

BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

Monthly Letter

SEPTEMBER



1946

137 WELLINGTON STREET WEST, TORONTO

TO MEMBERS, SUPPORTERS AND ALL CITIZENS

Men and Women:

While many citizens become absentees from the City during July and August and municipal considerations are more submerged than THE PLAY usual by other interests, if that is possible, the work of MUST GO ON the Municipal Corporation goes on apace. In fact, due to the exigencies of our climate, construction departments and some phases of other departments strike their highest pace during these months.

Save for an occasional special meeting of Council, the affairs of the City are managed by the Board of Control during the vacation months. As its name indicates, and as the two-thirds THE BOARD majority rule in the most important financial and administrative OF CONTROL matters ensure, it is really in control of civic matters CARRIES ON throughout the year. One is bound to wonder, when one compares the records of July and August with those of the other months, just how much would be lost not only in efficiency but in the larger field of the public's welfare, if the Board of Control, perhaps slightly increased in numbers, including of course the Mayor, constituted the City Council. After all the large and important City of Detroit manages to get along with a Council of nine. The cases are, of course, not exactly parallel as in Detroit the Mayor has all executive and the Council all legislative powers.

As the City grows it tends to become less and less a self-conscious community or even a series of communities and the needs of the THE WHOLE City as a whole eclipse the real or supposed needs of various COMMUNITY localities. It becomes more and more evident that what is SUPERSEDES demanded as good for any locality must be justified by proving LOCALITIES that it is good for the community as a whole. There need be no fear that, as long as the members of the Board of Control have to be elected by popular vote, they will be unresponsive to the demands founded on real needs in any part of the City.

During the summer months, as in those preceding, the topics of most engrossing interest and most pressing importance were traffic TWO MOST control and housing. It goes without saying that no adequate INSISTENT solution for the problems connected with these topics has yet PROBLEMS emerged. One only needs to read the headlines in the daily press to be convinced of this. One headline reads, "14 Fold Traffic Growth Chokes Narrow Streets". Another reads, "Alarmed by Traffic Toll Coroner Urges Caution".

It is obvious that no solution can be reached by piecemeal and partial or half-hearted action, but only by working with PLANNING determination according to a co-ordinated general plan. NECESSARY FOR So far this has not appeared, but there seems to be some possibility that the City will have before the end of the WHOLE year a comprehensive report from the City Planning Board. METROPOLITAN City Planning, whether it concerns traffic control, transportation, zoning or its many other phases, is not merely AREA AS A the concern of the mother city, but of all the municipalities in the metropolitan area which is the real social and economic community of Toronto. UNIT It is idle to expect that all the local political units will fall into line immediately when presented with the facts. If we are not to witness a great community being slowly but progressively strangled, something like the proposed metropolitan planning board will have to be constituted with adequate powers. It is to be hoped that no partisan and selfish interests and no doctrinaire consideration will prevent or greatly delay this. It is difficult to see how wholesale annexations, forced by the Provincial Legislature, can otherwise be avoided.

As to housing the situation appears to be growing more acute, and one hesitates to picture what may happen by snowfall. It would appear that there are about 170 evictions now pending and that the present programme will provide about from 115 to 136 housing units. Conditions are, however, fluid and may greatly change in the next few weeks or months. It is generally admitted that "conversions" and slowing down the rate of evictions are only temporary and negative measures and cannot effect any permanent solution of this vitally important problem of basic human need.

The taxpayers of Canada - and those living in Toronto do their share, - contribute enough revenue, if waste and inefficiency were WHERE THERE'S controlled as far as possible, to meet the cost of all necessary governmental services at all three levels of A WILL government. It is simply a matter of deciding how the THERE'S A WAY revenue is to be divided and what services are to be rendered by each level. It should be possible, as the Bureau has stated, to determine, over a period of years, which authorities should levy and collect certain taxes and which authorities should produce certain public services. Till this is done, we are bound to flounder along in a bog of uncertainty and frustration.

The debenture debt of the City has again decreased, this time by over seven million dollars. In 1932 it was over \$195 million THE dollars and at the end of 1945 was less than \$83½ million. This DEBT reduction of almost \$112 million was largely due to "doing SHRINKS without" during depression and war years, and most if not all the leeway resulting will be absorbed in the next fifteen years if Toronto is to maintain services at the desired level. Additional debts will entail additional debt charges, and as the reduced debt charges of the past have been largely absorbed by other expense, it may be expected that the tax levy will increase both absolutely and per capita.

Post-war construction has already begun and much more has been projected. The widening of Avenue Road and Oriole Parkway has been completed and work on the Avenue Road and Queen's Park thoroughfare will start later. Work has started on the Jarvis Street - Mount Pleasant

POST-WAR CONSTRUCTION PLANS PART OF A LARGER PLAN thoroughfare, which in part, as the Clifton Road extension, was voted on by the electors. The City Airport may be further developed in the near future possibly, by the Federal Authorities. The T. T. C. will start at some unspecified time on north and south rapid transit and has done much work in adding to the convenience of the public. The City is carrying out a programme of improving local traffic situations at strategic points. The question is whether all these operations and projects are or will be co-ordinated in a larger plan and conform to the requirements of the City's credit and the taxpayers ability to pay. As long as there is a large down-town industrial-commercial area and as long as the suburban areas become more and more populous, it is difficult to see how traffic problems can really be solved without a thorough-going programme of grade separation, and how the cost can be financed until a nation-wide policy of allocation of public revenues is adopted.

THE COMPETITIVE TENDER PRINCIPLE UPHOLD It is encouraging to note that progress is being made toward building a C. N. E. grandstand to replace - and more than replace - the former one destroyed by fire. The decision of the Board of Control and Council to continue the normal procedure of competitive tenders, in spite of suggestions to the contrary, received warm and general approval.

MORE TO FOLLOW Matters of Health, Welfare, Police, Parks also received attention and deserve full discussion. These and other topics of delinquency, recreation centres, community centres, etc., will be discussed in later issues.

Yours very truly,

J. G. Rogers
President

H. L. Britain
Managing Director

September 23rd, 1946
as of September 10th, 1946