

Citizen Control of the Citizen's Business

TORONTO'S CITIZENS CAN CONTROL TORONTO'S AFFAIRS ONLY THROUGH FREQUENT, PROMPT, ACCURATE AND PERTINENT INFORMATION WITH REGARD TO TORONTO'S BUSINESS.

ISSUED BY THE

21 KING STREET EAST



TELEPHONE: ELGIN 1904

White Paper No. 102

September 22nd, 1926

THE COUNCIL-MANAGER PLAN OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Story No. 5
PART A.

The History and Growth of the Council-Manager System

This series is intended to give information. It is not a brief for or against the Council-Manager Plan of Municipal Government. It is published in response to repeated requests for definite information.

I. DATA OF GROWTH.

The following table has been taken from the 12th Year Book (March, 1926) published by the International Association of City Managers:

Year put into effect	By Charter or Statute usually with popular vote	By Ordinance or By-Law	Total
1912 and before.....	2	2	4
1913	8	2	10
1914	13	5	18
1915	17	4	21
1916	16	3	19
1917	15	1	16
1918	18	10	28
1919	23	7	30
1920	21	13	34
1921	46	8	54
1922	25	9	34
1923	30	8	38
1924	13	7	20
1925	18	5	23
1926	4	1	5
Total.....	269	85	354

There were 19 municipalities in Canada which are listed under the Council-Manager form of government, although two of these are doubtful. Of these, 7 have a population of over 10,000 and 3 of over 15,000. There are several others which in practice, if not in theory, approach very near to the organization of Council-Manager cities. Omitting doubtful ones, Council-Manager municipalities are distributed as follows:

Manitoba	2	Nova Scotia	4
New Brunswick	1	Ontario	2
Quebec.....	8		

Since these figures were issued one municipality is reported to have reverted to its previous form. Possibly others may have been added.

At first the plan was frequently adopted apparently as a protest against political control or graft. Recently, it would seem, the motive has been sounder—the desire to secure an effective plan of administration adapted to give the best service for the least cost or the most service for the funds available.

II. THE FIRST PERIOD.

The first definite appearance of the Council-Manager Plan was in Staunton, Virginia, in 1908, which adopted by by-law the Manager idea as an improvement upon the straight Commission System, as found in Galveston. A Council-Manager Charter was adopted by a vote of the citizens, making it the permanent form of government of the city. Between these years, however, hundreds of municipalities adopted the plan either by vote of Council or by vote of the people. Sumter, South Carolina, was the first to adopt a Charter providing for the plan. This was in 1912. The period between 1908 and 1914 is marked by the adoption of the plan by many small municipalities, and it was the opinion of many that it was not adapted to the needs of large cities.

III. THE SECOND PERIOD.

This period began by the adoption of the plan by vote of the citizens in Dayton, Ohio, 1914, largely as a result of the efforts of Mr. John H. Patterson, late President of the National Cash Register Company. Dayton has been served by a succession of able administrators as Managers. Anyone wishing to obtain a non-partisan estimate of the result of the plan in Dayton may obtain a pamphlet thereon by writing to the Dayton Research Association, Dayton, Ohio. Between 1914 and 1922 a considerable number of larger cities were added to the ranks of Council-Manager municipalities.

IV. THE THIRD PERIOD.

A third period opened in November, 1922, when the Council-Manager plan was adopted by a vote of the citizens of Cleveland, Ohio. This city has a population of about 770,000. Since Cleveland's action, Fort Worth, Texas, population 106,000; Kansas City, Missouri, population 324,000; and Cincinnati, population 401,000, have adopted the plan. While there has been a rather sudden increase in the number of large cities under Council-Manager government, smaller communities have continued to adopt Manager government. These vary in size from less than 500 to over 750,000, and are found in 35 States of the American Union, in five Canadian Provinces, and in New Zealand.

V. HOW MANY MUNICIPALITIES HAVE ABANDONED THE COUNCIL-MANAGER PLAN.

There are two main ways in which municipalities have adopted the plan: (1) By resolution, ordinance or by-law of the City Council, and (2) by vote of the people, authorized by State or Provincial legislation, usually on a proposal to adopt a Charter or form of government embodying Council-Manager principles. There are some variations in these methods of adoption, but they may be roughly classified as (1) Adoption by action of Council; (2) Adoption by vote of the citizens. When cities have adopted the plan by the former method it is frequently without sufficient knowledge of the system, with inadequate discussion and with insufficient popular understanding. It is alleged also that in some cases it has been rushed through by Council for ulterior motive, such as to maintain political control of the Manager or so as to discredit the system. Even when adopted by Council in entire good faith, a system so easily adopted may be as easily discarded. Of the 354 existing Council-Manager municipalities 269 have adopted the system by charter usually accompanied by vote of the citizens, and 85 by vote of Council. Only the former can really be regarded as Council-Manager communities, as those in the latter class may abandon the Council-Manager almost over night if any slight friction may occur and, moreover, in a city which has adopted the plan only by Council vote, the Manager is almost inevitably handicapped either by uncertainty as to authority or by doubt as to how long he will have to make good. It is stated* that, since the movement started out, only 3 cities in class (2) abandoned the plan, while probably 60 of class (1) have done so, including 2 cities which had the system imposed on them by State Legislatures without a vote of the citizens.

With regard to the three cities who adopted the plan by popular vote and later on gave it up, one city, after the non-voting citizens saw what they had done, at the first opportunity elected the former City-Manager

* 11th Year Book, City Managers' Association.

as Mayor by a vote of 4 to 1; in another the old-time Mayor, when he found that the people had adopted the Council-Manager plan, resigned as Mayor and was appointed City Manager, with results from this and similar incongruities that may be imagined; while the other city allowed politics to defeat the intention of the plan.

It is claimed by friends of the movement that "it can be correctly stated that no city which has given the City-Manager plan a fair trial, adopting it by vote of the people and displaying a proper attitude toward the efficient administration of the city's affairs, has ever abandoned the City-Manager plan." The same thing might perhaps be said of other forms of civic government. It is quite clearly true that many communities which are said to have given the plan up never really had it to give up. There is something more to the Council-Manager plan than simply the passing of a by-law by Council declaring a city to be a Council-Manager city and the selection of some official and calling him City Manager.

It is quite evident that the movement has been a virile one; that it has not spent its force, and that it is at least one stage in the evolution of more efficient governmental machinery. The plan has at least proved its right to be considered on the basis of facts and can hardly longer be dismissed by an epithet or a dogmatic expression of opinion.

VI. HOW ONE CITY MANAGER LOOKS UPON HIS JOB.

Extract from address by City Manager Hopkins, of Cleveland, at the 11th Annual Convention of the International City Managers' Association.

"However, if once we get the idea that the city government after all is the housekeeper of our common home, that we are, all of us, members of a community, and that literally we are concerned, every last one of us, with the kind of life that every other person in the community lives, if the city, no matter how large, does become to us in truth a home, our larger home, then city government and municipal problems take on an entirely new aspect, and we may ask and expect and receive from every citizen an interest in city government which we never could get on any basis of finance, which we never could get by telling him that the city is a corporation and he is a stockholder, and that he has a money interest in good city government and all that. All that leaves him cold. Convince him once that this is a part of the household business and we have put the whole thing on a basis which leaves no limit practically to the devotion and the quality of service that the humblest of these tasks may enlist."

Part B. of Story No. 5 in this Series gives some of the opinions of eminent British Authorities arrived at after a study of the Council-Manager System. It will be issued shortly.