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**Gordon, David L.A.**

*Town and Crown: An Illustrated History of Canada's Capital*

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Often when the city of Ottawa is discussed or viewed, what is highlighted is the canal running through the city, the beautiful parliament buildings, the very cold winters, and maybe even the annual tulip festival. However, this seemingly peaceful urban centre has some very dramatic beginnings. This book, *Town and Crown: An Illustrated History of Canada's Capital*, by Dr. Gordon, retells Canada's founding through the eyes of a planner, while also providing a thorough account of the ways in which Ottawa has developed as the capital of Canada. Further, Dr. Gordon also explains some of the unexpected reasons the Crown exists in this particular Town, as well as the tensions which have existed in the region since contact throughout the text.

The book unfolds temporally, beginning at the literal foundation of what is now Ottawa, the geology and physical geography of the region, before discussing the Indigenous Nations which lived in the region pre-contact and colonization, moving all the way to contemporary planning issues in 2011. Each chapter builds on the next, providing a geographic, economic, social, and political contextual analysis for each referenced period of time. This outline essentially gives an entire history of what we now refer to as the Ottawa Valley. Although the specifics of the unfolding planning conflicts do shift, the tensions between the local and national politics, and the necessity for negotiation, remains central to each chapter.

Each chapter presents a wealth of information, which comes from over 16 years of archival research and informational interviews with planners, architects, and politicians. The discussion from this extensive research is further augmented by maps, contemporary and historical press reports and photos, and early plans which demonstrate the various transformations the National Capital Region has undergone, from a "city [that] lacked the most basic urban amenities" (p.1) and an "embarrassment to its leaders and people" (p. 3) to a growing metropolitan area with a high quality of life (p. 319), which is only outranked by "Vienna, Bern and Berlin" (p. 326). However, Dr. Gordon goes further than just describing urban transformations over time, and the various popular planning styles within the city, and illustrates the ways in which the planning of Ottawa was a major aspect of post-contact Nation building. Other critical reflections include the politics of naming, such as the way in which the Ottawa River "after people that had never inhabited its valley" (pg. 11).

Often when discussing urban geographies in Canada, the cities of importance include only Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal, and thus Ottawa may seem an unlikely site for urban planning research. Dr. Gordon disengages from this assumption, demonstrating the way in which Ottawa as the National Capital is a prime location for planning strategy diffusion. Although many cities in the region originally used simple planning designs, Ottawa became a site of discussion for planners like Thomas Adams, Edward Bennet, Frederick Todd, with redevelopment after WWII being done by Jacques Gréber.

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One of the most interesting chapters for individuals studying contemporary urban planning and geography is chapter 14, which includes a section on “Good Planning Ideas” (many of which were not implemented) and “Bad Planning Ideas” (p. 323-324). Further, the chapter also compares Ottawa and the National Capital Region to other national capitals, with an in-depth discussion on the ways in which capitals must function symbolically for the nation as well as a functioning as a city. When comparing this necessity to other nations, this is especially difficult for Canada as both a multicultural country and a country beginning the processes of reconciliation with the over 600 Indigenous nations Canadians share the territories with. These negotiations make for a particularly insightful discussion.

Being a geographer, and having lived in Ottawa for many years, I did not anticipate the surprises that Dr. Gordon would both find and include in his text. There is political, economic, and social intrigue worthy of a reality television show (see for example the issue of absentee landowners of the Nepean Townships, and the land flipping by Le Breton on pg. 29). As such, although I would consider this text to be for academic audiences, there are a variety of disciplines wherein this text would fit in well to a student reading list including geography, urban planning, sociology, political science, anthropology, history, architecture, and more.

Jennifer Mateer  
Department of Geography  
The University of Victoria