WE/ARE CITIES

ACTION AGENDA

MOBILIZING CANADIANS TO BUILD THE CITIES WE WANT
The We Are Cities Action Agenda is a collective expression of the kinds of cities we, as Canadians, want.

This Agenda offers a starting point for further conversation and emphasizes that we all have a role to play in creating the places we want to live. The Agenda is intended to inspire and catalyze action—locally and nationally—and builds on efforts already underway across the country.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit play a pivotal role in the ongoing development of our country. The We Are Cities Action Agenda respectfully acknowledges the traditional territories of Canada’s Aboriginal people and their stewardship of the land upon which our cities and country have been built. In order for our cities to thrive, our Aboriginal communities must also thrive.

We Are Cities mobilized Canadians across the country to shape a vision and action plan to build better cities.

Thousands of us contributed online and through citizen-led roundtables by providing ideas on how we can make our cities more livable.

The ideas that resonated most with Canadians that participated, are in this Agenda. Collectively we hope to advance these ideas because we believe they are important to building empowered, healthy and equitable cities.
We Are Cities connected Canadians

2,500+ Participants

75 Roundtables

35 Cities

2,000 Ideas

#WeAreCities & #WACDay
Timeline

FEBRUARY 2015
We Are Cities launches

FEBRUARY–OCTOBER
Supporters submit ideas online, over 800 ideas are posted

MARCH–JUNE
Roundtables take place across the country: 65 roundtables, 35 cities

MARCH–NOVEMBER
Ongoing development of the Agenda: interviews, idea generation, research and synthesis of ideas

JUNE
We Are Cities Innovation Grants invested in 18 community projects

OCTOBER 8
We Are Cities Day takes place: 10 cities participate

Across the country we identified the big ideas that would make each of our cities better.

Checkout what cities said:
Roundtable Recap

We're ready to continue this conversation and catalyze action!
Across the country we identified the big ideas that would make each of our cities better.

Checkout what cities said: Roundtable Recap
HOW TO USE THE WE ARE CITIES AGENDA

- As a catalyst to build and implement local action agendas
- As a framework for deepening relationships around city building
- As a platform to connect local action to national opportunities
OUR MOMENT IS NOW.

Cities have long faced pressure to respond to complex and growing challenges. We need to take action now. And we need to get it right.

- The country’s well-being is dependent on the health of our cities and must be a priority if Canada is to thrive in the 21st century.
  - More than 80% of Canadians live in urban areas
  - Canada’s 5 largest metropolitan areas generate close to half of the country’s GDP

- In October, Canada elected new federal leadership based on a progressive agenda. Let’s work with the new government to shape and implement a path forward that will ensure future prosperity for our cities.
  - Over 10 years, the new government has committed to investing $60 billion across three infrastructure areas: public transit, social, and green
  - We Are Cities initiated a conversation through which cities provided insight on local priorities; leveraging this network and dialogue to produce input on how these investments can best be spent is a unique opportunity
HERE IS WHAT WE SAID, CANADA
Cities need more autonomy and to better utilize the tools available to them. This includes more money—both government transfers and expanded revenue generating powers for municipalities. Cities need to be empowered to take risks and be experimental. This is essential to an innovative and adaptive city. We also believe that all residents, communities and cities need to have a strong and influential voice in the decisions that have local impact.

**Greater influence and participation of residents in local decision-making, for example:**
- Establishing participatory budgeting in city budgets
- Use of co-creation approaches to policy change and community development
- Use of ranked balloting systems

**Greater autonomy and fiscal powers for local governments, for example:**
- Provinces grant municipalities the power to collect a city sales tax

**Better integrated policy and governance between municipalities, provinces and federal government, for example:**
- Cities have greater influence on how federal transfers are spent
- Cities are resourced to collect, measure and analyze data to better inform decision-making
Building, complete communities is essential to the economic, social and environmental well-being of Canada. Healthy cities mean supported communities that foster a sense of belonging and offer meaningful places for Canadians to live, work and play.

**Use smart growth frameworks for planning and decision-making, for example:**
- Legislate urban growth boundaries to encourage densification and community revitalization

**Consideration of multi-modal transportation, for example:**
- Prioritizing public transit investment by establishing a national transit fund

**Mitigating and adapting to climate change, for example:**
- Creating a national energy vision and strategy to enable provincially-based carbon pricing and encourage cities to adopt zero emissions targets
- Establishing ecofiscal policies to help influence behaviours, raise new revenue and drive innovation

**Inclusive and connected communities, for example:**
- Improving youth safety by establishing more places and spaces for youth to gather and learn including youth from Aboriginal and racialized communities
To do this we need strong, diverse local economies that provide access to decent employment and build community wealth. Cities need affordable and diverse housing and transportation choices and accessible services, spaces and supports to enable all residents to thrive.

**WE WANT OUR CITIES TO BE PLACES WHERE...**

**THERE IS EQUITY FOR ALL**

- **Embed an affordability lens in the creation of new policy, for example:**
  - Establishing a national affordable housing strategy and investment fund
  - Expanding ownership models to enable collaborative consumption and approaches from the sharing economy

- **Employ resident-led, people-centred design, for example:**
  - Engaging citizens to identify best uses for public lands that will meet community goals and needs through placemaking approaches
  - Fostering discussion on the issue of decolonization and reconciliation through place-based reconciliation activities
  - Supporting the vibrancy of arrival cities where newcomers settle and establish local, diverse networks

- **Establish the goal of making cities poverty-free, for example:**
  - Advocate for livable incomes

- **Develop mechanisms to increase opportunities to include new voices in democratic processes, for example:**
  - Extending voting rights to permanent residents
We know we want empowered, healthy and equitable cities.

In order to build these kinds of cities, we recognize the need to think nationally and in solidarity with each other—cities big and small—and that’s what the We Are Cities Action Agenda represents.

The Agenda is an expression of the ideas that most resonated across Canada and articulates five potential opportunities for action.
WHERE COULD WE START?

We Are Cities will continue to facilitate conversations in the five opportunity areas of the Agenda in order to deepen our national understanding of the needs of Canadian cities.

Holding this dialogue will build capacity, deepen engagement and enable a shift in the traditional approaches to decision-making and planning in cities. These conversations will be dynamic and inclusive to ensure the voices of residents, stakeholders and decision-makers are heard.
WE ARE CITIES
ACTION AGENDA

- **Prosper:** The Equitable Community
- **Leverage:** The Civic Commons
- **Measure:** The Informed City
- **Connect:** An Urban Aboriginal Coalition
- **Adapt:** Future Proof Cities
PROSPER: THE EQUITABLE COMMUNITY

Establish a national strategy to increase equity that supports local efforts and strengthens political, social and economic rights.

Poverty reduction strategies have been established in provinces and municipalities across the country. The related policies and programs that emerge from poverty reduction efforts have the potential to impact the social and economic realities of individuals and communities.

Connecting local strategies to a national endeavour that supports action on poverty reduction is essential to addressing the root causes of inequity and improving access to the means to live a good, healthy and happy life.

WHERE COULD WE START?

1. Diversify local economies to provide decent work opportunities and build community wealth.

2. Identify a framework for including community benefits in infrastructure planning in order to maximize investments in infrastructure.

3. Support social entrepreneurship as a means of creating jobs and contributing to social innovation.
LEVERAGE: 
THE CIVIC COMMONS

Reimagine Canada’s civic commons in order to leverage underutilized assets and strengthen city resilience.

The civic commons is the backbone of a city, serving the needs of residents and offering public benefit, a sense of belonging and economic opportunities. The commons is made up of a system of civic assets that includes: parks, schools, ravines, libraries, post offices, museums, public spaces, as well as data and technology assets.

Connecting a city’s system of civic assets provides a platform through which to deliver a broad range of benefits to cities and their residents. As city governments are increasingly unable to invest in and maintain existing assets this will become a growing and potentially transformative opportunity both locally and nationally.

WHERE COULD WE START?

1. All levels of government should support mapping of publically owned assets in order to establish a national inventory and to better understand the opportunities and gaps across communities.

2. Develop a framework to establish a comprehensive understanding of the potential use of these assets as well as the private and social value of them.

3. Create a social purpose assets fund from public, private and philanthropic sources to enable Canadians to leverage underutilized assets to design, build and operate thriving public spaces and places.
MEASURE:  
THE INFORMED CITY

Make data open and accessible to enable better decision-making and innovation.

Data is a key ingredient to building empowered, healthy, equitable cities—it allows us to spot emerging issues, execute rigorous planning and make decisions grounded in evidence.

With improved access to data and a better understanding of how to apply this information, decision-making at all levels of government would be better informed and grounded in evidence.

WHERE COULD WE START?

1. All data should be “open.” Having data that is open and accessible is a driver of innovation and a tool for insightful analysis and planning.

2. All levels of government should support urban data labs, places where we identify what data cities need, collect it in a format that is usable, and are able to apply it in building the types of cities we want. Bringing back the long-form census will contribute significantly to this.
CONNECT:
AN URBAN ABORIGINAL COALITION

Establish national representation of urban Aboriginal communities through an Urban Aboriginal Coalition.

Canada's Aboriginal population living in urban centres is large, diverse, complex and for the most part disconnected from one another. Approximately 60% of the 1.5 million people of Aboriginal descent live in urban environments but do not have a means by which to collectively express their challenges and desires.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit operate successfully within their own cultural protocols but often lack a common table for the discussion and sharing of knowledge concerning urban Aboriginal issues. A coalition could establish a collective voice and platform for these communities in influencing decisions both locally and nationally.

WHERE COULD WE START?

1. Convene key stakeholders to determine the landscape and opportunity areas for this coalition and build on existing capacities and efforts underway.

2. Nurture Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partnerships across communities and sectors.
ADAPT: 
THE FUTURE PROOF CITY

Develop a path forward to mitigate and adapt to changes in our climate.

Climate change is one of the largest problems cities face. It impacts all aspects of life: economic competitiveness, health, safety, food security, and our natural environment. In order to mitigate and plan for the effects of climate change we need to develop a national climate change action plan.

No other issue requires greater collaboration between different levels of government, stakeholders and citizens. By working together, a Canadian climate change action plan will make cities more resilient and reaffirm Canada’s commitment to achieving global environmental targets.

WHERE COULD WE START?

1. Support compact development and quality infill strategies that reflect urban growth boundaries.

2. Enable and support local action by incenting electrification of transportation and strategies to mobilize capital for low-carbon solutions.

3. Collaborate and share across cities to build capacity in order to develop and implement carbon reduction and resilience strategies and actions.
We know the kind of cities we want and the opportunities we can leverage to create them, so now…

We Are Cities Action Agenda: A framework to build empowered, healthy and equitable cities.
NOW WHAT?

We know the kind of cities we want and the opportunities we can leverage to create them, so now...

- In the coming weeks, the Agenda will be shared with the new federal government to discuss how We Are Cities can support tangible opportunities to build the cities we want.

- Partners are engaged in order to establish funding support and collective action approaches to implementing the Agenda’s ideas.

- **Cities, take action!** Continue the conversation locally, reconvene your roundtable or participate in [100in1Day](#) to help catalyze and initiate change in your city.
Over 75 local conversations were hosted, thank you to all local We Are Cities roundtables!

Thank you to the We Are Cities Conveners

Thank you to all the We Are Cities Supporting Organizations