

# NEWS BRIEF



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MUNICIPAL  
RESEARCH

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November, 1969 -- #116

## THE PARTIES AND THE ISSUES

In this News Brief, the Bureau of Municipal Research looks at the policy statements of the three political parties contesting the December municipal elections in the City of Toronto. Our original intention was to compare the policy positions of the three parties with the positions taken by the incumbents running as independents. Of the eighteen councillors contacted (three of whom are now party affiliated) only one replied.<sup>1</sup> Analysis of the independents' positions, therefore, has not been pursued. Advocates of municipal party politics argue that the political party, through its policy-making function, can control social and economic growth more responsibly and effectively than can individual aldermen. By comparing the policy positions taken, the Bureau hopes to draw attention to the priorities set by each of the parties.

Publication of party platforms is common practice in partisan elections. Two of the parties -- the New Democratic Party and CIVAC -- have used the platform statement as the means to convey official party policy to the public. The Liberal Party, however, has relied to date on a series of press conference statements issued by the party leader. The different techniques used to reach the public point to significant differences in methods of policy development. The New Democratic Party and CIVAC ratify policy, both general approaches and particular legislative positions, in open party conventions. The Liberals, on the other hand, have agreed to the general thrust of their program in a convention of Metro Liberals, but specific policy recommendations for the City are made by the party leader in weekly caucus with Toronto Liberal candidates and advisors. For this News Brief, the official platform statements of the NDP and CIVAC, and a written policy statement by the leader of the Liberal Party, form the basis for analysis.<sup>2</sup>

## GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANIZATION

Amalgamation of the City and Boroughs, extension of existing Metro boundaries, and co-ordination of policy-making are aims generally shared by the parties. Although the structural changes the parties recommend are substantial, they are compatible with accountable, responsive, government; efficient, centralized policy making; local policy administration and implementation; and increased opportunity for citizen participation.

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1. The alderman in question identified: citizen participation, urban renewal, housing, voter apathy, and government re-organization as the key election issues.
  2. Copies of the platform statements and more detailed information on party policy may be obtained from local party headquarters.

Party proposals on re-organization differ on the important question of an elected Metro Chairman. Both CIVAC and the Liberal Party recommend that the political leader of Metro Council be directly elected by the people, while the NDP argues for his indirect election by Metro Council.

#### "A Unified City"

This scheme, proposed by CIVAC, recommends the direct election of a Metro Chairman. As the political leader of Metro, he would appoint members to what the party refers to as a "cabinet style Executive Committee." In addition, CIVAC recommends the appointment, subject to Council ratification, of a Deputy Metro Chairman to deal with administrative matters. CIVAC views the Metro Chairman's role as political, not administrative, and the interpretation and development of policy is his prerogative.

#### "Integration Plus"

The NDP proposal, comprised of local Ward Councils plus the Metro Council, integrates citizen participation and political leadership far more explicitly than either of the other parties. The party recommends the establishment of twenty-six to thirty wards throughout Metro, each of which would have four local ward councillors plus one Metro councillor. The Ward Council, chaired by the Metro alderman, is designed as a vehicle for citizen involvement in politics. Ward councillors articulate local demands, and act in an advisory capacity to Metro Council concerning planning, and in a decision-making capacity regarding neighbourhood innovation. Metro Council would be composed of one representative from each ward. The Mayor (Chairman) of Metro, and the Executive Committee would be indirectly elected by and from Council.

#### "Metro Parliament"

The Liberal Party's proposal of a municipal parliament is directly analogous to the parliamentary structure at the provincial and federal levels. Each Metro department would be under the political control of a directly elected minister, and, presumably, such control would require the confidence of the Metro Parliament (i.e., Metro Council). The proposal does not, however, specify under what conditions elections are to be held. The concept of responsible government is based primarily on the parliament's confidence in the governing party; elections held only at regular intervals (as municipal elections are now held), and not on the basis of a vote of non-confidence as well, is inconsistent with the notion of responsible parliamentary government.

#### Special Purpose Commissions

Only the Liberal Party specifically raises the question of whether it is right and proper for independent boards and commissions to make policy decisions in isolation from the political control of the elected representative and the citizen. The other parties deal indirectly with the issue within the context of co-ordinating policy and ensuring uniform standards of service. Except for proposals for control of the Police Commission and the TTC, they do not make explicit statements concerning the effective political control of independent boards and commissions.

#### Extension of Metro Boundaries

All three parties advocate the expansion of Metro's political boundaries, although only the Liberal party specifically mentions the inclusion of the

townships of Pickering, Markham and Vaughan and the towns and villages within them. The NDP recommends an extension of boundaries to include a common housing and labour market of twenty-five to thirty miles in radius. CIVAC suggests that the Province extend the present Metro Planning Area to a radius of fifty miles from Metro, and that an overall plan be developed for the area. The party failed to specify whether the Metro Planning Board would be given jurisdiction over this enlarged area.

### TRANSPORTATION

The parties direct attention to two specific problem areas in Metro transportation: expressways versus rapid transit, and transportation planning.

#### Expressways and Rapid Transit

There is little Metro-wide agreement on what should be done about the Spadina Expressway, or about the question of expressway construction in general. CIVAC does not consider the Spadina problem, preferring to deal with the broader matter of transportation planning, the TTC, a Metro Parking Authority, and free public transit. The Toronto Liberals have come face to face with the Spadina Expressway issue, and, not surprisingly, have confronted the North York Liberals with the demand that expressway construction be halted at Eglinton, that the rapid transit portion be continued, and that the Gardiner Expressway into Scarborough not be undertaken. There is more agreement among the NDP Area Councils. They are generally agreed that no further expressway construction into the downtown area be planned, and that subway construction begin immediately. Both the Toronto and Scarborough NDP agree that neither the Spadina nor the Gardiner projects be continued past Eglinton and into Scarborough respectively.

The transportation problem is well defined: How can expressway construction into the City of Toronto be justified when the City core suffers from traffic blight, parking lots by the score, noise and air pollution, and the disruption of neighbourhoods?

#### Transportation Planning

CIVAC, the NDP, and the Liberal Party recommend the establishment of a Metro transportation agency to co-ordinate transportation planning. Neither the NDP nor the Liberals spell out precisely the nature of the agency. CIVAC suggests that a Metro Transportation Department would be responsible for the maintenance and administration of existing services, the planning and construction of new transportation systems, and the establishment of a Metro Parking Authority. In addition, the Toronto Transit Commission would operate under the political control of the Transportation Department.

### CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Citizen participation is the sacred cow of Metro politics. Everyone is for it, presumably the more the better, and the parties argue generally that the most effective participation is organized and institutionalized. The NDP program, which integrates leadership and participation, has been outlined in "Integration Plus". CIVAC focuses on the idea that participa-

tion is best served by Neighbourhood Citizen Forums, similar to the NDP Ward Councils but which would be financially supported by municipal government grants, and which would provide citizens with an opportunity to spend portions of their tax outlays on the neighbourhood innovations they felt appropriate.

The Liberal Party advocates public assistance for ratepayers groups. These groups must be open in membership, fully representative of the community, and are to be an essential link between the community and the planners. In addition, the party recommends that a non-profit corporation be established to represent these groups and to co-ordinate community planning.

Two questions arise concerning these proposals:

- (i) Is it realistic to expect political authorities to subsidize essentially political organizations, such as ratepayers groups, if the councils can exercise no real control over these activities?
- (ii) None of the parties raise the question of citizen participation in electoral politics: That is, can participation be effective if the groups or forums or councils fail to involve themselves in the give and take of municipal politics?

#### TAXATION AND FINANCE

Of the three parties, CIVAC and the NDP have policy statements on taxation available. Both parties emphasize progressive taxation based on ability to pay, and point up some alternatives to and improvements upon the regressive property tax which now provides 75% of municipal revenues.

CIVAC suggests that Metro be given a portion of the provincial share of income taxes raised in the Metro area. Similarly, the NDP recommends that more progressive, provincial tax revenues be allocated to the municipal level, and that portions of land, income, and sales taxes be channelled to local government as well.

Concerning the reform of the property tax itself, the NDP recommends that the existing 20% of tax exempt properties now be taxed, that higher property taxes not be shifted to apartment and residential areas, and that rehabilitation of poor housing be encouraged by exempting home improvements (in dwellings valued at less than \$5,000) from assessment for three years.

In addition, CIVAC has outlined some innovations in budget management and spending priorities. In the main, the party deals with the establishment of a Central Budget Bureau responsible for the review of long-term operating programs as well as capital budgets, and for the development of an overall budget for submission to the executive.

#### POLLUTION

Like citizen participation, the problem of pollution has social, economic and political consequences of at least comparable magnitude. At

this writing, the NDP and CIVAC have platform statements available, but the Liberal Party does not.

Both parties attach priority to new sewer construction, to re-consideration of the proposed 700 foot stack of Ontario Hydro (the NDP recommends the implementation of the Monsanto Pollution Control Plan), and to control industrial pollutants. CIVAC, however, deals with the problem in a more comprehensive fashion. They recommend that individual incinerators for apartment buildings be prohibited; that a maximum sulphur content of 1% be set for all fuels; and that if devices for controlling automobile emissions are not in operation by 1971, then plans to eliminate private automobiles from the downtown area should be implemented.

In addition, CIVAC states that Metro should demand that the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority investigate and publish findings on pollution levels in the region's rivers and streams. The party also recommends that a Standing Committee of Metro Council be established to deal with citizen's complaints about pollution.

#### URBAN RENEWAL AND LAND USE

The urban renewal issue revolves around the questions of rehabilitation of existing structures, revision of assessment policy, citizen participation, and land use.

The Liberal Party and the NDP have generated policy positions on urban renewal, and are in basic agreement on the questions of assessment, rehabilitation, and participation. Briefly put, they recommend that, in one form or another, assessments be based on the premise that home-improvement should not be penalized; that rehabilitation of owner occupied homes should be encouraged; and, that the citizen involved in renewal schemes has the right to some say in the decisions that affect him and his community.

There are different emphases on the land use question. Both parties insist that spot zoning -- especially in the case of high rise apartments in residential areas -- be stringently controlled, and that adequate notice and consultation occur with residents in the area to be re-zoned. The major difference between the parties concerns the control of land speculation. The Liberals state that the developers may assemble land for re-development so long as they maintain housing standards in that area. On the other hand, the NDP recommends that houses be sold only to owner-occupiers or to the City; exceptions to which must be publicly approved. In addition, the party contends that publicly owned property, designated for public housing, should not be sold for private development.