

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Urbanization: An International Issue

The United Nations has several branches that are concerned with urban growth, urban development, urban decline, and urban issues in general. Urban issues are viewed as pressing *international* concerns. According to the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), more than 1.5 billion people in the world's cities will face life- and health-threatening environments by 2025, unless a revolution in urban problem-solving occurs.

Another division of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), surveyed 151 city mayors worldwide about the key challenges facing local authorities as they entered the 21st century. The findings of the survey are ranked according to how prevalent the issue was, according to the mayors who were asked and the issue itself.

1. Unemployment
2. Insufficient solid waste disposal
3. Urban poverty
4. Inadequate housing
5. Insufficient solid waste collection
6. Inadequate water and sanitation facilities
7. Inadequate public transportation
8. Traffic congestion
9. Poor health services
10. Insufficient civil society participation
11. Inadequate education services
12. Air pollution
13. Urban violence/crime/personal safety
14. Discrimination (women, ethnic groups, poor)

Does the place where you live face any of the above-listed challenges? If your mayor, reeve, or chief were to participate in a survey such as this one, what do you think he or she would cite as the most pressing urban issues facing your community?

## Urban Issues: Environmental and Economic

Cities have always been at the heart of economic growth, technological advances, and cultural production; however, as you read previously, their rapid growth has also brought forth negative issues such as pollution, unemployment, and traffic congestion.

Issues that concern the natural world (air, land, water) are environmental issues. Issues pertaining to jobs, industrial development, and trade are economic issues.

Many people are concerned about the deterioration of the urban natural environment. The effects of climate change, the loss of biodiversity, and a deteriorating environment affecting food supplies, water, energy, infrastructure, and the livability of cities are serious points to consider. The urban challenges of climate change alone may be noteworthy. Cities in the not-so-distant future will likely have to seriously investigate the possibilities of new and clean energy, a reorganization of where citizens live and work, and the options provided by new forms of eco-friendly transit.

Economic issues are also a major concern. These will be explored in the next section.



### Learning Activity 5.3

#### Urban Environmental and Economic Issues



1. Consider the following terms and sort them into the appropriate column. The first one is completed for you as an example.

insufficient solid waste disposal	decaying urban environment	climate change
declining property values	depopulation	unemployment
insufficient solid waste collection	property abandonment	air pollution
loss of biodiversity	urban poverty	

Environmental Issues	Economic Issues
insufficient solid waste disposal	urban poverty

*continued*

## Learning Activity 5.3: Urban Environmental and Economic Issues (continued)

2. Read the case study that follows and answer the following questions.
- What recent developments have led to an increase in the population of Smalltown? How can these developments be seen as both negative and positive?
  - Outline the issue facing Smalltown concerning water and sewage service for the expanding town. Is this an environmental or economic issue?
  - Outline the issue facing Josh's family. Is this an environmental or economic issue?
  - Carefully read the section entitled *The Decision: Should the New Development Be Allowed to Proceed?* Pretend you are a citizen of Smalltown and you are making a presentation to town council favouring development. Make a list of pros that you may use as speaking notes.
  - Carefully read the section entitled *The Decision: Should the New Development Be Allowed to Proceed?* Pretend you are a citizen of Smalltown and you are making a presentation to town council opposing development. Make a list of cons that you may use as speaking notes.



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### Case Study: To Develop or Not to Develop?

#### Background Information:

Josh lives in the small rural community of Smalltown in a prairie province. For many years, things remained much the same, with slow and manageable growth, mainly as a result of retired farmers moving into town. In recent years, however, there has been some concern as more and more people from a nearby city have been coming to live in Smalltown while commuting to the city for work. The positive impact has been that a larger population has led to the development of more businesses and job opportunities. The concern, however, is that the town may not be able to keep up in providing all the services that its residents have come to expect now that the population has almost doubled.

The major problem is related to water and sewage services. The town gets its water from a nearby lake via a pipeline that was constructed a long time ago and is already showing its age. The water is used not only for domestic purposes in town, but also for agricultural purposes by market gardens and small farms at the edge of town. The sewage system has reached capacity and has spilled into the river on several occasions. The town council is worried about the potential negative impact of a growing population.

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### Case Study: To Develop or Not to Develop? (continued)

Josh lives on a farm right next to town. His family has experienced difficult times as a result of various problems in the agricultural industry and they have had trouble paying their bills as of late. Now, there is talk that a construction company wants to buy some nearby farmland and develop a subdivision of 40 homes to attract more residents from the city. Josh's family has already had a good offer for their farm from the developer and is seriously thinking of selling their land.

### The Decision: Should the New Development Be Allowed to Proceed?

The town council is meeting next week for a vote on whether the development should be allowed to proceed. Those in favour argue that the new development will create new growth, bring new business, create jobs, and bring in more tax revenue. Those opposed to the plan feel that the water and sewer system cannot handle the expansion and that the tax base simply cannot handle the cost of the required upgrades. Furthermore, additional services such as schools, hospitals, and emergency services will be required and they are not sure the town has the resources to pay for them. Some people also fear that city residents will bring city problems and that their quiet, safe rural life will be threatened. Those concerned about the environment fear that the loss of farmland will further reduce badly needed food production areas, and that the additional pressure on the sewer system may pollute the local river and bring harm to aquatic life, if not to humans.

What should the citizens and council of Smalltown do?

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## Urban Growth and Decline

Cities constantly grow outward, but they also frequently decay in the centre. Keeping that in mind, let's explore the issues associated with both this outward growth and this inner decay.



The widespread sprawl of the modern city—known as **urban sprawl**—has been made possible by the automobile. Automobiles (and other forms of mass transportation like high-speed trains, freeways, and subways) meant that people could live further away from where they worked. In the 1950s, **suburbs** popped up on the outer edges of Canadian and American cities. These new communities were less crowded than downtown areas and land was cheaper, which made home ownership more possible. In 1964, the Canadian government formed the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), which offered low-cost loans for **mortgages**, which added to the exodus to the suburbs.

People flocked to these new homes, which usually had a big picture window, spacious lawns in the front and back, and an attached garage or carport. By 1961, 1.1 million of Canada's 18 million people lived in urban places, many in the new suburbs.



As new freeways and suburbs lured businesses and residents away from the core of the city, the traditional heart of the city often decayed. Skilled workers, professionals, and particularly young families with children moved to the suburbs. These **suburbanites** travelled downtown only to work—they spent little or no time outside of the working day there, and spent no money in the urban centre of the city, either. In many cities, the central core soon featured deserted buildings, and those residents left behind were the poor, the unemployed, the homeless, the elderly, and the recent **immigrants** or **migrants**.



The central city often falls victim to the ills of urban *economic decay* (remember you read about environmental issues previously). It is characterized by **depopulation**, a shift from secondary to tertiary industries (manufacturing to service), property abandonment, high unemployment, political **disenfranchisement**, and a decaying urban environment (sometimes including contaminated land and outdated infrastructure like old subways or streetcars). As property values decline, city governments may favour spending money on infrastructure and other improvements in suburban areas.

## The Role of the Urban Planner



As you just learned, cities change continually. These processes of change, which include not only urban sprawl and urban decay, but also physical weathering and air pollution, create problems, since a city's structure and layout must accommodate more people and changing patterns of living. It is the role of the urban planner to renew the city. **Urban renewal** is a complex and expensive process that requires careful planning.



Let's explore some of the terms associated with urban planning.

- **Zoning**
  - Laws are usually passed by city governments controlling the kind and amount of development in an area. For example, some areas of a city are zoned for residences (homes) and others are zoned for businesses.
- **End-state planning**
  - This is urban planning where plans are fixed from the start (like the pre-planning and building of Thompson, Manitoba in the mid-1950s).
- **Structure planning**
  - This is the continual modification of a city's layout.
- **Gentrification**
  - This is the process of renewing and rebuilding formerly run-down residential or commercial areas. As a result of the renewal, higher-income groups often move into the area.



- **Comprehensive development areas**

- This involves the tearing down of old buildings and the construction of a completely planned urban unit, with housing (often high-rises to accommodate more people), shops, and recreation facilities.

As you learned previously, cities tend to decay in the centre. Consequently, urban planners are often charged with the task of trying to rejuvenate the inner city. Most planners given this mission agree on the following points:

- The reliance on vehicles should be reduced: emphasis on public transit, cycling, and walking paths should be a priority.
- Different types of business and residential activities should be mixed: shops, professional offices, and homes should all be located in relatively small neighbourhoods.
- Where possible (climate permitting), there should be squares, parks, and streets where people can meet and relax.

## Heartland-Hinterland



Until the early 20th century, Canada was mainly an agricultural nation. Since then, it has become one of the most highly industrialized countries in the world; this has led to the development of a **heartland**. The heartland is the area of a region or country where we find an abundance of manufacturing and an abundance of population.

You may recall from Module 4 that in Canada, the heartland is located in southern Ontario and southwest Quebec. In the United States of America, it stretches along the northeast coast from Boston to Washington D.C. and extends west to the Ohio River Valley.



Often, the manufacturing industries found in the heartland are supplied with raw materials produced by the agricultural, mining, forestry, and fishing sectors (primary industries); this region is known as the **hinterland**. The relationship between the heartland and hinterland is known as the **heartland-hinterland concept** or the **core-periphery theory**.

In Canada, this concept helps us

- study the patterns of economic power (and what is produced in each) between the heartland and the hinterland
- understand that the relationship between heartland and hinterland is one of mutual dependency and cooperation
- realize that, in Canada's modern economy, neither region can exist without the other; the well-being of one directly affects the other
- recognize that these two regions show great contrasts, but they are interdependent