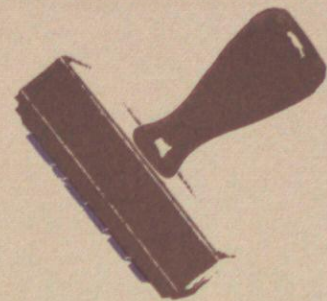




BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

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COMMENT



150 - November 1974

QUESTIONS FOR ELECTORS, 1974

In this Comment, the Bureau of Municipal Research continues a pre-election "tradition" and raises many important issues facing voters in the upcoming municipal elections. In drawing attention to these issues the Bureau seeks to assist voters in choosing their representatives.

With all of the talk about the need for more citizen participation in government, it must be stressed that electing one's representative is still the most important participatory step a citizen can take. Yet, based on past records, we can expect that only about 40% of Toronto's electorate will take the opportunity to vote in our municipal elections this December 2nd. The Bureau hopes that a clearer awareness of the issues at stake will stimulate interest and lead to a more meaningful election.

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

- (1) Do you agree with the present City Council's moves ^{1.} to control the size, style and pace of downtown development?
- (2) Should "downzoning" be considered partial expropriation and therefore require compensation?
- (3) If the new criteria result in a standstill in downtown development, as some predict, what can be done to encourage the "desireable" developments?

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1. The interim criteria, just released by the City in a 280-page document this October, 1974, are a detailed set of standards for the development of the downtown area of Toronto. Specifically, these criteria are intended to permit exemption to the 45' holding by-law, approved by City Council last September, 1973.

- (4) Are guidelines needed to ensure that in the event of developer/ratepayer conflicts issues are resolved within a reasonable length of time? Or would such "guidelines" tend to unduly weaken the voice and power of citizens' groups?
- (5) What role should the area municipal councils play in Metroplan - the program now underway to prepare a new official plan for Metropolitan Toronto?

HOUSING

- (1) Do you agree with the present City Council's new housing policy by which the City government is becoming actively involved in the actual production of housing? Should other borough councils get into the housing business? Should Metro?
- (2) Do you support the City's new housing commissioner's aim to make his department a major housing developer? Is local government bureaucracy capable of producing thousands of units of housing per year efficiently as compared to private industry? Would it be less expensive and more efficient to subsidize private developers to build the low-cost and family accommodation that is needed? Or is a strong active government role required to ensure that this kind of housing will be provided?
- (3) Should local councils impose rent controls to help limit the effects of inflation? Or would rent controls worsen the situation by further discouraging rental housing construction?
- (4) What control should tenants have over the management of their apartments or townhouses? Do you agree with the city housing policy's commitment to the principle of tenant participation in management? Or are the practical consequences of this likely to be negative with respect to the quality of apartment management and the production of more rental accommodation?
- (5) How can the need for public housing best be met? Should Metro have the power to require area municipalities to accept public housing projects?

GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION

(The creation of the provincial Robarts Commission to conduct a two-year full-scale review of the entire Metropolitan system of government, its structure and operation, makes this perhaps the most significant and far-reaching issue for electors.)

- (1) Do you favour the total amalgamation of Metro Toronto? Or does local governmental power need to be protected from the possibility of a more powerful and centralized Metro?

- (2) Should Metro Council be made more democratic by such measures as:
- (a) enlarging the council to permit a more satisfactory ratio of elected to electors (at present the ratio is very low, roughly one representative for every 73,000 people),
 - (b) directly electing Metro councillors, and
 - (c) directly electing the Metro Chairman?

Or, given our two-level system, should we recognize the "less democratic" nature of the Metro Council and reaffirm the responsibilities retained at the local level where there is greater access and accountability?

- (3) Should we reform our existing local representation systems? Should the City change its system of electing two representatives from each ward? Should the boroughs equalize the size of their wards, create more and smaller wards and replace Boards of Control with **executive committees**?
- (4) Should Planning Boards be independent of Council and/or have some political representation? Or would it be more democratic to have them replaced by a Committee of Council responsible for planning?
- (5) Should school boards remain independent or be replaced by a Committee of Council responsible for education?
- (6) Should the Toronto Transit Commission be made a department of Metro? Or does an "independent" ^{1.} Commission lead to better fiscal responsibility?

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

- (1) In providing for citizen participation should local government permit citizens to genuinely share planning and decision-making power or is it more realistic to interpret participation as a process of informing and consulting with the public?
- (2) What role should the alderman play and to what extent should he be responsible to citizens' groups? Should the alderman help to organize citizen groups in an area if no group exists? How should he inform and communicate with his constituents?
- (3) Should local government actively help to form and/or sustain citizens' groups by such means as financial aid, provision of resource staff and secretarial services or sponsoring community organizers?

1. There is majority political representation on the T.T.C.

- (4) Which methods of participation are most effective and democratic? Should the working committee idea be expanded into a more formal system? Could the concept of citizen advisory groups (made up of private citizens who are to work with and advise councillors on community matters) work in Toronto? Or do we need more polls and surveys?
- (5) Are local elected officials being unduly influenced by highly organized special interest groups?

TRANSPORTATION

- (1) What should the priorities be for Metro's transportation system? How much money and effort should be spent on public transit? Is the current "anti-road" mood realistic for Metro Toronto's needs and future needs? Have we made a big enough commitment to public transit (e.g. the provision of subway parking) in view of the desire to reduce private car travel?
- (2) Do you agree with the use of parking controls (i.e. on available spaces and rates charged) to reduce automobile traffic in the downtown area? Or should such controls await the production of alternative public transit facilities?
- (3) Should residents have the right to restrict car traffic in their neighbourhoods by such devices as traffic mazes, stop signs, speed "bumps" and street barriers?
- (4) Do you favour improving public transit service by such methods as reserving exclusive lanes for public transit vehicles?
- (5) Should staggered hours be mandatory for major employers in the City?

OTHER PUBLIC SERVICES

- (1) What municipal services are inadequate and what should be done to improve them? For example, should a side-door system of garbage collection be extended across the City, even if it costs more?
- (2) What roles should Metro and the local municipalities play in providing day care? (At present, the primary responsibility rests with Metro and the province.)
 - (a) should zoning by-laws that restrict private home day care be modified?
 - (b) should the goal be to provide a system adequate to care for all who want day care services or is widespread day care not desirable because of other sociological considerations?

- (3) Should fire fighting continue to be a function of the local municipalities? Should Metro's six fire departments be unified or would it be financially better and fairer to coordinate fire protection without unification?
- (4) Do Metro's elected officials and citizens receive an adequate accounting of the police operation?
- (5) Do we need stricter animal control legislation?

TAXATION & FINANCE

- (1) Should local government take steps to reform the property-based tax system? What alternative sources of revenue should be utilized?
- (2) Where feasible, should local government institute service charges to make services pay for themselves?
- (3) Should specific percentage limits be set on how much local government (and higher levels of government) can spend of available income?

MUNICIPAL GOALS

- (1) Are Metro and the local governments moving realistically to deal with such problems as violence and racial conflict?
- (2) What are the priorities for Metro and local government spending? Should we be spending millions of dollars on a new Metro library, on a new zoo, or on a new sports stadium or should more be spent on social needs?
- (3) How much money should Metro spend to enhance Toronto's cultural qualities? A recent report calls for \$36 million to be spent on Metro arts over the next five to seven years - should this be adopted?
- (4) Should the local zoning laws be used to determine the moral-social issues raised by such establishments as body-rub parlours?
- (5) Should the Toronto Yonge Street mall be tried again? Should it be made permanent or should several smaller malls throughout Toronto be tried?
- (6) How can local government effectively and realistically combat noise, air and water pollution in Metro? What action should City Council take to solve the lead pollution problem? Are Metro and the local governments doing enough to develop a viable recycling program for Toronto?

YOUR ELECTION CHECKLIST

Besides asking the preceding questions which should be of concern to all municipal electors, we believe it appropriate to take a comparative look at some of the prime indicators of whether a community is coping with the problems which it must face. We tend all too often to view our neighbourhood and our city in very narrow terms. Perhaps by thinking back to how things were five years ago, we can gain some perspective of whether Metropolitan Toronto and its member municipalities have been progressing towards the resolution of municipal problems and the establishment of a higher quality of life for all of its residents. By reviewing the items on the following list and ranking the status of each item now against your evaluation of five years ago, we hope you will gain further insight into the qualities you are seeking in your municipal candidates this year and the policies they should be pursuing.

(see following page)

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Research Associate.

	WORSE	ABOUT THE SAME	BETTER
Cleanliness of streets			
Prevalence of crime			
Suitability of recreation areas			
Fire fighting capability			
Employment opportunity			
Availability of adequate housing			
Road congestion			
Transit congestion			
Quality of education			
Quality of refuse service			
Aesthetic quality			
Cleanliness of air			
Fairness of taxes			
Quality of planning			
Input from citizens			
Control of pets			
Elected officials			
Qualifications for office			
Ability to communicate			
Understanding of constituents			
Cooperation with colleagues			
Commitment of time			
Understanding of issues			