

# Canadian Rental Housing Policy: Implications for Immigrants

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# Rental Housing in Canadian Cities: Barriers and Solutions to Implementation

- Research study funded through SSHRC Insight Development Grant, 2017-2020
- Goals:
  - catalyze new municipal policies and programs in rental housing through policy learning
  - synthesize knowledge from case study cities on barriers and solutions to rental housing protection and development through systematic case comparison
- Implications of these findings for immigrants
  - Immigrants have higher than average rates of renting, as high as 57% in Toronto and 63% in Vancouver (Stats Can 2018)
  - Immigrants live in rental housing much longer than the Canadian-born population (Thomas 2015)
  - Immigrant households typically have lower than average incomes

# Research Questions

- What are the barriers to implementation and protection of rental housing in Canadian cities?
- How have municipal planners, housing providers, and developers overcome these barriers to implement solutions to the protection of existing and implementation of new rental housing?
- What is the role of the new National Housing Strategy in supporting development or preservation of rental housing in municipalities?

# Methodology

Phase 1 (September 2017-September 2018)

Phase 2 (September 2018-July 2019)

## **Policy Analysis**

Examine the plans, policies, and strategies of 15 Canadian municipalities

## **Survey**

Ask municipal planners, developers, housing organization staff about barriers and solutions in the 15 municipalities

## **Meta-Analysis**

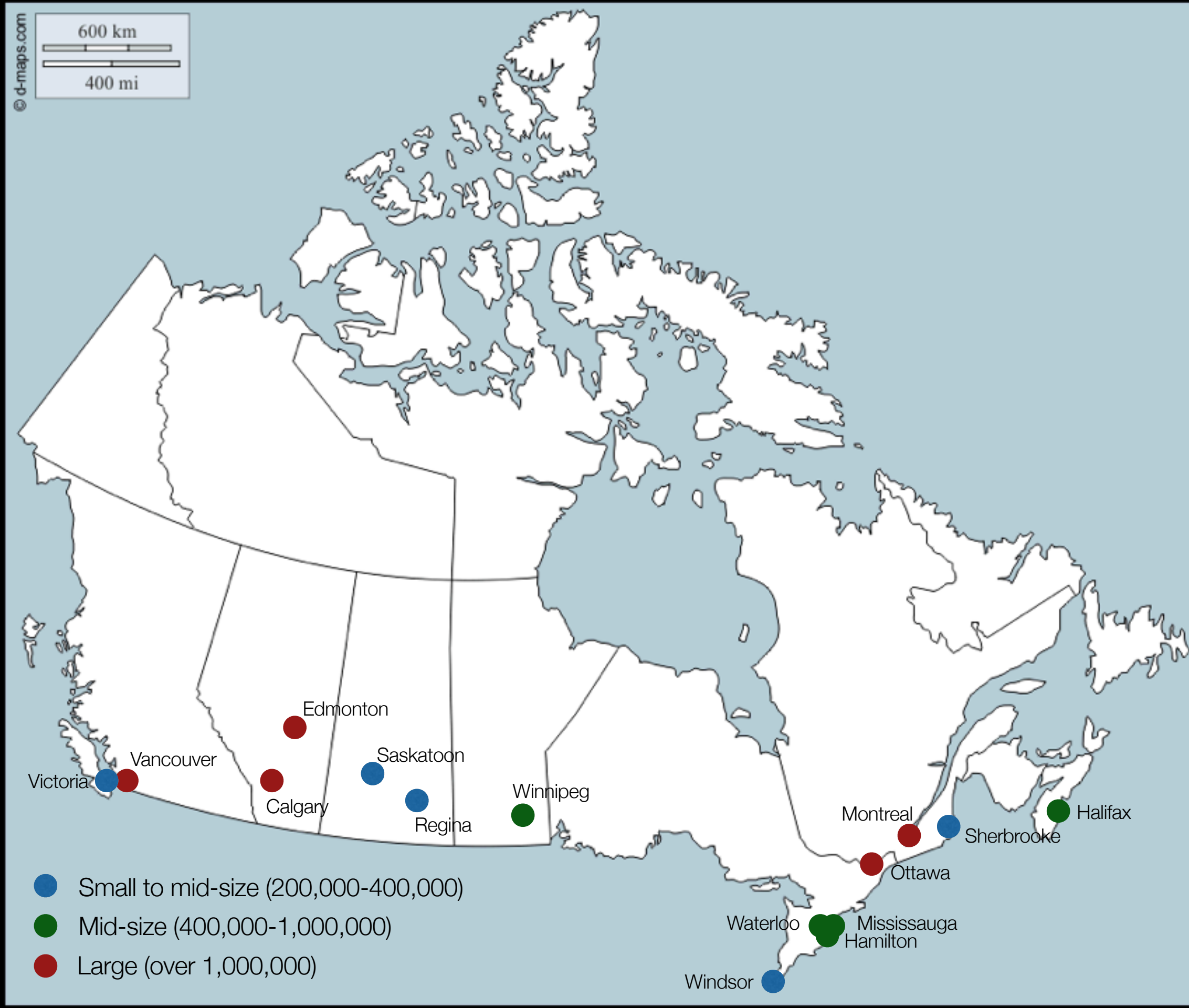
Determine the similarities/differences across the cases and the analytically generalizable trends and policy lessons

## **Policy Learning Workshop**

Share the policy solutions with municipal planners, provincial planning staff, developers, and housing organization staff in Halifax

# The Case Studies

The 15 cities were chosen for their population size and range of approaches to rental housing policy, plans, and programs



# Policy Comparison

## COMMON TO ALL

- Rent supplements
- Renovation/rehabilitation programs
- Policies encouraging secondary suites

## COMMON TO SOME

- Condominium conversion policies
- Reduction/elimination of development fees
- Capital grants for new rental units
- Sale of municipal land for affordable housing
- Inclusionary zoning
- Property tax exemptions

## UNCOMMON TO MOST

- Municipal development corporations
- Plans emphasizing affordable housing near transit
- Housing reserve funds
- Land banks

## UNIQUE

- Vancouver: Rental 100 Secured Market Rental Housing Policy, Foreign Buyers' Tax, Vacancy Tax By-Law
- Saskatoon Rental Development Program
- Province of Québec AccèsLogis program
- Province of Manitoba Rental Housing Construction Tax Credit Program

# Policy Comparison

## COMMON TO ALL

- Rent supplements
  - Renovation/rehabilitation programs
  - Policies encouraging secondary suites
- Rent supplements to low-income tenants through CMHC
  - Renovation programs to allow units to remain affordable—specific programs for rooming houses (Halifax, Winnipeg, Sherbrooke, Montreal)
  - Secondary suites—Calgary and Vancouver allow them across the city and Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Victoria, and Edmonton provide significant funding to create units

# Policy Comparison

## COMMON TO SOME

- Condominium conversion policies
- Reduction/elimination of development fees
- Capital grants for new rental units
- Sale of municipal land for affordable housing
- Inclusionary zoning
- Property tax exemptions

- Thirteen cases have condo conversion policies—Vancouver, Saskatoon, Hamilton, and Windsor are strongest, Regina and Sherbrooke the weakest
- Six cases offer fee exemptions for non-profits building affordable housing, and Vancouver, Waterloo, and Hamilton specifically offer these to developers building rental housing. Ottawa, Edmonton, and Hamilton require long-term affordability
- Nine cases allow municipal land to be used for affordable housing
- Eight cases allow inclusionary zoning/housing, but Vancouver is by far the strongest
- Seven cases exempt property taxes for non-profit developers, Saskatoon for up to 10 years for new rental projects



# Policy Comparison

## UNCOMMON TO MOST

- Municipal development corporations
- Plans emphasizing affordable housing near transit
- Housing reserve funds
- Land banks

- Four cases have municipal development corporations: Hamilton, Victoria, Vancouver, and Saskatoon
- Four cases connect low-income or rental housing to transit infrastructure: Waterloo, Edmonton, Montreal, and Vancouver—Vancouver is the most explicit
- Three cases have housing reserve funds used to build affordable housing: Victoria, Vancouver, and Saskatoon
- Three cases have land banks: Saskatoon, Victoria, and Montreal—Saskatoon is the most advanced and oldest

# Policy Comparison

## UNIQUE

- Vancouver: Rental 100 Secured Market Rental Housing Policy, Foreign Buyers' Tax, Vacancy Tax By-Law
  - Saskatoon Rental Development Program
  - Province of Québec AccèsLogis program
  - Province of Manitoba Rental Housing Construction Tax Credit Program
- **Vancouver's Rental 100**: Offers a package of incentives to developers to build 100% rental buildings that will stay rental for 60 years or for the life of the building
  - **Vancouver's Foreign Buyers' and Vacancy Tax By-Laws** aim to bring more condo units into the secondary rental market
  - **Saskatoon's Rental Development Program** (in partnership with the Province) provides up to 70% of the cost of new affordable rental units
  - **Québec's AccèsLogis program** crowdsources public, community, and private resources to create permanent rental housing for low- to middle-income households
  - **Manitoba's RHCTC** allows developers to earn tax credits if at least 10% of the units are affordable and remain affordable for five years

# Survey Results

- Survey of municipal planners, non-profit housing organizations, and developers in the 15 case study cities
- 194 responses, 102 complete; response rate 48.6% (all responses), 25.5% (completed responses)

Public	Private	Non-Profit	Total
45	18	39	102
44.1%	17.6%	38.2%	100%

# Barriers to Implementation of Policies

- Incentive-based approaches have a limited ability to influence rental housing compared to market forces
- Inflexible government funding programs
- Lack of community support for densification, multifamily housing outside core area
- Lack of funding from federal and provincial governments
- Difficulties coordinating partnerships/lack of communication

# Protecting Existing Rental Units

- Social (public) and non-profit rental housing is well protected, but not private rental
- Most of the case studies have at most one tool to protect rental housing: a condo conversion by-law

# Obstacles Overcome

- Increased cross-sector collaboration and communication
- Increased capacity building
- Political leadership/will has increased
- Increased appreciation of the need for rental housing, better able to address NIMBY
- Introduced incentives and tools for developers
- New funding from CMHC will enable preservation of non-profit and co-op housing

# Implications for Immigrants

- Most municipalities support the development of new rental housing, but even when it is built it's not affordable
- Preservation of existing rental units is uncommon—and it is the existing units that are often more affordable
- Municipal housing plans/strategies and housing sections of Official Plans are often poorly linked to Land Use By-Laws, and in particular to Transportation Plans
- Municipalities do not target housing to specific demographic groups (e.g. immigrants, seniors) although they often acknowledge that these groups are low-income and have different household sizes or needs

# Conclusions

- **Policies fell into four groups:** there was a lot of variation in the strength of the policy/program and the intent of the municipality to implement it
- **Barriers to implementation and protection of rental housing:** lack of funding; lack of collaboration/communication; inflexible government programs; lack of resident support; difficulty enforcing standards/policies
- **Overcoming the barriers:** increased cross-sector collaboration/communication, capacity building, and political will; appreciation of the need for rental housing; introduction of incentives/tools
- **Some progress in expanding rental housing stock:** demographic groups such as immigrants, who rely upon affordable rental units in particular, are affected



## Planning in high school? Black Business Initiative partners with Dalhousie

Last Friday, May 18th, the Dalhousie School of Planning was thrilled to offer a workshop for African Nova Scotian high school students in partnership with the Black Business Initiative in Halifax. Eight students attended our workshop on planning and ten attended the workshop on architecture held by the School of Architecture on the same day. Architecture professor James Forren pursued this idea with BBI throughout the fall, and then recommended that the School of Planning get in touch so we could possibly hold a parallel workshop. We all felt that this was a great way to introduce high school students to our disciplines, which most of them don't know about until well into their undergrad degree. BBI aims to introduce stud



## Using videos in planning education

Planning education reaches far beyond the classroom. As practicing planners, we need to make sure that residents, business leaders, and city councillors understand planning concepts such as the need for increased density in urban corridors, growth management strategies and travel demand management. In this post, I'm going to introduce some videos that introduce people to planning concepts and issues.

### Planning Discipline

Our amazing Dalhousie School of Planning alumni, Byung-Jun Kang and Uytae Lee, produced this video in partnership with the Licensed Professional Planners Association of Nova Scotia. It gives beginners a brief glimpse into the field of planning, and might be useful for conversations and presentations to the general public. We also use it on our School of Planning website to help potential students understand what kinds of work they will do when they graduate from our programs.

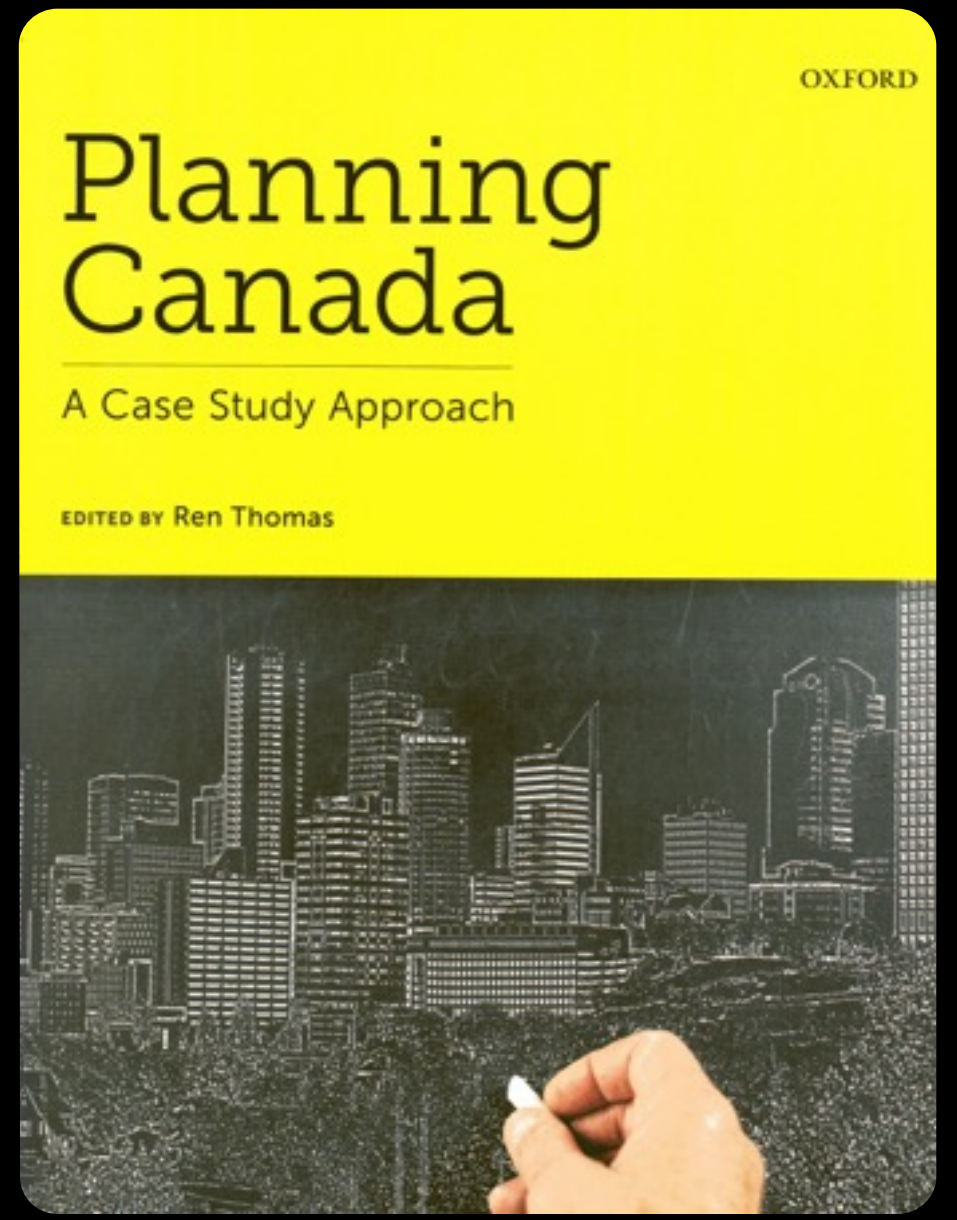


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