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CIVIC AFFAIRS

Proposals For The Re-organization Of

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Metropolitan Government

Proposals For The Re-organization Of Metropolitan Government

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D. W. LANG, Q.C. *President*
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 F. WARREN HURST *Honorary Treasurer*

MICHAEL D. GOLDRICK,
 B.Comm., M.A. *Director*
 ANN I. CRAWFORD, B.A. *Research Associate*

Proposals For The Re-organization Of Metropolitan Government

SUMMARY

The two proposals are tested in terms of three criteria:

1) *Electoral Control*. The ratio of constituents to representatives, direct and indirect election and complexity of organizational structure are determinants of electoral control.

2) *Legislative Effectiveness*. Efficiency in government must be judged in terms of capable management and the ability of representatives to transform public aspirations into policy. Since the resources available to authorities influence their integrity as effective units of government, the two proposals also must be tested in this respect. Responsibilities of elected members must not be such as to prevent them from evaluating their policy in its practical application or the faithfulness with which policy is being executed by their officials.

3) *Administrative Co-ordination*. Amalgamation would allow the standardization of services and co-ordination of planning. A Five-City scheme might permit the administration of an expanded range of services of a local nature by the individual area authorities, presumably with standardization and co-ordination affected at the Metro level. The relative operational efficiencies of the two proposals are open to question but some definite indication in this respect may result from present Metro studies. The same studies, which also deal with the effect of Amalgamation and the Five-City plan on current tax rates will have an important bearing on the disposition of the two schemes.

Proposals which attempt to correct basic weaknesses in the government of the Metro Toronto area have been suggested recently. The proposals fall into two groups:

- 1) Those that would retain the Metro system but correct existing inequities in representation on the Metro Council; and
- 2) those that would accomplish the above and reduce disparities in area, population and assessment that exist between present members of the federation.

Only the proposals in the second group attempt to remedy both problems. Amalgamation would create a single authority for the administration of all municipal services in the area. The Five-City plan would create five authorities for the administration of matters of local concern and retain the Metro Corporation for the administration of area-wide affairs. Progressive amalgamation envisages a gradual shifting of responsibilities from the area municipalities to a single Metro council.

The size and resources of a local authority have a direct bearing on its strength and vitality as an instrument of local democracy. Its size should not be such as to isolate its elected members from public opinion nor should its available resources so limit its activities as to deprive it of an essential purpose.



Proposals For The Re-organization Of Metropolitan Government

Defects in the Present Metropolitan Concept

The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto Act was a compromise which left a number of fundamental weaknesses in a plan that otherwise has functioned effectively for more than seven years. While adequately providing the machinery and resources for the administration of area-wide services, the federated system resulted in wide inequities in representation on the Metropolitan Council and serious disparities in area, population and assessment between members of the federation.

These weaknesses are well known. The single representatives of North York and Swansea, representing 252,000 and 9,500 people respectively, speak with equal voice in the deliberations of the Metropolitan Council. With respect to financial resources, the Township of Scarborough levies the highest mill rate, yet realizes no more than the sixth highest tax yield per capita of all Metro municipalities. In contrast, Leaside, with a favourable proportion of industrial assessment, levies the lowest tax rate of the thirteen constituent municipalities yet nets the highest tax return per capita. A situation is thereby created in which the highest mill rate of 66 mills yields \$117 per capita while the lowest, 43 mills, produces \$179 per capita. Table I further illustrates these disparities.

TABLE I
METROPOLITAN TORONTO
AREA, POPULATION, ASSESSMENT

Municipality	Area Sq. Miles	Population	Total Assessment 000's	Assessment Ratio	
				Residential %	Industrial-Commercial %
Toronto	35.1	648,642	1,841,303	38.7	61.3
North York	68.1	252,073	603,812	70.3	29.7
Etobicoke	44.8	147,249	425,123	59.8	40.2
Scarborough	70.0	200,341	390,800	67.6	32.4
York	8.0	124,818	220,281	69.4	30.6
East York	5.9	69,847	119,426	78.6	21.4
Leaside	2.4	17,220	69,805	52.4	47.6
Forest Hill	1.5	20,571	66,130	89.8	10.2
New Toronto	1.2	12,905	42,772	29.3	70.7
Mimico	1.0	17,143	31,364	76.0	24.0
Swansea	1.1	9,525	23,100	76.5	23.5
Weston	1.0	9,545	22,727	55.0	45.0
Long Branch	.9	10,755	18,220	64.8	35.2
TOTAL	241.0	1,540,634	3,874,869	53.6	46.4

Source: Metropolitan Toronto, 1961, The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto.

In spite of these basic weaknesses, the Metropolitan federation has demonstrated a capacity to deal effectively with many exigencies of extraordinary urban growth. In fact, it might fairly be said that the price of such inequities has been small when compared with the advantages realized by the participating municipalities during the organization's infant years. Now that the Metropolitan system is entering its early maturity, should these inequities be perpetuated when their existence prevents representation on the Metropolitan Council in proportion to financial interest and population and throws an excessive burden of taxation upon a few municipalities?

Any doubt there once may have been as to the interdependent nature of the metropolitan region has been dispelled by the ease with which the Metropolitan Corporation has expanded its functions to fill a previous void in the provision of area-wide services. Since an almost complete unity of social, economic and political interest exists in the region, it is only reasonable that the voice of each inhabitant should carry equal weight in deliberations of area-wide concern. Similarly, it should be possible for residents of the region to receive, at the option of their local councils, standards and ranges of services comparable to those provided by other members of the federation at something approaching equal levels of taxation. Since these standards are not met by the existing system, a number of alternative arrangements has been suggested which purport to remedy all or some of the system's recognized weaknesses.

Proposals of Re-organization

These suggestions fall into two groups. The first group proposes changes in the present system of representation which balances city and suburban voting strength on the Metropolitan Council and gives equal voting rights to each suburban municipality notwithstanding wide variations in their size, population and assessment. The proposals making up this group are set out in Table II but their examination will be passed over at this time since, standing by themselves, they do not represent a full and complete solution to the two sided problem confronting the Metro federation.

TABLE III
THE FIVE CITY PLAN
POPULATION, AREA, ASSESSMENT, REPRESENTATION

City	Population	Area Sq. Mi.	Total Assessment 000's	Industrial Commercial Assessment 000's	% Ind/Com. Assessment	Representation on Metro Council
Tor.	765,805	46.0	2,113,811	1,199,659	56.7	13
North York	261,618	69.1	626,245	189,539	30.1	5
Scar.	200,341	70.0	390,188	126,619	32.4	3
Etob.	188,112	47.9	516,468	216,090	41.8	3
York	124,818	8.0	219,839	67,406	30.6	2

Table III details the effects of these adjustments and shows that under terms of the Plan, equal representation on the Metropolitan Council between the city and suburbs would be retained. The table also shows that representation on the Council would approximate population and financial interest and that, by means of the regrouping, the present units of government would be consolidated into authorities of more comparable area, population and assessment.

The principle on which the borough plan is founded holds that there are definite advantages in a system of municipal government which preserves as great an amount of local autonomy in the provision of essentially local services as is practical. If this was the only advantage of the proposal however, there would be no reason to abandon the present system which itself is founded on this very principle. Two additional advantages are anticipated. In the first place, it should be possible to allocate voting strength on the Metropolitan Council in a more equitable fashion by regrouping the constituent members. In the second, by equalizing, or at least bringing up to a standard minimum size, the administrative divisions which would constitute the basic governmental units of the federation, the Plan apparently anticipates that the five boroughs would have the resources to effectively provide their assigned functions at something approaching equal levels of service and taxation. It also attempts to deal with the problem of distributing functions to members of a federation while at the same time providing them with the financial resources with which they may meet their assigned responsibilities. It is also based on the belief that if the jurisdictions and responsibilities of municipal councils go beyond a certain point, many advantages of local government may be lost. Consequently, it is implicit that local units of government be small enough to allow councils and individual members to maintain direct and personal contacts with those to whom they are responsible, yet large enough in terms of population and resources to enable them to provide a sufficiently wide range of services as to make them vital, effective units of government.

TABLE II

	Proposals for New System			
	Present System 24 Members ^a	46 Members ^b	42 Members ^c	36 Members ^d
Members elected indirectly to Metro				
Chairman	1	1	1	1
1. Toronto	12	23	12	12
2. Scarborough	1	3	1	1
3. North York	1	3	1	1
4. Etobicoke	1	3	1	1
5. York	1	3	1	1
6. East York	1	2	1	1
7. Leaside	1	2	1	1
8. Forest Hill	1	2	1	1
9. Weston	1	1	1	1
10. Swansea	1	1	1	1
11. Mimico	1	1	1	1
12. New Toronto	1	1	1	1
13. Long Branch	1	1	1	1

Members elected directly to Metro* —
A. From 18 additional Wards 18
B. From 12 additional Wards 12

*Elected directly to Metro from newly-drawn wards, independent and existing municipal boundaries.
*Excludes chairman, not directly elected.

The second group contemplates changes to correct both present inequities in representation and the wide disparities in taxable resources and financial need that exist between members of the federation.

The Five-City or borough plan, proposed by the Metropolitan Chairman last August, would require the consolidation of the present thirteen members of the federation into five autonomous units of local government for the administration of matters of purely local concern. The plan, at the same time, would retain the Metropolitan Corporation for the provision of services of an area-wide nature. A second alternative proposes the complete elimination of the present form of metropolitan government in favour of an amalgamation of its constituent members. A single, unified authority governing the affairs of the region would replace the fourteen primary units which presently constitute the area's framework of municipal government.

Under the Five-City plan, the City of Toronto would amalgamate with the Township of East York, the Town of Leaside, and the Villages of Forest Hill and Swansea to form an enlarged City of Toronto. A City of North York would be formed by amalgamating the Town of Weston with the Township of North York. The present Township of Scarborough would be elevated to city status, and an amalgamation of the towns of Mimico and New Toronto with the Village of Long Branch and the Township of Etobicoke would form the City of Etobicoke. Finally, the Township of York would become the fifth city of the Metropolitan area.

In addition to the Five-City plan, it has been recommended that a complete amalgamation be affected throughout the metropolitan region, with the resulting area divided into fourteen wards for purposes of representation on the single, area-wide council. A variation of this scheme proposes the complete amalgamation of the area, progressively, over a number of years, by gradually transferring functions currently performed by the area municipalities to the Metropolitan Corporation. Since the objective of these two proposals is complete amalgamation — differing only in the manner in which the end is to be achieved — they will be considered together.

The principles underlying amalgamation are simply stated. Since the Metropolitan area is a cohesive, interdependent entity and since there apparently are savings to be realized through the administration of all local government services by a single unified administration, these efficiencies should be realized. Moreover, the taxable resources of the region which now are distributed unequally throughout the thirteen member municipalities would be available for use by the entire community. Services which under the existing system are the responsibility of individual municipalities could thereby be standardized with their costs being more equitably distributed throughout the area. Similarly, the community as a whole would contribute toward the cost of facilities which are now constructed at the expense of a single municipality but used by all inhabitants of the region.

Before examining the two proposals, a moment might be taken to review the theory of local government and its application to the Five-City plan and Amalgamation.

The Theory of Local Government

Local government is a device which allows individuals acting collectively in a municipal sphere to accomplish goals more easily and effectively than would be possible by individual action. Consequently, it is important that any activities undertaken by a local authority accurately reflect the wishes of those for whom it acts. The authority should be responsive to the desires of the public and sufficiently flexible to allow for some variation in the application of its services. It must be financially sound with resources in proportion to its responsibilities. If these conditions are to be met, a local authority's size should not be such as to isolate its elected members from public opinion, nor limit its range of responsibilities to the point of depriving it of an essential purpose. Therefore, much of the strength and vitality of local government depends on the maintenance of

a close relationship with local residents and the possession of a meaningful range of responsibilities.

Bearing in mind the preceding discussion, and putting aside for the moment problems of overlapping jurisdiction, duplicated facilities and local autonomy, it will be seen that the Five-City and Amalgamation plans resemble each other in at least one respect: both propose increases in the size of existing governments in the area. Any evaluation of the two plans therefore should include a consideration of the optimum size for an effective unit of local government.

It is suggested that the two proposals can be tested in terms of three criteria: electoral control, legislative effectiveness and administrative co-ordination.

Electoral Control

There are a number of means by which the electorate may control the actions of its elected representatives. The most common device, aside from the ballot, is through personal representations to elected officials and councils. Probably the most important determinant of control that can be exercised by this means is the accessibility of elected members to the public. Under a scheme of amalgamation, a single elected body must cope with all local, sectional and regional problems arising from the municipality's affairs. If the ratio of constituents to elected members is large, the individual councillor may become remote to many of his constituents and consequently escape their vigilance. It is essential that voters can easily identify their representative and bring their problems to him without hesitation.

Maximum electoral control, through direct election, would be a feature of a single council. Although the present system of indirect election to the Metropolitan Council reduces electoral control, this system need not necessarily be retained in a federated, Five-City plan.

The public's familiarity with the municipality's affairs and the part played in its operation by elected members should be increased by the existence of a single council rather than the multiplicity of authorities under a federated plan. However, if through the pressure of business, a council under either scheme, transfers duties to special purpose bodies, electoral control is reduced.

The election of a single slate of representatives to one council is less confusing than the selection of several candidates for office in a number of authorities.

Legislative Effectiveness

The second criteria tests the relative capabilities of representatives under the two systems to accurately determine the wishes of the electorate and convert these wishes into concrete public policy. The ability of elected members to perform this function is an important determinant of the efficiency of the two systems.

In industry and commerce, efficiency is relatively easy to assess by reference to the financial results of a particular undertaking. In government as well, inefficiencies resulting from defective organization and operation can be identified. But efficiency in government operation must pass a further test. Since its objective is to give outward expression to the collective wishes of those for whom it acts, its effectiveness must be judged, in part, by its success in transforming public aspirations into policy. Accordingly, its efficiency depends upon the ability of elected members to ascertain public opinion and convert their knowledge into practical operation. At what point will the sheer size of an authority prohibit its elected members from accurately making this interpretation? Will a desirable ratio of representatives to constituents require a council of unwieldy size? Yet, if a small body is established, there is the danger that policy will not adequately reflect public desires.

A partial solution to this problem is available in those countries in which political parties form an active element in municipal government. Party organizations are able to transmit to those in office a running analysis of current popular sentiment.

In the formation of policy in matters affecting the metropolitan area as a whole, a single council would make its decision more promptly than would a federated government. A single council also would assure that policy was co-ordinated in its application through the entire area and that services were standardized. However, if a service is administered by a single body, there can be no flexibility in its application. The larger a community is, the wider will be the number of specialized services provided. Though many of the services are really required by only a few, the tendency will be to extend them to all. A federated system permits some selectivity across the metropolitan area.

The type and range of policy that can be determined effectively by area councils under a federated scheme can be sharply restricted by limitations of size and available resources. Under a single Metropolitan Council, resources of the entire area would be at the disposal of the single council for the support of such services as may be required. Under the proposed Five-City plan,

limitations of this nature would be reduced through the creation of municipal units of sufficient size to allow for the provision of the whole range of local services normally provided by cities. Authorities with minimum populations of 124,000 and assessments of \$200 million would have the stature and strength to stand as vital units of government in their own right. The Metropolitan Corporation would handle duties of wider than local concern.

The Five-City plan would bring into play a principle which has been relied on in Great Britain for a number of years in distributing functions between two, and even three tiers of government.¹ In determining the size or level of government with which a particular service is to be lodged, the general aim has been to place responsibility for the service at the lowest or most local level of government as is compatible with the effective administration of that service. Observance of this principle is said to assure the vitality and integrity of local government by preventing the transfer of local responsibilities to regional authorities.

Whereas municipalities under the present scheme of metropolitan government are restricted in the extent of their responsibility for policy by limitations of size and resources, a single council would be unhampered in this respect. Alternately, a borough organization would create units of sufficient size to permit the provision of most local services by the member municipalities while keeping the determination of policy at a relatively local level.

An important element of legislative effectiveness is the requirement that councillors maintain close relations with the administration so that they may evaluate the competence of their officials, ensure that policy is being faithfully executed, and judge the effectiveness of their policy in its practical application. While elected officials should not interfere with the actual administrative work of professionals, they nonetheless should be intimately acquainted with it.

This is especially true when, as a result of specialization and 'big government', the tendency often is to leave more and more minor policy decisions and technicalities of administration to appointed officials. When the business of local government is so involved in regulatory functions, it is essential that the decisions of professionals, which may be efficient but which also may stray a long way from the decisions rendered by the people's representatives, are kept under constant scrutiny by the elected members.

¹ Report of the Local Government Boundary Commission, 1947, (H.C. 86), London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1948.

With respect to the Five-City proposal, the restricted jurisdictions would permit members of each council to become more familiar with the results of their policies and would allow them to better judge the competence of the officials responsible for administration. At the same time, however, familiarity with officials of the Metropolitan Corporation and the member's evaluation of policies determined at that level probably would be inferior to that of the elected officials of a single, area-wide council in respect to its own administrative staff and policies.

The calibre of elected representatives attracted to public office also has a bearing on the soundness of policy adopted under either system. Membership on a single council with its vast range of duties and jurisdiction extending over 241 square miles of Metropolitan Toronto would carry with it heavy responsibilities and would be an adequate challenge for the most ambitious. The job would be immense and there is a question whether there would be enough outstanding people willing to fill, and capable of filling, the outsized jobs thereby created. On the other hand, the formation of five boroughs of significant size creates the problem of manning five councils with a considerable number of competent members. However, there is the possibility that with public attention diffused over a number of authorities, able persons who otherwise would shun the intense publicity associated with membership on a single metropolitan council might be willing to serve in the more casual atmosphere of borough office.

Problems of urban development beyond the immediate boundaries of Metro Toronto may in part be ascribed to insufficient legislative controls extending over these areas. Consequently, any re-organization of the existing Metro system should make provision for the orderly, progressive expansion of legislative control according to the demands of suburban growth. Under a single Metro government, this would be accomplished by simply amalgamating the developing areas with the organized city. The Five-City plan could establish additional autonomous authorities as warranted by new development. Each plan has a "built-in" capacity to deal with the problem. When one considers the modern trend toward sprawling growth as opposed to the intensive development of land in earlier times, continuous expansion of the Metropolitan area might at some point compromise effective central control.

Administrative Co-ordination

The third test involves the administrative effectiveness of the two proposals and the extent to which they lend themselves to the co-ordination of policy and services.

There are many obvious administrative advantages in an amalgamated form of government. Functions which probably would be duplicated by five area administrations, and a sixth if performed by the Metropolitan Corporation, would be centralized and brought to a single standard by Amalgamation. In addition, the provision of services throughout the area could be co-ordinated, and comprehensive planning of all services and expenditures could be based upon the requirements of the entire region.

Under a borough system, many of these conflicts would remain. However, with the formation of five medium sized city authorities, whose population, area and revenues would permit the administration of all services normally provided by cities of comparable size, it might be expected that some functions now planned and administered by the Metropolitan Corporation could be returned, at least in part, to the control of the individual authorities. Responsibility for co-ordinating locally administered services which require some degree of standardization throughout the metropolitan area, and the administration of functions not suited to individual local control, would remain with the Metropolitan Corporation. The practice of transferring functions to the Metropolitan authority due to the inadequate resources and size of many suburban municipalities might be reduced. This would result in similar administrative departments in each borough, with co-ordinating-planning authorities in the Metropolitan organization. While duplications would remain, the administration of services would be lodged, wherever practical, with the level of government closest and most accessible to the electors.

In respect to service functions within the organizations created under either proposal, economies could be realized through mechanization, standard procedures and centralized functions. Less tangible savings through 'tidy' patterns of organization, clear lines of authority and the utilization of highly qualified experts are more likely to be found in large organizations. How these factors, excepting that pertaining to organization, relate to Amalgamation and the Five-City plan is open to conjecture since the organizations contemplated under both schemes are of substantial size. A British Royal Commission studying the government of the Greater London Area concluded that although an accurate comparison could not be made, it appeared that costs of administration increased in proportion to the size of the authority. Though this same conclusion was reached in the 1953 Cumming Report on Metropolitan Toronto, investigating bodies in Edmonton, Winnipeg and Sacramento have drawn contrary conclusions. It is expected that studies made on behalf of the Metropolitan Council will throw further light on this question when they are presented to Council

early in November. It also is expected that the hitherto unknown effect of the Five-City and Amalgamation plans upon the current tax rates of the metropolitan area — an important determinant of the proposal eventually selected — will be dealt with in that report. The unique problems presented by the proposals would require unique legislative and financial innovations for their implementation.

Conclusion

If democracy at the municipal level is to be satisfied in the metropolitan area of Toronto, it must be decided at what point a local authority becomes too large to adequately reflect the desires of those for whom it acts and too small to effectively carry out the responsibilities of local government. It is to this problem that the Metropolitan Council must address itself.

This Bulletin is issued solely in the interest of advancing objective analysis of a matter of public concern.

Conclusion
It is important at the municipal level to be
aligned to the metropolitan area of Toronto. It
must be defined what part a local authority
has to play in the metropolitan area. The
responsibility for the metropolitan area
must be clearly defined. It is the
responsibility of the Metropolitan
Council to define this.

early in November. It also is expected that the
boroughs will have a say in the current tax rates
of the metropolitan area - an important element
of the present study. The study will be
done with the report. The study will be
presented to the public and the
legislative and financial authorities for their
implementation.

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Your inquiries are invited

Michael D. Goldrick
DIRECTOR

32 ISABELLA STREET, TORONTO 5
Phone 924-9717

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