

It Takes Three: Making Space for Cities in Canadian Federalism

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Canadian cities are on the front lines addressing and dealing with the impacts of Canada's major policy challenges, including the COVID-19 crisis. However, they remain "little siblings" in Canadian federalism, often ignored by the federal government or overruled by the provinces. This paper examines four specific challenges cities face because of this situation, as well as two fundamental steps that can be taken to address the imbalance in Canadian governance and fiscal relations.

Read the full paper: bit.ly/IMFG-It-Takes-Three

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Challenges:

Paternalism: Cities face unnecessary or too stringent oversight over their decision making.

Constrained finances: A mismatch exists between a city's responsibilities and its ability to pay for them.

Poor coordination: There is a lack of clarity on provincial and municipal responsibilities due to overlapping jurisdiction or unclear cost-sharing.

Fragmentation: A lack of adequate governance structures prevents coordination among cities in a metropolitan region.

Solutions:

Clarify the powers and responsibilities of cities, and ensure they have the resources to meet their responsibilities.

Deepen federal-provincial-municipal relations by creating formal avenues for regular collaboration and agreements to address shared policy challenges.