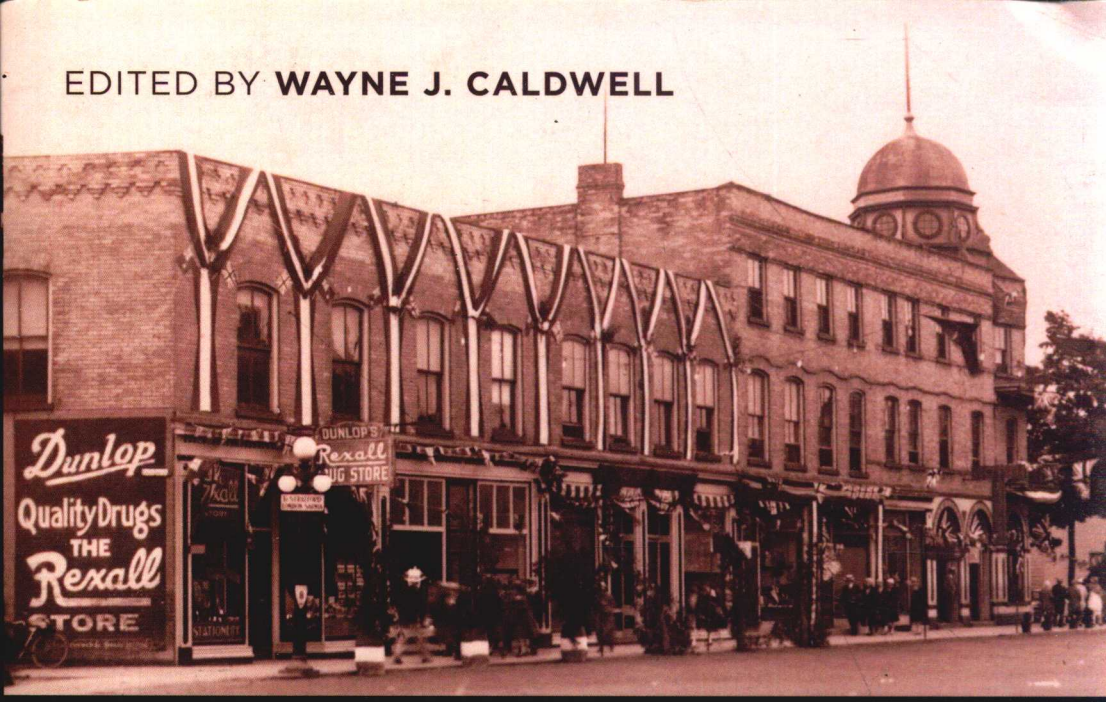
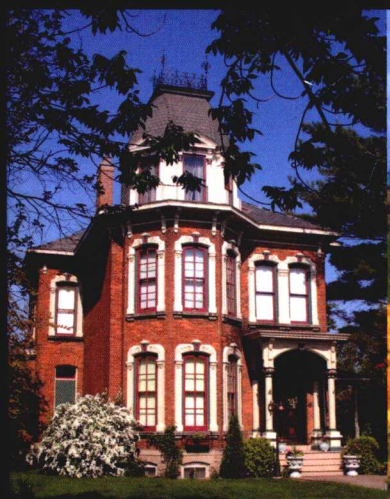
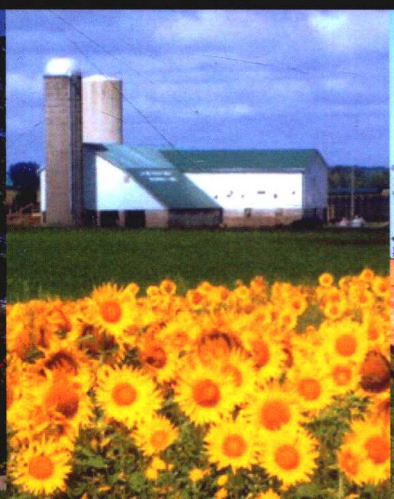
EDITED BY **WAYNE J. CALDWELL**



REDISCOVERING THOMAS ADAMS

Rural Planning and Development in Canada





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REDISCOVERING THOMAS ADAMS

In memory of JEANNE WOLFE and LEN GERTLER
for their leadership in the field of planning, and
in memory of MICHAEL TROUGHTON
for his legacy and passion for all things rural.
He was a personal inspiration, friend, and mentor.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thomas Adams' *Rural Planning and Development* was first brought to my attention by Professor Michael Troughton while I was studying for my undergraduate degree at the University of Western Ontario. Over the years it became a touchstone, a measure if you like, of how rural Canada and the profession of planning have evolved over the last hundred years. It is my hope that students of rural communities and planning will come to see the value of this book for its historic and philosophic contributions.

The republishing of this book has taken a number of years to come to fruition. It is a tribute to those who contributed in one way or another – to their patience, perseverance, and commitment to this project. To the contributing authors my many thanks. There are also many students at the University of Guelph who played a hand in the reproduction of this book. They include Kate Hagerman, Elizabeth Vanstone, Laura Weir, Erin Bankes, Nicolas Brunet, Irv Marucelj, Jennifer Ball, and Therese Ludlow. At UBC Press Melissa Pitts shepherded this project to completion and Holly Keller gave this old book new life, despite what must have felt like 10,000 ancient photos and maps.

At a personal level, none of this would be possible without the support, love, and encouragement of my wife Deborah and my children Michael and Alison. Words of thanks can never fully express my gratitude.

INTRODUCTION

Wayne J. Caldwell

> *[The point is] whether we stand still and talk ideals or move forward and get as much realization of our ideals as possible in a necessarily imperfect society, capable only of imperfect solutions to its problems.*
>
> — *Thomas Adams,* New Republic, *6 July 1932*

When Thomas Adams accepted an offer of employment from the Commission of Conservation (1909-21) and landed in Canada in 1914, it was still uncertain how much influence he would have on the newly established profession in which he had, largely through circumstances of the moment, become involved. He was invited to Canada because of his prior involvement in Letchworth Garden City, an experiment that was arguably unsuccessful in its implementation, if reasonable in its scope and idea. By managing that project from 1901 to 1906, however, Adams did acquire practical experience that made him marketable, and so he enjoyed professional life for the next eight years as one of the earliest private planning consultants, supplementing practice with academic study and seizing opportunities to speak at conferences around the world.

It was therefore because of Adams' reputation and experience that he was sought after and hired in Canada. Although he achieved some success, a number of factors undermined his long-term goals and ultimately soured his experience. Adams eventually left Canada for residency and employment in the United States, but not before leaving behind several legacies. He wrote numerous publications, the most comprehensive of which is *Rural Planning and Development: A Study of Rural Conditions and Problems in Canada* (1917). He established the Town Planning Institute of Canada and, finally, he ceaselessly promoted the modern planning profession, even though his efforts were often opposed by his newly adopted countrymen.

It is, perhaps, a testament to Adams' strength of character that he suffered professional disappointment in both Britain and Canada, and the disappointments followed him to the United States. Because they coloured his expectations

over time, his writings tend to include details of implementation rather than rhetoric. From this perspective, he is a planner's planner: the idea may be the thing, but application of a described process accomplishes the goal.

Adams also continues to be relevant because of his ability to effectively link short-term actions with their long-term effect, to link the tactical with the strategic aspects of planning decisions. In other words, he recognized that short-term projects could either contribute to or sabotage long-term goals. Some would call Adams an idealist, but though he might have walked with his head brushing the clouds, his feet were firmly locked to that plane of earth where business, government, and other man-made institutions swirled in conflict. He could draw, and explain to others, a traversable path from the realities of his world to the standards he was attempting to espouse.

WHO WAS THOMAS ADAMS?

Thomas Adams was both a product of his times and of his personal circumstances. Having grown up on a family farm outside of Edinburgh, Scotland, Adams introduced a new concept of balance between rural and urban life to Canadian planning. Although his work was regarded highly throughout the world, he suffered the consequences of his time – a climate of war and uncertainty. As a convinced utilitarian and pragmatist, he insisted on attaining natural harmony in society and the co-operation of individuals.

In his early life, Adams had two major influences. Family, farming, and his involvement in public life allowed him to further his understanding of the social issues of his time. Distrust in the power of the state caused him to favour individual liberties (or associated individualism). His involvement in local politics became more serious when he became a local councillor at the end of the nineteenth century. This led to a career in journalism in London and involvement in the newly emerging Garden City movement.

Adams then qualified as a surveyor and became one of the first people in England to make his living entirely from planning and designing garden suburbs. In 1910, because of his growing reputation in his new profession, he became the first president of the British Town Planning Institute.

Canada's Century, 1896-1913

Meanwhile, Canada was experiencing a fifteen-year period of economic prosperity and an incredible expansion of its population. This expansion was essentially caused by wide open immigration policies that were aimed at populating the Prairies. However, Canada's rural population rose only by 17 percent while its urban population grew by 62 percent. Urban development was characterized by grid design and did not take into consideration the topography of the land.

Market forces determined land use, and single-family housing encouraged the development of new subdivisions at an alarming rate. Adams identified some major consequences of these developments.

Adams noticed that land speculation resulted in cities expanding their boundaries to attain more land for development. However, a large proportion of this land had no prospect of being developed and would consequently become sterile. This idle land would result in increased costs for municipalities and lead to bankruptcy in some cases. Furthermore, according to Adams, land assessments were based on fictitious values. Unrealistically low densities of development, he argued, would lead to dramatic tax increases because of increased servicing costs. Residents of suburban areas would then be faced with high land and transport expenditures. Many homes would become slums because families would not be able to afford these unpredicted increases in living costs. Moreover, cities were increasingly becoming grim and dirty because of the lack of public investment in the arts and green spaces. There was little control over the exploitation of natural resources and land use.

Adams recognized that rural areas faced similar issues. Speculators held the best land, close to railways and off the market, and other lands were unavailable because of premature subdivisions. Settlements were scattered and lacked essential services such as health care, municipal services, and schools. This made the city look like a good option for rural Canadians and contributed to the depopulation of rural areas.

In response, city planning became a prominent feature of Canadian progressivism. It was believed that America's City Beautiful movement, with its well-laid-out plans and aesthetically pleasing concepts, would reduce social tension, secure property values, and promote stability and efficiency. Canadians in general, however, were not receptive to these ideas, stressing instead more urgent needs such as health care. Town planning came to be associated with luxury, and the City Scientific movement instead prioritized health, economics, and beauty (in that order). The movement was based on the British Garden City movement and, in its attempt to provide for the population at large, was oriented towards efficiency in the provision of services.

Canada and Thomas Adams: A Marriage Waiting to Happen

The Commission of Conservation was established in response to a growing concern about the rapid destruction of natural resources in Canada. It sought to promote scientific management principles for the conservation and economic development of natural resources. Before the arrival of Thomas Adams, Dr. Charles Hodgett, the commission's chief medical officer, along with G. Frank Beer and Colonel Jeffrey H. Burland, was the leading authority in Canadian planning. Aware of the rapid decay of the urban environment, a lobby campaigned for

the appointment of a planning expert. To this end, Adams was appointed town planning adviser to the federal government in 1914 following three requests from Prime Minister Robert Borden. The British government simply could not spare Adams until that time. Adams was given a three-year contract, and he took on the new challenge in stride.

By early 1915, Adams had visited all the Canadian provinces except for Prince Edward Island. His aim was to establish planning as a central function of governments at all levels and to base it on an integrated structure of legislation, administration, public support, and professional organization, education, and expertise. Around the same time, he founded the commission's journal, *Town Planning and the Conservation of Life,* and advised many municipalities on planning problems, often through the Civic Improvement League. By 1918, five provinces had adopted new planning legislation. Early planning legislation was tame in comparison to the legislation of today because planning was usually limited to the urban fringe, not developed areas. Adams, inspired by his desire to make planning an academic discipline and his belief that little was known about Canada's environmental problems, also designed several projects. In his case study of Ottawa, he surveyed housing issues in the urban environment. He then undertook an investigation of attitudes towards urban planning and development by circulating a questionnaire in over two hundred towns. As he worked on these projects, he was also writing *Rural Planning and Development,* his first major work and possibly his most notable contribution to Canadian planning.

In 1916, Adams unveiled the first draft of an Act to ensure that new development would be regulated, that public monies would be spent in the best possible way, and, finally, that conditions in urban communities would not cause unnecessary impairment of health or loss of life. Executive responsibilities would be placed in the hands of a professional town planning surveyor, and planning would be made mandatory. Towns would adopt long-term planning schemes, while rural areas would adopt the simpler method of bylaws. His plan was criticized. Critics claimed it lacked imagination and was far too complex. The Act, therefore, was not adopted on a large scale. Adams' 1919 campaign for provincial planning legislation also had little success and came to a halt. Critics said that the legislation could not be adapted to the needs of Canada and that the British town planning scheme was not suitable for the North American context. Many provinces adopted American-style legislation, which was simpler and allowed municipalities to have comprehensive control over planning and zoning.

As a private practitioner, Adams was appointed as a consultant on a number of new Canadian communities, including Temiscaming in western Quebec, Corner Brook in Newfoundland, and the Richmond District of Halifax, which had been devastated by an explosion in the harbour in 1917. From 1922 to 1936, Welland,

Kitchener, and London each hired Adams as their town planning consultant. Kitchener's plan was the first to become law in Ontario. Adams also designed Lindenlea in Ottawa in response to demands for low-cost housing suburbs after 1918. In this case, his progressive plan was not followed, and the project was taken over by others. Although the project was completed, it never housed its target population.

The Town Planning Institute of Canada

In 1919, a group of land surveyors and engineers combined their efforts with those of Adams to create the first professional planning institute, the Town Planning Institute of Canada. This group included Noulan Cauchon, Horace Seymour, A.S. Dalzell, and James Ewing, all of whom Adams had worked with previously. The institute had fifty-two members, and Adams became its first elected president, serving two terms. Members included engineers, surveyors, architects, and landscape architects.

Leaving Canada, 1920-30

In the postwar era, growth was interrupted and planning seemed irrelevant. The major preoccupations of the profession became zoning and town and highway design, and recessions and government conservatism had a detrimental effect on Adams' work. The expiration of the Civic Improvement League and the progressive recommendations of *Rural Planning and Development* went unnoticed. In January 1921, the Commission of Conservation was dissolved because of policy conflicts between levels of government and intra-government jealousies. Adams' influence was reduced further when the Town Planning Branch of the Commission of Conservation was transferred to the National Parks Division of the Department of the Interior. Adams, however, was appointed town planning adviser for the Town Planning Branch.

Following these events, Adams' involvement in Canadian planning issues became increasingly distant. In February 1920, Adams accepted a part-time position as chief consultant on planning for a new firm in the United States, American City Consultants. He also lectured part-time at MIT and went on to play a leading role in the establishment of US planning education. In July 1923, his contract as the town planning consultant to the Canadian government ended. In September, he was appointed chief consultant to the Committee on the Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs. Six years later, he retired after completing the plan's ten volumes. At that time, he had a staff of 150 and a budget of one million dollars, a considerable amount at the time. He then went on to become associate professor of research in city planning at Harvard University.

During this period, he wrote four books: *Neighborhoods of Small Homes: Economic Density of Low-Cost Housing in America* (1931); *Recent Advances in Town Planning* (1932); *Design of Residential Areas: Basic Considerations, Principles and Methods* (1934); and *Outline of Town and City Planning: A Review of Past Efforts and Modern Aims* (1935).

Throughout his career, Adams proved to be a pioneer in modern planning. On 24 March 1940, after a lifetime of dedication to the field, he passed away in Sussex, England, after a short illness. His professional experience in Britain, Canada, and the United States included significant disappointments, but perhaps they added to the realism and urgent practicality of his writings.

THE PLANNING OF YESTERDAY, TODAY

Although *Rural Planning and Development* was written for a different age, the issues that Adams identifies in it resonate with our own times. Adams spent a great deal of effort attempting to formalize the planning profession in Canada, and we now bear the benefits of his exertions. It is now recognized that planning has its own approaches, tools, and methods. Although planning may focus on land use issues, planners also concern themselves with the local economy, labour and employment, demographics, resource management, and environmental protection (see Figure 1). They adapt to and capitalize on parallel processes, relying on community initiatives as much as on legislated processes in the implementation of their initiatives. In sum, rural planning is the process of planning for rural areas, with a focus on rural issues and from a rural perspective (implying an appreciation for the rural community, its needs and aspirations) (Caldwell 2005).

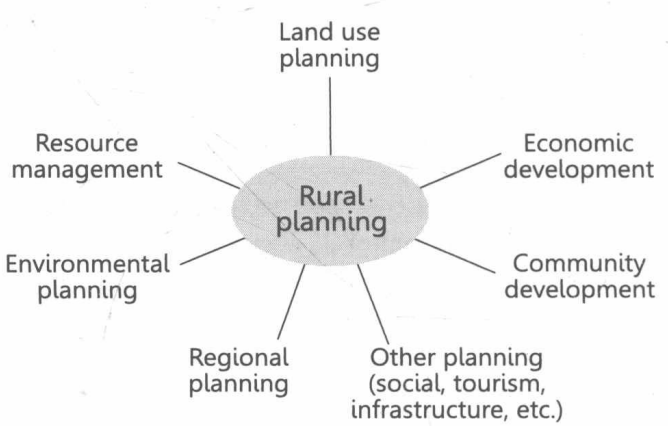

FIGURE 1 COMPONENTS OF RURAL PLANNING

Adams advises as much in *Rural Planning and Development*. Although his omission of public participation in the planning process is sometimes identified as a key difference between planning then and now, Adams does recommend comprehensive social surveys as a prerequisite to local planning (page 344). Although today's methods of eliciting community participation are not discussed explicitly in Adams' writing, it is evident that Adams was moving in that very direction with his conclusions on process and good planning. Along with his call for an integration of effort among different levels of government in planning initiatives, Adams' writing attempts to pre-empt the bureaucratization of comprehensive planning that came later.

As the designer, in the 1920s, of New York's first regional plan, Adams recognized the benefits of comprehensive planning, but he only did so in a manner that could be tolerated by residents. While Adams was open to a diversity of approaches and strategies, he was also sensitive to community aspirations with an appreciation for what the community would accept.

Adams' exploration of local character as a key to local planning solutions has been institutionalized over time, particularly in the rural context, where staying within budgetary or profitability limits can be more difficult than in the urban context. Farmers in the Okanagan Valley, for instance, face different issues than those in the Fraser Valley – the diversity of rural Canada has forced us to heed Adams' insistence on social and economic surveys in the search for realistic solutions.

Adams was also concerned about reactive government policies and public initiatives to stem urbanization. In *Rural Planning and Development*, he extensively acknowledges the challenges of rural living, the illusory ease of urban living, and the need for planners to maintain the rural-urban balance by planning rural communities that offer the same promises as their urban counterparts. The 29 November 2004 issue of *Maclean's*, which featured an article on the war between town and country, illustrates the continued currency of this issue. Canada has continued to transform from a rural to an urban country, and this shift has often meant a loss of political clout for rural communities, migrating youth, an aging population, the paving over of farmland for suburbs, and ongoing competition within urban Canada for increasingly limited resources.

Although Adams identified rural issues and outlined solutions, thoughtful and deliberate planning interventions are quite recent. There were efforts in the 1930s to respond to challenges on the farm through the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act, but a broader community-based focus on planning was much later in coming. Following the Second World War, the rejuvenated planning profession turned its attention to urban issues, which, in the postwar decades of rapid economic growth and relative urban prosperity, proved to be more pressing. Regional planning focused on urban regions and the debate about metropolitan management

(Hodge and Robinson 2002). This focus in turn led to questions and concerns regarding the role of the so-called rural. The Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act (1961) created a framework for focusing on rural issues, and within fifteen years of the publication of Ralph Krueger's seminal study of Ontario's tender fruit lands (1959), Canadian planners had developed a distinct rural perspective. The 1961 legislation was followed by the Canada Land Inventory, which also facilitated this shift in perspective by cataloguing the location and quality of agricultural lands (Crerar 1963). In the early 1970s, provincial and municipal governments increasingly focused on planning for rural areas. David Douglas (1989) notes that agriculture resurfaced as the primary rural issue in the British Columbia Land Commission (1973), in the passage in Quebec of the Act to Preserve Agricultural Land (1978), and in the Ontario Foodland Guidelines (1978). Countryside planning in Ontario proved to be influential throughout the country (MacLaren 1975). All of these studies addressed planning issues related to an increasingly industrial agricultural sector (Troughton 1982). By the mid to late 1970s, effective municipal rural planning systems existed in areas such as the County of Kings, Nova Scotia, and Huron County and Waterloo Region in Ontario.

In many respects, urbanization and suburbanization, scattered rural development, economic decline, environmental degradation, and the relationship between primary industries and their host communities drove the rural planning agenda for the next four decades. Successful rural planning responded to these issues. British Columbia's Agricultural Land Reserve program, for example, stemmed the conversion of farmland for non-agricultural uses (Smith and Haid 2004). Quebec developed an Act to Protect Agricultural Land (Bryant 1994) and, in Ontario, some agriculturally based municipalities eliminated new, scattered, rural development (Caldwell, Weir, and Thomson 2003). However, challenges remain. Although Canadian cities have achieved relatively high densities (Condon 2004), the issue of sprawl and the related loss of farmland still exist. Recent initiatives, including Greenbelt legislation, attempt to respond to these trends.

Is rural planning constantly struggling to find its niche? Why is it that after a century of planning efforts, planners continue to face the same problems? Adams' professional experience caused him to recognize the conflictual nature of planning and the need for a focused dedication to principles. In his words, "there can be no simple and ready solution of the complicated social questions dealt with in this report, and it is equally obvious that the adoption of the most perfect system of planning and developing land will not do more than provide the right foundation on which to build a solution by a slow and gradual process" (page 339). In the closing chapter of *Rural Planning and Development,* Adams sets out an agenda that continues to represent the focus of today's rural planners (page 340). Although advancements have been made since his time – particularly in the investigation of rural issues, the adoption of planning legislation, and the formalization of planning processes – the rest of the world has not waited for

the planning world to implement its collective plan. As a result, the intensification of pressures has forced rural planners to constantly experiment with new strategies and to assess old tactics for their continued relevance. Given the pace of progress, it can be expected that some of today's challenges will burden the planners of the next century. And, as Adams' example shows, it is the policy of today that will prevent or ameliorate the issues of tomorrow. Again, this should not deter us from the accomplishments of *Rural Planning and Development.* Thomas Adams might have been one of the catalysts of the movement, but rural planners and those involved in rural planning but not formally of the profession also deserve credit. Rural planning in Canada has, however, continued to be a stew of challenges over the past decades.

From the Rural Planning District Commissions of New Brunswick to those who deal with the agricultural lands of Ontario and Alberta, there are planners dedicated to speaking about and addressing rural issues. As a profession, however, planners have devoted inadequate attention to rural matters. For example, a keyword search of articles in *Plan Canada* (1978-2008) yields 64 "rural" and 860 "urban" articles. Canadian planning texts make limited reference to rural or agricultural issues, yet approximately 20 percent of the country's population and more than 99 percent of the country's land is rural and remote. Thus, while a rural focus does exist in planning, it does not command a sufficient degree of attention.

One of the successes of rural planning has been a willingness to tackle diverse issues. Yet much of rural Canada remains susceptible to broad global and market trends that threaten community stability. Although the interest is there, rural planners lack the influence needed to guarantee the maintenance of rural qualities of life. Provincial governments also struggle with this issue. In Quebec, for example, the National Policy on Rurality was developed in 2006 to establish conditions conducive to ensuring that Quebec's rural areas develop and thrive.

Parts of Canada have made progress in recognizing the role of agriculture and acting to protect it. British Columbia took strong action nearly thirty years ago and continues to see dividends. Alberta is grappling with this issue. Ontario passed the Greenbelt Act in 2005 and a revised planning policy statement. Many farmers recognize that preventing scattered rural development serves the interest of agriculture. Complementary urban planning successes contribute to higher densities that, in turn, protect farmland.

Across Canada, specialized tools, techniques, and policies are used to plan for the countryside. Scattered residential development is generally discouraged. Legislation regulates land use issues associated with livestock production. Recreational and extractive uses can be accommodated. In Ontario, laws protect sensitive rural areas, including the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges Moraine. Although conflict continues, planners have attempted to use preventative and consultative strategies to facilitate decision making.

Many small towns and villages struggle with a changing economy. Although main street and heritage programs help, the decline in population and economic strength of small communities continues. Moreover, the desire for development sometimes leads to a lowering of community standards in the hope of attracting investment.

In a country as diverse as Canada, some communities have limited capacity and desire to pursue comprehensive planning. While some do not perceive a need for planning and others are reluctant to see an enhanced role for government, a wider range of communities could benefit from rural planning.

We know that most Canadians, given the option, would choose to have dynamic, healthy, and sustainable rural communities. Much as Adams did several generations ago, it is now our professional obligation to guide our surroundings toward that goal. After all, from the planners that followed Adams, we have inherited the tools and policies that make this an achievable objective; in cases where they are wanting, we have the processes in place to refocus or change them entirely.

PLANNING FOR TOMORROW

Today, there are more than eight thousand professional planners in Canada and millions of citizens who are engaged in the planning process in one way or another. In fact, everyone in the country, whether they are insulated in a condominium in the heart of our largest cities or travelling on roads in the most remote communities, have been influenced and affected by numerous planning decisions. Our transportation systems, our development standards, and, increasingly, the holistic planning of our communities (in accordance with Adams' thinking) affect how we move, live, and, ideally, thrive in our environments. Although there may not be direct linkages between all of Adams' conclusions and the planning challenges of today, Adams' critical method of investigation, recognition of (but not resignation to) realities, and openness to local perspectives all serve as excellent principles for planners to emulate.

Adams' *Rural Planning and Development* is unequivocally a milestone in Canadian planning for three reasons. First, it provides insight into rural planning a century ago. It has thus become valuable for its historical information. Adams provides us with a detailed overview of conditions in rural Canada at the turn of the last century. He draws upon census information and numerous case studies and examples from the United States, England, Australia, and elsewhere. He was witness to the development, speculation, and intolerable living and working conditions prevalent throughout rural and urban Canada, and he outspokenly condemned the trends.

Second, Adams' book provides a broad-based vision for planning. Although his work has a decidedly land use and development bias, Adams recognizes the

relationship between planning and the broader connections with health, culture, education, and employment. In fact, an argument can be made that Adams offers a comprehensive vision of planning that, at times, has been lacking for the past one hundred years.

Third, the book provides an objective and rational scientific vision for planning practice. Adams' focus on numbers, standards, and statistics clearly promulgated the value that planning could bring to society. He understood the political realities of planning and how to navigate government institutions and processes to achieve success. In this context, Adams sowed the seeds for planners and the planning profession, as it is known today.

Rural Planning and Development is an important book for all Canadian planners and students of planning. It provides historical context for our profession. It provides a formative, and still relevant, vision of what planning can be. And, through understanding Adams' personal experiences, it demonstrates that planning, whether rural or urban, requires hard work and individual initiative to be successful. Planners cannot afford to simply guard and maintain the processes and policies of the past; they must strive to improve the quality of life in the communities where they operate. In today's evolving, complex society, where communities struggle to achieve "sustainability," planners must, ultimately, be courageous enough to provide leadership.

THIS BOOK

This book includes the complete text of *Rural Planning and Development,* including appendices, diagrams, and photos. None of the original work has been modified or changed in any way. Modern reflections or commentaries, however, follow each chapter.

These reflections are by leading academics and practitioners from across the country who provide their perspectives on Adams' work and the role he played in shaping communities and professional practice in Canada. The commentaries also update each chapter by reflecting on the context and, in some cases, the relevance of its conclusions in the twenty-first century. Adams' place in the history of the profession is evident in the enthusiasm that each author brings to the project.

Although each contributor offers a different perspective on Adams' influence, they all acknowledge that Adams was a product of his times, the First World War era, and heavily influenced by his background in the United Kingdom. They also recognize the thoroughness of his work and his perceptive understanding of rural conditions at the turn of the twentieth century.

Jeanne Wolfe, who passed away in 2009, in her commentary on Chapter I, notes both Adams' on-going relevance and the historical context of his work. She outlines Adams' understanding of the interplay between rural and urban