**HOMESSLES and the Rural Urban Divide**

Musing – Perry Kinkaide

I am musing this morning. Up early reflecting on the 1st episode of the series of homelessness webinars. During the webinar I posed the question of whether serving the homeless differed between rural and urban areas. Today I read ...

https://epaper.nationalpost.com/@PK29762188/csb\_EQF9z5A8n75A5GFVJROHHpC9qfHEPQiJ8ooV8rMX5Ax9pahoExj-W42Kcbbc2qWgidZu4rzqitwNksn2Xc3TxA

I am particularly interested in the rural/ urban divide because several years ago I faced the challenge of developing community services in rural areas to prevent the urbanization of people with developmental disabilities. They were drifting from rural to urban areas due to the  closure of institutions and the dearth of rural options.

The strategy adopted was to acknowledge that the problem at the individual level was severe in rural areas (stood out) as specialized supports were lacking. The lack was compensated for by family resilience and the availability of community interest and support.

We capitalized on the community coming together and intercepting the drift. We helped mobilize community/ family support for the development of housing first in the form of spare beds for relief, group homes for extended care, increased professional awareness, and ensuring school integration and regional vocational training.

The approach stemmed the tide when institutions were no longer an option and people in rural areas were seeking urban support.

The indigenous populations in Canada have been migrating to urban areas for several years. Today some estimate that the majority  of Canada's indigenous population is now urban. Canada has rationalized the "problem" advocating for multi-culturalism that applies to urban areas but not to rural.

The same applies to immigrants and people discharged from public corrections, addictions, child welfare programs. Their clients land or drift into urban centres adding to the homeless and exacerbating the rural/ urban divide. Public service policies are failing to address these transitions resulting in the urbanization of the homeless.

With nothing but laws to support multi-culturalism, the policy has been imposed by senior government on urban centre's without compensation. It is splitting regions apart politically. (Giving rural areas more representation in the allocation of public resources helps. Suburban representatives are then left to resolve any imbalance and they have little interest.)

What can be done? Canada is not alone. Urbanization is a worldwide phenomenon. What is driving it? The allure of the welfare state. That ideology favors the state over other options to provide for what people need, want, may wish for starting with jobs and income, housing and services. But when is enough enough ... or too much?

The problem has been that such services have continued to be located in urban areas. People in "transition" have had no option to locate elsewhere and as rural areas are "purified" they come to resist and resent any reallocation.

The circumstances of suburbia are a study in itself. New found suburbia lack the "community" cohesion of rural areas, and are largely unexposed to the pr9blems and therefore unsympathetic to the urban and rural problems of urbanization. E.g. Resistance to regionalize. Why?  The population of people in "transition" by-passes suburbia; suburbia evolved as a reaction/ alternative to the urban problems.

It is getting late and fallout of the failure are the homelessness. And it is growing! Someone, somewhere must wakeup to the drift, to stem the tide of urbanization. The drift - urbanization and the fallout - the homeless, together reflect the failure of the welfare state to prepare the people, prepare the community, and develop the support services.