

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.

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TORONTO
CANADA

White Paper No. 277

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OPEN LETTER To the Citizens of Toronto (Budget Story No. 1 — 1943)

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is the duty of the City's Board of Control to recommend to Council how much the **citizens get** in service and how much the citizens **must pay** for it, i.e. the City's Budget with the tax rate. In normal times the budget must be consistent with the needs of, and the capacity of its citizens to pay. In war time it must fit in with national needs and the over-all capacity of its citizens to pay regular and war taxes. The people expect economy and retrenchment. The national government requests it. All-out war effort demands it.

What are the facts?

The decrease in general debt charges was	\$1,280,605
The increase in surplus brought forward was	255,873
The increase in provincial subsidy was	7,798
	\$1,544,276
The gross advantage of these three items was (or almost $1\frac{3}{4}$ mills on the general assessment).	
The total deficits of special services increased	*\$1,652
The Board of Education requirements increased	90,597
The Estimated General revenue decreased	64,940
Increased war-time cost-of-living bonus is	456,024
	613,213
These four items represented a total disadvantage of	
That is, the Board of Control started out to draw up the budget with a net advantage on these items of	\$931,063

*1943 Draft Estimates, pages 20 to 63.

The proposed reduction, actually, is exactly one mill. That is, in its progress toward economy and retrenchment the Board almost succeeded in holding its ground—from the measuring stick of the tax rate.

Last year the Board and City Council* started with an advantage of over 2.2 mills and ended with a reduction in the tax rate of 2 mills.

If, as seems to be the recent custom in Toronto, decreased debt charges and increased surplus brought forward are to be regarded as an opportunity to increase expenditure on other items, such a result is to be expected. If scarcely more than one qualified voter in five actually takes the trouble to vote, how could one be surprised at the adoption of such a policy?

It is still considered good politics to talk economy and retrenchment before election. It is not considered good politics to practice them after election.

We are now well into the fourth year of a total war, which has still to be won. We have blackouts and A.R.P. activity. The current financial policy of the city does not tally with these facts. Even a 2 mill reduction in the tax rate, instead of the one mill proposed, could hardly be considered an all-out war effort.

It has been said by a cynic that people are just as good as circumstances warrant. Certainly it seems to be true that elected bodies practice economy and make retrenchments as effective public opinion warrants. Why not?

The Bureau recognizes that the making of a city budget is full of difficulties and that Toronto does not fall behind most large cities on this continent in the quality of its work in this regard.

But where there are substantial increases or decreases in departmental appropriations, would not a few words of explanation not only help the inquiring citizen in getting real information, but increase the general public confidence in the searching character or the City's budget making procedure.

The Bureau has definite reason to believe that at least some members of local elected bodies are convinced the people of Toronto do not want economy or retrenchment in local expenditures, even during war time. If they do, they don't seem to want it urgently enough to produce any very tangible result.

Respectfully submitted,

T. G. ROGERS, President.
HORACE L. BRITTAIN, Managing-Director.

*The Mayor and Board of Control are the same as last year. The Council has 6 new Aldermen.

†Or maintain.

SUMMARY OF 1943 DRAFT ESTIMATES

Expenditure	1943 Estimates	1942 Estimates	1942 Actual	1941 Actual
Administrative Depts....	\$ 1,105,781	\$ 1,137,775	\$ 1,113,478	\$ 1,116,274
Operating Departments..	12,123,161	12,086,679	11,800,223	11,733,406
Courts.....	294,896	312,983	295,630	320,981
Public Libraries.....	533,236	495,686	495,686	475,923
"At Large" Items.....	1,435,424	1,164,520	1,201,356	1,209,238
Increased Cost of Living Bonus.....	456,024			
Debt Charges.....	4,913,056	6,193,661	6,173,545	7,051,810
Education (Public and Separate Schools)....	11,083,794	10,999,372	10,999,372	11,040,103
Deficits on Spec. Services	319,574	317,922	38,928	323,867
	\$32,264,946	\$32,708,598	\$32,118,218	\$33,271,602

Revenue

Tax Levy (net).....	\$28,633,651	\$29,276,034	\$29,472,693	\$31,062,371
Provincial 1-mill Subsidy.	883,954	876,156	876,934	876,934
General Revenue, Li- censes, etc.....	1,851,810	1,916,750	2,018,996	1,866,446
Surplus brought forward.	895,531	639,658	645,127	110,972
	\$32,264,946	\$32,708,598	\$33,013,750	\$33,916,730

Related Facts

Population.....	675,000	660,000	669,130	655,751
Assessment General.....	\$ 883,954,523	\$ 876,156,152	\$ 876,156,152	\$ 875,719,226
School.....	956,257,486	948,228,583	948,228,583	947,641,883
Tax Rate City.....	20.20	21.20		23.15
Public School..	11.40	11.40		11.45
Separate School	15.50	15.60		15.65
Public School Supporter...	31.60	32.60		34.60
Separate School Supporter...	35.70	36.80		38.80

**IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO BE
"PENNY-WISE AND POUND FOOLISH"**

It is, of course, recognized that, in order to preserve both human and physical assets, some increases are always necessary. This does not mean that there should be a net increase in expenditure. It does mean that, particularly in war time, there should be a redistribution of available funds on the basis of relative importance. On this basis some proposed increases may be good. Some proposes decreases may be bad. But there should be an over-all decrease.

The Bureau of Municipal Research is, and has been from the first, supported by private subscriptions from public-spirited citizens. It has received no governmental or municipal grants, for the reason that its statements of facts, and suggestions as to policy, must not only be independent and unbiased, but must be so considered by the general public. The value of the Bureau to the citizens of Toronto depends on its independence as an agency of constructive criticism and citizen co-operation.