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SOURCES FOR THE HISTORY OF URBAN PLANNING IN CANADA, 1890-1939

By 1912, there was widespread recognition in Canada of an acute shortage of decent housing. A national town planning movement developed because many in the housing reform movement became convinced that the servicing of suburban lots could become so much more efficient through preventive planning, that large numbers of families currently doomed to slum conditions would become able to afford sanitary suburban dwellings. The movement manifested itself in such national conferences as the "First Canadian Housing and Town Planning Conference" held in Winnipeg in 1912,¹ and the separate meeting of Canadian delegates to the National Conference on City Planning convention held at the University of Toronto in 1914.² Soon two national organizations devoted to town planning were formed: the Civic Improvement League of Canada (founded in late 1915) and the Town Planning Institute of Canada (T.P.I.C.), begun in 1919. By the 1920's, town planning consultants such as Horace Seymour, Norman Wilson, A.G. Dalzell, and A.E.K. Bunnell were doing work for cities and towns throughout the country. Moreover, Canadian planners were advocating planning principles which, they believed, might be applied throughout urban Canada.

National bodies were founded, the same consultants gained employment from coast to coast, and planning principles assumed to be generally useful were discussed because by 1912 the rapidly growing cities of Canada experienced some common fundamental causes of ugliness and inefficiency, such as unco-ordinated subdividing, systems of local taxation which often encouraged scattered suburban development, and frequently injurious mixing of land uses. As well, their development was profoundly affected by two advances in transportation technology: the electrified street-car and the automobile.

The most important sources concerning these common problems of urban growth and the principles advanced to deal with them are the speeches, articles and planning reports of members of three groups at the core of the professional wing of the planning and housing movement: architects,