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## Cities falling apart - the big worry

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OTTAWA - Crime and high taxes are major concerns, but the top issue for Canada's big-city dwellers is their failing infrastructure, especially deteriorating roads, a new poll suggests.

About one in four urban residents named the crumbling condition of their cities as the most important local issue facing their communities, followed by taxes (18%), health care (14%), the environment (10%) and crime (9%).

Conducted in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Calgary, the survey also indicated related infrastructure issues of concern such as public transportation, at 6%, and urban development and growth, at 5%.

"Our cities, despite some positive attitudes and being pretty tolerant and optimistic and rating their overall quality of life as pretty high, there are some clouds on the horizon, and it is not so much about crime or social issues. It's more the day-to-day experiences of living in an urban environment, trying to get from A to B," said Rudyard Griffiths, executive director of the Dominion Institute.

The report, conducted by Ipsos Reid and the Dominion Institute from Feb. 24 to 27, surveyed 1,136 adult Canadians.

It has a margin of error within 2.8 percentage points, 19 out of 20 times. The poll's margin of error for individual cities was higher, ranging from 5.8 to 7.1 percentage points.

Mr. Griffiths said Canadian cities appear to be at "a bit of a tipping point," with frustrations at failing infrastructure wearing at residents' tolerance for newcomers. For example, the survey suggested in Toronto, 51% of residents believe the city needs to reduce the number of newcomers that it currently welcomes.

Mr. Griffiths added: "To extrapolate, look at what happened to American cities in the '70s and '80s when they really fell apart. They fell apart not because of high rates of immigration or social issues; they fell apart because their infrastructure collapsed."

Montreal and Calgary residents cited infrastructure and bad roads as the first concern, while Torontonians' first mentioned taxes. In Vancouver, where Mr. Griffiths said recent gang incidents have affected attitudes, crime is the major concern, with one out of four bringing it up as the most important issue.

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