

Executive Summary

This report will attempt to elucidate the role of the Community Planning Association of Canada (CPAC) and its Quebec Division in the development of planning in Quebec. The starting point for this historical research is the work of Quebec urban planning historian André Boisvert. In his *Aménagement et Urbanisme au Québec*, he lays out the early history of the planning profession in the province of Québec. Despite the acknowledged role of the CMHC in the development of the post-war Canadian urban landscape and of the involvement of many of his research subjects' involvement in the CPAC and its Quebec Division, not as much attention has been given to the influence it had to the development of planning practices and ideas.

In focusing on the development of the planning profession, Boisvert neglected the contribution of the Quebec Division of the CPAC and it will be precisely on this contribution that this report will focus. In focusing on the CPAC Quebec Division this report will also challenge the narrative put forward by Boisvert that, aside from the initial contribution of the CPAC, the development of the planning profession in Quebec as part of the larger revolution in mores brought about by the Quiet Revolution. Instead, this report proposes that we can look at the development of modern planning in Quebec in the wider context of the post-war effort by the Federal government, through the CMHC, to develop housing and community across the country. Instead of organic development we find rather institutional intervention, and the nature of those intervention will be analyzed.

The Tools of Planning and Shaping the Landscape

Three contributions to the development of planning in Quebec by the CPAC are analyzed in this report. The first one is the neighbourhood unit. The neighbourhood unit, a concept

developed by Clarence Perry and famously implemented in Radburn by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, was one of the founding blocks of modern planning and imported into Quebec via the CPAC. Though forerunners in the form of Garden Cities were already known and applied in Quebec, the more modernist version of the neighbourhood unit, as theorized by Humphrey Carver¹, would have to wait the arrival of Harold Spence-Sales and his McGill planning program (more on him in chapter 4) and his hugely influential book *How to Subdivide*. We can trace back to the CPAC the introduction of the modern suburban subdivision, a model of spatial arrangement whose mark on the landscape of Quebec is hard to miss.

While we can trace back advocacy for the implementation of compulsory and legally enforceable community plans to the early days of the Town Planning Institute of Canada (TPIC), the CPAC would make it a systematic part of its advocacy. From the very first issue of *Urbanité* and throughout the 50s and 60s, the CPAC made the adoption of community plans synonymous with planning. It is also in the page of the Community Planning Review that we can find perhaps the first instance of the technical research done for a community plan in Quebec, a model used to this day. Similarly, the CPAC was an ardent lobbyist for the adoption of a *loi-cadre sur*

¹ Humphrey Carver (1902 – 1995): Born and educated in England, Humphrey Carver arrived in Canada in 1930 where he struggled to find work as an architect in Toronto in the wake of the Depression. He became involved with the League for Social Reconstruction throughout the 30s, organized the 1939 Housing Conference, and became involved in the development of Canada's national housing policy, and more particularly, its newly created institution, the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, where he chaired its Research Committee (1948-1955) and its advisory group (1955-1947). He also contributed directly to the formation of the Community Planning Association of Canada, being among its founding members and its first formally elected vice-president. He, however, stepped down from the position to accept his position on the Research Committee in 1948. He was a regular contributor to *Layout for Living* and the *Community Planning Review* and in his role as the chair of the CMHC's research program, and later its advisory group, provided much needed federal funding to the nascent CPAC. Humphrey Carver was an influential advocate for the need for community planning. Inspired by modernist architects and planners such as Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Clarence Perry, readily visible in his work on housing for the CMHC and his work on urban design. See his memoir, *Compassionate Landscape* (1975), as well as Gordon's *Humphrey Carver and the post-war revival of Canadian community planning* (2019)

l'urbanisme, advocating so from its inception and provided the research, directed by Harold Spence-Sales that would form the basis the later La Haye Commission.

Through these tools we can appreciate the role of the Federal government in the development and promotion of planning in Quebec has been considerable. All of these tools are now mainstays of the profession and have shaped the urban landscape of the province. This stands in stark contrast with pre-war planning efforts, which never achieved the same level of outreach in their message, both among the public and officials. This report is therefore a contribution in illuminating a part of planning history in Quebec that has been relatively untouched so far.

