Building a Collaborative Advantage

Network Governance and Homelessness Policy-Making in Canada

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Preface

My earliest conceptualization of the issue of homelessness was a typically sheltered, middle-class, and abstract one: I felt a vague sense of pity, yet also a clear sense that it was inconceivable this could ever happen to me. Moving from a small town to Vancouver to attend university made homelessness less of an abstraction, since I was so completely surrounded by it. Like all urban citizens, as I went about my daily routines, I would come across panhandlers, hordes of people crowded around drop-in centres, and street sleepers in alcoves or alleys. And like many, I held dismissive and essentialized attitudes towards the homeless and how they had arrived there, coupled with a fear of their actions and disgust with their presentation. Yet these sights and interactions, unnerving in my first months of living in Vancouver, eventually became part of the tapestry of urban life – or what some would call a disturbing normalization of homelessness in Canadian urban life.

For many years, the normalization of homelessness was the lens through which I understood the issue – until very abnormal trends became visible to me when I moved out of the University of British Columbia nest to Yaletown, a previously derelict industrial area in downtown Vancouver that was undergoing gentrification. The spectacular sights of the city, mountains, and ocean from my new downtown high-rise apartment could not distract from what transfixed me at the street level: cardboard assembled for shelter in alleys, shopping carts as mobile homes, and hardened women and men working the streets before noon, most with visible signs of extensive drug

use. Now that I was confronted by homelessness on a daily basis, it began to dawn on me how abnormal this scene was. There is nothing normal about children being raised in homeless shelters. There is nothing normal about lineups extending several blocks when a charitable organization offers a free lunch. And in a civilized society, there is nothing normal about allowing untreated mental illness to destabilize every element of a person's life. Even if it neatly absolves me from political action, the prevailing theory of homelessness as personal destruction by lazy and self-indulgent single adult males simply did not match what I saw on the streets. Yet, for the most part, I approached the issue with benign neglect, not engaging in political action that would reflect my reconceptualization of homelessness.

It turned out that the scenes on the streets below troubled my fellow high-rise dwellers as well, though they were troubled in very different ways than I was about our new neighbourhood with "rough edges." Many expected their new urban life to marry the convenience and allure of downtown living with the suburban ethic of homogeneity and predictability. In short order, the re-engineering attempts began in an effort to make the neighbourhood consistent with the aesthetics of new urban life. My private discomfort with the seemingly legitimate and widespread "hobophobia" reached a fever pitch in the mailroom of my new apartment building:

PETITION

From Concerned Residents of 501 Pacific St

We the undersigned strongly oppose the expansion of the Covenant House youth shelter facility on the basis that it will upset the fabric of the neighbourhood by attracting more homeless and junkies, increasing threats to the safety and security of young children, women and the elderly in the neighbourhood.

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Three petitions in a matter of months were circulated by "concerned residents" in this apartment building in an attempt to close down a shelter for abused women, prevent the expansion of a youth homelessness shelter, and ensure more police presence to sweep the streets clean of sex workers

and the indigent. The cold economics of "declining property values" and phantom claims of "threats to personal safety" were the basis of the appeals, with decidedly little concern for where women and youth fleeing violent and abusive situations would go if these political actions were successful. Provoked out of passivity, I wrote a caustic letter for display in the mailroom, reminding residents that *we* were the ones new to the neighbourhood – not the sex workers, the homeless, and other marginalized people – and that surely compassion and productive political action to help stabilize lives was a much more reasonable approach than simply sweeping the neighbourhood clean. Needless to say, my indelicate attempt to calm the young urban professionals of Yaletown and channel their fears into compassion was unsuccessful, although I am happy to report that they were ultimately unsuccessful in all three of their petitions to the City. "Concerned residents" of many other neighbourhoods, however, have no doubt been successful in similar attempts.

These patterns of response extended beyond my spooked neighbours to the next area ripe for gentrification in downtown Vancouver: Gastown, which is adjacent to and overlaps with the notorious Downtown Eastside. A "concerned resident" named Mike Comrie was granted space in the editorial pages of the *National Post* on April 20, 2012, to lament over how, after moving into the poorest postal code in Canada, the surroundings were not idyllic enough for his young professional family. In his piece, titled "Raising Kids amid the Hookers, Junkies and Drunks of Vancouver's Worst Neighbourhood," Comrie used language characteristic of common dismissive attitudes towards the homeless and marginalized:

> We had found a condo that we could actually afford ... gambling that the neighbourhood would improve significantly by the time our building was completed. It didn't ... although the area would improve, eventually. But first, we would spend a few years raising our children in what could generously be described as a disturbing new community.
>
> ... Junkies steal, they prostitute themselves, they leave needles and feces in the streets. The Downtown Eastside may be home to my city's least fortunate, but it is also, in many cases, home to my city's least sanitary, least responsible, and least polite ...
>
> ... My wife and I had to quickly learn ... how to take it in stride when alarmingly filthy individuals, clearly intoxicated and probably insane, wanted to exchange baby talk with our little ones ...
>
> It took a while, but we bet on gentrification, and – knock on wood – it's happening.

Such callous attitudes towards a vulnerable segment of society would be less troubling if they were not so widespread and legitimized in common discourses and media. Not only were these experiences in Vancouver replicated with eerie precision in my Toronto apartment building during my doctoral studies, but other observers, such as Mariana Valverde, in her book *Everyday Law on the Street: City Governance in an Age of Diversity* (2012), have documented these dynamics in Canadian cities, revealing a certain detached acceptance and ignorance of the plight of a permanent underclass in Canada.

Widespread and persistent homelessness in Canada is indisputably the result of policy decisions at several levels of government. Among those in the homelessness policy community, the Paul Martin budgets beginning in 1993 are seen as the most devastating setbacks to housing affordability and the broader social safety net in Canada, with the federal government withdrawing almost completely from affordable housing provision (and with subsequent provincial downloading to cash-strapped municipalities). The impact was dramatic: according to a 2007 article by Michael Shapcott called "Ten Things You Should Know about Housing and Homelessness," in 1982, all levels of government combined funded over twenty thousand units of social housing annually, while in 1995, only one thousand new social housing units were constructed by all levels of government in Canada. Yet only five years earlier, in 1990, the Official Opposition critic for Housing and Urban Affairs, Joe Fontana, wrote in a Task Force on Housing report co-authored with Liberal MP Paul Martin and called *Finding Room: Housing Solutions for the Future*, that Canada "is presently confronted with a major housing crisis … and immediate action is necessary to correct the problem": hence, the shock and disbelief in the homelessness policy community when that very same opposition critic – Paul Martin – came to power as finance minister, in 1993, and did the opposite of what his own Task Force Report had recommended. By 2000, Canadian cities had experienced a massive spike in homelessness.

Patterns of abuse, mental illness, and personal tragedy will always dot Canadian society, but the question is whether the policy framework in place helps to stabilize the lives of those who are faced with incredible challenges, many of which are involuntarily thrust upon them. In his 2008 book, *Homelessness: The Making and Unmaking of a Crisis,* Jack Layton, an early political leader on the issue of homelessness in Canadian cities, articulated his conviction that "just as homelessness can be created, so too can it be

ended" (p. xxv). In the absence of a strong federal government role in the provision of affordable housing across Canada – which is still undoubtedly the most important need – Layton claimed that one of the most important lessons he learned in his life in politics "is that energy and ideas spring from the community – what social scientists sometimes call 'civil society' … not from mandarins in Ottawa" (p. xxviii).

This is quite a statement for someone who wanted to become prime minister! Like others in the homelessness policy community, Layton placed a high premium on the community as an agent of change and creator of policy ideas that should be brought into the policy process to challenge technocrats and elected officials "to help raise awareness and [advance] creative strategies and solutions" (p. 301).

Politicians may respond to the interests of "concerned residents," and bureaucrats to arcane institutional incentives, leaving civil society actors – those on the ground working with the homeless population – as key agents driving innovative policy and programs in this domain. *But is this true*? If civil society actors – in this case, shelter and drop-in centre providers, affordable housing providers and activists, mental health and addiction professionals – are included in substantive policy planning and decision making, what is the effect on homelessness policy? The answer to this question, which is the primary concern of this book, has consequences not only for homelessness policy development in Canada but also for modern governance and public administration issues across a number of sectors and areas.

Abbreviations

ACHSIP (or TO-emerg)	Advisory Committee on Homeless and Socially Isolated Persons, Toronto
AHSC	Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee, Vancouver
CAA	coordinated access and assessment
CAL-main	Calgary Action Committee on Homelessness and Housing
CCEH	Calgary Committee to End Homelessness
CGP	collaborative granting process
CHF and CAL-CHF	Calgary Homeless Foundation
CMHC	Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
CRG (or TO-main)	Community Reference Group, Toronto
DTES	Downtown Eastside
EWR	Extreme Weather Response
GVSS	Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy
HAW	Homelessness Action Week
HPS	Homelessness Partnering Strategy
HRSDC	Human Resources and Social Development Canada
MTHC	Metro Toronto Housing Corporation
NHI	National Homelessness Initiative
RSCH (or VAN-main)	Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness

SHARC	Streets to Homes Assessment and Referral Centre
SNA	Street Needs Assessment, Toronto
TAEH	Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness
TCHC	Toronto Community Housing Corporation
TDRC	Toronto Disaster Relief Committee
TO-Ab (or UAHRC)	Urban Aboriginal Homelessness Review Committee, Toronto
TO-emerg (or ACHSIP)	Advisory Committee on Homeless and Socially Isolated Persons, Toronto
TO-main (or CRG)	Community Reference Group, Toronto
UAHRC (or TO-Ab)	Urban Aboriginal Homelessness Review Committee, Toronto
VAN-main (or RSCH)	Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness
VAN-Ab	Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee, Vancouver
VAN-emerg	Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy

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The Homelessness Puzzle in Canada

As one of the most economically prosperous nations on earth, Canada is a country with an enviable human rights record, including some of the social and economic rights (health care, education, old age security). But our public and private institutions are organized in such a manner that one of the now "normal" outcomes is that a growing number of people are excluded from having an adequate and secure place to live. For some this is a temporary situation, for some an occasional situation, for others it is a long term reality.

… Without a physical place to call "home" in the social, psychological and emotional sense, the hour-to-hour struggle for physical survival replaces all other possible activities. Without an address it is virtually impossible to access some essential social services and it is very difficult to get a job.

People with no place to live, those who have no physical and psychological place of their own to call home, are the most completely excluded group of people in society. On becoming homeless, people enter a different world from the rest of society. Survival is the main goal. It is a nightmare world completely apart from the normal day-to-day pattern of living.

— Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (1998)

We have a problem in Canada. It is largely a hidden problem, but it is one that reveals a fundamental disconnect from the long-held, professed values that define Canadian citizenship and identity. In an incredibly rich country, and amid the great wealth of many, there are thousands of Canadians – 235,000 unique individuals each year and 35,000 on any given night, according to one recent estimate – for whom "normal" life now involves not having an adequate and secure place to live (Gaetz, Gulliver, & Richter, 2014). In Toronto, more than 5,000 live on the street or in homeless shelters on a given night; in Metro Vancouver, more than 2,500; and in Calgary, more than 3,500 – and these data are widely considered to underestimate the scale of the problem (City of Toronto Street Needs Assessment [SNA], 2013; Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness [RSCH], 2014a; Calgary Homeless Foundation [CHF], 2014). Among the street homeless population, nearly 40 percent in Vancouver have lived on the street for more than a year, while in Toronto that figure is 65 percent (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014a; City of Toronto SNA, 2013).[1]

Homelessness is not merely an academic problem of unequal resource distribution in this country. Homelessness kills Canadians. During the worst period of homelessness in Toronto, one homeless person died *every week,* on average, from 1996 to 2006. This is not a speculative conclusion of radical activists. Jack Layton, then a Toronto city councillor and homelessness advocate, in his book *Homelessness: How to End the National Crisis* (2008), documents how juries, in countless coroners' inquests into the deaths of homeless individuals in Toronto, established that "homelessness" was the ultimate cause of death (Layton, 2008, p. 34) and that proximate causes included freezing to death and persistent and untreated health conditions exacerbated by the pathologies of street life. Former Ontario premier Mike Harris famously asked, "Isn't it sad that these people just seem to want to be homeless?" – an attempt to frame the issue as a matter of individual choice rather than as a structural or systemic societal failing. Yet real stories of homeless people tell a different and more complicated story about the pathways in and out of homelessness, few of which are the result of laziness or an inexplicable desire to live in miserable conditions.

There is a striking overrepresentation of Aboriginal people within the homeless population in Canadian cities: in Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto, they represent 31 percent, 21 percent, and 16 percent of the homeless, respectively, despite constituting between 1 and 3 percent of these cities' total populations (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2014a; City of Toronto SNA, 2013; CHF, 2014). This disparity reveals that structural issues are key drivers of

homelessness in Canada. Likewise, by some estimates, youth constitute 20 to 30 percent of the homeless population in Canadian cities, and despite prevailing myths of their self-indulgent desire for early freedom, homeless youth "often run away from something awful, not toward something hopeful"; they are often fleeing abusive, drug-dependent, mentally ill, or homophobic families (Ryan & Kelley, 2012, 7). The Covenant House Institute tracked youth that had accessed its services across North America and found patterns that challenge the common depiction of directionless youth: 40 percent had been in foster care; more than 25 percent had been hospitalized for depression, anxiety, or other mental health issues; 30 percent had experienced physical abuse; and 40 percent of the young women had been sexually abused as children (Ryan & Kelley, 2012, p. 4). In addition, shelters in some cities report that LGBT youth account for up to 40 percent of their inhabitants; many of these youth have been kicked out or subjected to shame by homophobic parents. Thus, people often become homeless through no fault of their own, even if some poor individual choices have been made along the way.[2]

Unfortunately, some children have always grown up in challenging households under difficult personal circumstances, so this alone does not explain the rapid growth in homelessness in Canada and elsewhere since the 1990s. Before that time, society's most marginalized individuals could count on a comprehensive policy framework to help them stabilize their lives – a safety net that allowed those fleeing terrible home situations to be able to afford independent housing, access social assistance, and receive counselling or institutionalized services if suffering from mental illness. Jack Layton insisted that "homelessness is not some mysterious affliction visited upon us by unseen forces. It is the tragic, but inevitable, outcome of a series of policy decisions" made at several levels of government (Layton, 2008, p. xxv).

Among large Canadian cities, Toronto, Vancouver, and Calgary are where homelessness and a lack of affordable housing are most acute (Laird, 2007), and governments have responded to the issue with various approaches over the years, thus offering the opportunity for a comparative analysis of governance and public policy. Comparing homeless populations across cities, even within the same country, is not without risk, given the complex reasons for homelessness in specific locations. These reasons include economic restructuring of the labour force, mental health and addiction, real estate market trends, and even the local climate – not to mention differences in governance patterns and political priorities. Furthermore, because of different criteria, measurements, and methodologies, directly comparable

data with respect to shelter use and the enumeration of those experiencing homelessness across cities are often scarce. That said, it is nonetheless important to get a sense of some of the fundamental features of homelessness in Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto. On the most important measures of homelessness – growth of street homelessness and average length of homelessness – Vancouver and Calgary display more positive trends than Toronto, as depicted in Table 1.1.

Since 2008, the number of individuals sleeping on the street (referred to as "street homeless") on any given night in Metro Vancouver and Calgary has decreased by 39 percent and 62 percent, respectively, whereas in Toronto it has increased by 24 percent. Homelessness among Aboriginal people declined in Metro Vancouver between 2008 and 2014, yet it continued to grow in Toronto and Calgary over the same period. And in Toronto, 65 percent of the individuals who were homeless in 2013 had been so for over one year, whereas in Metro Vancouver this proportion was considerably

TABLE 1.1

Homelessness data from Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto

	Metro Vancouver (pop. 2.31M)	City of Calgary (pop. 1.2M)	City of Toronto (pop. 2.61M)
Homelessness count (street and shelters)	2,623	3,533	5,086
Homelessness per capita	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%
Growth in street homelessness (six-year trend)	−39.0%	-62.0%	+24.0%
Growth in Aboriginal homelessness (six-year trend)	−15.0%	+17.0%	+6.0%
Families in shelter system as percentage of total	5.0%	12.0%	20.0%
Percentage of street homeless being homeless for one year or more	40.0%	n/a	65.0%

Sources and Notes: Greater Vancouver RSCH (2008, 2011, 2014a, trend from 2008 to 2014); Calgary Homeless Foundation (2014; trend from 2008 to 2014); City of Toronto SNA (2013; note that trend data is four years in this case, from 2009 to 2013, due to data availability). The point-in-time data is from the most recent homeless counts in Metro Vancouver (2014), Calgary (2014), and Toronto (2013).

lower, at 40 percent, suggesting that the barriers to exiting homelessness remain high in Toronto. Again, given the complex drivers of homelessness, too much weight should not be placed in any single data point; nonetheless, it is valuable to track trends among the important indicators of an effective response to homelessness.

Leading researchers on homelessness in Canada such as Stephen Gaetz of York University and Michael Shapcott of the Wellesley Institute tend to link two key dimensions of policy – policy innovation and system coordination – with an effective response to homelessness (Gaetz, 2010; Shapcott, 2007a; see also Carter, 2001). These are key factors to track to explain the differences in homelessness trends from city to city. Policy innovation involves using approaches that break from the conventional response of "managing" homelessness (e.g., giving out clean socks), and system coordination means making the various systems related to homelessness (e.g., affordable housing, social assistance, mental health services, criminal justice, and so on) coherent, integrated, and, perhaps most importantly, non-competetive (Gaetz, 2010). Many observers recognize that policy innovation and system coordination have been characteristics of Metro Vancouver's and Calgary's approaches in recent years but have been less apparent in Toronto.

There are some important differences in how the three cities have addressed the problem of homelessness from a policy perspective, and their approaches have varied in effectiveness with respect to stabilizing and improving the lives of homeless persons, as seen in Table 1.1. This variation in homelessness outcomes cannot be explained by a dramatic difference in the amount of money spent on housing and homelessness in each city: counting all levels of government, annual expenditures in recent years were remarkably similar – in Metro Vancouver, $278M; in Calgary, $320M; and in Toronto, $297M (BC Housing, annual reports, 2012; Scott, 2012; City of Toronto, 2012, 2013).

In terms of innovation and coordination, homelessness policy and programs in Vancouver and Calgary have generally outperformed those in Toronto. For example, over the past two decades, Vancouver has pioneered low-barrier shelters and harm-reduction strategies and has implemented significant system coordination with the development of Homelessness Action Week, Extreme Weather Response protocols, and the Greater Vancouver RSCH (Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness) Investors Table for the coordination of public- and private-sector investment in homelessness. Calgary is notable for its creation of the Calgary Homeless Foundation (CHF), a quasi-government entity with a business-like orientation that was

given the mandate by the City of Calgary to end homelessness by 2018. Its innovative approach involves using real-time data on homeless individuals to link them to housing and services and coordinated, single-window access for housing and support services. Toronto is also active in the homelessness policy domain and has an extensive shelter and social-housing system; however, except for the innovative Streets to Homes program, which targets the chronically homeless, the city has displayed fewer and less substantive examples of policy innovation and system coordination over the past twenty years. Promising efforts in Toronto towards inclusive Aboriginal policy planning, as well as an annual Report Card on Homelessness, were notable but short-lived. These specific policy and program differences among the three cities are a preview of the much more extensive comparative policy analysis that follows in the chapters ahead.

The Puzzle and the Argument

The above sketch of the data and policy dimensions of homelessness in Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto sets up the key puzzle under investigation in this book: Why do Vancouver and Calgary have more innovative and co-ordinated homelessness policy and programs than Toronto, even though these cities all share similar homelessness challenges? Although the three cities have many similar demographic, economic, and institutional features, a key difference among them, which I argue accounts for these substantive policy differences, lies in the properties and dynamics of their homelessness governance networks.

Governance networks are composed of government and civil society actors in institutionalized and sustained relationships of policy planning and decision making, and these networks may serve as sites of deliberative problem solving and exchange among diverse policy actors. A comparative analysis of Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto with respect to homelessness therefore presents an opportunity to systematically test the claims of Jack Layton and many others about the impact of civil society actors in the policy process.

These three cities differ dramatically in how government and civil society actors organize themselves in governance networks to solve public problems. Governance networks can vary considerably in structure and mandate, but many are equipped with policy-generating capacity, public dollars to allocate to housing and support services, and autonomous decision-making authority, all delegated by the state. In Metro Vancouver and

Calgary, the homelessness governance networks, though distinct in many ways, are highly institutionalized and inclusive; they are effectively a new form of governance characteristic of deliberative problem-solving. Toronto, however, takes a much more traditional political-bureaucratic governance approach; homelessness governance networks in that city remain weakly institutionalized and non-inclusive, with decision making largely closed to civil society actors.

In a broad sense, examining homelessness policy development over the long run shows that elected leadership at the municipal level matters considerably less than observers suggest. That is, Vancouver is not outperforming Toronto simply because Mayor Gregor Robertson has so explicitly identified his legacy with the homelessness issue (though it does help), and Toronto is not held back primarily because of the Rob Ford years (though they did hurt). Likewise, in the case of Calgary, substantial progress is being made despite the lack of sustained engagement and interest in the issue from the mayor, Naheed Nenshi, and the city council.

This book shows how governance networks in Metro Vancouver and Calgary represent an avenue to break out from the status quo. In those cities, new actors have engaged in joint planning and decision making, introducing new ideas and approaches that were previously deemed too risky by public servants and their elected masters and that are largely responsible for the variation in policy and outcomes. Fifteen years after the Federation of Canadian Municipalities declared a state of emergency with respect to homelessness, this book provides a rare comparative analysis of homelessness policy. Most homelessness research in Canada and elsewhere is conducted by researchers in social work (Hulchanski, 1995, 2000), education (Gaetz, 2010; Paradis, 2009), geography (Carter, 1997), and public health (Dachner & Tarasuk, 2002; Hwang, 2001); homelessness is rarely viewed through the lens of governance and politics. Other than Jack Layton's studies (2000; revised and updated in 2008), only a few significant studies have considered the governance issues associated with homelessness, and they were produced by major state-commissioned task forces, such as the landmark Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force in Toronto (Golden, 1999) and the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science, and Technology (Subcommittee on Cities), which issued the report *In from the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness* (Eggleton, 2009). While these reports are critical pieces in the extended literature, they are sprawling tomes of description and advocacy, largely detached from theory and systematic comparative analysis of public policy.

Governance Networks in Canadian Cities

No major city in Canada has been spared from the homelessness crisis that emerged in the late 1990s. So why study only Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto? Why not Montreal, Winnipeg, and Halifax, for example? There are good reasons, from a comparative governance and policy analysis perspective, to choose the former set over the latter. Despite its comparable size to Vancouver, Montreal's first homelessness count was conducted in 2015, making it difficult to track policy outcomes in that city over time. Winnipeg, too, conducted its first homelessness census in 2015, and Halifax, though it began homelessness counts in 2003, experiences homelessness on a much smaller scale, as does Winnipeg. In addition, these cities do not have the acute housing affordability challenges that high-growth cities such as Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto are currently facing, and they are not confronting homelessness on the same scale.[3] Although these three cities have the same status and authority as municipalities within Canada's constitutional framework, they diverge in terms of the specific dimensions of their homelessness policy and the design and structure of their homelessness governance networks.

Because homelessness is a complex issue that draws in multi-sectoral and intergovernmental policy players, each of the cities under investigation has more than one homelessness governance network. Each city has three, and each of these networks has a near perfect equivalent in each city in terms of functionality and purpose; the omission of any would fail to capture the complexity of homelessness policy-making in each city. The governance networks examined in Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto represent a comprehensive portrait of network governance activity in each city but also allow for pair-wise comparisons of equivalent networks across the cities. The three types of governance networks examined in this book are as follows: (1) a mainstream network, generally inclusive of all relevant actors in the sector; (2) an Aboriginal-specific network, established because of the strikingly disproportionate share of Aboriginal people among the homeless population and the desire to produce culturally appropriate policy and programs; and (3) an emergency-needs, typically shelter-focused, network. In some cases, these governance networks work closely with one another, and in other cases, they conflict. Examining the dynamics among the networks adds an important layer to the analysis, particularly in terms of understanding system coordination.

Vancouver

The Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness

The Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (which I will call VAN-main) is a governance network that was initially created under the auspices of the Government of Canada's National Homelessness Initiative (NHI), announced in December 1999 and later renamed the Homelessness Partnering Strategy.[4] The NHI mandated the formation of community advisory boards consisting of civil society and government members; each advisory board was to create a community plan to address homelessness and to allocate federal funding (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2003). The membership of VAN-main, the community advisory board for Vancouver, is diverse and inclusive of the policy community and comprises nearly forty active members. The expansive and diverse membership includes local, regional, provincial, and federal government administrators; health authorities; charitable groups and foundations; Aboriginal groups; and service providers. No elected officials are actively involved in the governance network. Since 2010, VAN-main has been formally attached to the Metro Vancouver regional government, based on the recognition that homelessness exists in the broader metropolitan area (not just the City of Vancouver) and that a regional, coordinated approach is required to make effective policy interventions (Greater Vancouver RSCH, 2007).

The Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee

The Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee (VAN-Ab), like VAN-main, was created in 2000 in conjunction with the federal NHI program, which required the creation of governance networks of Aboriginal civil society actors mandated with developing and implementing a local strategy for Aboriginal homelessness. An Aboriginal-specific governance network is particularly relevant in the homelessness domain, since Aboriginal people constitute a disproportionate share of the homeless population across Canada (Ward, 2008). Furthermore, many argue (and the Government of Canada acknowledged as much with this piece of the NHI) that the most effective means to reduce and prevent homelessness among Aboriginal people is through Aboriginal best practices and culturally appropriate policy and programs. The membership of VAN-Ab consists of shelter providers, housing organizations, youth advocates, and other service providers that primarily serve the homeless Aboriginal population in the all municipalities in Metro Vancouver. One significant difference from VAN-main is

that VAN-Ab does not include government (bureaucratic) members; in fact, all members of VAN-Ab are from Aboriginal communities. VAN-Ab is also much smaller in membership than VAN-main, with twenty active members; this is commensurate with the much smaller policy mandate and envelope of money it has to allocate.

The Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy

In 1998, in response to unmet needs for shelter in the winter months, homeless shelter providers formed a regional network, called the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy (VAN-emerg), to develop and implement a continuum of accessible shelter services (Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy [GVSS], minutes, 2003, 2004). The principal task in the early years of VAN-emerg was to increase communication and coordination among shelter providers to ensure that services were accessible to the target population during inclement weather. Unlike VAN-main and VAN-Ab, the creation of VAN-emerg was community-driven rather than being the result of a government mandate, although provincial government departments have provided in-kind secretarial support and local governments have provided research and coordination funds to assist in the operations of the network. In contrast to both VAN-main and VAN-Ab, VAN-emerg is less of a policy-focused network and more of a coordination network (GVSS, 2010).

Over the years, VAN-emerg has expanded its mandate and role in the region. The need to strategize and coordinate during cold and wet weather remains a priority, but the mandate of the network now extends to the more general planning and coordination of shelter services (year-round), systematic service tracking, and the promotion of sharing resources and expertise among shelter providers (GVSS, terms of reference, 2011). Membership consists of nearly thirty organizations actively involved in meeting emergency shelter needs – whether providing, funding, or otherwise associating with shelter services – as well as local and provincial government bureaucrats.

Toronto

The Community Reference Group

In Toronto, the Community Reference Group (TO-main) is analogous to VAN-main in that it was created in response to the federal NHI program. It serves as the community advisory board, as mandated by the NHI, with the task of devising a community plan to identify and articulate key priorities for the investment of funds, but unlike other community advisory

boards, it plays no role in the allocation of homelessness funding. The City of Toronto formally administers the program and assumes legal and financial liability for the policy development and expenditures identified by TO-main (Community Reference Group [CRG], terms of reference, 2003). The City of Toronto is distinct from Vancouver in that it had been heavily involved in homelessness funding ever since this task devolved from the provincial government in the 1990s; the City therefore already had the capacity to administer the new federal program, which Metro Vancouver did not when VAN-main was created. This early difference would prove to be immensely consequential: whereas VAN-main was created in a relative policy vacuum, TO-main was inserted into a crowded policy field, and as a result, TO-main, from its beginnings, has had a comparatively narrow mandate and role in policy-making. Membership in TO-main comprises a diverse cross-section of fifteen community, local government, and private sector actors. In contrast to VAN-main, TO-main meets only once or twice per year and has a low public profile, even though both networks derived from the same federal government mandate. TO-main, therefore, has not become the primary community-driven voice for homelessness in Toronto like VAN-main has in Vancouver; it remains a narrowly defined community advisory board for the purposes of the federal homelessness program (CRG, 2002).

The Urban Aboriginal Homelessness Review Committee
The Urban Aboriginal Homelessness Review Committee (TO-Ab), like VAN-Ab, was created in response to the federal NHI program. Like its equivalent in Vancouver, VAN-Ab was mandated by the Government of Canada as a prerequisite for accessing funds and is responsible for setting policy priorities, reviewing homelessness program proposals, and allocating funds within the Toronto Aboriginal social service community. The membership of TO-Ab consists of representatives from seven Aboriginal organizations, each of which covers a demographic or service segment of the Aboriginal homeless community (Urban Aboriginal Homelessness Review Committee [UAHRC], terms of reference, 2010). TO-Ab meets once every two months and, like VAN-Ab, has one full-time staff to support its work, as well as a local federal government official, as needed. In addition to its role in the setting of strategic policy priorities for urban Aboriginal homelessness in Toronto and funding specific projects consistent with those priorities, TO-Ab functions as a site for networking, communication, and information sharing with respect to issues of mutual interest. Unlike its equivalent in

Vancouver, TO-Ab does not have a connection, either formal or informal, to TO-main at the City of Toronto.

The Advisory Committee on Homeless and Socially Isolated Persons
The Advisory Committee on Homeless and Socially Isolated Persons (TO-emerg) was created in 1996 to provide advice to City decision makers, to identify emerging issues facing homeless and marginalized persons in Toronto, and to promote long-term solutions to homelessness (Advisory Committee on Homeless and Socially Isolated Persons [ACHSIP], minutes, 1996). The network, which operated for ten years, was created in the context of an exploding homelessness crisis in Toronto, which was marked by an increasing number of deaths of homeless individuals on the streets in the mid-1990s. Like the other governance networks under investigation, TO-emerg comprised approximately twenty key civil society actors in Toronto – including shelter and housing providers, mental health advocates, homelessness activists, and even academics – together with bureaucrats from the City of Toronto's Shelter, Support, and Housing Administration. One unique feature of this governance network in comparison to the others under study is that it was co-chaired by an elected official – a city councillor. The first co-chair was councillor Jack Layton, and upon his resignation from council, councillors Jane Pitfield and Sylvia Watson took the helm of TO-emerg. During its tenure, TO-emerg was responsible for numerous and substantive policy innovations, including developing emergency shelter protocols, police sensitivity training, and transit policy changes; in addition, the network pushed debates about homelessness onto the Toronto City Council agenda. The leadership turnover caused – or, at the very least, exposed – deep fractures within the governance network membership, causing it to disband in 2006. No similar governance network, with councillor leadership and substantive policy community involvement, has been created since.

Calgary

The Calgary Action Committee on Homelessness and Housing
The mainstream homelessness governance network in Calgary is similar to VAN-main and TO-main in terms of serving as the community advisory board mandated by the federal government's HPI program (now the Homelessness Partnering Strategy), but it is quite distinct from them in other ways. Denoted here as CAL-main, it is familiar to Calgarians today as the Calgary Action Committee on Homelessness and Housing. CAL-main

has had various names throughout its history, but it was first created in 1996 as an ad hoc committee to study the emerging homelessness crisis in Calgary and to make policy recommendations. Over time, it evolved into a large and complex network of civil society actors associated with homelessness and housing in Calgary, as documented by Susan Scott in her book, *The Beginning of the End: The Story of the Calgary Homeless Foundation and One Community's Drive to End Homelessness* (2012). Its full membership exceeds 100, but its executive is composed of a somewhat smaller set of members from diverse segments of the homelessness sector. To this day, CAL-main preserves the numerous working groups that formed to help devise the first Community Action Plan and that serve as "sector groups," each of which independently elects a sector chair to be its representative at CAL-main. Although CAL-main preceded the creation of the NHI, it assumed the role of community advisory board mandated in 1999 by that federal program – that of a local governance network devising policy priorities and making investments on behalf of the federal government in Calgary – and it remains in that role today.

The Calgary Homeless Foundation

The Calgary Homeless Foundation (CAL-CHF) was created in 1998 by local business person Art Smith, who, upon learning of the growing homelessness problem in Calgary, became a tireless advocate and mobilizer for change. CAL-CHF began as a network of business people and community actors, with a very small staff provided in-kind by the province. Initially, the primary role of the organization was to raise money from the private sector to contribute towards assisting the homeless, but CAL-CHF has since evolved into a powerful quasi-government agency that directs federal, provincial, and private funds towards housing and homelessness services. Despite having features like those of a government agency, the organization remains collaborative in nature, with high community involvement and engagement in policy planning and decision making. In 2008, CAL-CHF was tasked with implementing Calgary's aggressive *10-Year Plan to End Homelessness* (Calgary Committee to End Homelessness [CCEH], 2008).

CAL-CHF is larger in institutional heft and mandate than any of the other governance networks under investigation. Somewhat counterintuitively, it does not generally work with the City of Calgary, whose role in dealing with homelessness has, in effect, been taken on by CAL-CHF. Furthermore, because of the uniquely expansive role of CAL-CHF, including fulfilling emergency functions, there is no equivalent in Calgary to TO-emerg and

VAN-emerg. The resulting variation among the properties and dynamics of the governance networks across the cities offers fertile ground for comparisons.[5]

This brief introduction to the governance networks reveals that while each of the equivalent networks in Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto share similar origins, there are important differences in their institutional roles, memberships, and activities. These differences allow us to isolate the impact of governance network dynamics on the development and implementation of policy. The latitude with which the governance networks were permitted to take shape and evolve offers an opportunity to track a natural experiment in governance and public policy over twenty years.

As important as the properties and dynamics of governance networks are to policy innovation and system coordination, such networks are, of course, not the only pathway to policy innovation and coordination. Since other aspects of politics and governance, such as elected leadership, could potentially explain some of the policy and outcome differences exhibited by the cities, they must also be identified and tracked.

The three cities have interesting variations. First, the leadership of elected officials, particularly mayors (and even premiers), has the potential to be immensely consequential to big-ticket, high-level policy changes. Leadership necessarily varies at the local level and must be tracked over time. In Vancouver, a considerable degree of homelessness and housing policy development is centralized in a single provincial agency (BC Housing), while in Calgary and Toronto it is more or less devolved (with funding transfers) to the local level. Likewise, Vancouver has an integrated and functional regional government system, whereas Calgary and Toronto, because of amalgamations, do not. This difference may have implications for the coordination of homelessness services in the broader urban area. In addition, the electoral systems in Metro Vancouver municipalities are "at-large" (meaning the mayor and council are elected by the entire city), while in Calgary and Toronto the councillors are elected to specific wards. The electoral system in the latter two cities may have implications for the ability of decision makers to implement affordable housing and homelessness support services and may give the NIMBYism of citizens a potentially powerful institutional pathway to resist change. Thus, a focus on analyzing homelessness governance networks over the past two decades does not imply that traditional political and bureaucratic elements are inconsequential. Rather, this focus reflects the fact that governance networks constitute

a comparatively understudied element of homelessness governance in Canada and elsewhere.

Methodology

Tracing the influence of governance network structures and dynamics on homelessness policy development requires an examination of the evolution of policy and governance over a considerable period of time. This study begins the analysis in each city in the mid-1990s, not only to capture the early days of the emerging homelessness crisis in Canadian cities but also to set the beginning of the study period at a time before any of the governance networks were created. The mid-1990s provide a policy baseline in Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto from which to track policy changes attributable to homelessness governance networks and, by doing so, test key precepts of network governance theory.

This approach is consistent with the classic historical institutionalist approach of political scientists Peter Hall (1986), Paul Pierson (2004), and Theda Skocpol (1979), who maintain that the unique institutional features of each city, as well as the sequencing of events and historical timing in that particular context, are significant to policy development. To establish a causal link between governance network properties and certain dimensions of policy development – in particular, policy innovation and system coordination – we must isolate important moments in the governance network creation and evolution and identify corresponding effects on policy. According to political scientist Evan Lieberman (2001), one of the first steps in comparative historical analysis is what is known as *periodization* – that is, dividing up the chronology of the study into analytically and even theoretically consequential periods. Periods are generally marked by variation in a potentially important explanatory factor, whether it be the one we seek to prove as meaningful (e.g., governance network structure, metagovernance changes, or network dissolution) or potential alternative explanations (e.g., local institutional reforms, the leadership of particular actors or organizations, or policy idea diffusion).

Following this method, this study examines three distinct periods: the period before the governance networks were created (pre-1995), the period of the bulk of their existence (1996–2014), and the most recent period (2015–present). Before 1995, none of the eight governance networks was in existence; thus, it is important to establish a policy baseline during this

period. Beginning in 1996, the governance networks began to appear – TO-emerg and CAL-main in 1996, VAN-emerg and CAL-CHF in 1998, and the remaining four networks in 2000 – and all of them are analyzed from the date of their creation to 2014, the end of the second period under investigation. The final period is short, but it is critical to examine it as a distinct period, since major changes were made in 2014 to the the federal government's metagovernance of the networks, and metagovernance, as discussed in the next chapter, is an important part of the theoretical framework guiding this analysis.

In the following pages, I present the findings for each city using longitudinal and comparative policy analysis. I have drawn on archival records over a twenty-year period, beginning in 1995, since tracking the development and implementation of policy requires a historical process-tracing approach. The archival documents include meeting minutes and policy documents from all of the governance networks, special task force reports, city and regional council documents, and provincial and federal government policy plans and reports. Complete sets of available meeting minutes for all governance networks under investigation were obtained from the networks' leadership. In addition, more than seventy interviews were conducted with key government and civil society actors in all three jurisdictions to gain perspective on internal policy debates and dynamics within the governance networks and government bureaucracies.

Because investigating network governance requires engagement with ground-level data-collection methods, I used extensive participant observation of governance network policy planning and decision making in all three cities from 2011 to 2015. This enabled me to view the governance network dynamics in real time, including meetings, subcommittee work, and deliberative decision making regarding program investments. Viewing governance networks in action is essential to capturing the properties of network governance that may have an effect on policy development. Being immersed in the institutional setting enabled me to observe the structural forces at work on network actors' daily lives and actions and to collect empirical data on the relationship between structure and agency, as articulated by political ethnographer Jan Kubik (2009). In addition, as suggested by anthropologist Janine Wedel and her colleagues (2005), participant observation is essential to understanding how state policies and government processes are experienced and interpreted by people within networks, whether those individuals represent government, a particular interest group, or another aspect of civil society.

In Vancouver, I was embedded among network members for an intensive five weeks in the winter of 2012, and I made shorter follow-up observational visits from 2012 to 2015. In Calgary, I made multiple week-long visits throughout 2014 and 2015, and in Toronto, I attended bimonthly network meetings over two years, from 2011 to 2013, and made follow-up visits from 2014 to 2015. Participant observation also allowed me to extract data from a unique natural experiment in decision making in one of the Vancouver governance networks; using these data, I was able to examine the differences between investment decisions made by the governance network and those made within the bureaucracy allocating those same investments. I also used investment data from all of the governance networks and municipal governments for a comparative analysis of policy priorities.

This study therefore draws upon a diverse suite of research methods ranging from quasi-experimental quantitative decision-making analysis, to comparative historical policy analysis using archival records, to qualitative analysis based on interviews and participation observation. All of these methods are essential to establishing how and why governance networks matter to homelessness policy development in these cities.

Conclusion

This book is fundamentally concerned with examining the governance issues associated with homelessness in major Canadian cities, particularly the practice and variability of governance processes on the ground. It represents a rare longitudinal comparative analysis of homelessness policy-making in three major Canadian cities. Because homelessness in Canada and elsewhere is rarely viewed through the lens of governance and politics, we are missing information not only about the political dimensions of the distribution of resources in society and the political-economic structures that contribute to homelessness but also about the practicalities of governance in this sector.

Conventional theories in political science and public administration do not adequately explain the variation in homelessness trends and policy that we see across the these three Canadian cities. In this book, I explore how different structures, properties, and dynamics of homelessness governance explain these divergent policy developments in Vancouver, Toronto, and Calgary. In particular, if civil society actors – in this case, shelter and drop-in centre providers, affordable housing providers and activists, mental health and addiction professionals – are included in substantive policy

planning and decision making in governance networks, what is the effect on homelessness policy?

In addition to exploring the concrete issue of homelessness governance and policy-making in Canadian cities, *Building a Collaborative Advantage* builds on conversations and theory development in the academic literature related to network governance, deliberative democracy, and metagovernance. It also expands upon emerging theories of network governance in public administration, responding directly to recent calls from scholars such as John Dryzek (2010) and Robyn Keast and colleagues (2014) to more concretely theorize the study of network governance. It is not well understood which institutional and relational features of network governance are most critical to facilitating productive policy deliberations and decision making, and the controlled comparative analysis of eight homelessness governance networks can help clarify this by identifying mechanisms that underlie the causal relationships. This contribution to theory-building bridges the literatures on metagovernance (how the state designs and manages networks), network governance (how properties of networks shape policy development), and deliberative democracy (how policy is shaped through persuasion and brokerage) to construct a generalized model linking network governance to policy outputs. This model, as we will see, can be used to explain the differences in homelessness policy innovation and system coordination in Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto, but it can also be applied across policy domains. *Building a Collaborate Advantage* draws on and adds to emerging theories of network governance that challenge conventional explanations from political science for policy variation that privilege the individual leadership of elected officials, the intergovernmental relations between different levels of government, and the diffusion dynamics of policy ideas.

This book contributes to ongoing debates on whether governance networks enhance policy innovation and system coordination via persuasion from diverse policy actors (see Borins, 2008; Considine et al., 2009; Paquet, 1999; Strumpf, 2002) or sustain the status quo by promoting compromise and lowest-common-denominator policy (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2004; Scharpf, 1999). How much "policy space" should governance networks be granted by the state metagovernors? Are governance networks truly deliberative in nature? This analysis of developments in three cities shows that it is not merely the properties of the governance networks that shape their impact on public policy development: how those networks are placed in the policy-making arena and managed by the state, what scholars have identified

as the metagovernance context, also plays a role (Doberstein, 2013). The metagovernance context determines the arena and the rules of the game, and this context, as we will see, powerfully shapes the policy-making potential and deliberative opportunities of governance networks.

In a broader sense, this book builds on Canadian and international public administration scholarship that challenges the predominant thinking in the West about public administration in the twenty-first century, which favours a leaner public service that is expected to tackle more complex public problems amidst growing expectations of inclusive decision making (Conteh & Roberge, 2013; Leone & Ohemeng, 2011). That there is considerable variation in homelessness policy among Canadian cities strongly suggests that the design and execution of governance institutions matters, and this, in turn, has important public administration implications for other policy issues that also have complex multi-jurisdictional dynamics. Many policy sectors in Canada (including immigrant settlement, health care, economic development, neighbourhood revitalization, urban Aboriginal governance, and homelessness) have seen the emergence of an abundance of new and complex multi-level and network governance institutions in which government and civil society actors jointly engage in institutionalized policy planning and decision making. These governance networks remain underinvestigated by scholars in Canada, despite their increasingly significant role in the policy process. Political scientist Grace Skogstad (2003) reminds us that there is a plurality of conceptions of legitimate political authority in Canada, including state-centred, expert, private (market), and popular authority. Indeed, the contemporary challenge for governing is how to reconcile demands for direct participation with traditional representative democracy. One path forward is that taken by the governance networks examined in the following chapters.