

Homelessness in Winnipeg, Manitoba:
An Analysis of Local Government Inaction

MPA Research Report

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Abstract

This report uses a qualitative approach to study local government inaction on homelessness in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Core areas of Winnipeg are rife with poverty, violence, substance abuse and lack of adequate housing. Combined with limited economic interest and extremely long wait lists for social programming, the homeless population in Winnipeg continues to grow. While other cities in Canada have begun to address this issue from a local level, Winnipeg has yet to do so. Using a comparative study, as well as recent literature and interviews, this report explores why the City of Winnipeg continues to go without an active anti-homelessness strategy. Findings from the literature and interviews indicate that failure of multi-level government agreements and the city's economic and ideological interests are the driving factors behind the city's inaction.

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1. Introduction

Research Question

Local governments are consistently being challenged to meet high expectations. These expectations are placed on them by the public, other levels of government and non-governmental organizations. Presently, cities are often engaged in economic development, community services, housing, and social issues.

This research explores one of the many social issues that cities across Canada are being challenged with; homelessness. The focus of this study is on Winnipeg, Manitoba. While homelessness is a blatant problem in the core areas of Winnipeg, the local government of the day has not taken any lead on addressing this dire situation. I use a qualitative approach to understand why the City of Winnipeg has remained inactive in addressing homelessness. From the data I draw conclusions around the philosophy of the City of Winnipeg, the complexities of multi-level governance and the economic drive of the current council.

Context

Homelessness is not an independent issue; it is a symptom of poverty. Tackling issues of poverty at macro level may seem daunting; therefore focusing on specific aspects of poverty has the potential to make the task more feasible. Looking at homelessness in Winnipeg as a specific issue is not meant ignore the other

components of poverty such as violence, addiction, mental illness and structural barriers. Rather it is grounded in the understanding that secure housing, and sense of home are recognized as important prerequisites to addressing those other issues.

Homelessness does not have a single definition. It is often viewed in four distinct categories; Absolute, Sheltered, Hidden and At Risk (Government of Manitoba, 2012).

1. Absolute: Those that do not have conventional housing alternatives and do not stay in shelters, safe houses, or transition facilities
2. Sheltered: Those who self report not having a permanent residence and are currently residing in emergency shelters, safe houses or transition facilities
3. Hidden: Likely the most common form. Those who do not have secure housing. Families or individuals who would sleep on the streets/shelters but are often bouncing between friends and family
4. At Risk: Those who are at risk of losing their homes. Fleeing abuse, losing a job, addiction, mental illness etc.

The City of Winnipeg is failing to meet the basic needs of its most vulnerable citizens. According to the 2006 Census, 135 000 Winnipeggers were at risk of homelessness, and 9865 Winnipeggers were considered homeless. *“Winnipeg’s First Annual Report Card on Homelessness”*, conducted by the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg believes that this number will continue to rise if unsustainable, ‘band aid

solutions' to homelessness continue (2009). The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg also released an eight page policy recommendation based on an earlier report entitled "A Place to Call Home: Homelessness in Winnipeg in 2011." The policy recommendation began like this:

In Winnipeg, the shortage of safe and affordable housing and rental housing in general, has reached a critical level. Many inner city residents live without the basic needs most Winnipeggers take for granted – running water, proper plumbing, heat in winter, and locks on doors. At the same time, our report *A Place to Call Home: Homelessness in Winnipeg in 2011* revealed that emergency shelter use has increased by 14 percent in the past three years (2012).

Winnipeg's Housing Policy (1999) is out dated and has done little to improve the affordable housing conditions. Winnipeg has the lowest vacancy rate of anywhere in Canada at 0.9% (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2012). A quick glance around the core area of Winnipeg is enough to notice that housing infrastructure is literally falling apart. In addition, poverty, violence, substance abuse, lack of adequate housing, limited economic interest and extremely long wait lists for social programming add to the long list of problems in Winnipeg's core neighbourhoods and inner city decline (Carter, 2010).

Additionally, these are the neighbourhoods where Winnipeg's urban Aboriginal population is concentrated. Making up about ten percent of Winnipeg's

population, the poverty and homelessness faced by Aboriginal people upon arriving to Winnipeg from reserves is taking a huge toll on not only the people themselves, but the city as well (Carter, 2010). Whether or not homelessness is looked at from a social justice perspective or economic perspective, improving the quality of life within Winnipeg's inner city is a necessity. The Aboriginal population in Winnipeg is a young population; in 2006 approximately fifty percent of the Aboriginal population in Winnipeg was under 25 (Carter, 2010). A young population that does not have secure housing is likely not going to be contributing to the local economy. Aboriginal people are often faced with discrimination upon arrival to Winnipeg. This discrimination often contributes to feelings of isolation, substance abuse and lack of employment. While there are community groups and initiatives to address Aboriginal needs and issues, Aboriginal peoples are largely underrepresented in decision making groups (Walker, 2003).

In 2000, with funds administered through the City of Winnipeg from the National Homelessness Initiative, the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative developed a plan for Winnipeg. Unfortunately this plan did not meet the national requirements, which ended up to be a positive decision as the plan was sloppily put together and had extremely limited community consultation. In 2001 another proposal was submitted (when there was only supposed to be one submitted, which demonstrates the city's lackadaisical approach to these initiatives), which was created by a newly formed group "Community Partnership on Homelessness and Housing." This group had several community members, economic development members, and importantly, an Aboriginal Reference Group

(Leo, 2008). Unfortunately once the Federal government approved the funding, it was evident that the community level suggestions were not acted upon. The community needed funding for renovations, upgraded housing and more spaces. Funding was given for emergency shelters and food banks, and while these important social services, it was not what the community had recommended (Leo, 2008). This happened again when the City of Winnipeg established the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative, which is the administrative unit to provide funds to community groups with proposals for tackling homelessness. Again, their mandate was to provide funding for shelters and emergency services for street involved people, instead of being put into the necessary affordable housing and renovations that could truly make a difference (Leo, 2008).

While Winnipeg continues receives funding from the federal government for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2012), they lack any real policy to specifically address the homelessness situation. Without a comprehensive homelessness strategy, groups and organizations who are tackling homelessness will continue to be provided with little to no direction.

Methodology

Understanding why a city may or may not choose to embark upon tackling issues such as homelessness requires a qualitative approach. Interviews with different employees who have worked or continue to work for the City of Winnipeg

were conducted. Other interviews included members of non-government organizations. Interviews were conducted in order to gain a deeper understanding of why Winnipeg has responded to homelessness in the way they have.

The objective of this study is to determine why the City of Winnipeg remains inactive in addressing homelessness. This is considered in a context where there is federal funding available for homelessness initiatives, and the City of Winnipeg has committed themselves to administer these funds. The City also addresses the need for better and increased affordable housing in their 25 year strategic plan “OurWinnipeg (2011).”

Two cross-city comparisons were conducted in order to establish that there are Canadian cities out there currently attempting to tackle homelessness. They are taking part in multi-level agreements, but championing the cause from a city level. Edmonton was chosen as a comparison to Winnipeg as it has similar issues around homelessness. These include a large urban Aboriginal population, cold winter weather, and social problems which are concentrated within a few areas. Vancouver, while having a different housing market than Winnipeg, does share some similarities. The street homeless population is very evident in concentrated areas, as it is in downtown areas of Winnipeg. Lack of affordable housing is a barrier to addressing homelessness in both Vancouver and Winnipeg.

A cross-time comparison from the Mayor Glen Murray era vs. the Mayor Sam Katz era is also looked at in order to determine whether Winnipeg has ever been involved in addressing homelessness, and what role the city was playing in addressing social issues.

Six face-to-face interviews were conducted. The interviewees were selected in order to gain insight from various perspectives including current employees, politicians, Aboriginal groups, and community organizations. The aim was to ensure a well-rounded perspective from inside the City and from actors who engage with the city.

Ursula Stelman is the former director of Community Services for the City of Winnipeg. She began her career as a registered nurse working in the inner city of Winnipeg. She worked her way up to director of Community Services where she went through a great restructuring, where the city merged from 15 departments to 6 departments.

Jenny Gerbasi is a current member of council for the City of Winnipeg. She has served on Winnipeg's council in the Fort Rouge-East Fort Gary ward since 1998. She represents Winnipeg on the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Board, and is the chair of the Housing Steering Committee. She is actively involved in the community, receiving the Queen's diamond Jubilee Medal for her great contributions to Winnipeg and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

Jason Syvixay is the leader of Strategic Initiatives and Publics Relations for the Downtown BIZ (business improvement zone). The Downtown BIZ is the oldest business improvement zone in Winnipeg. Established in 1989, the BIZ is directed by an elected management board, comprised of downtown business owners. The BIZ is accountable to their stakeholders (the businesses) but work with community and

business groups to ensure Winnipeg's downtown is a safe, sustainable community. Much of their work is directed at safety, employment, and the image of downtown.

Dave Dessens is the current Policy Coordinator for Winnipeg Housing. In his own words: "I am employed by the City of Winnipeg as the Winnipeg Housing Policy Coordinator, and I coordinate administration of funding that supports projects that renew housing and build capacity in Winnipeg's core neighbourhoods. As well, I coordinate administration of funding from the federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy, which supports projects that serve people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the City of Winnipeg (Dessens, 2013)."

Christina Maes Nino is a policy and program analyst for the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg. The Social Planning Council is a non-profit organization that seeks to bring awareness around the social issues occurring in Winnipeg. They work with other community organizations, aboriginal groups and funding agencies to produce policy and program options, raise community awareness, promote partnership between levels of government and identify important community issues occurring in Winnipeg.

Damon Johnston is the president of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg. The council represents a voice for the Urban Aboriginal population in Winnipeg. The council is membership driven and seeks to support a vibrant, healthy and self sufficient Aboriginal community in Winnipeg.

All six respondents were asked nine questions (see Appendix A), but not surprisingly each interviewee had differing view points and tended to focus on their areas of expertise. However, despite different areas of employment and different

backgrounds, several factors from each interview stood out, offering potential explanations to the City's lack of action on homelessness.

2. Literature Review

In this review I introduce ideas around three concepts; cities and their economic interests, successes and limitations of multi-level governance, and the minimalist view of local governments. These topics pertain to homelessness for various reasons that will be discussed more generally throughout this review. These ideas will emerge again throughout the analysis and conclusion through a Winnipeg-specific lens.

Cities and their economic interests

Paul Petersen's hypotheses in "City Limits" suggests that cities invoke policy to advance their interests. This is applicable in determining why a city may not choose to champion a social justice issue. According to Petersen, cities do have interests, however the interest is not a total sum of individual interests rather the interest of a city as a whole. That interest can be defined as any policy that has the potential to advance a city's economic position, social prestige or political power (1981). Petersen argues that cities are not like national governments. City's have limits. These limits are around the movement of people and goods, and policy areas that are outside of the local government's jurisdiction. Therefore a city government must do what is good for the city as a whole, which does not necessitate that it will be in the interest of every individual citizen (Petersen, 1981).

Petersen also discusses the three different types of policies. Developmental, allocational, and redistributive. Any policy that enhances the economic position of the city is considered a developmental policy. According to Petersen's theory, these would be considered positive policies for a city, as they are intended to enhance a city's economic position, while creating better local services and greater revenue for the local government. Allocational policies are considered to have a neutral economic effect. Petersen uses the example of local government 'house-keeping' policies. Services that "reduce the likelihood of catastrophic conflagrations, wholesale violations of person and property, community epidemics and the use of public spaces as dumps and junkyards (Petersen, 1981, pg. 44)." Redistributive policies are policies that transfer monies to the unfortunate, and tend to be economically unproductive. For a city on a strict path to enhance itself through economic growth, redistributive policies are highly unfavourable.

In "Being Realistic about Urban Growth" Chris Leo and Katie Anderson discuss the North American obsession around 'growth.' Urban municipalities have become infatuated with the idea of growth as "a cure for all ills (Leo & Anderson, 2005)." Leo and Anderson posit that growth is not the solution for all cities, rather that cities must create policies and programs that are beneficial to the reality of their situation (2005). Using Winnipeg and Vancouver as examples of slow growth (Winnipeg) and fast growth (Vancouver), the differences between the cities are discussed. The result is that should cities care to advance the success and desirability of their cities their policies must be different. Slow growth cities that are engaging in fast growth policies will not necessarily produce the same results as

a fast growth city would. This steady focus on growth policy also often comes to the detriment of social policies, as they are not considered to encourage growth within a city. Excluding certain policies such as homelessness initiatives in favour of 'growth policies' will not always produce positive results in a slow growth city (Leo and Anderson, 2005).

Another important argument is that slow-growth and economic decline are not the same thing. While Winnipeg may not be experiencing growth at the same rate as other cities, this has not been in and of itself detrimental to Winnipeg. The problems that Winnipeg experiences come from a narrow tax base and economic growth that is occurring in a sprawling manner, which places added stress on the City to provide services in far out suburbs (Leo & Anderson, 2005). The sprawling in Winnipeg is also partly to blame for the deteriorating infrastructure, including housing stock, which is particularly important for this research. Inner city housing stock is quite literally crumbling. However, as Leo suggests, there is opportunity here for Winnipeg. Being in a slow growth city has the benefit of lower priced homes, meaning affordable housing in Winnipeg is much more 'affordable' to tax payers than in a city like Vancouver (2005). To Leo and Anderson's (2005) point it would bode well for Winnipeg to engage in an affordable housing strategy. Interestingly, it is currently Vancouver who is placing much more emphasis on providing affordable housing as a step to eradicating street homelessness (City of Vancouver, 2011).

Successes and Limitations of Multi-level Governance

Homelessness is not an issue that a single level of government can tackle on its own. Through various programs including the National Homelessness Initiative and affordable housing initiatives through the Canadian Housing and Mortgage Corporation, it seems that the Federal government has recognized this. While this is good news for cities across Canada as it gives them access to resources to tackle issues like homelessness, it also gives them the added responsibility of managing the funds properly.

Unfortunately multi-level agreements can be at high risk for running into problems. As discussed by Martin Horak in "Sites of Governance" accountability remains a problem in multilevel governance. Policy can reflect one level of government that may not express the public interest where the policy or program is occurring. Resources can create another problem; the level of government which holds the resources tends to hold the influence over the direction of the policy (2011). Yet if a problem presents itself throughout the course of the agreement, no level of government wants to claim responsibility for the problem. Accepting responsibility could risk providing more resources, or poor public perception. Unfortunately what often follows is 'finger-pointing' at which level of government is to blame for the mistake or the failure of the program. Coordinating the different levels of government and community organizations, business organization and residents is a tedious, yet crucial task. Without proper coordination multi-level agreements are bound to succumb to the above mentioned problems (Horak, 2011).

In “Deep Federalism through Local Initiative; Unbundling Sovereignty in Winnipeg,” Chris Leo and Todd Andres discuss a federalism that looks beyond constitutional jurisdictions and divisions of power (2008). In order to achieve an ‘unbundling of sovereignty’ governments must recognize that a changing of roles is required in order to accomplish goals at various levels of government. Leo and Andres are not calling for a grand devolution of power to provinces or cities, rather a recognition that what may be good for Vancouver, is not necessarily good for all other Canadian municipalities. With a shift from a focus on government to governance ‘deep federalism’ would attempt to maintain a degree of national standards while “ arrangements involving all three levels of government, which are structured to try to achieve various national objectives, while at the same time maintaining the degree of flexibility required if there is to be an appropriate accommodation of the very important differences among communities (Leo & Andres, 2008, pg. 94)” This seems to necessitate a need to know what makes communities different and what their different needs are, before one can begin to develop policy to address those needs.

The Minimalist View of the City

There are differing perspectives on what the role of a City should be. An older, although still popular perspective is that a municipal government should be a minimalist government. According to Osborne and Gaebler a city should introduce market principles within their work in order to improve outcomes (1992).

“Services to people” should be upheld by senior levels of government, with municipal governments acting as administrative agents that focus on “services to property. This view often finds support within the local business communities, as public institutions are encouraged to operate like a business (Leo, 2011). In “Reinventing Government,” Osborne and Gaebler (1992) put forth ten principles that public institutions should uphold in order to reform outdated, highly centralized models of government. These principles as listed suggest government should move to a entrepreneurial mode of governance:

1. Catalytic Government (steering rather than rowing)
2. Community-owned Government (empowering rather than serving)
3. Competitive Government (injecting competition into service delivery)
4. Mission-driven Government (transforming rule-driven organizations)
5. Results oriented government (funding outcomes, not inputs)
6. Customer-driven Government (meeting the needs of the customer, not the bureaucracy)
7. Enterprising Government (earning rather than spending)
8. Anticipatory Government (prevention rather than cure)
9. Decentralized Government (from hierarchy to participation and team work)
10. Market-oriented Government (leveraging change through the market).

By adopting these principles, Gaebler and Osborne (1992) believe governments will have the ability to better serve the public, while operating at a highly effective and efficient level.

3. Comparisons

In order to determine that there are options available for cities to tackle the issue of homelessness, two cities were looked at. Edmonton, Alberta and Vancouver, British Columbia are two cities that face some of the same homelessness problems as Winnipeg. However, in Edmonton and Vancouver, the City has taken it upon itself to try and address homelessness in their respective city.

Edmonton, Alberta

The City of Edmonton has developed a 10 Year Plan to End Street Homelessness. This initiative was championed by Mayor Stephen Mandel in an attempt to address some of the visible problems occurring on the streets of his city. In “A Place to Call Home” Mayor Mandel says,

The shame of us having the number of homeless people we have is very difficult for Edmontonians to accept. They’re saying that’s not acceptable. It’s time to come up with a roadmap, one which will deal with this in an effective manner. We really can’t bury our heads in the sand anymore (A Place to Call Home, 2009).

The program focuses on a “housing first” model, as well as prevention. “A Place to Call Home” took effect in January 2009 and has specific yearly targets. These include: increasing the affordable housing stock by 1000 units by 2014, decreasing

the length of stay in emergency shelters to maximum of 7 days by 2014, and producing annual report cards on progress and results to all levels of governments (A Place to Call Home, 2009). The targets are tangible, realistic and in short time increments. They are also holding themselves accountable by producing yearly reports, which have come out on their website every year since 2010.

This plan is an excellent model for cities who are looking to take homelessness seriously. It goes above the “band-aid solutions” of shelters and drop ins which only manage immediate crisis, but do not get to the root of the issue (A Place to Call Home, 2009).

Vancouver, British Columbia

The Housing and Homeless Strategy 2012-2021 developed in the City of Vancouver, aims to end street homelessness by 2015. Like Edmonton, they too have taken a “housing first” approach, and therefore have incorporated their homelessness strategy directly into their housing policy. Also similar to Edmonton is that Vancouver’s strategy was championed by council and the mayor. “A Home for Everyone (2012)” has three strategic directions; increasing the supply of affordable housing, encouraging a housing mix across all neighbourhoods that enhances quality of life, and providing strong leadership and supporting partners to enhance housing stability.

The City conducted a public consultation called “Talk Housing With Us Engagement Program” in 2011. They engaged with homeowners, renters, community organizations, developers and other interested parties and uncovered some interesting findings. Citizens were most concerned with protection of rental stock, zoning regulations and continued support from the mayor and council. They felt that partnerships were incredibly important, but that leadership should continue to come from their mayor and council (A Home for Everyone, 2012).

The City has recognized that addressing homelessness requires partnership and support. The policy outlines community partners, city family and government partners. 31 general groups throughout those three camps are involved, and many more individual organizations as well. They acknowledge that homelessness is not a singular issue. Affordable housing, rental housing, supportive housing, mental health and addictions all need to be considered when addressing homelessness (A Home for Everyone, 2012).

The City of Vancouver has been working hard at trying to address all the issues that surround housing and homelessness. They produce annual progress reports showing what they have done, how it matches their original goals and how they will continue to move forward (A Home for Everyone, 2012).

Cross-Time Comparison

Another important comparison to make is a cross-time comparison. Looking at how Winnipeg responded to social problems such as homelessness before current

Mayor Sam Katz took office, shows how Winnipeg was once much more actively involved in tackling social issues.

Former Mayor Glen Murray held office in Winnipeg from 1998-2004. Mayor Murray was a fierce champion for Canadian cities and believed they had the ability to invoke influence and change across a wide spectrum of issues. In Winnipeg he advocated for historical preservation, neighbourhood revitalization, more affordable housing, cleaning up downtown and developing a more positive relationship with Winnipeg's Aboriginal population. He was awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal and the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal for his outstanding contributions of citizenship and public service. Most notably for the purposes of this research was his involvement in First Steps: Municipal Aboriginal Pathways (MAP), the city's first urban Aboriginal policy. Murray recognized the social ills occurring in his city and believed it was his duty to address them (Leo, 2012). MAP was intended to create meaningful dialogue between the City and Aboriginal organizations within Winnipeg. From these consultations, recommendations that came straight from the community were put into the policy which included 5 distinct areas; Employment, Safety, Quality of Life, Economic Development and Outreach and Education. While this was not a specific housing and homelessness policy as we have seen in Edmonton and Vancouver, one of the main initiatives was affordable housing, which could be modified to fit specific needs. These needs were to be determined through continued consultation and open dialogue. Other programs included employment training, support services and cultural awareness training (City of Winnipeg, 2003). As suggested in its title, this policy document was intended to the 'first steps' of a

new relationship and of a new direction. This direction was intended to create a new, caring, healthy and vibrant Winnipeg. Unfortunately, when Mayor Sam Katz took over in 2004, the policy got scrapped.

Katz also postponed other Aboriginal initiatives put forth by Murray, and a noticeable shift in favour of the business community began to occur. While the business community certainly played an important role during Mayor Murray's tenure, Mayor Katz did not attempt to balance that role with social causes the way Murray had (Leo, 2012). Over his tenure Katz has continued to guide the City towards a minimalist government, often acting as an administrative agent and trying to contract out services whenever possible.

All three comparisons are important in the current context of the homelessness situation in Winnipeg. Edmonton and Vancouver are positive models of how partnerships and true cooperation can overcome some of the limitations of multi-level governance. They demonstrate how a city can champion an issue, and be a leader in producing effective policy that does not traditionally fall within their jurisdiction. Examining Winnipeg in the Glen Murray era also shows what potential a city has to drive change. By engaging in an open dialogue with the urban Aboriginal community Murray rallied funds from the Federal Government for an Urban Aboriginal Strategy, of which the Aboriginal Youth Internship still remains a part of the City (Leo, 2012). Being a voice for change, and an advocate for issues that matter in a city, can come from a city, as Murray once demonstrated in

Winnipeg. With the current data collected it becomes clear that strong leadership is essential for any social policy to be brought forth by a city, and these comparisons will be revisited in order to understand why Winnipeg is currently not addressing a social issue like homelessness.

4. Interview Findings

Data collected through the various interviews indicated two overarching reasons why the City of Winnipeg does not actively address homelessness. Failure of multi-level government agreements/cooperation and the city's economic and development interests. These two findings were drawn out from the interviews discussed below. A concluding analysis will follow the interview section, drawing on the previously reviewed literature, comparisons and findings.

Failure of multi-level government agreements and cooperation

a. Jurisdiction

All four interviewees gave a similar response when posed with the question of whose responsibility is it to deal with homelessness. The answer, while not simple, was everyone. Homelessness is not an issue that one level of government can respond to alone, particularly a junior level of government like a city. According to the literature, cooperation between various levels of government and non government actors has potential to produce tremendous results (Leo, 2008). Unfortunately that theory remains untested in Winnipeg in regards to homelessness. When asked about governmental cooperation around housing and homeless issues, Christina Maes Nino responded: "I would say the province probably understands housing quite well and has done a fair amount, but the city

and the province don't work very well together and that's been a real challenge in terms of utilizing resources better and making sure everyone is on the same page and getting things done faster (2013)." Councilor Jenny Gerbasi would agree with that: "I think what we need in this province is what they have done in other provinces, where they have a comprehensive strategy with everyone at the table working together...you just end up getting more done (2013)."

Dave Dessens, Winnipeg's Housing Policy Coordinator takes a little bit more of a hard line approach, "we don't want to take on obligations that are the responsibility of the other levels of government (2013)." He was however open to the idea of cooperation with other levels of government and other groups. He cited the Memorandum of Understanding between the City, the Province and Federal Government for the National Homelessness Initiative, but stated "homelessness has always been federal jurisdiction, until we were signed on to administer the funds [for the homelessness partnering initiative], we simply don't [sic] have the resources to address homelessness (2013)." Stelman also shared her experience over the course of 30 years working for the city. "Over the years that I've been part of the city structure the answer to that changed over time. Reorganization of city council, smaller, more and more decision making on part of council that the city level of government should be less and less involved with anything to do with senior policy agenda, so issues such as homelessness were regarded by and large by council as not really appropriate to be tackling from a city perspective (Stelman, 2013)." Stelman reiterates what was identified in the cross-time comparison, that Katz is seeking a minimalist perspective of local government. Following minimalist

tradition, “services to people” are not part of local government’s agenda (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). Stelman believes that tackling homelessness would involve very complex policy links and would require intergovernmental cooperation as well leadership from aboriginal groups. “It’s a big box to open, you have to have some sense what to do when you open that box and we aren’t there yet (Stelman, 2013).”

Interestingly, a significant component of the ‘big box,’ the urban Aboriginal population, was not seen as a large contributing factor to why the City would choose to not address homelessness in general. While there was agreement that Aboriginals were largely over represented in the homeless population, no one seemed to think that was a specific reason the City would choose not to act. When asked whether the large urban Aboriginal population effected the City’s decision to act, Stelman responded: “I don’t know that it’s a conscious decision on council’s part. I think the issues, of the seriousness of the social issues and also the fact that the issues of aboriginal peoples, specially urban aboriginal issues, is a complex one in terms of funding, certainly for a city level, but no I would not think so specifically.” Council Gerbasi would agree, believing that the one area where the City has made some progress is introducing the Aboriginal Youth Strategy, which focuses on getting Aboriginal youth educated and employed (Gerbasi, 2013).

Damon Johnston, President of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg shares Councilor Gerbasi’s view. “I don’t think its fair to say [the City] ignores it as a separate issue. Its much more about the effort that is being put into to bringing a more culturally appropriate response to aboriginal homelessness,” said Johnston, “and I think its possible in time, they have established an office of Aboriginal

Relations, which I think is and will continue to be a positive move forward (2013).” With that being said Johnston does feel that with Winnipeg housing the largest Urban Aboriginal population, that a homelessness strategy focusing on Urban Aboriginal issues would be beneficial, “we make up such a large part of the homeless population and I think there are some unique factors indicating or causing, or rooted in historical context. Those differences sometimes will determine whether or not you have a positive outcome when you work with Aboriginal individuals (2013).” Like the other interview respondents, Johnston felt jurisdictional issues were a problem, and continue to be a huge problem when addressing Urban Aboriginal issues:

Anytime you have more than one government there’s always going to be some jurisdictional issues. Historically Aboriginal peoples are in the constitution of Canada, there is federal responsibility clearly established for First Nations. To me its silly putty these jurisdictional disputes issues, it gets in the way of concrete solutions to these issues. Its used to stonewall the development of good policy and of good programming but its there, its real, its valid, and depending on who the government of the day is they will use it one way or the other, they will put more emphasis to hamper or hinder the development of policies (2013).

As Horak discusses in Site of Governance, fingers suddenly point in different directions if something goes wrong with a multi-level government issue (2011). No

one claims responsibility and people fall through the cracks. Without proper coordination of who is responsible for what, there are no consequences when mistakes are made. Without ownership and proper management of resources and responsibilities, appropriate outcomes will not be reached.

All interviewees were in agreement that resources for addressing homelessness in Winnipeg are limited, however they felt that consensus and cooperation with other levels of government would be a necessary first step. “The reality is the economic climate, its not the best, so monies available for any of these initiatives are limited. I would say that if you look at scale, supply and demand, the supply is not where it needs to be. This is what sometimes frustrate me...to me it’s a common sense equation, the economy is human beings, we produce everything. The people that produce more are generally more healthy than those who don’t. The more healthy people you have contributing to the economy the better. We can’t seem to get governments to go there and accept that premise,” said Damon Johnston when asked about adequate resources, he then added “If we want to do anything it has to be about cooperation, communication and collaboration with every level of government and every culture being treated as equals (2013).” Aboriginal peoples in Canada have a history of being a disenfranchised, often discriminated against group. While Aboriginal peoples have acted collectively, there is not a unified Aboriginal force to voice all concerns, particularly for urban Aboriginals. This, coupled with systemic discrimination, has left Aboriginal peoples largely excluded

from decision making processes, often which the results of these decisions have impacts on them (Walker, 2003).

The lack of resources to address every issue that has potential to arise in a city speaks to Petersen's understanding of the limits that cities have. Cities are not national governments and therefore must choose the services that will be the most effective to serve their citizens, but also advance their interest as a city (Petersen, 1981). However as pointed out by Councilor Gerbasi, "getting the ball rolling is not necessarily spending lots of money, just having the conversation, facilitating the process of pulling everyone together (2013)." Addressing homelessness on their own would be an impossible task for the City of Winnipeg, and certainly outside their limits of policy and control. However facilitation and cooperation with other levels of government are crucial for a city's success in many policy areas, and the ability to start a conversation is certainly within a city's limits. In order to make multilevel agreements work there needs to be a leader and a champion for the cause. Which leads to another problem that is occurring in Winnipeg; a lack of leadership in the area of homelessness.

b. Lack of Leadership

Leadership was a second common theme throughout the interviews. No one felt as if it was Winnipeg's responsibility to tackle such an issue on their own, but there was clear agreement that Winnipeg, should they so choose, has the ability to

champion the push for a change in attitude towards homelessness and how it has been dealt with in this city. In other municipalities such as Edmonton and Vancouver, the drive for change came from the city level, which brings a lot of legitimacy to a city's drive to tackle the issue of homelessness. Christina Maes Nino agrees, " Yes, I think everyone should fulfill their responsibility. All three levels of government need to work together on housing and homelessness, its not just the responsibility of one level. What I have seen is that cities that are really tackling the housing issues and the challenges that all cities in Canada are facing, the lead comes from the municipalities, it's the city saying we need the support of the provincial and federal government, and they can guide whatever happens with that and that hasn't happened here (Nino, 2013)." What Nino is advocating for is what Chris Leo is arguing for, deep federalism. As discussed, deep federalism is way for complex policy issues that often transcend city limits to be dealt with at a local level (Leo, 2008). A city like Winnipeg does not have the financial resources, the expertise or the administrative capacity to tackle this issue alone. Winnipeg does have a strong NGO community, who Jenny Gerbasi has realized are also calling for leadership from the city:

The call for leadership is coming from lots of people who are trying to provide leadership, but it would be a lot more powerful with a lead from the mayor, not just paying lip service.. Its just really strange that we are not, it would be an easy win for the mayor. The United Way (not led by the city) has the poverty reduction council, which have pushed to get city council and particularly the

mayor to say we are going to eliminate homelessness. We are going work on this, which is what many cities have done, and the province and city works together and have done poverty strategies and all sorts of things. Province is committed in legislation for a poverty reduction strategy. But when it comes to something like homelessness its generally done with everyone working together and in Winnipeg we have a really strong sector of NGOs and community economic development, we have the capacity. There has been talks but not initiatives led by the mayor. There's been a wish for that. (Gerbasi, 2013).

Jason Syvixay from Downtown BIZ would agree: "We need to channel everyone towards a direction. There are kind of turf wars too. When it comes to the different homelessness groups in the city and province and not because there's an unwillingness to work together but the social agencies are very committed to trying to find funding, and funding is very, very limited in our province for alleviation of homelessness. If there was leadership and vision from city, and commitment from the province and private sector saying look this where we want to be, this how we are going help the social agencies, this is their role, and this is the corporate role. We aren't all working together, we need to have a coordinated plan (2013)"

NGOs in Winnipeg are working incredibly hard. Community organizations like the Social Planning Council, Siloam Mission, Salvation Army and Canadian Community Economic Development Network Manitoba (CCED) have this to say about City involvement:

“The lingering concern among community groups lies in whether or not these tangible and practical solutions will be considered, and how they will be implemented. It is unclear if the solutions being put forward by the community are similar to, or even compatible with, the solutions that the private sector or government stakeholders suggested. Without dialogue, understanding of the various points of view will have to be sorted out and prioritized by the consultants and City of Winnipeg Housing staff” –Social Planning Council, 2013

“We are disappointed that the *Report to the Community* does not identify an ongoing role for the City to play in taking a comprehensive approach to reducing poverty in Winnipeg” –CCED (Government of Manitoba, 2012).

“A very helpful tool would be a system put in place...better direction is necessary.”
-Salvation Army Winnipeg Booth Centre, 2012 (Government of Manitoba, 2012)

“While the provincial government is trying to meet some of this need, the municipal and federal governments are doing virtually nothing.” –Social Planning Council, 2013

“However, it seems the City is not genuine in hearing from Winnipeggers about the housing situation and even less interested in hearing about what the city should do to meet the housing needs of its residents. While Our Winnipeg, the City’s long term

plan states that the City is committed to collaborative implementation that is inclusive, transparent, accessible and meaningful for everyone, the consultants have only invited a select group of organizations to be interviewed, there is virtually no promotion of the public event and with only a few weeks before a report is to be submitted. There is no public information available on the consultation or the policy review” –Social Planning Council, 2013

It seems clear that there is a consensus among NGOs working in poverty reduction fields; there needs to be guidance and direction from a city level. There are also members of council and city staff that would be excited to make progress with this issue. When asked whether or not it was the City of Winnipeg’s role to be involved with responding to the challenges of homelessness, Jenny Gerbasi said, “I wanted it to be identified as our role, and so did some other councilors, but it hasn’t been, its just more of a political thing, it should be in our policies, but you cant direct the city staff to do something political. Its not the mandate we were given, so we can’t focus there. If there was the political will we could do it, we would make it happen. We were just told to focus on different initiatives. And staff works at the pleasure of council. Implement what the leaders give them. We are doing some good work though. We can only do what we are given direction and money to do (2013).”

While it has become evident through these discussions that there is a lack of leadership, the question that still remains is why.

The City's economic and development interests

According to Ursula Stelman homelessness in Winnipeg is a complex issue for a variety of reasons, and the question has to be posed whether or not a city government should attempt to tackle a policy area such as homelessness. "A city government is always balancing, and how much of this 'good governance' portion makes the agenda? Is a city government there to provide efficient effective services or a democracy agenda on the other hand? Probably both, but there has to be balance. (Stelman, 2013).

Understanding where that balance in Winnipeg is provides some understanding of why homelessness is not on the top of the agenda. "The city's philosophy, ideology its to keep taxes low, the current finance chair and conservative council, its all pipes police and pavement! When it blows up in their face they pretend they care about it for a little bit, but then carry on business as usual" says Jenny Gerbasi (2013). Stelman would agree:

Its more and more into a business focus, more an economic focus. That's my sense of the trend, more and more moving into, and again giving the complex tax (no tax increases over many, many years) more and more effort into what are we getting out of it. What services are critical. So the notion of getting into comprehensive policy questions that potentially could have significance on property tax base supported service has been this on going concern. That

no, we are getting out of those things. It's the economic argument and ideological argument. This is just not something that we should be getting involved in (2013)."

Damon Johnston agrees, believing that "ideology is there. And it always plays a role to some degree. We know that the mayor has political leanings and they come into play. And each of them will have their own priority interest, the current mayor is clearly a business type person, or at least puts that forward, he owns the baseball team, the restaurant, he's been in the news for those issues. We all know this stuff (2013)."

Again, Petersen's argument around a city's limits and serving their economic interest are best suited to understand the situation in Winnipeg. The City ideologically sees their role as providing core services. Extras will only be considered should they improve the economic position of the city, otherwise it is not the responsibility of the city.

When asked why there is no push from the mayor to address homelessness Jenny Gerbasi responded "I don't know really, I think its just who they are, I think its their ideologically neo conservative pinhead agenda, I just don't think they get it, its just not a high enough priority, their focus is more on cutting taxes for business, they don't really see that addressing these issues helps business and economy, I think its part of our responsibility, there's just so many reasons why we should do it. But in terms of political context, he cut \$40 000 to poverty reduction. And the Peg City indicators. Its really sending a message of non-committallness [sic]. And when

you ask “What does this mean mayor” his response is “oh no, no, I just don’t see where the action is.” Agreeing to take on the federal funding, it doesn’t cost us, it helps us do more things, it’s a good initiative but in terms of bigger political initiative no we aren’t seeing that, and we need it here (2013).”

The significance of improving economic position was seen in Dave Dessen’s response when asked if more affordable housing should be built in Winnipeg:

You don’t want to discourage normal market activity. They won’t build unless there’s a market for it. There might be a fully sustainable market here, but they are waiting for a grant, and then you’re really just giving money away. The whole thing with all of this you have to be cautious that your grants would be targeted at activities that would not normally occur. No developer is going to build a house that’s worth less than the cost of building, so we go in, and as those developments occur on a scattered basis they will draw in more people, the private sector will re-engage seeing that there’s an investment opportunity. So prices will go up, but they will need to. I would argue that virtually all the housing in downtown is already affordable. We actually need higher end housing to mix in, to balance it. You want people that have disposable income to shop (2013).

The City’s ultimate goal for downtown can be seen through the actions of CentreVenture. CentreVenture came into effect in May of 1999. Developed predominately by Winnipeg’s then City Council, its purpose was to be the leader in

the revitalization of downtown. City Council enabled CentreVenture to adopt a public-private partnership approach that would according to the CentreVenture Website “capitalize on the expertise of the private sector and the policy development strength of government. The goal was the economic, physical and social rebirth of Winnipeg's downtown (2012)” According to city council, Centre Venture would be an arms length organization of council and strategic directions would be decided together. The city provided \$3 million in initial funding, and an addition \$7 million in 2006. Annually, the city provides CentreVenture with a \$125 000 operating grant, and contributions from the Province of Manitoba are received as well, meaning this program is largely funded by taxpayers. These resources are then put into the ‘Urban Development Bank,’ which is meant to provide loan guarantees, gap financing and mortgages (CentreVenture, 2012).

CentreVenture’s mandate and direction is quite extensive. CentreVenture strives to strike a vibrant balance between residential and business development, social issues and economic growth, commercial retail and heritage programs/buildings, to ‘cut red tape’ and keep the public involved, all the while maintaining environmental awareness. Downtown has also been broadly defined, and CentreVenture has a large geographical area to rejuvenate, and much of this area that they are responsible for is residential. Furthermore, CentreVenture must always have in mind the City of Winnipeg’s mandate on revitalization which focuses on neighbourhoods and communities, infrastructure improvements, beautification and safety (CentreVenture, 2012).

When asked whether or not CentreVenture was fulfilling both the economic and social components of their mandate, Christina Nino Maes had lots to say:

CentreVenture want to revitalize downtown and they see it as a business and entertainment downtown. They pay lip service to housing, the only housing that they have really supported is the bell hotel, which I'm sure they were reluctant to support. I went to a downtown housing forum, CentreVenture's CEO Ross McGowan was on the panel and it was downtown housing, and all of the focus was on expensive condos, not recognizing the housing that already exists. "Well why can't we have the same standards of decorum downtown as we do in a suburban shopping mall" was his response to questions about the current situation downtown. And so I think that's how he views downtown and a suburban shopping mall is a private retail location, it is not a downtown. So that's the approach that he takes in much of what he does, he wants business development which is important there is no denying that, but to the exclusion to the current residents so that's the big problem (2013).

Unfortunately CentreVenture was unable to provide an interview or information on their experience with homelessness in Winnipeg. Their website shared some of their accomplishments and recent success which include the Manitoba Hydro Building, The MTS Centre and Credit Union Central. The housing section features the upscale Waterfront Drive condominium complex (CentreVenture, 2012). When

asked whether the City is on the same page as CentreVenture in what a downtown should look like Nino responded: “Yeah, it’s a business project. It’s the direction the city has taken. If you look at their downtown plans, even in the Our Winnipeg it says we need more affordable housing but there’s nothing being done, but there’s a lot being done to develop more condos and higher end housing, but for people at risk housing is different (2013).”

Nino mentioned “Our Winnipeg,” Winnipeg’s 25 year strategic plan. According to Dave Dessens, the City of Winnipeg’s Housing Policy Coordinator, “Our Winnipeg is one of the most important documents the City has, and is much more than a paperweight (Dessens, 2013).” He believes the staff use this document to guide almost all of their decisions and he encourages his staff to frequently go over the plan to make sure everyone is staying on track. He believes that Winnipeg did its due diligence in providing the appropriate avenues for the public to engage with the city in order to come up with “Our Winnipeg.” He feels a city can put their ‘blood, sweat and tears’ into getting people to participate but sometimes people are just not interested. In the case of Winnipeg, he believes that they exhausted all their resources and creativity to be as inclusive as possible. When asked whether he felt the realities of the social situation in the core areas are addressed within the strategic plan, he felt they absolutely were. He feels the strong focus on communities and revitalization will begin to address the social ills and as the communities grow stronger, the social problems will begin to fade. He pointed to the fact that significant by-law changes have improved zoning and access within the city and these positive changes were because of Our Winnipeg (Dessens, 2013).

Whether or not one has faith in the potential of strategic plans, following through with the goals is the most crucial aspect of strategic planning. As Nino discussed, while affordable housing is mentioned, there has been little done (2013).

Furthermore, homelessness itself is not mentioned at all, nor in the specific community plans, or housing policy. While Dave Dessens is confident that Our Winnipeg will revitalize downtown, Jason Syvixay is not as convinced stating “the city isn’t following its own planning document., which is to densify [sic] the downtown, they are investing more in bridges and road repair out into the suburbs, stretching thin the budget and hope for downtown (2013).”

Councilor Gerbasi also added, “Yeah Our Winnipeg has an affordable housing strategy, but when the city defines affordable its not really talking about social housing. The lead people are the province, and the City is trying to always get out of it (2013).”

5. Conclusions

1. The City of Winnipeg is motivated by economic growth and business development. The current mayor and council feel it is in the city's economic interest to pursue policies that encourage growth and development.
 - a. The City of Winnipeg wants to advance the interest of their City, and that is an economic development interest. As Leo argues, North American cities are infatuated with the idea of 'growth' and it is evident that Winnipeg is not exempt from that status (Leo, 2005). Eager to expand economically, Winnipeg continues to make policy decisions based on their assumption of growth. 'Our Winnipeg' states that Winnipeg is forecasted to experience tremendous growth rates, expanding its population by 180,000 by 2031 (City of Winnipeg, 2011). Leo would argue that is unlikely, and more probable that Winnipeg will grow, but at a smaller rate, and that the City should tailor its policies towards a more realistic version of the Winnipeg. Yet it seems the City is following Petersen's trend, that advancing the interest of economic development is the most important priority for the City of Winnipeg. As Petersen argues, this is not in the interests of all individual citizens within the City, as is evident by Winnipeg's large and growing homeless population. What is interesting to note, and was alluded to by Jenny Gerbasi and Ursula Stelman particularly, that it is the choice of council and the mayor to pursue this specific

direction. Under Mayor Glen Murray social initiatives played an important part in shaping the direction of the city and as discussed, many important partnerships were formed. This demonstrates that there is a potential capacity within the budget and with community organizations to pursue a homelessness strategy in Winnipeg, yet there is a conscious political decision to avoid taking that direction.

- b. As several of the interviewees discussed, despite a strategic direction that discusses downtown revitalization, affordable housing and rebuilding neighbourhoods, the City continues to expand outwards, focusing on business development in suburban areas. As Jenny Gerbasi explained, with funding cuts to the United Way, no new affordable housing plans underway and continued expansion of expensive condominiums on the outer edge of the city, it is clear that social issues are not a priority of the city (2013).

2. Multi-level agreements will not properly address the homelessness situation without city leadership and cooperation
 - a. As indicated by all six interviewees, leadership is an important component of successful multi-level agreements. This is evident when looking at both Vancouver and Edmonton who are working together with partners from a variety of governments and non-government organization. These successful partnerships would not have occurred without the city taking a leadership role. City leadership speaks to Chris Leo's idea of deep federalism. A national initiative cannot

possibly address the intricate details and differences of each individual city. When a city champions an issue that is specific to its city, it already has the expertise to deal with city specific issues, yet can channel funds and external knowledge from other levels of government. Without a strong mayor, who advocates for addressing and leading the cause for homelessness, Winnipeg will not be adequately making use of the current multi-level agreements in place the way other Canadian cities have.

- b. As discussed by Christina Maes Nino, Jason Syvixay and Damon Johnston there is some good work being done through different organizations and various levels of government. The major issue besides the lack of city leadership, is then the lack of cooperation between those different levels. This is known by academics as a limitation of multi-level governance, as Horak discussions in *Sites of Governance* (2012).

3. The current city council's philosophy is one of minimalism within local governments

- a. As all interviewees attested to, the current council does not want to address issues that do not fall into their specific jurisdiction. Ursula Stelman alluded to the fact that over time, particularly in her last years with the city, when Sam Katz was mayor, that the city wanted completely out of any type of social service that could be provided by the province or the federal government (Stelman, 2013). Dave

Dessens was particularly clear when he stated that homelessness is a federal issue that the city cannot afford to get into (Dessens, 2013).

Whereas Mayor Glen Murray was certainly more active on social issues and viewed cities as having an important role to play in Canada, Major Sam Katz is quite the opposite. His ideologically conservative agenda focuses on the traditionally minimalist role of the city, where he wants to focus on 'services to property.'

This report, through comparison, literature review and qualitative study, has shown that with proper leadership multi-level governance has the potential to begin to adequately address homelessness in Winnipeg. However, the city's economic interest takes precedence over a leadership role in social issues. The current mayor and make up of council play a significant role in managing the City of Winnipeg from a minimalist perspective, which ideologically suggests a city has very little role to play in addressing an issue like homelessness. With municipal elections in 2014 there is potential for a dramatic shift in council priorities, however should the mayor and council remain the same, the homeless population will have to keep relying on the good work of the community organizations.

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Appendix 1

Interview Questions

1. What is your understanding of homelessness in Winnipeg?
2. Can you please explain your involvement with community issues/homelessness in Winnipeg?
3. What is your understanding of the City of Winnipeg's involvement in tackling homelessness in Winnipeg?
4. Who do you feel the main players in tackling homelessness in Winnipeg are? Why?
5. Do you believe upper levels of government have a clear understanding of what is needed to address homelessness and surrounding issues in Winnipeg? Why or why not?
6. Would a more involved City administration help tackle the problems?
7. Why would Winnipeg not want to get involved?
8. Are there adequate resources being allocated to tackle these issues?
9. Is there anything else you wish to add?