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RELUCTANT ENTREPRENEURS OR EMBRACING MARKETIZATION: THE GOVERNANCE OF MUNICIPAL ENTREPRENEURIALISM FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL CANADA

ABSTRACT

Rural communities in many OECD countries have experienced political and economic restructuring pressures from neoliberal public policies and New Public Management since the 1980s. To navigate these challenges, rural local governments in Canada are developing municipal enterprises to expand revenues and address service and infrastructure pressures. This paper reports on research from four Canadian provinces investigating the challenge of municipal entrepreneurialism for the implementation and governance of community development in rural Canada. Findings reveal strains on local capacity and the potential loss of control over municipal enterprises due to tensions between the municipality's strategic planning and community development goals versus the strategic goals pursued by the board of directors representing the municipal enterprise. Rural communities also face fiscal and staff capacity limitations that hinder the development and operation of municipal enterprises. Such capacity pressures are exacerbated by the absence of a clear regulatory environment to guide the operations of municipal enterprises.

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