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137 WELLINGTON ST. WEST



TELEPHONE ELGIN 1904

White Paper No. 159

November 27th, 1930

Can the Organization of the Municipal Government of Toronto be improved

STORY No. 2.

*The Selection of Council and other
Representative Bodies*

THE ELEMENTS AND PROBLEMS.

In every Corporation there are three elements:—

1. The body which selects the policy deciding organization.
2. The policy deciding organization.
3. The policy carrying out organization.

In a municipal corporation, the selecting body is the electorate. This body has or should have other functions. It, or part of it, occasionally passes on matters of policy involving capital expenditure. Directly or indirectly, through taxes, rates, fees, fares, etc., it provides the money to defray the costs of operating municipal services. It observes or should observe the manner in which its representatives discharge their stewardship. Its basal function, however, is to choose men and women for its legislative bodies. Its two basal problems are:

- I. How to obtain the services of men and women best fitted for the work.

II. How to retain their services.

I. How to obtain the Services of Men and Women best fitted for the better work.

This question raises at least four other questions:

- (a) What are the qualifications required of members of elective legislative bodies?
 - (b) Do a sufficient number of persons with these qualifications offer themselves as candidates?
 - (c) If not, why?
 - (d) What can be done to improve conditions?
- (a) Qualifications for membership in legislative policy deciding bodies. Among these might be listed the following:
 1. Honesty, including in that term intellectual honesty.
 2. Moral courage.
 3. Interest in municipal affairs.
 4. A lively sense of the value of opportunities for service to the public.
 5. A clear understanding of the difference between policy deciding and policy carrying out functions and unwillingness to interfere in the latter function.
 6. Soundness and independence of judgment and capacity for hard thinking.
 7. Ability to express thoughts clearly and tersely.
 8. Ability to refrain from talking when having no thoughts of value on subject under discussion.
 - (b) Do a sufficient number of persons with these qualifications offer themselves as candidates?

This question does not lend itself to quantitative measurement, so that the answer must be a matter of judgment. It might appear that the electors of Toronto are fairly well satisfied on this score. Otherwise they would before this have taken definite

action to remedy conditions. Lethargy or resignation, however, might be the explanation. There is a widespread, though somewhat indefinite, opinion that the calibre of candidates is not improving and that, unless changes are made in methods of electing and organizing Council, conditions may grow worse before they grow better.

(c) If not, why?

The condition, insofar as it exists, is the resultant of many forces, but some of the causes may be stated with assurance. Among them are these:

1. The short term (one year) makes efficient service almost impossible. The first term of office is largely occupied in getting acquainted with the job. Following terms must be largely occupied with ways and means of holding on to it.
2. The short term compels too great an investment of money and valuable time, not in service, but in getting the opportunity to serve.
3. The short term, through the necessity for frequent elections, tends to subject candidates to too frequent "mud baths," to the great discomfort of themselves and families.
4. The sort term makes independent or forward-looking action extremely difficult through the necessity of placating or combatting special interests throughout the whole term.
5. The Committee system so multiplies words and slows up action as to make the individual member almost helpless in the grip of the system.
6. The prospect of protracted meetings without important result appals the man or woman who already has something to do, and little enough time to do it in.
7. The Ward system encourages the coming out of men unknown or almost unknown in other wards, makes it easier to elect small men and puts a premium on sectionalism and introduces into Council too many men of the "ward" mind.

(d) What can be done to improve conditions?

These things, among others:

- I. Make greater use of established forums where, throughout the year, citizens can meet personally members of Council and elected Boards and candidates therefor, where questions can be asked and answered, to the end that lethargy and suspicion may be replaced by interest and understanding. This would mean the investment of some time by citizens in the consideration of their own public affairs.
2. Take the necessary steps to secure a lengthened term of office.
3. Provide for continuity of policy by overlapping terms of office. This would also give the electorate an annual opportunity to express itself at the polls, which a longer term than the present, without the overlapping feature, would not do.
4. Abolish all standing committees except the Committee of the Whole, and possibly an Executive-Finance Committee instead of a Board of Control.

5. Abolish wards or so modify the Ward System that the majority of Council would be elected at large or in large districts. This would tend to moderate sectionalism and to reduce the number of candidates not known outside comparatively small areas.

II. How to Retain the Services of Such Men and Women.

There can be no doubt that many excellent members of municipal legislative bodies have given many years of service to the municipality. Many periods of service have been altogether too short. There can be little doubt that some have been too long. It is probably true that it is more difficult to secure long service from an efficient person than from an inefficient person. The same causes which operate against securing the best type of candidate, operate against the retention in the service of aldermen of the best type. The retirement of aldermen after one year's service, disillusioned and frustrated, is not unknown.

The measures suggested above to promote the coming out of desirable candidates will also tend to lengthen the term of service of efficient members of Councils, Boards and Commissions, and to discourage long periods of service by inefficient, self-seeking or otherwise undesirable members.

The present distribution of population by wards is as follows:

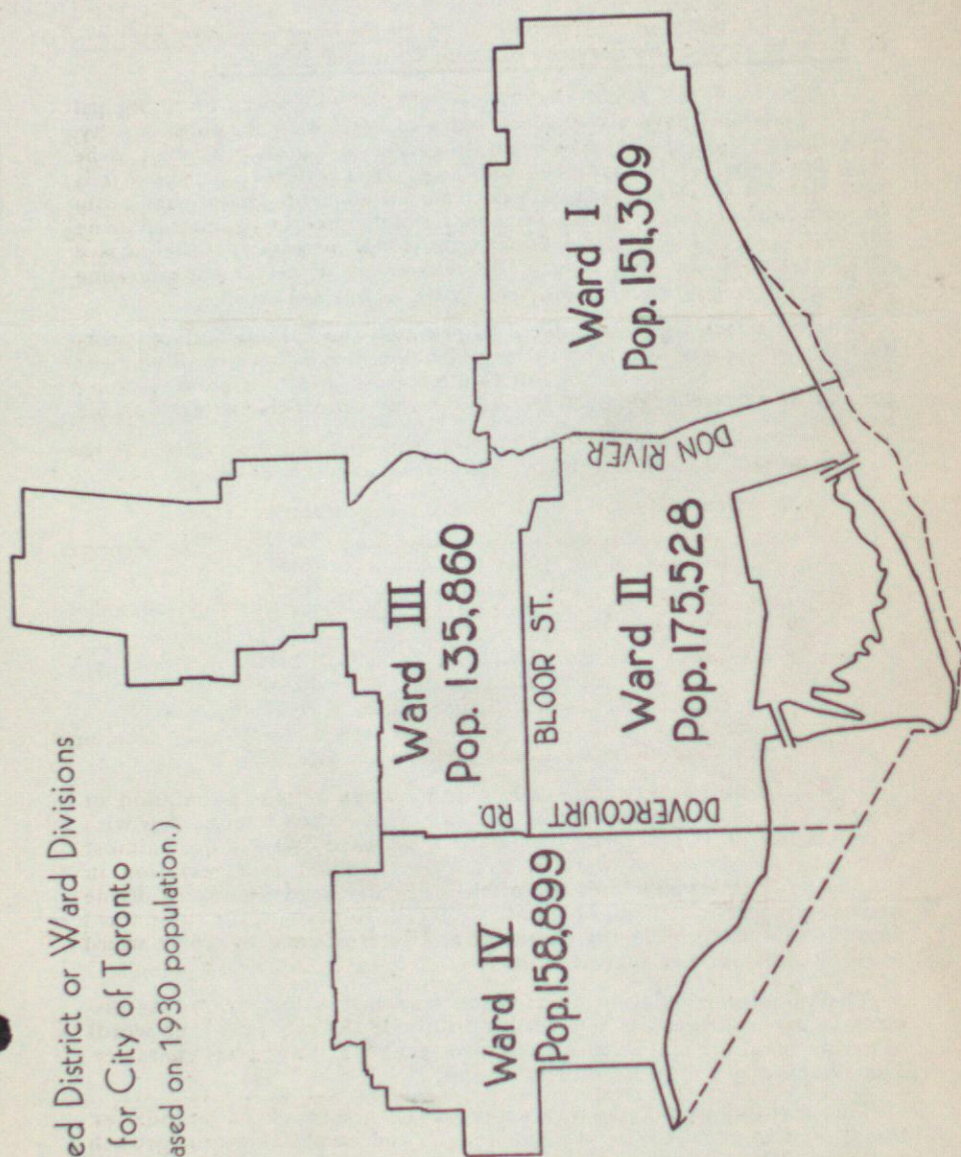
Ward	Population
1.....	72,394
2.....	89,815
3.....	66,652
4.....	67,591
5.....	87,330
6.....	112,411
7.....	46,488
8.....	78,915
Total.....	621,596

It will be noted (1) that wards 4 and 7 have a joint population of 113,140 with twice the representation in Council than has ward 6 with a population of 112,411; (2) that ward 2 or ward 5, each with almost twice the population of ward 7, has only an equal representation in Council; (3) that ward lines are often illogically drawn so as to divide unnecessarily communities of similar interests, to unite in the same ward districts of entirely different character and interests and to create weird ward outlines such as that of ward 3.

The valuable population distribution map just issued by the Assessment Department enables one readily to divide the city into four words of nearly equal population and fairly comparable as to general character. The sketch map following illustrates this.

This division would preserve many of the present ward boundaries, would tend to equalize the voting strength and would allow for growth and annexation, if any, for some years in future before redistribution would be necessary. If it were desired to equalize the population now, this could readily be done by the transfer of certain small districts along the western border of the suggested Ward 2, so that the populations would vary only from 151,309 in the proposed Ward 1 to 158,988 in the proposed Ward 4.

Suggested District or Ward Divisions
for City of Toronto
(Based on 1930 population.)



If each of the four districts or wards were given two members, elected for two-year overlapping terms, if two members were elected at large for two-year overlapping terms, and if the Mayor were elected annually, the City Council would have 11 members instead of the present 29, and each elector (voting once) would have the task of passing on three places in Council instead of eight as at present.

If each district or ward were given 3 members for three-year overlapping terms, if 4 members were elected at large for two-year overlapping terms, and if the Mayor were elected annually, Council would have 17 members instead of the present 29, and each elector (voting once) would have the task of passing on four places in Council instead of eight as at present.

If it were desired that all members of Council should be passed on by the whole electorate, while retaining the principle of district representation, it could be provided that candidates nominated for particular wards or districts should be elected at large. This would tend to promote a city-wide point of view in deciding on policies, without danger, if there be any, of sectional neglect.

(The number of choices would, of course, be increased by three.)

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