

The 1950 National Capital Plan - A Half Century of Capital Planning

Executive Summary

Aim

The intent of this report is to analyze the policy-implementation process of the Canadian 1950 National Capital Plan (NCP). The report concentrates on the Ontario side of the Ottawa River within the National Capital Region (NCR).

Introduction

This report was undertaken as a single case study using archival research methods. The main research information was sourced from primary sources: personal papers, diaries, and federal and municipal government files. The National Archives of Canada, the National Library of Canada, and the National Capital Commission library were the main locations for primary source information. The case study was compared to criteria for effective implementation derived from a literature review.

In 1899 Prime Minister Laurier established the Ottawa Improvement Commission (OIC). The OIC sponsored the 1903 Todd Plan. This was followed by the Holt Report in 1915, but it was not implemented.

In 1927, Prime Minister Mackenzie King replaced the OIC with the Federal District Commission (FDC). In 1936, he hired the French architect Jacques Gréber to work on improving the centre of Ottawa. Gréber's work was not finished when WW II started. After the war, King rehired Gréber, and setup the National Capital Planning Committee (NCPC). The National Capital Plan was completed in 1950. The Plan's five main recommendations were: railway relocation; extension of the parkway networks; decentralization of federal government offices; creation of a greenbelt; and the expansion of Gatineau Park. It was substantially implemented by 1974.

Derivation of Criteria

Fifteen of the implementation criteria were developed from the literature review. Two "new criteria" emerged from the analysis. These criteria are listed in Table EX. 1 "Analysis Summary of the 1950 National Capital Plan".

Analysis

The analysis indicates the NCP to be a sound and well-made plan especially by the standards of the day. Nevertheless, a few problems and flaws were revealed. As mentioned earlier, the need for two new criteria was revealed. It also exposed some duplication in the criteria.

The 1950 National Capital Plan fully met 12 of the 15 criteria for good implementation - see Table EX. 1. The three "Partially" met criteria, *Investment By Other Organizations*, *Authority Support*, and *Evaluation and Learning*, were found to have only minor differences. *Authority Support* identified a weakness in streamlining the decision/approval process. Projects had to be approved by Cabinet and the FDC was restricted by other federal regulations, e.g. financial.

The lack of a formal in-house *Evaluation and Learning* methodology/system was also a weakness. The lack of *Investment by Other Organizations* (and municipalities) was also considered weak, because the Federal Government could have more actively sought investment and buy-in in an attempt reduce friction and discord between the various municipalities.

The greatest weakness was the lack of statutory/regulatory authority in municipal matters. It was assumed that the Greenbelt could be protected from development using planning regulations, following London's example at the time. However, Ontario planning law is different. Nepean and Gloucester Townships were able to delay the creation of the

Table EX.1 Analysis Summary of the 1950 National Capital Plan using revised Criteria Template (Revision 1)

CRITERIA GROUP and Criteria	Meets Criteria			Comments
	Fully ¹	Partially ²	Does Not ³	
FINANCIAL				
Resources	✓			
Financial Planning	✓			
Economic Conditions Conducive to the Program/Plan	✓			
Investment by Other Organizations		✓		Very little and not invested early for "buy-in"
POLITICAL				
Political Commitment	✓			
Authority Support	✓			
<i>Statutory/Regulatory Authority (new criterion)</i>			✓	
POLICY				
Provision of Policy	✓			
Clarity and Feasibility of Policy	✓			Streamlining decision/approval process considered
Constraints Identified	✓			
<i>Streamline Decision/Approval Process (new criterion)</i>		✓		
ORGANIZATION				
Implementation Organization	✓			
Evaluation and Learning		✓		Required a formal "in-house" evaluation
Publicity and Public Relations	✓			
URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING				
Program/Plan	✓			
Planning Techniques	✓			
Practicality	✓			Priority/scheduling/phasing a weakness of 50's plans

Notes:

1. "Fully" signifies that all the Description Points for the criterion were met with only minor differences or omissions which had little or no affect on the implementation.
2. "Partially" signifies minor differences, a significant difference or combination thereof with only minor affects on the implementation.
3. "Does Not" (meet) signifies a number of significant differences or critical difference(s) which led to a critical failure or problem in the implementation.

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Greenbelt for almost ten years, forcing the Federal Government to purchase/expropriate the needed properties at a large cost that would not have not been necessary if they had had the statutory authority. Fortunately, more serious problems were not encountered.

The greatest strength the implementation organization had was its massive *Financial Resources* and power. The NCPC/FDC were provided with many sources of funds over the implementation of the NCP. However, the most telling figure is the total expenditures. From fiscal year (FY) 1947/48 to 1970/71 the total program expenditures were Gross \$1.50 billion and Net \$1.30 billion in 1998/99 dollars (See Table EX. 2 and Charts EX. 1 to 4 which are based on data only up to FY 1970/71). Other comparable data was found from the same sources for FY 1971/72 and 1972/73 which increased the total expenditures to between \$1.65 billion and \$1.85 billion in 1998/99 dollars. The NCC amassed land worth close to one billion dollars (1973/74 dollars), covering one-third of the City of Ottawa and a quarter of the NCR.

Other strengths of the Plan were King's vision and leadership to beautify the Capital, and Gréber's professional ability (*Political Commitment*); simple and straightforward policies (*Provision of Policy*); the Plan's publicity program (*Publicity*); near perfect economic conditions (*Economic Conditions Conducive to the Program/Plan*); and, a detailed plan (*Program/Plan*).

To eliminate the duplication with streamlining the decision/approval process, a third Policy criterion, *Streamline Decision/Approval Process*, was recommended to be added to the criteria list and the three references to it in other criteria eliminated. Also recommended was the addition of another new criterion: *Requisite Statutory/Regulatory Authority*.

Conclusions

King's leadership and his fierce passion to beautify the Capital provided the necessary support at the fragile start to the preparation of the Plan and the momentum needed to complete the Plan. Gréber's professional ability and drive complemented his client's vision.

The policies were simple and flexible. The Plan was able to take the policies and turn them into a set of practical proposals. The implementation organization's publicity group was able to maintain political momentum for the large expenditures needed to execute the proposals

If only one measure of the Federal Government's commitment to the Plan could be made, it would be found in the Plan's total expenditures over approximately 25 years - by 1972/73 it was \$1.65 - \$1.85 billion (1998/99 dollars). Fortunately, the excellent economic conditions of the period were able to fuel the massive expenditures.

The 1950 National Capital Plan became the single most important and influential plan of the 20th century for the NCR and Ottawa as a result of its extensive implementation.

It was concluded that the proposed two new criteria should be added to those derived from the literature review. They are *Policy - Streamline Decision/Approval Process*, and *Political -Requisite Statutory/Regulatory Authority*.

It is hard to contemplate a plan of the scope and breadth of the National Capital Plan being executed today. The cost, the political climate and the political commitment needed over such a long period would seem to be out of reach. Nevertheless, the amalgamation of the many municipalities into one municipality is an encouraging trend for improving federal/local coordination.

Large land acquisition projects like the 1950 Plan would be astronomically expensive in the urban setting of today. However, smaller more directed projects found in the NCC's vision for the core area including Confederation Boulevard, Parliamentary Precinct, and Victoria and Chaudières Island, have some potential for implementation.

Even with amalgamation, it appears that the days of the single mega-master plan - the 1950 National Capital Plan - is gone due to urbanization of the Ottawa area and its associated escalating costs (land and supporting infrastructure), and the political climate.

Table EX.2 - Expenditure Summary
National Capital Plan - 01 April 1947 to 31 March 1971

Source: NCC Annual Report 1970/1971 (Auditor General Section) Chart entitled "EXPENDITURES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT WITHIN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION - APRIL 1, 1947 TO MARCH 31, 1971"

FISCAL YEAR	CPI (1992=100)	Net Expenditures			Sales of Property			Gross Expenditures		
		Fiscal Year	Base Yr 1947/8	Base Yr 1998/9	Fiscal Year	Base Yr 1947/8	Base Yr 1998/9	Fiscal Year	Base Yr 1947/8	Base Yr 1998/9
1947-48	12.3	370,638	370,638	3,272,462	0	0	0	370,638	370,638	3,272,462
1948-49	14.0	936,833	823,075	7,267,147	0	0	0	936,833	823,075	7,267,147
1949-50	14.5	1,146,200	972,294	8,584,643	0	0	0	1,146,200	972,294	8,584,643
1950-51	14.9	1,634,074	1,348,934	11,910,096	0	0	0	1,634,074	1,348,934	11,910,096
1951-52	16.4	1,832,964	1,374,723	12,137,798	0	0	0	1,832,964	1,374,723	12,137,798
1952-53	16.9	1,911,536	1,391,236	12,283,598	0	0	0	1,911,536	1,391,236	12,283,598
1953-54	16.7	2,678,623	1,972,878	17,419,069	0	0	0	2,678,623	1,972,878	17,419,069
1954-55	16.8	5,508,955	4,033,342	35,611,459	0	0	0	5,508,955	4,033,342	35,611,459
1955-56	16.8	4,612,787	3,377,219	29,818,373	0	0	0	4,612,787	3,377,219	29,818,373
1956-57	17.1	3,422,380	2,461,712	21,735,115	0	0	0	3,422,380	2,461,712	21,735,115
1957-58	17.6	4,533,857	3,168,548	27,975,959	0	0	0	4,533,857	3,168,548	27,975,959
1958-59	18.0	7,740,285	5,289,195	46,699,720	282,779	193,232	1,706,100	8,023,064	5,482,427	48,405,819
1959-60	18.2	13,758,703	9,298,464	82,098,634	134,603	90,968	803,181	13,893,306	9,389,432	82,901,815
1960-61	18.5	11,662,201	7,753,788	68,460,272	404,044	268,635	2,371,847	12,066,245	8,022,422	70,832,119
1961-62	18.7	11,484,739	7,554,133	66,697,468	3,890,360	2,558,900	22,593,214	15,375,099	10,113,033	89,290,682
1962-63	18.9	16,933,984	11,020,529	97,303,210	493,130	320,926	2,833,541	17,427,114	11,341,455	100,136,750
1963-64	19.2	21,852,600	13,999,322	123,603,769	296,428	189,899	1,676,671	22,149,028	14,189,221	125,280,440
1964-65	19.6	18,582,674	11,661,576	102,963,183	4,850,556	3,043,971	26,876,040	23,433,230	14,705,547	129,839,223
1965-66	20.0	25,297,115	15,557,726	137,363,334	4,050,874	2,491,288	21,996,246	29,347,989	18,049,013	159,359,580
1966-67	20.8	33,352,247	19,722,723	174,137,213	3,223,525	1,906,219	16,830,520	36,575,772	21,628,942	190,967,733
1967-68	21.5	16,857,001	9,643,773	85,147,456	4,846,240	2,772,500	24,479,147	21,703,241	12,416,273	109,626,603
1968-69	22.4	4,187,022	2,299,124	20,299,580	13,191,761	7,243,690	63,956,484	17,378,783	9,542,814	84,256,064
1969-70	23.4	13,269,423	6,974,953	61,583,732	679,867	357,366	3,155,280	13,949,290	7,332,319	64,739,013
1970-71	24.2	10,973,057	5,577,215	49,242,727	1,025,677	521,315	4,602,831	11,998,734	6,098,530	53,845,558
Totals		234,539,898	147,647,118	1,303,616,019	37,369,844	21,958,909	193,881,102	271,909,742	169,606,027	1,497,497,121

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Chart EX.1 - Net Expenditures National Capital Plan - 01 April 1947 to 31 March 1971

Source data from: NCC Annual Report 1970/1971 (Auditor General Section) Chart entitled "EXPENDITURES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT WITHIN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION - APRIL 1, 1947 TO MARCH 31, 1971"

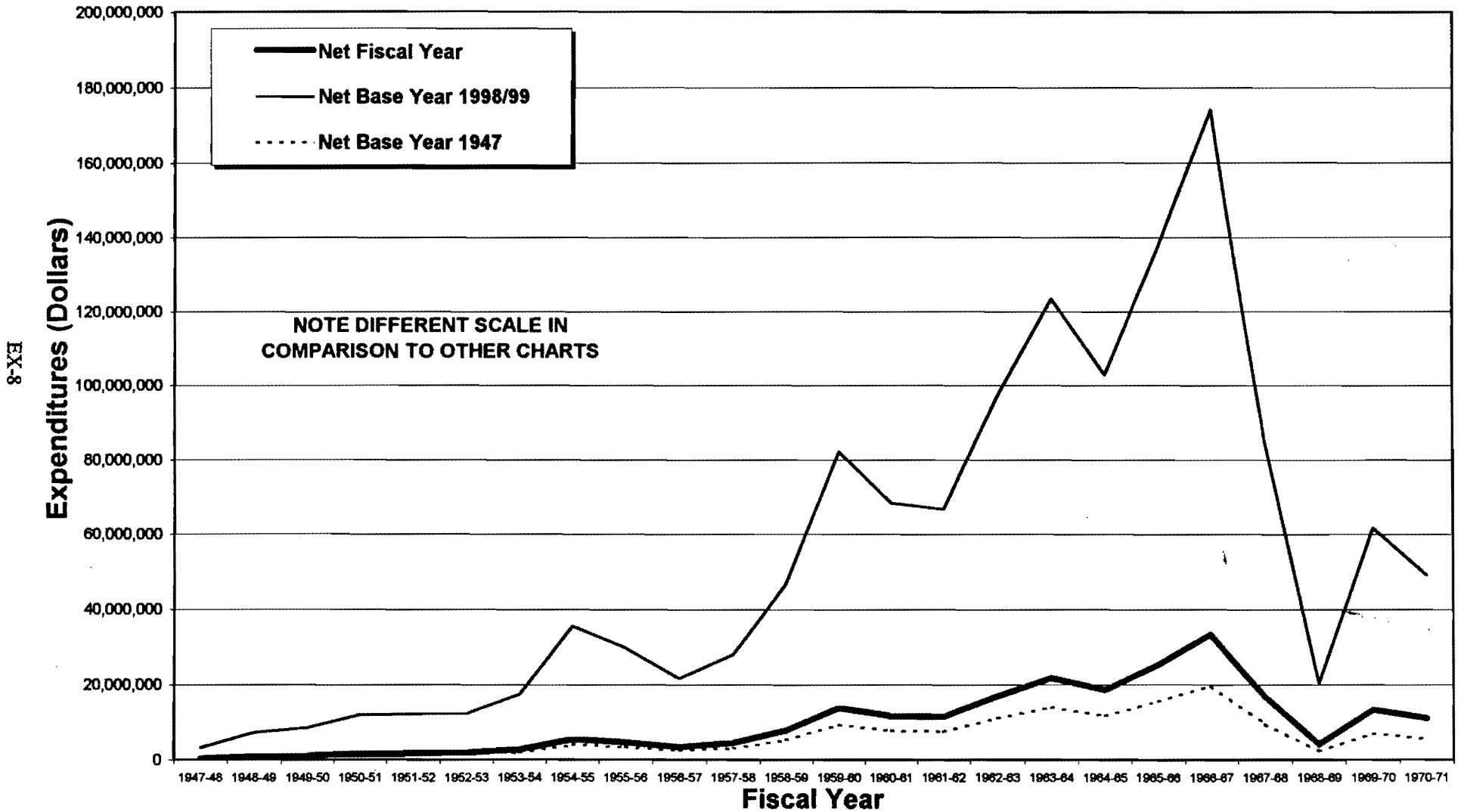


Chart EX.2 - Gross Expenditures National Capital Plan - 01 April 1947 to 31 March 1971

Source data from: NCC Annual Report 1970/1971 (Auditor General Section) Chart entitled "EXPENDITURES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT WITHIN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION - APRIL 1, 1947 TO MARCH 31, 1971"

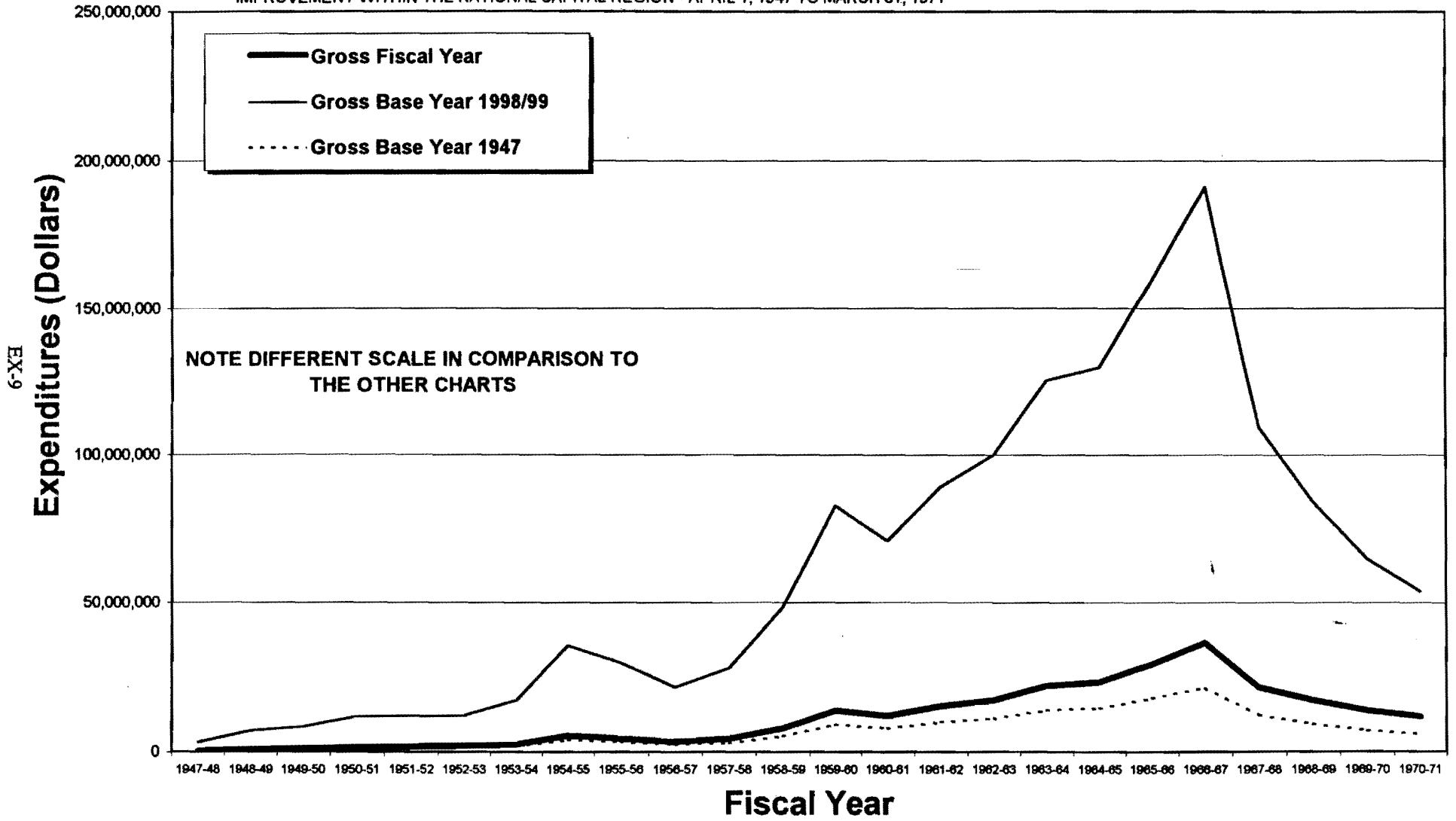
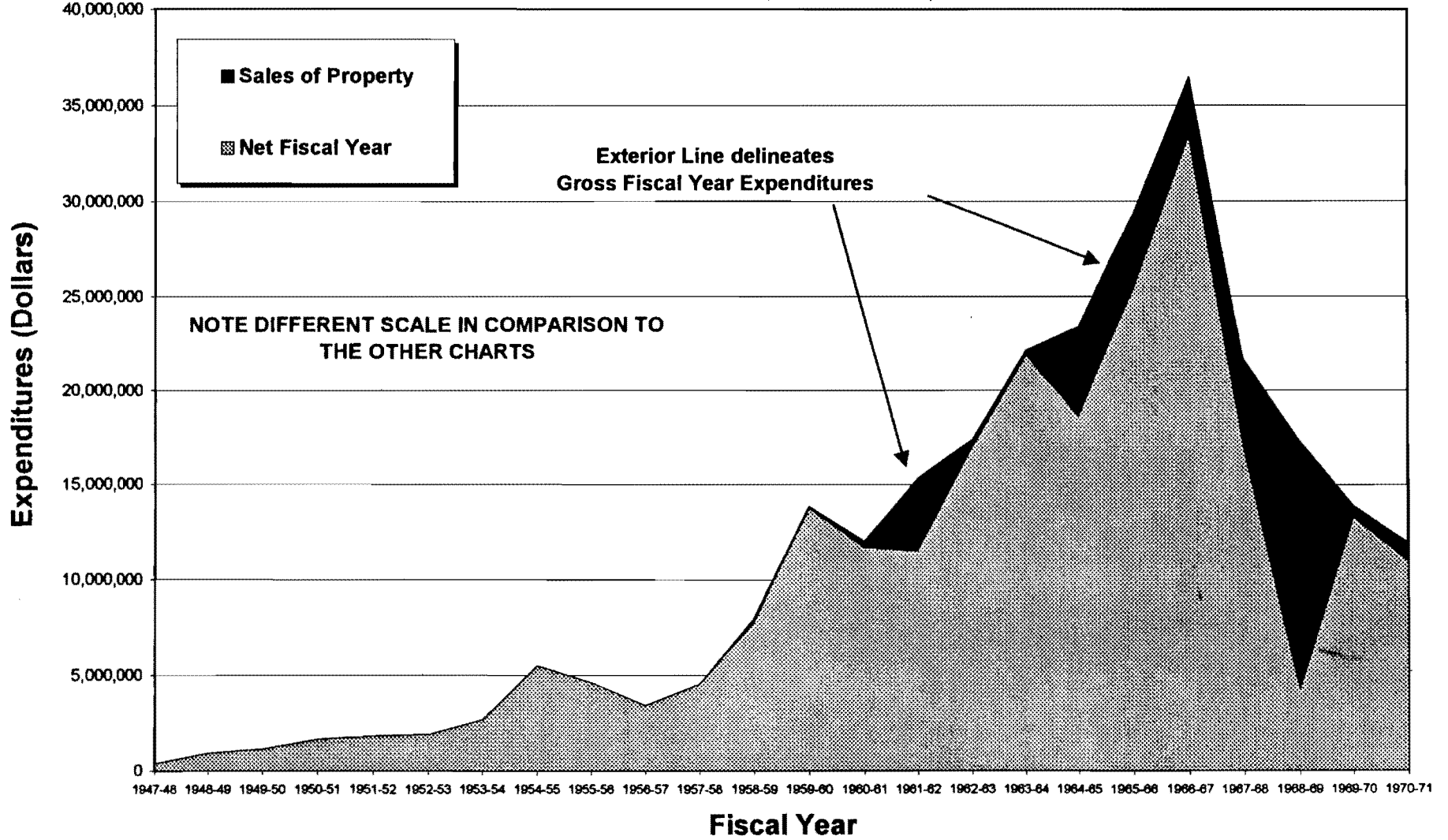


Chart EX.3 - Gross Fiscal Year Expenditures - Sales of Property (Fiscal Year) = Net Fiscal Year Expenditures
National Capital Plan - 01 April 1947 to 31 March 1971

Source data from: NCC Annual Report 1970/1971 (Auditor General Section) Chart entitled "EXPENDITURES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT WITHIN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION - APRIL 1, 1947 TO MARCH 31, 1971"

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**Chart EX.4 - Breakdown of Expenditures
National Capital Plan - 01 April 1947 - 31 March 1971**

Source data from: NCC Annual Report 1970/1971 (Auditor General Section) bar chart entitled "EXPENDITURES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT WITHIN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION - APRIL 1, 1947 TO MARCH 31, 1971"

