

BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

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In 1938

the City of Toronto is faced with some problems of long standing the solution of which cannot be much longer postponed. Among these are:

- I. Sewage Disposal*
- II. Another Traffic Artery to the North*
- III. Zoning, Town Planning and Housing*

The longer these are postponed the more intolerable will conditions become and possibly, if not probably, the financial burden will be increased by delay.

If public bodies are elected to manage public affairs and to provide economically public services required by the citizens and taxpayers, and not simply so that the electors may show whom they delight to honour, it would appear that these topics will be prominent on the agenda as well as on the "loquenda" of the 1938 City Council.

The possibility of carrying, without establishing an uneconomic tax levy, the annual debt charges which will follow action on the first two matters, while reverting to the sound policy of paying the City's share of direct unemployment relief costs out of current revenue, depends on Council taking radical steps to cut down current costs in ways that are well known.

SEWAGE DISPOSAL

The proper treatment of sewage became an acute question in 1926. An independent report of experts on a plan for a plant anywhere than at Eastern Avenue, its present site, was ordered in 1931. The report was made in November, 1933, and recommended a site at Highland Creek, but was not acted upon. Then in 1934 a supplementary report was ordered on a modern plant to be built at or near the present site, formerly ruled out. This report was made in July, 1935, and recommended the construction of a plant on the lake front to the south of the existing plant. There was still no action. In the meantime the City had lost at least one nuisance suit before the courts and bought property to settle or avoid suits. Dangers to public health such as alleged unsanitary conditions on eastern beaches are not getting less. In his inaugural address the Mayor pointed out the urgency of action regarding sewage disposal, and referred to the pollution of the beaches and the possible endangering of the water supply.

ANOTHER TRAFFIC OUTLET TO THE NORTH.

For years the necessity of this has been evident. Yonge Street was widened north of the railway tracks. McLellan's Hill was widened. Reports were asked for and obtained on extending Sherbourne Street and Jarvis Street. The Don Valley Route as a relief work was considered. University Avenue was extended and widened, but it can hardly be called an outlet. The movement is too slow for that on account of the number of side streets and other obstacles to free movement of traffic. What is wanted is a traffic way like Fleet Street and the Lake Shore Boulevard where traffic can proceed regularly instead of in a series of jerks. Why not a Don Valley Parkway connecting with Fleet Street on the south and with several leaders to the eastern North Toronto areas? "Staggered hours" as a partial solution for traffic congestion might again be considered. At any rate, all possibilities should be considered by a Town Planning Commission such as is suggested below.

ZONING, TOWN PLANNING AND HOUSING.

Zoning has been permissible for many years under Section 398 of the Municipal Act. A report on zoning is now being made, but nothing far reaching and fundamental has been done to date.

In 1917 cities were given the right to appoint Town Planning Commissions with strong advisory powers. Toronto has not availed itself of this permission.

Although nothing permanent and fundamental can be done in housing in advance of zoning and town planning, Toronto has made at least two excursions into the field of housing. In deficits and guaranteed interest these have cost the taxpayers considerable sums even if they have not solved the housing problem. At present a great deal is being done under the rehabilitation by-law in the way of bringing sub-standard housing up to standard at little or no cost to the taxpayer. A citizen committee made an extensive survey of housing conditions and presented it to the City. The City appointed a housing committee to make recommendations to Council. The report has not been implemented. A housing by-law with hazy wording was submitted to the electors entitled to vote on money by-laws; but the electors turned it down decisively, either because they did not know what it meant, because they felt it was putting the cart before the horse, on account of the low borrowing margin of the City, or for all these or other reasons. In any event controlled housing for homes with very small incomes has made no appreciable progress, unless it be educational.

How any one can expect city-wide, long-term and definite policies from municipal bodies elected sectionally and for one year terms is difficult to understand.

A continuing City Planning Commission, of non-partisan and disinterested membership, **not acting in place of the City Council, but giving advice**, on the basis of long-continued and thorough-going study, **to the City Council when deciding on policies involving town planning**, is essential. Only thus can progress be effected in making Toronto a better place in which to live, at a cost within the taxpaying capacity of the citizens. The larger the City, the greater the cost of the waste involved in community building without a community plan. With such a plan, individual improvements can safely be made at the opportune time.

OTHER ISSUES

of equal or even greater importance in the long run, although not of such immediate urgency, are

- I. A long-term capital budget, tied into a key town plan and coordinated with the one-year current budget.
- II. Longer terms, staggered, for the City Council and Board of Education as in the British system.

- III. A reduction of the ward influence in elected bodies by reducing the number of wards and electing a number of aldermen at large.
- IV. Coordination of Health and Public Welfare—mentioned by the Mayor in his inaugural address—with a chief executive officer under a single Board of Health and Welfare with powers similar to those of the existing Board of Health. This would mean reverting to and amplifying the policy of the City before 1932.
- V. An administrative and personnel survey of the City Government, looking toward cutting down the number of service departments in order to reduce costs and for the convenience of citizens having business with City departments. This would fit in with a suggestion in the inaugural speech of the Mayor that, in the interests of citizens, routine in issuing building permits be revised so as to eliminate delay as far as possible.

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