Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership

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Comparative Rental Housing Trends and Policy Contexts in Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver since the 1970s

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Principal Investigator with email address	David Hulchanski (PI for internal UofT reasons; research will be carried out by Greg Suttor]
Co-investigator/s	**Greg Suttor** greg.suttor@utoronto.ca
Community Partner/s	The NCRP Rental Housing Working Group will serve as an advisory committee.

1.   Rationale & Potential Policy Relevance

Rental housing and related neighbourhood change is one NCRP research priority. Trends in these are significantly shaped by broad and evolving rental market conditions, and these are affected by policy.

Understanding how the policy and market context has evolved is essential for understanding and interpreting observed change in rental housing and in neighbourhoods. The proposed comparative review of three CMAs will help explain differing trends as well as documenting shared trends. Provincial policy is dominant in rental housing (within a shared but waning federal regime) but local policy is also significant.

Examples of divergent context include: growth rates; housing prices and tenure split; municipal roles; rent control; timing/severity of downturns; Montreal's large prewar stock; the larger relative scale of Toronto's postwar rental; social housing production (e.g. Ontario's 1991-93 peak, more post-1995 in Quebec and BC.)

There is no existing comparison of this sort. A comparative overview will be useful context for any more detailed studies that may be carried out for particular CMAs. It is feasible as well as useful to describe, analyse, and compare the main elements of the evolving context in one research report.

Three cases are proposed, to contain the scope: Toronto/Ontario, Vancouver/BC, and Montréal/Québec province – containing 40 percent of Canadian rental housing (77% of rental housing in the 8 CMAs the NCRP focuses on). This research could be extended to more CMAs/provinces.

2.   Research Questions

1) What have been the characteristics and trends in rental housing stock, production, rents, 'filtering' and other change in the Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver rental markets, by sub-period from the 1970s to today?

2) What have been the main shifts in provincial and municipal policy in these CMAs relating to private rental housing (e.g. official priorities, rent control, landlord-tenant law, taxation, promotion of supply, rehabilitation, conversion controls, other) by sub-period from the 1970s to today?

3) What have been the main shifts in provincial and municipal social housing policy (e.g. funding, official priorities, production, targeting, renewal/repair) by sub-period from the 1970s to today?

4) What have been the main differences by sub-period, in general or for particular CMAs?

5) What have been the main differences between the CMAs and their respective provincial contexts?

3.   Specific Fit with the NCRP Objectives & Research Questions

The research is aligned with the approved NCRP SSHRC proposal in situating observed neighbourhood and spatial trends in the context of government policy, and of restructuring processes at the metropolitan and broader levels. It provides needed context for policy recommendations that are intended as part of NCRP.

The research is aligned with the framework for the rental neighbourhoods stream of NCRP, especially the explicit interest in housing policies and housing market dynamics as context for the neighbourhood trends; and research questions "How and why did these problems evolve…?"; "What policies have been enacted…?"

4.   Research Design & Methods

The research will draw principally on data (housing supply, stock change, etc.) and key informant interviews. Reference will also be made to selected documents/reports identified by key informants or at the outset.

Key informants are emphasized more than documents, as many of the latter are obscure or forgotten, and the concern is the main parameters of market context and of policy/programs rather than the details. The study will not address the detailed how-and-why of policy change.

Stages of the research to be as follows:

1) Framework and sources: (a) Identify data sources, key informants, and any available key documents /reports; (b) Refine analytical framework, e.g. main parameters as in research questions above.

2) Information-gathering: (a) Compile comparative data; (b) Carry out key informant interviews; (c) Review documents/reports; (d) Supplementary information-gathering if needed during stage 3.

3) Analysis and report-writing: (a) Carry out comparative analysis; (b) Write report.

4) Revise report (after review).

Up to five key informants will be identified for each of Vancouver/BC, and Montréal/Québec; fewer for Toronto /Ontario, with which the researcher is intimately familiar. One or two key informants or NCRP team members in each CMA will be asked to review the draft report. For local policy, the focus will be each CMA's main municipalities only, i.e. the central municipality and the regional authority if relevant.

Work will be carried out by the co-investigator, who has long experience in this type of work.

5.   Role of Community Partner/s

- This is background, contextual research in support of the NCRP's focus on private rental housing using the Rental Housing Disadvantage Index (RHDI) to help define geographies for further study.
- The NCRP Rental Housing Working Group will serve as the academic/community advisory committee for this research.

6.   Role of Students / Research Assistants and Contributions to Training

The co-investigator completed a PhD (University of Toronto in 2014), on Canadian social housing policy evolution and impacts. He was a municipal housing policy advisor/researcher for 20+ years in Toronto, with stints at the Ontario government, and does consulting in this field. He understands rental market issues and policy, has policy contacts in the three cities, and has carried out comparative work.

7. Schedule

Nov 2014   Research ethics approval + stage 1 (identify sources, informants, etc. & refine framework)

Dec - Feb   Stage 2 – Information-gathering

Feb-Mar 2015   Stage 3 – Analysis and report-writing

April-May 2015 Stage 4 – Review & revisions

8. Outcomes / Deliverables

Research report of about 15,000 words (with related tables and a few graphics). Potential journal article and/or NCRP book chapter.
- NCRP team will determine whether other forms of summaries and dissemination methods are appropriate.
- A Phase 2 focussed on more CMAs/provinces will be considered by the NCRP rental housing working group depending on the results and an assessment of the method.

9. Budget Explanation

Budget covers time of the co-investigator. Actual hours to be invoiced monthly with a limit of $14,000. Estimated maximum is based on $50/hour @ 14 hours/week X 20 weeks Nov-May (this is net of weeks for Christmas/New Year + reviewer time).

☐   Sent to the NCRP's Research Advisory Board for comment: date _____ deadline: _____
☐   Funding approved by the NCRP's Board: $ 14,000 _____   date_____

Funding approved by NCRP

Fun

SSHRC Budget Worksheet

	Amount requested from NCRP	Contributions (In-Kind / Cash)	Contribution source	Total Project Cost
Personnel costs				
Student salaries and benefits/Stipends				
Undergraduate*				
Masters *				
Doctorate *				
Non-student salaries and benefits/Stipends				
Postdoctoral	$14,000			$14,000
Other				
Travel and subsistence costs				
Applicant/Team member(s)				
Canadian travel				
Foreign travel				
Students				
Canadian travel				
Foreign travel				
Other expenses				
Non-disposable equipment (specify)				
Other expenses (specify)				
Total	$14,000			$14,000