effective leader and how they might adapt or rewrite each attribute/quality to optimally represent the attributes/qualities of a collaborative leader.

The next set of questions related to five issues or challenges I identified as being important for cities to address. These five issues/challenges were:

- Automation and Artificial Intelligence

- Tax Reform

- Human Rights as the basis for Government policy

- Basic Income (Guaranteed Annual Income)

- Racism and Discrimination

The purpose of this section of the survey was to test my thinking on these five areas, which of course reflect my biases about what issues and challenges are critical to co-creating the future of cities. I presented an overview of each item and then made a statement that I asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with on a 5-point Likert scale, as well as provide their thoughts about each of them.

Finally, I asked them, "What is your vision of your City of the Future and how Collaborative Leadership can be a catalyst for the vision?"

INFORMATION ABOUT THE 35 PARTICIPANTS

I asked for demographic information like age, gender, type of work, ethnicity, etc. not so much to be able to present a statistical overview of who responded or to do demographically-based cross tabulations, but rather to get a sense of who chose to take the time to participate and to transparently acknowledge that my methodology would be biased demographically.

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After all, this was not a large sample size, much less randomly chosen or designed to ensure optimal participation across demographic criteria. This was not a research project; it was a collaborative process that involved either people I knew in various capacities or who followed me on social media and/or who read my blog.

The people who participated carried various backgrounds to this collaboration. Amongst the 35 were funders, executive directors or senior staff in the non-profit sector, poverty reduction practitioners and a community developer, an elementary school teacher, a city planner, two city councillors, a physician, an accountant, small business owners, a professional mediator, two musicians, a writer, a priest, and a day home operator. Several had worked with me as members of Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson's Task Force to End Poverty in a Generation. As well, there were single parents, grandparents, and one or two retirees.

These people's involvement in co-creating this paper was voluntary. Many more went to take a look at the survey than actually filled it out. Collaboration should be voluntary, and that necessarily means that many will choose to not to engage.

Overview of who participated:

- Women outnumbered men, approximately 2 to 1.
- The large majority were over 50 years of age, an age cohort I am a part of.
- Visible minorities and Indigenous people were underrepresented.
- People employed by non-profits and municipal government outnumbered those employed by provincial government and business.
- I did not ask for income data, but knowing most of who responded (30 of the 35), I identified five of the 30 as living on modest incomes, if not living below the poverty line.

As well I opted to not write an overall summary of what people shared with me. Writing such a summary would be the standard approach for me when reporting on an engagement, but doing so is also a biased undertaking in which I would have to choose what to include and what to leave out via summarization. While I won't pretend I eliminated all bias from my role in this paper, I have tried to minimize my biases by reporting verbatim[i] on what my co-authors had to say.

Since I anticipated I would know most people who participated, I had a colleague compile the survey in a manner that did not associate respondents' narrative with their identity. I wanted to avoid favoring the remarks of people I like or know better than other people. With one exception, I chose not to identify who said what.

I am hoping this paper will be seen as not only one small example of collaborative leadership and co-creation, but will also provide readers with the opportunity to consider these voices and, if necessary, summarize on their own what value they glean.

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CHALLENGES AND ISSUES CITIES FACE

I asked people to consider the pressures facing our cities economically, socially, culturally, and environmentally and to identify up to three major issues or challenges facing cities today, that if not optimally addressed, will not bode well for cities in the future. Often, people identified similar or connected issues, though with a nuance that distinguished their voices from one another. Many chose not to comment on what would happen with an issue if it is not well addressed. Some chose to clarify the issue or challenge. Others made suggestions on what they thought needed to be done. Here is what they had to say.

POVERTY

Poverty was identified by many either directly or through narrative they wrote on other issues. Concerns were expressed about the increasing divide between the wealthy and everyone else, especially those at the bottom 20% of income earners. Unless addressed effectively, my colleagues saw a future with decreased opportunities for a growing number of people. This included limited options for decent work and decreased ability to participate in community life and add value to the economy. Some speculated that the continuation of poverty, along with the downward pressure on wages, would exacerbate generational poverty and would require an increase in financing responses to the pernicious impacts of poverty, such as crime, addictions, and family violence, lack of access to services, and food insecurity. A few remarked about the importance of educating the general public about the causes of poverty in order to counter perceptions of people living in poverty as being "defective," "lazy," or exhibiting personality flaws that were primarily, if not solely, to blame for their own suffering.

> **Participant Comments**
>
> *A community that is not welcoming and does not provide the opportunity for every person to live, love, work and be themselves can never fulfill its true potential.*
>
> *For a community to be great it must be great for everyone. We must find ways to include the mentally ill, addicted, and homeless.*

I sensed genuine empathy in these responses, but there was a practical or common sense mien to their comments as well: it makes more sense to invest in ending poverty than to spend money to manage its noisome effects on people.

HOUSING

Housing was mentioned frequently as a major challenge facing cities. Migration from rural communities to cities is expected to continue and most immigrants land in cities. Urban populations will increase and subsequently so will the demand for affordable housing as well as a wide array of locally-based services. Concern was expressed for those who end up homeless because they cannot afford a roof over their heads, but also for people living with rising debt caused by their need to supplement their income with credit. Affordability challenges result in families living in substandard housing, often in areas of town rife with other problems and in

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environments unsafe for children. What I inferred from my colleagues was a shared concern about how unstable life is without a home and how unstable communities become when millions of Canadians live pay cheque to pay cheque trying to hang on another month before the rent is due again.

INCLUSIVITY OR INCLUSION

Inclusivity or Inclusion was cited as another major issue to address in our cities as they become more diverse in terms of ethnicity, culture, language, and religious practices. Concerns were expressed about racism and discrimination and the ugly stereotyping the majority frequently attaches to the minority. Hatred is divisive; it stops people from getting jobs; it turns away families from rental opportunities because of skin colour or to avoid the bad smell of what, "*those* people cook."

> ### Participant Comments
>
> *The best decisions for all of us are made when many voices are heard and perspectives provided to shape solutions.*
>
> *Embracing and making possible (and accessible) the human right of all people to exercise their voice and their ideas in their communities is central to how our cities will develop and thrive in the century ahead.*

INCOME INEQUALITY

Income inequality was a recurring theme as well, the inference being that a growing income-divide has social impacts, not just economic challenges. Being poor is a full-time undertaking; there is little time to participate fully in community life. Survival is the first goal and too often the only goal that matters for people living day-to-day.

Other comments stressed the need to pay more attention to addressing the long standing generational biases against Indigenous people and society's tendency to ignore, if not purposefully avoid, engaging all marginalized people in building a future that works for everyone.

EDUCATION

The lack of affordable, quality childcare was not only seen as a disadvantage for children of low income families, but also as a barrier parents face in terms of landing a job. Throughout the survey there were comments about the importance of better preparing children for the future through new or overhauled curriculum that balances the theoretical with the practical challenges of growing up, seeking employment, and participating in community life.

The prohibitive costs of attending college, university or vocational programs was also on the minds of participants, which not only stop people from growing their talents and skills but effectively scrape away at people's hope for a better future for themselves and their children.

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CLIMATE CHANGE & THE ENVIRONMENT

In the words of one respondent, "In order to sustain our cities over the long term, we need to shift away from traditional industrial systems in order to decrease our greenhouse gas contributions, or deal with the expensive socio-ecological consequences now and increasing into the future."

Other comments included: advancing our collective understanding about the link between climate change and equity, gender, poverty, and racism. I would add to their comments that environmental problems are often evident in workplaces, where workers are subjected to tainted air, inhuman working conditions, and continual threats to their safety.

DEMOCRATIC & MUNICIPAL ENGAGEMENT

Teaching democracy and leadership to children in school and the varied ways these qualities manifest across a diverse population, and making democratic principles alive and palpable at city hall were two key suggestions.

People saw a real connection between applying a human rights lens to the delivery of municipal services in order to effectively provide better, timely, relevant, and more affordable transportation services, accommodate alternative methods of getting around (e.g. bicycles, shared vehicles, walking paths), and do more to make citizens aware of where and what supports are available to them.

Calls to action aimed specifically at the non-profit sector were infrequent in the narrative provided by participants. My sense is that people were focused on community challenges and not confining them to specific sectors. Rather, as one person wrote, "It is really important for communities to be a connected community and to embrace a common vision for a better quality of life for all and what it really means." Another commented about the "need to re-evaluate what cities are about, and change the urban environment to a community environment," underscoring the importance of the language we use to describe the future.

While identified as separate issues, comments about the need for Democratic Engagement and Leadership and better Municipal Services are best shared together. There was an emphasis on human rights being front and centre in the work to build future cities. Comments here also connected with others who wrote about Inclusivity.

THE CALL FOR RADICAL CHANGE

The Call for Radical Change was expressed eloquently by one survey participant, an emergency room physician, Louis Francescutti, who shared his personal views based on what he experiences each and every day, as follows:

As an emergency physician in a busy inner-city ER I experience on a daily basis the sadness and suffering of a neglected segment of our society.

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To see a child in tattered, dirty clothes, eating potato chips and drinking pop, with a mouth full of cavities and missing teeth is heart breaking. To comfort a pregnant teenager crying as she struggles with the reality of another pregnancy as she is attending to her other kids.

The emptiness of a senior who has fallen alone at home and has no one who can take care of her. The incarcerated prisoner who keeps attempting to hang himself rather than go back to the confines of segregation.

The middle-aged woman who presents with another suicide attempt to erase the loneliness in her life. The young male with a painful, swollen face from a dental abscess that he cannot see a dentist about due to a lack of funds.

These folks that need us show up every day 24/7 in our emergency rooms and what do we do? We provide band-aid solutions and send them right back to the same environment and expect them to change.

What kind of insanity is this?

We should operate our ER's like a five-diamond hotel and start providing the individualized care that people need. Bring the services they need to them right then and there.

If our current shelters are so great, why do most of my patients refuse to go to them?

We need to ask the hard questions we are afraid to ask.

We need to reallocate resources from those that have more than they need to those that have nothing.

We need the collective vision and resolve to be different, to act different and to expect different results.

The time has come for radical change.

QUALITIES AND ATTRIBUTES OF COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

I asked respondents to comment on the desired attributes of a collaborative leader. Many of the responses were what you might anticipate. Words like "visionary," "charismatic," "knowledgeable," "trusted," "action-oriented," "efficient," and "excellent communicator," were mentioned frequently.

In aggregate, the narrative provided by participants stressed the importance of collaborative leaders being committed to, and skilled at, engaging the community in problem solving and

decision making. Being able to work with diversity, fostering inclusivity, and facilitating consensus building were also highlighted as desired attributes.

While leaders, especially government leaders, have to work with a wide variety of citizens and stakeholders and address not only future-oriented challenges but current and often mundane operational matters (e.g. snow plowing, pot holes, etc.), there was a clear bias in participants' remarks about requiring leadership that is particularly sensitive to and focused on intractable problems like poverty, low wages, discrimination, and so on – as experienced by those living day-to-day with such challenges.

In addition to the above, I discerned the following key attributes of a collaborative leader as expressed by those participating in the survey and on social media, in no particular order.

Human: My co-authors identified the need for collaborative leaders who are "real" people. While they do want leaders to exhibit professionalism, they want more than that. They want collaborative leaders to demonstrate empathy that is authentic and actionable and to engage citizens equitably, with palpable respect, and to put in the effort required to understand and *feel* what others are going through, even though he or she has never experienced what others have. They want leaders who seek doing what is right for the majority and who can hold their own egos in check by not having to be right all the time, themselves.

People-First Mindset: Operating with a human rights lens and putting people at the centre of budgets, policy, and systems decisions were common desires among participants, especially with respect to those who are marginalized and lack sufficient power and influence on their own to effect change. Such a mindset understands that people are uniquely shaped by culture, gender, race, sexual orientation, and language and that a People-First approach requires the capacity to work with multiple truths as well as conflicting needs and viewpoints.

Capacity Builder: In addition to engaging and representing the marginalized, a collaborative leader is also one who recognizes that transformational change is a long-game, requiring not only community leadership and involvement, but a commitment to help build capacity so that people in neighbourhoods gain the knowledge, skills, connections, and resources to fully participate in community change efforts.

Movement Builder: People wrote that they wanted leaders to be able to engage and inform citizens, listen and follow others when warranted, and to embrace transformational community change as an interdependent quest that accommodates debate and heated exchanges and seek ways to converge differences into shared leadership and responsibility for creating a better future for all people.

Fearless and Relentless: This includes being able and willing to take a stand on an issue, strategy or policy and advocate publicly and transparently for change, despite opposition from powerful interest groups. People expressed that the leaders must be able and willing to speak

up for those who lack voice and influence and serve as a persuasive, if not fierce, advocate for marginalized people.

Innovation Catalyst: This is about not only being innovative but being able to create an environment that fosters inquiry, new ideas, and opportunities for collective innovation among citizens. Leaders are needed that understand and accept that the drive for innovation will often not only change a course of action, but also change how leaders should think and act. True innovators accept that the result of innovation can very well mean previous positions held by leaders and others were incomplete or incorrect. In other words, the ability to 'change one's mind' is a critical attribute of an innovative and collaborative leader.

Integrative Thinker: Although no one identified this type of thinking by name, there was a clear call for collaborative leaders who can work with multiple truths and biases and who can hold opposing positions and perspectives together in their minds. This suggests that leadership is needed that tries to avoid either-or decisions and, instead, crafts solutions, with others, that effectively converge disparate views and positions into a shared aspiration for the future.

I discerned from the body of responses an interest in seeing collaborative leaders fulfilling two roles that on the surface appear to be in conflict. First, collaborative leaders must be able to work with other leaders on the inside, so to speak, and be strong advocates for change desired by people and communities. At the same time, there is a role for leaders to play that reflects more of an outlier approach to addressing questions of resources, offering possibilities, if not solutions, that deviate from status quo practices. It is such practices, along with the ideologies they are based on, that stop transformational change. Leaders are needed who have the courage to pose questions and ideas that others do not want to hear.

> **Leaders are needed who have the courage to pose questions and ideas that others do not want to hear.**

What attributes/qualities do you think collaborative leaders must have?

PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT ON FIVE MAJOR ISSUES/CHALLENGES

As mentioned earlier, I wanted to test my own thinking about five issues or challenges that I believe must be addressed in order to build and sustain cities of the future. These five issues or challenges represent what rose to the top for me, based on my own reading and investigation, but I wanted to hear what others had to say.
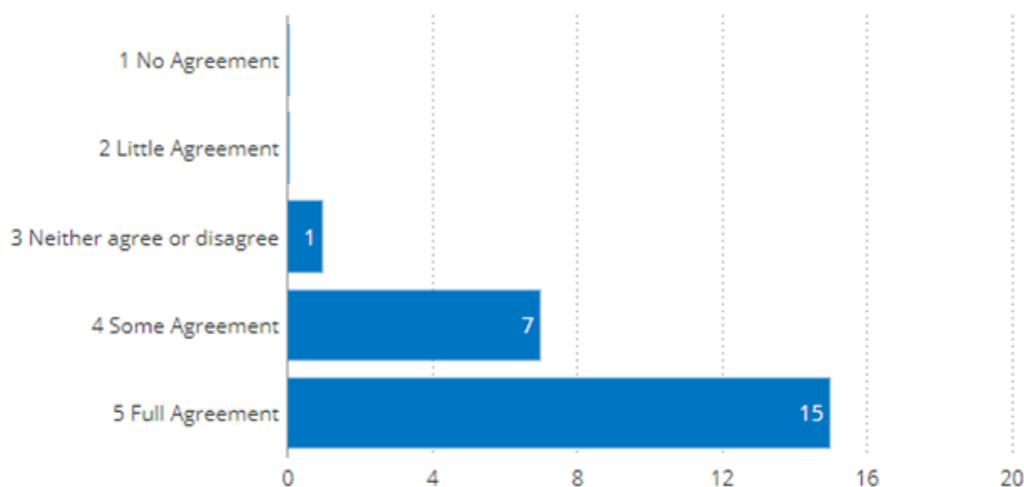
For each one, I presented my case (in italics) as to why I felt the item was important and I asked respondents to provide their level of agreement with me on a Likert scale and then provide narrative that represented their perspective. Note the Likert scale was used with survey respondents, not those who engaged with me via social media.

What follows for each of the five is the case I made in the survey, the Likert scale results, and then a summary and often verbatim remarks from participants.

Automation and Artificial Intelligence

Automation and Artificial Intelligence are fast becoming realities. This is creating a shifting away from lower skilled jobs (like truck drivers, cab drivers, warehouse workers, and production line workers) to jobs that are highly technical (bio-technology, cyber security, nanotechnology, etc.). Due to these and other incredible technological advances, millions will lose their jobs as millions of new jobs are created. Unfortunately, for example, a truck driver who loses his/her job will not be able to make this shift quickly, if at all, to the new job marketplace. Some say, and I agree, that our educational systems are lagging behind this rapid restructuring and not optimally preparing students for the new economy. Some also say that the development of these technologies will add to the growing income and wealth gap.

To what extent do you agree that there must be a substantive role for governments to play in ensuring this shifting toward automated work rolls out within the context of good policy and, where needed, government support, if not intervention?

23 responses in 24 results

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Automation and Artificial Intelligence

Summary of Respondent Comments

Eleven people commented and offered very similar perspectives, summarized as follows:

Governments have a leadership role to play in how to support citizens through the disruptions that artificial intelligence and technology are having, and will have, on people and families. This includes leading the way in the following areas:

- Providing adequate income supports for those who have lost their jobs but lack the skills and education to acquire a job in the changing marketplace. This would especially be true for older workers and those whose education and training focused on participating in the "old economy."

- Fostering educational reform and innovation, including new and timely curriculum that prepares today's children for the tomorrow they will be living and working in. Affordable post-secondary education, as well as vocational training were stressed as well to ensure that the labour force is rich with talent and know-how.

- Anticipating and adapting to the changing marketplace, governments should become more active in addressing market conditions by increasing supply to meet a growing demand or change demand by shifting policies and investments that benefit both workers able to get jobs in the new market place as well as those who are being displaced. This includes making policies and working with business and industry with an eye on ensuring that the emerging economy works for the majority, not just the wealthy.

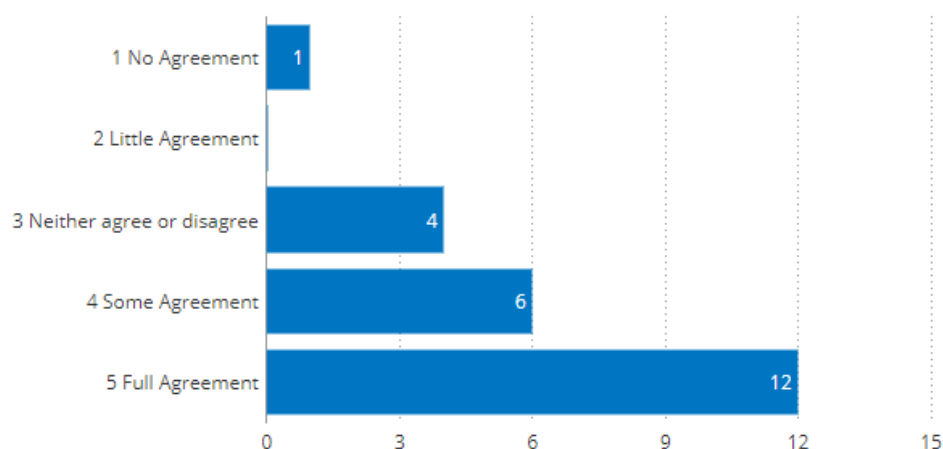**How do you think Automation and Artificial Intelligence will impact cities in the <u>future?</u>**

Reforming our Tax System

Cities have far less ability to raise revenues than do Provinces/Territories and the Federal Government. Their major source of income is property tax, which is seen by many to be an unfair flat tax. Cities are left to raise money from fees, ticketing infractions, and transfer payments or cost sharing grants from other levels of government. At the same time, social and economic realities manifest in local communities. Poverty is experienced locally. Economic gains or losses are experienced locally. One could argue that local governments require some power to tax citizens beyond property tax.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that a different system of taxation is required that calls upon Federal, Provincial/Territorial and Municipal governments to negotiate a better, fairer way to tax citizens that includes increasing the ability of municipalities to tax local residents?

23 responses in 24 results

Summary of Respondent Comments

Sixteen people offered comments about tax reformation. While the Likert scale indicates general agreement, four were on the fence with this one, and the comments provided represented a mixture of support for this kind of reform with cautions about the potential negative impacts on citizens as a whole and, in particular, citizens with low incomes. Consider the summary of responses below:

- While tax reform that gives municipalities more authority to generate revenues from local citizens should be investigated, the actual need is about cities requiring more money to work with and money they have more control over than they do now. Some respondents felt that this could be accomplished through structural changes that would deliver more/different funding to municipal governments from the two higher levels of government.

- While increasing the taxation authority of municipalities was an option to consider, another perspective offered was: "Who the taxman is to me is irrelevant. What matters is that we have a highly progressive tax system to counter the economic privilege extreme wealth brings and it is important that the level of taxation meets the need to fund universal services."

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Reforming our Tax System

- The call for governments to work together to effect tax reform was identified: "I wonder if the new national poverty strategy might lead to offsets for cities to alleviate things on the ground. I think that one of the three tax bodies being able to increase taxes without a shared vision with the other two on issues such as poverty is doomed."

- While there was recognition expressed about the need for appropriate levels of, if not increases to, taxes, caution was shared about ensuring that any increased power by cities to tax citizens did not just simply result in an overall increase in taxes, especially to those hard-pressed to fund their own subsistence.

Participant Comments

Municipal government should have flexibility in creating taxation within their economic and demographic context. They should decide as a community what would work for them to achieve fiscal responsiveness and sustainability.

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I think this is more a technical issue than a policy alternative. I suspect something must change, but I'm not sure what or how. I can see the case for making some conditional grants to municipalities unconditional, but that can be done without changing the taxation system.

What do you think about Tax Reform and/or how cities of the future should be resourced?
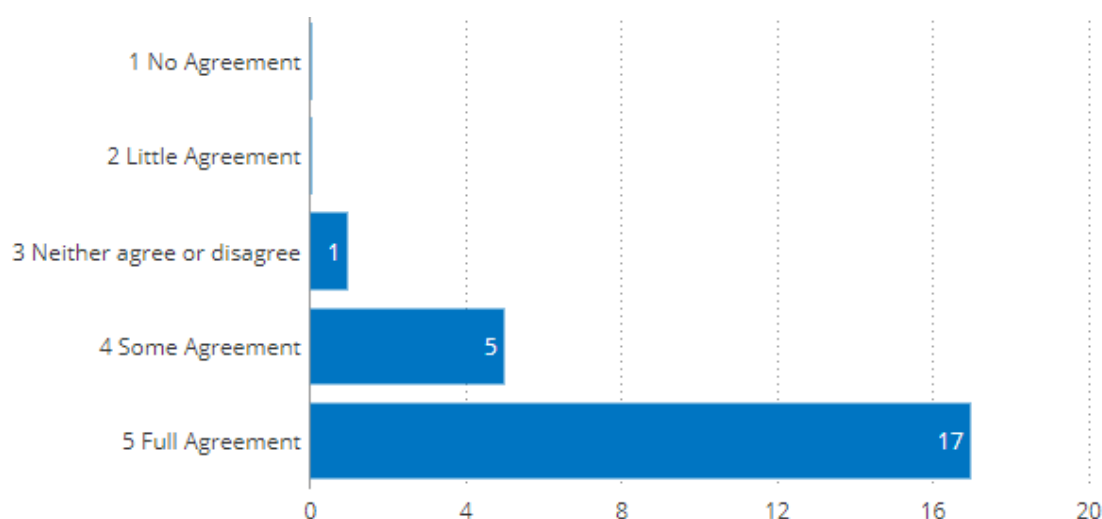
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Basing Government Policy on Human Rights

Civil, political, economic and social rights are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international law. However, while civil and political rights in Canada are well established and protected, the same cannot yet be said for economic and social rights – even though all human rights are meant to be indivisible (i.e. equal in status) under law. There are jurisdictions that are, for example, working on policy changes that would disallow NIMBYism (Not in my backyard) based on stereotypes or negative attitudes about the people who will live in the housing being proposed.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that human rights should become a fundamental factor and filter with respect to the development of social and economic policy at all levels of government?

23 responses in 24 results

Summary of Respondent Comments

Eleven people commented and offered very similar perspectives. There was high agreement around governments engaging in policy development and systems reform based on a strong human rights orientation, but even with such a majority support among respondents, cautions were mentioned. Consider the following summary via respondent remarks:

- "When a person's right to his or her social and economic rights is recognized, our traditional notions about poverty are flipped and the "fault" is put on our society and societal systems instead of the individual for being poor. This is far more accurate than putting the blame on the individual for becoming trapped in a cycle of poverty, which is most complicated and perpetuated by systemic oppression."

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Basing Government Policy on Human Rights

- "Economic and social rights need to also be a lens. The strength of a community is evident when rather than discussing rights, the discussion is instead on actions that provide for those rights."

- "Cautiously agree. Oftentimes, at least from my perspective, the fundamental human rights of one sector (usually the loudest or the sector "in favor" at any given time) is considered to be more important than others. In some cases, it's resulted in individuals (or groups) not feeling able or comfortable to state an opposing viewpoint.

- "I think it is counter-productive to legislate human rights or to try to reflect them in policy before there is a strong consensus about what constitutes human rights. I believe we have that consensus with some rights. I'm not so sure when it comes to economic and social rights. If I'm correct, the challenge might first be to educate, foster dialogue and build consensus, which might be suitable for a collaborative leadership approach."

What are your thoughts about how to integrate human rights into policy-making and systems design?

Excerpts from Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms

"Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability."

"Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: (a) freedom of conscience and religion; (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication; (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and (d) freedom of association."

"Every citizen of Canada and every person who has the status of a permanent resident of Canada has the right (a) to move to and take up residence in any province; and (b) to pursue the gaining of a livelihood in any province."

"Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice."
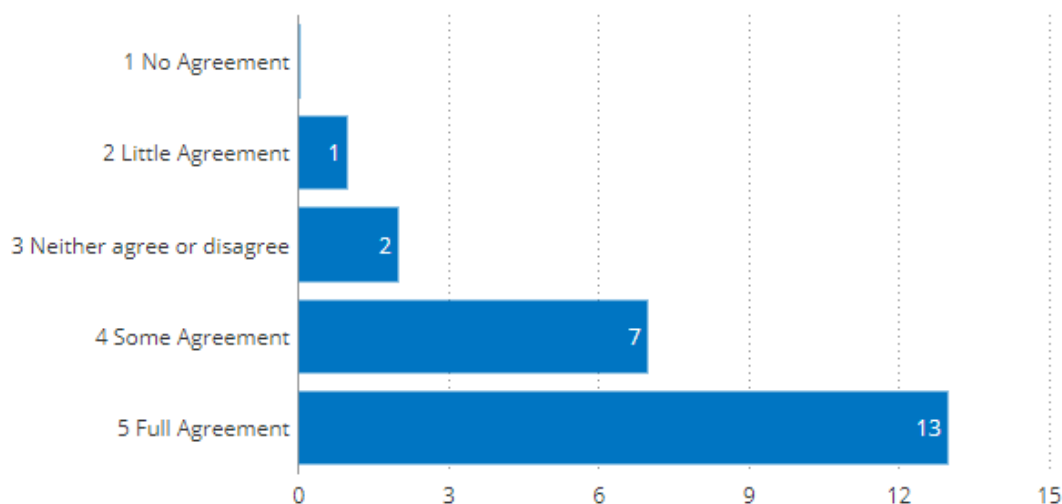
Have you read the Charter? It's here: http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html.

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Basic Income (Guaranteed Annual Income)

There is a growing interest across Canada in some sort of basic income (or Guaranteed Annual Income) that provides a sufficient, basic, livable income to Canadians. Some say we need this because of structural inequality that exists in our country. Others say it will discourage people from working. And others say a single government source of basic income will just become an efficient way of providing sub-par benefits to Canadians.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that Canada needs a basic income program that will provide a more secure and substantial safety net for all Canadians, help reduce inequality, and serve as a more efficient way to administer income security programs?

Bar chart:
- 1 No Agreement: 0
- 2 Little Agreement: 1
- 3 Neither agree or disagree: 2
- 4 Some Agreement: 7
- 5 Full Agreement: 13

23 responses in 24 results

Summary of Respondent Comments

Fifteen people commented and offered very similar perspectives, summarized as follows:

Overall there was strong support expressed for exploring, if not implementing a basic income program. A number of respondents saw basic income as a necessary and major solution to income inequality, structural changes to the economy and the job market, and a key way to support those trapped in poverty.

Basic income was not seen as the only solution. As one person wrote, "Along with a basic income, individuals and families should be supported to find stable and affordable housing, affordable and quality child care, financial empowerment and literacy training, access to nutritious food, access to mental health and addictions supports and opportunities to further their education."

While the need for governments to set minimum wages and for more jobs that offer decent work at a living wage were acknowledged as important, respondents also acknowledged that the minimum wage is insufficient to live on and that a living wage was a partial answer to the complexity of

Basic Income (Guaranteed Annual Income)

ensuring citizens have an adequate income. The inference is that a basic income program had more promise to lift people up out of poverty's stranglehold on their lives.

Cautions and warnings were shared as well:

- "Whereas great in philosophy, the opportunity for abuse is astronomical. I would have to insist that recipients still had to do something, give back in some way to society, in order to receive."

- "One mark of civilization is that not everyone works. It's better to universally provide basic services than to universally provide a basic income ... profiteers will capitalize on extracting funds from the unwary with a universal provision of a basic income."
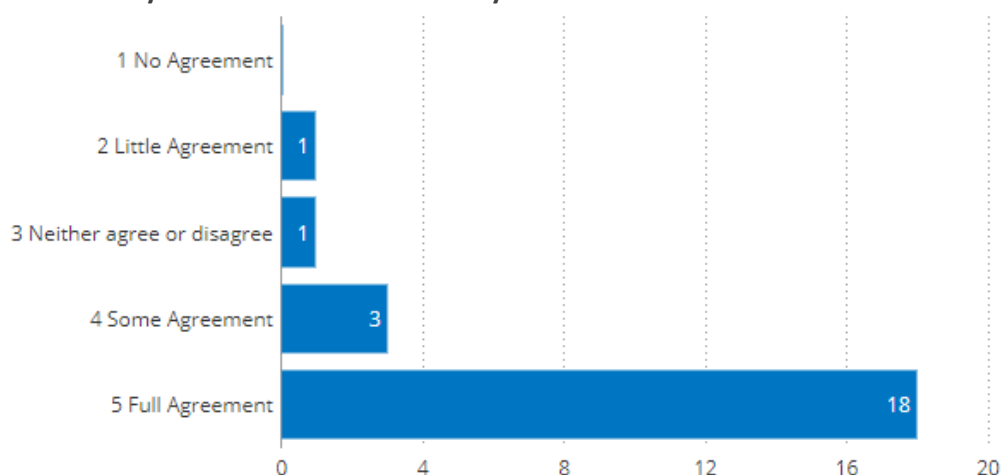
What are your thoughts about a universal basic income program?

Experts have disparate views on Basic Income	
Basic Income Advocates	**Basic Income Opponents**
Basic income "would mean a significant clawing back of government involvement in citizens' lives, and the elimination of the "judgmental" aspects of social programs like welfare and EI – government officers deciding who is and who isn't worthy of aid." [ii]	"Employers have little obligation to pay a living wage if the government is sending a supplemental cheque every month. [Basic Income] would de-incentivise work, prompting younger age groups to leave the workforce if they are able to receive money for no cause."[iii]
"There are three main advantages to a [Guaranteed Annual Income (GAI)]. First, it would address poverty directly, and in a neutral fashion, via transfers provided through a single existing administrative system — the income tax system…Second, a properly-designed GAI could reduce the "welfare wall" of high marginal tax rates on earned income for the working poor. Earned income could be taxed at low marginal rates, providing a strong incentive for GAI recipients to work and earn more…Third, a GAI could reduce health care spending on low-income persons."[iv]	Some are concerned that integrating all income security programs into a Basic Income program could result in an efficient way for governments to provide a financial benefit that continues to keep people poor by mimicking the inadequate assistance provided by welfare and other programs. Others are concerned that a single income security program could make it easier for governments to ignore or give low attention to social problems that cannot be addressed by income on its own.[v]

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Racism and Discrimination

It is well-established that racism and discrimination negatively impact the daily lives of Indigenous people, visible minorities, persons with disabilities or mental illness, and others. Negative impacts include being denied work, housing, access to services, and access to capital because of ethnicity or heritage.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that addressing racism and discrimination, which includes allocating ample resources, should be among the top priorities of all levels of government and that doing so is necessary to build and sustain healthy and vibrant communities in Canada?

23 responses in 24 results

Summary of Respondent Comments

Fourteen people commented and offered very similar perspectives, summarized as follows via respondent remarks.

- "I think the key to lasting solutions, to real attitude shift of hearts and minds, is that resources and ideas and energy need to be supported, yes, but need above all to be local, to come from the community, catalyzed by support from the municipality and other organizations at the local grassroots level. The solutions are not nationally funded campaigns, one size fits all, with no grassroots leadership or connections. National investment in change, and provincial, to support local communities and citizens to respond and generate solutions is the way to go."

- "Addressing racism and discrimination are a definite priority in my opinion, but I would not count them among the highest priorities. I believe that racism is strongest when an economy is weakest. Still, work must be and should be done to abate discrimination, but not before other concerns, like affordable housing, are met."

- "People will continue to be mean to one another, and worse. All we can do is to make it illegal, out the perps, and keep preaching the way, the truth and the light. Fully integrated

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schools and neighborhoods would help. Racism's greatest vulnerability is that it disappears after people form personal relationships."

- "Absolutely racism and discrimination should be a top policy concern. It's about inclusion, about respecting the rights of individuals, and creating social cohesion. What's just happened in Charlottesville in the United States is a prime example of how political leaders not condemning racist acts can just as easily be interpreted as condoning them. If our governments don't stand up for equity and inclusion, violence, unrest and poverty will persist, which all hurt our social fabric and well-being."

What are your ideas about how to stop racism and discrimination as a society?

" **Racism oppresses its victims, but also binds the oppressors, who sear their consciences with more and more lies until they become prisoners of those lies. They cannot face the truth of human equality because it reveals the horror of the injustices they commit.**
-Alveda King "

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Vision of your City of the Future

What is your vision of your City of the Future and how Collaborative Leadership can be a catalyst for the vision?

This was the final question I posed to survey respondents and also asked via my social media engagement. I struggled with choosing whether to summarize these statements or provide the majority of them verbatim. I opted to let respondents speak for themselves. In some cases, I shortened them or shared portions of their narrative, mostly for reasons of optimal brevity and to avoid redundancies. Whether or not I agreed with these vision statements was not a factor for inclusion.

"I am not convinced that the concept of "collaborative leadership" can work in a political context, except perhaps in specific, exceptional situations. Cities now contain most of Canada's population. I take it as axiomatic that the larger the group being governed, the fewer the realistic opportunities for any individual to contribute meaningfully to an action that matters to the whole. Collaborative leadership works at times in community action groups, but municipalities are communities of communities, infinitely more complex. It's hard to imagine a city council employing collaborative leadership principles and still getting its work done in a timely fashion.

Some observers have cited the rise of authoritarian leaders in western democracies as a reaction to complexity, uncertainty, and perceived disorder. The people who created "collaborative leadership" are wired to thrive in that kind of environment. But many people can't stand chaos and call instead for decisive decision making. Collaborative leadership gets chaotic. Some people are always displeased, of course. They wanted to win. But living in large, complex communities means losing occasionally, or winning only partially. Perhaps we need to focus on 'effective followership in a crowded, complex world.' But I could be wrong."

"Back in my undergraduate days I studied world systems and development which led me to the belief that real change has to come from a meeting of the top-down and bottom-up. I see cities as the middle ground, as the meeting place for the bottom and the top, where the interests of citizens and political leaders, of the poor and the rich, of corporations and charities, all diverge under one goal – to see ourselves and our cities prosper. My hope for the cities of the future is that we build more compassion for one another and that we start to focus more on how we live, flourish, and prosper as a whole as compared to separate, divergent parts that are in competition with one another.

Collaborative leadership is imperative in this environment, where numerous different stakeholders want their interests to be heard, for their needs to be met, for their lives and livelihoods to be protected, to be seen and accepted for who they are and what they believe in, and to be able to participate fully in their community and society. With the right leadership, people are more likely to believe in a new vision for our cities, and to build trust with one another."

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"I want to take a more narrow perspective and focus on poverty reduction. Communities still have a lot to learn to understand how we should place individuals at the centre of our efforts. A business leader told colleagues on a committee that in his business, he goes after the customer and makes sure that he does what is needed to help or refer.

Crossing over mandates of organizations to better serve our citizens is growing but is still not a principle easily understood, put into action or even celebrated. Working with diverse partnerships is so beneficial to efforts – different perspectives and broadening the ownership for a better community is what will work. A learning community, a collaborative community, and shared ownership are three key ingredients to a better future."

"A city of the future is a place where citizens are empowered and engaged and work together to drive change forward. The economy is thriving; employment opportunities are accessible. The environment is green and clean. People consider this space a place where they can live affordably, work effectively and with impact and have fun and prosper."

"While I believe that you should have to work hard to achieve great heights, I also believe that there should be equal opportunity for everyone no matter where they come from (socioeconomic status, country, etc.) which means that some people might need a boost. Fair isn't always equal, but children (who eventually become adults) shouldn't be at the mercy of where they started from in life. We need to work as a community to end the stigmas surrounding poverty and find ways to provide opportunities for those less fortunate."

"A city that values each citizen from the perspective that everyone, regardless of their means, can contribute to society. Supports are in place so that is possible (access, financial, mobility, education and culture). We can tell because communities are thriving and people are gathering, everyone knows one another and they watch over each other, crime is down, respect for each other is manifested by the mix of people at gatherings – who are having fun, there is a mix of cultures, activities and food. Collaborative leadership has opened the doors for all, and has also been open to the value that everyone contributes no matter how small."

"The City of the Future is a city that puts people at the top and centre of its development and growth. It designs public spaces where people are safe and comfortable; it plans and delivers programs that eliminate barriers to access and use by all people; it connects people and communities through authentic conversations; and most of all, it values the dignity of people to be active agents of their own development.

Collaborative leadership can be a catalyst for this vision if it is founded on principles of participatory democracy and active citizenship building. Collaborative leadership can only flourish in an environment of genuine engagement, a commitment to honor the contributions of individuals, groups and communities and a critical perspective on power relationships among the diverse players."

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"Unfettered capitalism destroys the environment and creates artificial 'needs' and inadequacies in people. It is the linchpin in the tribal mentality that is responsible for attacks on markers of identity, like race and gender. It is an operating system that creates and assigns value from one's ability to offer labour and create capital. In short, it dehumanizes us and leads us toward material gain as a measurement of 'happiness' and away from true fulfillment.

A city of the future ought to have residents (private and corporate) who overwhelmingly look beyond material gain and concentrate on public good. We are all better off when we are focused on caring for others. We need to give up on the acquisition of wealth and instead invest energies and resources on making a positive impact on the lives of those who are in need. Philanthropy, volunteerism, and other acts of kindness need to be celebrated, revered and emulated. We need to aspire toward making an impact on others instead of acquiring 'things'.

I think the spirit of Bill Gates' challenge of shedding 99% of his wealth and challenging others to do the same is part of healthy cities of the future. The end game of AI, automation, and innovation will likely make money worthless. People will have days that are filled with leisure time that can be used to heal the city, the planet, and each other.

So how can collaborative leadership be a catalyst for this vision? It starts with conversations facilitated by leaders that ask people to reflect on the ideal society they want to build and live in. What needs to happen today, in 5 years, in 15 years, and in 50 years to get us there?

Collaborative leadership can be the influence that moves individuals, business, and government to think critically beyond the current operating system, consider a better future for all, and how we might get there."

"1. You need a healthy economy – without a healthy economy, nothing else is achievable or affordable. By [my] definition, a healthy economy means good well-paying careers are available for everyone who wants one.

2. You need to have safety of person and safety of capital – without those two things nothing else is achievable.

3. You need to value the less advantaged as much as the more advantaged irrespective of age or background etc. in providing equal access to quality education and healthcare.

4. You need to value the arts and artists because they are the ones that give us a true appreciation for beauty.

Vision of your City of the Future

5. You need to create a culture of equality and acceptance and value. This doesn't equate to "full equivalency" when it comes to financially rewarding a neurosurgeon or a carpenter or a restaurant server etc. but it does equate to recognizing that each of those roles is deserving of courtesy and respect – which includes a decent wage – because a successful city requires all of them to function."

"Equality of voice – there is no doubt that there are pockets of influence and traditional leverage of privilege. I would like to see a council and city staff that at all levels represent the diversity of the city. Seeing councillors on community led groups to address certain issues and then bringing that back to council is a healthy way to start. Collaborative leadership means that the voice from the city – those affected by policies and those living it out in the trenches – get more opportunity to be heard and to shape new policies and also to address the intersections of various departments. I would love to see collaborative circles in each ward that feed back into the loop at the city.

Shared ownership of vision brings shared responsibility for the implementation which could only benefit the city as a whole. We might be able to fully identify those things which are best done at micro rather than macro levels."

"Full engagement in the discussion of creating a vision for the future based on the past and the present. This survey is a great example of doing things differently.

"Look into why certain countries are always rated as the best places to live and learn from such as Norway, Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, etc. Measure whatever you say you are going to do and hold someone accountable at the end of the day. Engage our youth for solutions. Listen to the wisdom of our elders. Be buoyed by the laughter of our children. Challenge the status quo and be prepared for the push back.

Corporations need to pay a greater share for the changes needed. Health care and education need major overhauls. Identify the weakest and improve their lot in life. Our prisons are outdated – visit the Norway model for guidance. Have regular town hall seminars with exceptional speakers that motivate us to change. Manage the change agent's agenda. You are either in it for the long haul or you are just dabbling. Love yourself first, then love your family and then your community."

"Empowering and coaching citizens to think through and speak up in a way that they are listened to. Town hall meetings facilitated by good, fair, neutral facilitators. Social change initiatives that educate, motivate, listen and are open to influence by the many sides of any issue."

"Equality. Cities treat richer neighborhoods differently than poorer ones. Certain groups of people's needs are put above others. Citizens of a city need to be treated fairly and with equality."

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"The economics of business needs to change to a triple bottom line. Profit and power are indelibly linked to creating poverty, so business as usual must stop and an equitable distribution of wealth must occur to genuinely begin to end economic poverty. Too much lip service to end poverty from governments and little to no participation from economic giants on this matter equals consistently lost opportunities. Where are the business people who must step up at our anti-poverty round tables?"

"The problem of taxation needs to be solved. The poverty gap is a big one, but to solve it cities need money. They are legislatively prohibited, here anyway, from raising money by any possible means. Property tax can't pay for everything, and it's a flat tax, which is hugely unfair. No wonder city police forces get onto photo radar and parking meters – it's all the city has. Flexible revenue sourcing is a big deal. Far beyond my ability or this venue to come up with a model, but the current one doesn't give cities the kinds of resources they need to solve addictions, poverty and homelessness issues in a site-specific way."

"I believe that cities are places where people come together – to connect, to seek opportunity, to thrive and to build something lasting – whether a family, a culture, a business, relationships – and even a civic legacy.

Cities are increasingly the crossroads where a new generation of citizens gather and build their lives. They offer a platform for innovation and creativity, for new ideas to meet and clash and evolve, and for people to build relationships with their city's history, the land and the country. They are a jumping off point in many people's lives for careers, for friendships, for life long commitments to a place and for the opportunity to take on leadership roles in their community.

As an urban country, we need to expand the old language of cities, the paradigm of the urban planner and the established 20th professional who designs road ways and bridges and buildings. As a city moving into the 21st century, we are at a turning point where we are looking at our cities less as constructs of well-designed buildings and transit hubs and more as complex ecosystems, environments of people, nature, social connections (and lack of connections) and exchange, a more holistic and people-centred approach.

I believe that the idea of Collaborative Leadership is one that is born of a time that demands diverse and creative solutions. It's a model for shared leadership, rooted in the community, that resonates strongly with the wisdom of the Indigenous peoples of our city – as we heard in [Edmonton's] work on ending poverty.

I think this model speaks to community voice, activism, the need for grassroots leaderships and a new model of municipal government that convenes and facilitates a broad, open and equitable forum for change. A truly modern municipality is one that embraces not bureaucracy but diversity. A modern urban centre is one that knows that fully and equitably

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engaged citizens generate the best ideas and most lasting change because it comes from them."

"I think one of the biggest challenges we face to creating an equitable and just society is the fact that many people do not believe that as a community we are inextricably tied to one another. The health, wealth, and well-being of each individual affects all. There is still too much blaming and shaming going on. This has been evidenced by some of the comments regarding the government of Alberta and the government of Ontario's plan to raise minimum-wage to $15 per hour."

"I have no vision for the "city", per se. My vision is entirely rooted in the education of children (municipal, provincial, national) and in providing all of them exceptional opportunities to learn all that they can, in order to do all that they need."

"My vision is not just for my City it is for the global village. Universal provision of basic services including the one I focus on: universal provision of advertising-free streamed media through a digital public library."

"To riff on Margaret Mead: Never doubt how vital collaborative leadership is in creating and sustaining future cities – indeed it is the only thing that will. IMHO, we will always be faced with increasingly complex issues problems to be solved. We need to create the culture, skills and abilities to host conversations that both stumble and flourish on their way to providing innovative solutions. In my world of community and stakeholder engagement, as well as in my volunteer life, I am noticing the following issues or challenges:

1) The changing nature of our discourse.
Howard Thurman writes, "Again and again we find it hard to hold in check the biting comeback...how natural it seems to give as good as I get, to take nothing lying down, to announce to all and sundry in a thousand ways that no one can run over me and get away with it." So I think the nature of dialogue, particularly in our city, is shifting. There's an edge, a demand, a defiance that seems to be emerging. In some ways that can be good – a challenging of the status quo. But if conversation become only vessels to defend positions rather than seek understanding, we have an entrenched citizenry.

2) Position vs Interest (or principled based) negotiation or conversations.
This is perhaps the source of my first comment – holding onto one's position versus looking for common interest is an issue that diminishes our ability to create a future city such as the one you describe. And it is the enemy of collaboration. Projects that are laden with potential often bear no fruit because of the feelings of scarcity that have us clinging to our own positions and agendas. Often the performance measures of staff, boards, agencies and business are based on driving their own agenda, and collaboration, though lauded is not listed as a performance measure. When your bonus or performance review is based on achieving your agenda, it makes collaboration difficult.

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3) Anger, weariness and wariness.
There seems to be a feeling of powerlessness – or former powerlessness that has unleashed and granted permission for nastiness to one another. How do we understand the anger, harness its strength and transform it into a force for city building?

4) I think that there are ways other than, or in addition to technology that will transform cities. I think that our urban design can create spaces that facilitate connectivity, address disparity, and create beauty for all. I also support comments about a razor-sharp economy, political stability, and more outcome-based initiatives. And of course, along with the challenges or issues discussed, I see some incredible show of talent, resilience and innovation that are already in place.

What is your vision of cities of the future and how collaborative leadership can be a catalyst for that vision?

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CLOSING REMARKS

A paper like this one is messier perhaps than reading the thesis of a single writer. I hope that the viewpoints of 35 people, stir your own thinking and offer a body of information and perspective that prompt conversations and perhaps some co-creation in your network and community.

I invite you to experience the learning and the hope that I have through this process. Collaborative leadership cannot be confined to those with power and influence; it calls for more than rote adherence to best practice and ideological dogma. Everyone in community can be a leader. Everyone deserves the opportunity to have a voice and to hear the voices of others, especially when such voices speak of ideas and perspectives that are new to us or contrary to our own.

Collaborative leadership is about community engagement and acting in ways that increase the capacity of citizens to participate in future-building. I know it happens, but I suggest it must happen more and better if we truly want to build sustainable cities of the future that work for the majority.

CONTRIBUTORS

Many thanks to the following for taking the idea of co-creating this paper seriously. I appreciate each and every one of you. Please note, some participants chose not to have their names included.

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ABOUT MARK HOLMGREN

At an early age, Mark was introduced to music and singing by his mother, an in-demand administrator, and the importance of social justice work by his father, a theologian and writer. Both influences have enabled Mark to blend together the creativity and innovative disposition of an artist with the rigor and discipline of serving community as a change-leader and practitioner.

Mark is driven by the desire to change community conditions that cause and perpetuate poverty and the marginalization of the vulnerable and disadvantaged. A proven leader of poverty reduction efforts, Mark is known for his ability to converge big picture thinking with on the ground implementation.
As the Director of Vibrant Communities Canada, Mark leads Tamarack's engagement of more than 55 member communities leading local poverty reduction efforts and works with his team to develop learning opportunities and resources that add value to this Pan-Canadian network.

In addition to his ability to facilitate groups of all sizes around strategy development and solution-building, Mark has built and delivered curriculum related to collective impact, collaborative leadership, community innovation, strategic planning, and non-profit leadership. Mark is a provocative speaker who challenges the status quo and fosters new and innovative ways of seeing and addressing social issues.

Mark's fiction, poetry, and exposition have been published in dozens of literary reviews and as a sing-songwriter he has performed at the Edmonton Folk Music Festival, on CBC radio, the Edmonton Fringe Theatre Festival and elsewhere. He blogs frequently at www.tamarackcommunity.ca and on his own blog, *Anticipate*, at www.markholmgren.com. You can follow him on Twitter @mjholmgren.

END NOTES

[i] Participant narrative was proofread and edited by me. I corrected spelling errors, grammatical and syntactical issues and I removed extraneous narrative without altering the message being provided.

[ii] See the Huffington Post's article, "Minimum Income: What You Should Know About The Idea That Could Revolutionize The 21st Century," retrieved September 10, 2017 from http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/12/23/minimum-income-basic-income_n_6370458.html. This quote represents the view point of Senator Hugh Segal, according to the Huffington Post.

[iii] See "Why unconditional basic income is no more than a socialist fairytale" by Sandra Kilhof, published by The New Economy, retrieved September 10, 2017 from https://www.theneweconomy.com/strategy/why-unconditional-basic-income-is-no-more-than-a-socialist-fairytale.

[iv] See "A Big Idea Whose Time Has Yet to Arrive: A Guaranteed Annual Income," by Glen Hodgson
Senior Vice-President and Chief Economist, Forecasting and Analysis, Conference Board of Canada. Retrieved September 10, 2017 from http://www.conferenceboard.ca/economics/hot_eco_topics/default/11-12-15/a_big_idea_whose_time_has_yet_to_arrive_a_guaranteed_annual_income.aspx

[v] From my personal notes of conversations I have had with colleagues and from points made by plenary panelists at two Poverty Reduction Summits held in 2016 and 2017 by Vibrant Communities Canada, a practice area of Tamarack Institute that I currently lead.

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