

BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

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

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Civic Budget-Making Time

is always an anxious period for taxpayers. It is this year, even if, on the basis of the recent municipal election campaign, taxpayers are looking forward to a reduced tax rate.

The fact that the draft budget was not and, as a matter of policy, never is ready for public discussion at election time does not cramp the style of optimistic candidates or enable pessimistic taxpayers to ask disturbing questions as to just where it is proposed to effect reductions. Each year we see pre-electoral optimism fade into post-electoral pessimism. But "hope springs eternal in the human breast". Perhaps after all this year will be an exception.

As far as anyone knows, Toronto will be carrying on many years from now.

One would think in examining Toronto's method of selecting policy-forming bodies, that everyone expected that each year would probably be the City's last and that it was not worth while to plan for more than a year at a time. It may be well for an individual to live as if each day would be his last. Not so a city. Toronto, as a settlement, has been here for about one hundred and fifty years and may be here for many thousand years. It does not mark time after the end of a year for three months in the next year, and start from scratch for a nine months' sprint.

The City is a social organism which grows continuously. The character of its growth is good or bad according to the quality and amount of its planning. Planning does not cost money. It saves money.

CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS

After twenty-four years of observing local government in Toronto, the Bureau of Municipal Research suggests once again the advisability of considering the following possible methods of saving money and improving services:

1. The co-ordination of welfare and health services in one administrative department, with a single chief executive officer under a single Board of Health and Welfare, being the existing Board of Health with enlarged powers. Health and Welfare are related functions and cannot be administered separately without waste, financial and human.
2. The co-ordination of all departments rendering services to the people directly, not being "overhead" or "protective" departments, into one Public Service Department under a single chief administrative officer respon-

sible to Council. At one step, this would lead to a greater degree of centralized accounting, purchasing, and budgeting; would permit a more economic use of the personnel of the civic staff and would provide a unified administrative basis for town planning. Water, sewage, pavements, sidewalks, street cleaning, garbage collection and disposal, building inspection, plumbing inspection, parks maintenance and extension, city surveying, all involve engineering and the utilization of materials and the management of man-power. They should and could be co-ordinated as bureaux or sections of a single administrative department.

3. The establishment of a permanent City Planning Commission advisory to the City Council, with power (a) to formulate a city plan in close co-operation with the suggested public service department; (b) to draw up a schedule of capital improvements in close co-operation with the Finance Department and the proposed Public Service Department; (c) to prepare a zoning plan; (d) to outline a housing plan—all for the consideration of Council.
4. The lengthening of City Council terms from one to three years with staggered terms, as in the British system. This would tend to continuity of policy, independence of judgment and definiteness of action.
5. The radical readjustment of the ward system so as to facilitate the decision of policies on the basis of community-wide needs, not of bargaining value. We have now nine wards with populations varying between 43,000 and 114,000, in most cases having little or no relation to community interests, and all having the

same representation in Council. It should be easy to divide the city into four wards on the basis of general similarity of development with populations varying between 151,000 and 175,000.

6. A thorough-going survey of all departments from the standpoint of organization and personnel. In an organization spending forty million dollars annually there must be some room for saving, particularly in such a decentralized system as exists in Toronto.
7. The adoption of the pay-as-you-go policy in so far as this is possible. In eight years the appropriations in the current budget for capital expenditures have decreased from almost half a million to nothing.
8. Immediate action with regard to sewage disposal.
9. The preparation of a draft of a proposed current budget previous to and for discussion during the civic electoral campaign.

The time to begin a consideration of these policies is now. Otherwise we shall begin 1939 no further ahead than we are at present.

For twenty-four years the Bureau of Municipal Research has maintained a service of independent fact telling and suggestion to the citizens and taxpayers of Toronto. Under present conditions it is impossible for an individual unaided to devote the time necessary to keep in touch with the actual tendencies in municipal affairs. The Bureau offers a real opportunity to citizens to co-operate effectively in civic government by helping to maintain an independent fact finding agency of constructive criticism which is so necessary for citizen control of the citizens' business.