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CITIZEN PARTICIPATION  
IN METRO TORONTO:  
Climate for Cooperation?

**CITIZEN PARTICIPATION  
IN METRO TORONTO:**

**CLIMATE FOR COOPERATION?**

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## THE CLASH OF OPINIONS . . .

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“Citizen participation is like sex on the campus. It has always been there, people are just talking about it more.

. . . citizen participation is not new, it is very valuable, it should continue, it should be encouraged, as long as those participating realize they are advisors to government . . . but they are not an alternative to government.”<sup>1</sup>

David Rotenberg,  
Former Alderman,  
City of Toronto.

“The way to survive, I have found, is to be responsible to definable groups of citizens who can tell me what to say on their behalf. As a spokesman for such groups I make no claims to be ‘objective’, but am consciously trying to represent the interests of those community groups which have managed to get formed. That, to me, is what democracy is all about. . . .”<sup>2</sup>

John Sewell,  
Alderman,  
City of Toronto.

“Metro should take more thorough polls of public opinion instead of making decisions on the basis of skilfully organized campaigns by minority groups . . . I’m concerned that decisions are not being made quickly enough . . . .”<sup>3</sup>

Paul Godfrey,  
Metro Chairman.

“We’re talking about a community going from a position of dependence through to interdependence, where you do have two virtually equal groups who can sit down and talk. *But you can’t do that until you have some power.* Taking away some power from a politician . . . is a very painfull process.”<sup>4</sup>

[Italics added.]

Don Keating,  
Community Organizer.

1. F. Frisken and H. Peter Homenuck, eds. *Citizen Participation: Views and Alternatives* (York U: Urban Studies Program, Dec. 1972) pp. 16, 20.
2. *Up Against City Hall* (Toronto: 1972), p. 168.
3. *Toronto Star* (November 23, 1973).
4. Frisken and Homenuck, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

## INTRODUCTION

Citizen participation is a subject about which there has been both a good deal of interest and confusion. Whether or not the recent wave of citizen activism across Canada is fundamentally "new", the dramatic growth of the citizen participation movement since the mid-1960's has been one of the most important events affecting the North American metropolitan political scene.

In the 1972 municipal elections in Metropolitan Toronto almost all candidates talked about the value of public participation in decision-making. Even non-reform candidates campaigned on the need to keep Toronto a city for people and to permit citizen participation at the local level. But, clearly, there were different ideas as to what participation meant and how this involvement should work. Some citizen movement candidates have stressed the need to have neighbourhood-based decision-making with politicians being controlled by the community. Other so-called reformers have rejected this decentralization of authority on the grounds that it would relegate the politician's role to that of a mere delegate. Several elected representatives have dismissed this call for citizen participation as redundant in our democratic system. It is evident that citizen participation has different meanings for different people.

Recently, signs of a potential backlash against citizen participation have appeared. Some appointed officials, upset by ratepayer opposition to certain plans, have publicly decried citizen delegations; several journalists have portrayed citizen groups as vocal self-interested minorities seeking to impose their views on the majority; press editorials have called for "moderation" and stressed the importance of

politicians maintaining a "proper perspective" in listening to citizen groups.<sup>1</sup>

At the outset we should explain which citizen groups we are referring to. The rise of citizen activism has of course resulted in the creation of many different kinds of citizen groups and institutions—over one thousand new groups in Toronto in the past five years according to one estimate.<sup>2</sup> Day-care and housing cooperatives, storefront set-ups, information organizations, tenant associations—all kinds of advocacy and service groups have emerged in connection with the recent citizen participation phenomena. But for the most part, the current debate over citizen participation has involved neighbourhood groups seeking to exert more control over municipal development and transportation planning. This study does *not* attempt to deal with citizen participation in all of its varieties and areas of impact. Its focus is on citizen groups whose chief concern is local governmental decisions about the physical environment — mainly land use and roads.<sup>3</sup>

1. For examples, see: Thomas Coleman, "Farrow Assails City Council 'Trained Seals' for Knee-jerk Support of Citizens' Groups," *Toronto Globe* (August 15, 1974), Scott Young "Saints and Sinners" *Toronto Globe* (April 1973), "A Matter of Proportion," *Toronto Globe* (August 16, 1974), "Citizen Protest is Good—Up to a Point," *Toronto Star* (August 16, 1974).
2. Stephen Clarkson, "Citizen Participation: The Challenge for Research", unpublished paper given at the Banff Conference on Alternative Forms of Urban Government, May 1974. The Province of Ontario's Ministry of Community and Social Services is currently in the process of preparing a directory of community groups involved in the move for greater participation in Ontario.
3. See Appendix A for an explanation of the selection of groups and of the methodology used.



The purpose of this *Civic Affairs* is to examine and to evaluate the available options for citizen participation in Metro Toronto. We are concerned with participation within the present system and with possible adaptations to that system. Within this framework, we shall be attempting to define the apparent constraints on the various forms. We believe that this will be helpful not only to those whose job it is to design programs for public participation, but to all officials and concerned citizens. Any evaluation of methods should take into account such basic factors as:

- the fundamental values and principles which must be respected.

- the history of citizen participation in Toronto over the past eight years: what led to the rise of citizen group activity in the late 1960's; the present condition of the "movement"; the results of the so-called reform victory of 1972; the areas in which citizen participation in decision-making has increased the most; how the city and borough situations compare.

- how each of the methods work, how much participation and what kind the various methods appear to permit; the practical consequences of more public involvement including administrative and cost factors.

- the attitudes of politicians, civic officials and planners toward citizen participation: the attitudes of involved citizens; the extent to which they are mainly issue-oriented; how many are dissatisfied with our present representative system; what these attitudes suggest about the kinds of participation which would be most effective; what they suggest about the role which organized groups should play.

The future of the citizen participation movement in Toronto has obvious significance for other communities. While our study focuses on the situation in Metropolitan Toronto, we hope that the conclusions reached about appropriate methods of citizen participation will be of wide interest to the general urban community.

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## I – WHAT DO WE MEAN BY CITIZEN PARTICIPATION?

### What do we mean by Democracy?

Any attempt to define citizen participation is tied to the complex problem of the role people really play in the democratic policy-making process. Democracy originally involved participation of “all”, on an active and continuing basis, in every leading issue facing the community. The democratic notions to which we in 20th century Canada subscribe are, of course, very different from the classic Greek ideal of participatory democracy. The most obvious change is that the practice of representative democracy has replaced the classical direct form.

The common form of representation across the United States and Canada is based on single-member, territorial constituencies: the candidate who wins a plurality of the votes cast is the elected “representative” of the constituency.<sup>1</sup> The precise role of the elected “representative” has long been a matter of debate and we shall consider its relevance below. In its broadest sense this study is concerned with the extent to which citizens can most constructively participate in the governing process—within our present representative system.<sup>2</sup>

### Two Conflicting Views:

While this study is primarily concerned with the practical aspects of citizen participation, it is necessary to note that political theorists are not in agreement as to how the present liberal democratic system ought to operate and are, in fact, involved in a very sophisticated and complex controversy. Recent scholarship on the question can be divided roughly into two main schools of thought: one group, known as the *behaviouralists*,<sup>3</sup>

claims that their analysis of the political system is “realistic” and “objective”. Profoundly influenced by the results of the new survey techniques which became so fashionable after WW2, these political scientists argued that a new definition of democracy was needed, a new definition based on the findings of modern socio-scientific research. This new research had “proved” that citizens were not citizens in the classic sense and that the general public was neither equipped for nor interested in active participation in the policy-making process. In fact, the average citizen was uninvolved, uninformed, uninterested and inactive. And yet—the system worked. Democracy, they concluded, therefore had to be seen not as a political system involving the continuous active participation of its members, but rather as a system in which the role of the general public was limited essentially to approval or disapproval of policies created by educated, interested and benevolent leadership groups and elites.

During the late 1960’s a second group of scholars arose to challenge these assumptions.<sup>4</sup> Harkening back to the ideals of the 19th century

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1. The obvious exception is that in certain municipalities which use the ward system there are two representatives.

2. This study deals with *available* options. We are therefore concerned with participation within the existing political system and with possible adaptations to that system. We are not considering participation as a means to transform the system.

3. For example, see the works of Robert A. Dahl, Seymour Martin Lipset, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba.

4. This group, known as “post-behaviouralists”, include: Christian Bay, Jack Walker, Peter Bachrach, Lewis Lipsitz, Philip Green and Sanford Levinson.



liberal theorists,<sup>1</sup> they disputed the need to redefine democracy. What the new facts meant to them was not that the definition needed to be changed to fit the system—but that the system was falling short of democratic ideals. If citizens were passive and apathetic it was because the system itself discouraged involvement.

Clearly, then, attitudes toward citizen participation depend upon how one views the democratic system. If one assumes, as the behaviouralists do, that it is both inevitable and desirable that few actually help to make decisions, then the scope for citizen participation is limited: it envisages a passive, indirect, sporadic involvement. If, on the other hand, one assumes that a liberal democratic system must rest on genuine and direct citizen involvement, then the scope for participation is immense: it presumes an active and continuous role.

### The Significance of this Debate:

The significance of this debate relates to the problem of defining citizen participation. Our understanding of citizen participation is based on the following assumptions:

(a) While the findings of the behaviouralists that the public is generally uninterested, uninformed and uninvolved in public affairs cannot be ignored, we do not interpret this as an argument against encouraging more of participation. The classic liberal ideal of an enlightened citizenry, though not attainable in any absolute sense, should remain a goal. The fundamental democratic principles of responsibility and accountability are undermined without an informed and involved public. Reliance in the ballot box alone is not sufficient.

(b) A liberal democratic system can provide for effective citizen participa-

tion, but does not necessarily do so by definition. We do not share the radical perspective of liberal democracy as inherently manipulative and elitist<sup>2</sup> (a perspective which underlies the argument that no meaningful participation can occur without a basic redistribution and decentralization of power), but do recognize the limitation of so-called “partial” forms of involvement.

(c) The forms that citizen participation can take that are consistent with a liberal democratic system are varied—active and passive, direct and indirect, co-operative and confronting.

(d) With regard to the “representative vs. delegate” theories of representation,<sup>3</sup> we suspect that a strict application of the delegate theory is impracticable, so that the issue really is the *degree* of discretion to be allowed the representative.

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1. The post-behaviouralist concept of democracy derives primarily from 19th century liberalism, as epitomized by John Stuart Mill, and is therefore focused on the individual. While Mill's essential concern was the protection of individual liberty and the proper limits of government, his emphasis on individual independence implied an active and highly informed citizenry.

2. i.e. beyond the elitism inherent in any social-political system.

3. Dating from Burke's famous speech to the electors of Bristol in 1774, the delegate vs. representative quandary has been with us. The “delegate theory” provides that the representative ought to exercise minimal individual discretion but be guided by constituency preferences on every issue. The “representative” theory does not insist on continuous consultation. We are, of course, dealing in Toronto with a representative system in which party politics play only a minor and informal role. The introduction of party politics at the local level—with party discipline, party platforms and ideological factors—would completely alter the representative's role.

## The Role of Groups in a Democratic System.

Much of the controversy about citizen participation relates to the question of groups and the role that they should play in democratic politics. Opinion ranges from the very negative view that groups are a danger to democracy to the most positive perception of groups as a crucial safeguard: critics of ratepayer and community groups condemn them as self-interested minorities seeking to manipulate decision-making against the wishes and best interests of an unorganized majority; advocates of groups argue first, that good political representation can only occur when active groups of ordinary citizens hold their politicians accountable between elections, and second, that groups are the best vehicle for promoting a high degree of citizen involvement.

According to traditional political theory, groups or voluntary associations have a vital purpose—the free and open competition among the various interest groups is supposed to ensure that all interests will be taken into account and guards against extremism and the “tyranny of the majority”. No one group is allowed a monopoly of power. The essential premise is that democracy works best through a careful equilibrium of diverse interests without compelling unanimous consent on every issue.

This conventional wisdom has not gone unchallenged. Recent scholarship has shown that groups tend to be inherently oligarchical and undemocratic in nature and that group leaders do not always represent the rank and file membership.<sup>1</sup> While the research has covered mainly the internal workings of larger formal organizations, the evidence suggests that at the very least, one should approach groups generally

with caution. It cannot always be assumed that those who articulate the “group view” reflect the outlook of all who are purportedly represented.

This necessarily colours our view of the role of groups as vehicles for citizen participation. We basically accept the traditional argument that interest groups are necessary in a healthy democratic society and are familiar with the benefits of group action in providing the necessary continuity, strength and resource personnel for a more effective citizen contribution; yet, we are wary of proposals which would institutionalize them as a formal part of the political system.<sup>2</sup> We begin, then, with the assumption that methods of participation which rely on groups need to be balanced by methods which seek to elicit the opinion of the public as individual citizens.

## Towards a Definition of Citizen Participation:

There is no shortage of definitions of citizen participation. Some are extreme, calling on the one hand for radical structural changes in the existing system or on the other for participation at the ballot box alone. The definition offered here begins with the assumption that there are degrees of meaningful participation within the present system. Political theorists have

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1. Michael Rogin, “Non Partisanship and the Group Interest” in P. Green and S. Levinson, eds, *Power and Community*, (N.Y.: Random House, 1969).

2. These comments refer to the nature of groups generally, including special interest business and labour groups as well as neighbourhood associations. As we emphasize later in this study, one of the key problems with both existing neighbourhood groups and with the newly created special planning committees, task forces, citizen advisory groups, etc., is how to ensure that they are comprehensive in their representation.



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analyzed these gradations in sophisticated terms, arriving at various typologies.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of the formulation their conceptions deal with two common elements:

—non-elected members of the community, and

—control over decision-making which goes beyond elections.

We shall begin this study, then, with a definition of citizen participation as:

**A component of the democratic system which permits non-elected members of the community to exercise some control over decision-making which goes beyond elections.**

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1. For example see Sherry Arnstein, "Ladder of Participation" in *American Institute of Planners Journal* (July, 1969), pp. 216-224. Arnstein's "ladder" identifies eight rungs of participation which she groups into three types: non-participation (which includes 'manipulation' and 'therapy'); tokenism ('information', 'consultation' and 'location'); power ('partnership', 'delegated power' and 'citizen control'). Another theorist, whose more simple formulation corresponds to Arnstein's typology is Carol Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (N.Y.:1970). Pateman identifies three forms of participation: 'pseudo', 'partial' and 'full'.

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## II – CITIZEN ACTIVISM IN TORONTO AND NORTH YORK SINCE 1966

In this section we shall be considering the following questions:

- What led to the rise of citizen group activity in the late 1960's?
- What were the results of the so-called reform victory of 1972?
- In what areas has citizen participation in municipal government increased the most?
- How active is the current 'movement'? How representative is it? What are the attitudes and objectives of those presently involved?
- How do the City of Toronto and North York situations compare?

### A The Rise of Citizen Activism in Toronto:

#### The General Context

One should perhaps begin with the simple observation that the concept of citizen participation is firmly rooted in our Western liberal-democratic political tradition and citizen groups have been with us for a long time. At the same time, the contemporary movement is clearly related to a uniquely modern awareness and represents just one aspect of what many observers are calling a "fundamental cultural revolution."<sup>1</sup>

It is not our intention here to analyse the origins of this drive for participation. Yet it should be borne in mind that the current citizen participation movement is part of a comprehensive shift in values and perspectives occurring throughout the Western World and brought about by overwhelming forces. Some of the factors which help to explain this "new awareness" are:

- the ever-increasing rate of change<sup>2</sup>
- the proliferation of modern government with its growing involvement in all activities affecting the public

- the population explosion, the increase of urbanization and the concomitant social and environmental pressures
- the "triumph" of technocracy
- changes in education and communication

As a reaction to these and other forces a new climate of opinion with a new system of values seems to have taken hold. A recent report prepared by the Committee of Government Productivity for the Ontario Government highlights the nature of this change:

Springing up all around are youth cultures, counter cultures and other individualistic lifestyles. These are characterized by a reliance upon experience as a basis for thought and action, an orientation to the here and now, a view of existence as process, a search for meaningful involvement, a tendency to question and confront, an inner direction and autonomy, a concern for and acceptance of others, non-competitive and non-exploitive relationships, and rejection of exclusively economic and technical goals.<sup>3</sup>

And as these changes in our lifestyle and attitudes occur, accepted patterns of leadership and authority come under attack. Confidence in a system which seems incapable of meeting the

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1. In his provocative book, *The Greening of America*, Charles A. Reich predicts that the transformation that is coming will exceed "anything in modern history": a new consciousness will produce a social revolution, beside which the French and Russian revolutions will seem "inconsequential". (N.Y.: Random House, 1970) p. 380.

2. The shattering social and psychological impact of change is vividly explained in a recent bestseller, Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock* (N.Y.: Random House, 1970).

3. *Citizen Involvement* (April, 1972) p. 15



overwhelming problems that confront us and which seems incapable of responding to the real public needs is eroding. The growing demand for democratic and participative decision-making is being heard not only in government, but in our economic, social and cultural institutions as well.<sup>1</sup>

Directly connected to this general trend is a challenging of the prevailing "elitist" concept of democracy. No longer are people willing to accept the version of democracy which presumes an apathetic, ill-informed mass public being best served by benevolent, informed elites; no longer is voting in elections seen as sufficient participation; no longer is administration seen as neutral and separate from policy-making, nor are the experts and professionals paid automatic deference. A new theory of democracy is gaining support—a reinterpretation of democracy which insists on citizen involvement in the decision-making process on the grounds that it is both educative and developmental for the individual and at the same time fosters the acceptance and implementation of policy.<sup>2</sup>

It is within this general context that the rise of citizen activity in Toronto can best be understood.

### **Citizen Activism before the 1972 Elections**

The recent wave of citizen participation in Toronto rose up in the latter half of the 1960's around two main issues: urban renewal and transportation. Freely translated, these concerns were 'high-rise development' and the 'Spadina Expressway' which together produced the keynote theme of the participatory movement: the protection of neighbourhoods.

### **High-rise Development**

It was the redevelopment issue that

established the lines of battle. The stirrings of 'citizen power' were first felt in central Toronto, in downtown neighbourhoods south of Bloor Street and west of the Don Valley. By 1969 citizen groups were springing up across the City as requests from developers to rezone land for high-rise development came before City Council.

Numerous accounts of the events of the major civic 'battles', 1966-1972, have appeared and the circumstances which led to the formation of citizen groups have been detailed.<sup>3</sup> In each case, while the events differed, citizens were reacting to proposed rezonings which affected their neighbourhood; and in each case, the opposition of the local citizens involved citizen groups in conflict with developers and civic government, a conflict typically described by its chroniclers in militaristic metaphors.

One early major confrontation occurred in 1966 over a City Council expropriation in the Trefann Court

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1. For example, witness prisoner demands for self-government, welfare recipient claims to the right to help decide how welfare money is dispensed; student demands for power in the governing of universities and even proposals for having inmates involved in the running of mental institutions.

2. As is explained above, this school of thought is known in political science as the "post behavioral" interpretation.

3. These include: James Lorimer, *The Real World of City Politics*, (Toronto: James, Lewis and Samuel, 1970), James Lorimer, *A Citizen's Guide to City Politics* (Toronto: James, Lewis and Samuel, 1972), John Sewell, *Up Against City Hall* (Toronto: James, Lewis and Samuel, 1972), David Lewis Stein, *Toronto For Sale* (Toronto: New Press, 1972), Maureen Quigley, *Democracy Is Us* (Toronto: Ontario Department of Municipal Affairs, 1971), James T. Lemon, "Toronto: Is it a Model for Urban Life and Citizen Participation" for publication in David Ley, et al, eds. *Community Participation and the Form of the City* (Vancouver: Tantalus, forthcoming).

area, a five block section one mile east of City Hall. With the help of outside organizers, the residents of this downtown working class area united in opposition to the urban renewal plan; and although City Council had approved the expropriation, this opposition was successful in preventing its implementation. At first, the area residents, influenced by the Don Mount experience in which the expropriated homeowners had not been adequately compensated, were concerned about not getting fair compensation; but by 1967, aided by John Sewell and others, they had decided they wanted a new plan. For two years the residents remained in limbo as the threat of urban renewal continued to hang over Trefann. Following the 1969 civic election, a working committee was set up and a new plan was produced by the local residents after a year and a half of work. In 1971 Alderman Sewell prematurely exulted: "In the end the people won out".<sup>1</sup>

In the same year as the Trefann Court residents formed their group, urban renewal generated citizen protest in another downtown neighbourhood, Don Vale.<sup>2</sup> In this case three separate associations were set up, representing different and at times conflicting interests. As in the Trefann situation, the Planning Board's original scheme was successfully opposed. It was in Don Vale that the first attempt at institutionalizing citizen involvement in the formulation of an urban renewal scheme was made. While civic officials continued their "do-nothing" policy in Trefann, they did agree to establish a working committee (representing local associations, elected officials, and members of the Planning Board and the Development Department) for Don Vale; in March, 1968 this working committee was officially

recognized by City Council. By mid-1969 this special planning committee had prepared a detailed scheme for their area which reflected the genuine involvement of area residents. For this reason the Don Vale experience is considered an important milestone.

This working committee format was then applied to a third downtown area designated for urban renewal—Kensington. By the middle of 1969 Kensington residents together with civic officials had produced a detailed renewal plan for their neighbourhood as well.

Citizen participation was an issue in the City elections of December, 1969—but only in an indirect sense. As the above cases indicate, urban renewal expropriation had led to the formation of residents groups in Trefann, Don Vale and Kensington. Other groups, too, had organized in order to protect the integrity of their neighbourhoods, such as the Huron-Sussex Residents' Association, the Wilkins-Berkeley Tenants' group and the Cornwall-Oak residents' group.<sup>3</sup> It is no exaggeration to say that by late 1969 many citizens were becoming "radicalized" as a result of their dealings with the developers, civic officials and bureaucrats.

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1. *Up Against City Hall*, *op. cit.*, p. 40. The actual outcome did not fulfill this expectation. The project was stalled over the issue of Federal funding and after eight years the issue was still alive in 1974. Presently it is being claimed that the original plan (which called for rehabilitation grants for homeowners and new housing that could be bought or rented with subsidies by those displaced by the scheme) has been dropped in favour of a "glorified rental deal". There is some feeling in Trefann that the people have not "won out" but have been "sold out." See *Ward 7 News* (June 15, 1974).

2. Area bounded by Gerard, Parliament, St. James Cemetery and the Riverdale Zoo.

3. James Lorimer, *The Real World of City Politics*, *op. cit.* p. 154.



## The Spadina Expressway

By this time the second major "cause" which accounts for the outburst of citizen activism in Toronto had become a vital issue—the Spadina Expressway. Citizen protest mushroomed between August and December of 1969 as residents of areas all along the Expressway route organized to protect their neighbourhoods against the expressway itself and against what they perceived as the impending menace of high-density development.

The Stop Spadina movement mounted a City-wide protest which included letters, petitions, briefs, meetings, demonstrations, delegations and a protest march. While the full Spadina story still needs to be told,<sup>1</sup> there is no question that the Spadina campaign was a major catalyst for the citizen participation movement in Toronto and that it is still having a ripple effect across Canada. The movement began in the summer of 1969 when the first of two coordinating opposition groups was formed—Citizens Concerned About Spadina—under the leadership of certain Annex citizen spokesmen including Colin Vaughan. In the early autumn the second and the central organizing body was established, the "Stop Spadina—Save Our City Coordinating Committee (SSSOCCC) with Alan Powell as its founding chairman."<sup>2</sup> It was SSSOCCC which mobilized and coordinated the anti-Spadina struggle through the rest of 1969 and the first half of 1970. The leadership of SSSOCCC was comprised in the main of middle-class intellectuals, who saw in the collapse of the American city a warning signal that the special qualities of Toronto had to be protected. Certain individuals played a special role, notably urbanologist and former New Yorker Jane Jacobs, whose writings and actual presence in Toronto came

to symbolize the cause.

One might have expected the Spadina battle to become a major factor in the 1969 civic elections but, as Jim Lemon has pointed out, the involvement of political parties in 1969 clouded the issue.<sup>3</sup> The anti-expressway vote was apparently split between Stephen Clarkson and Margaret Campbell so that Mayor William Dennison was returned.

Some "gains" were made in the December 1969 election in terms of candidates being elected who were publicly committed to citizen involvement. John Sewell and Karl Jaffary won in Ward 7 and both were clearly identified as opponents of high-rise development and the expressway and as advocates of citizen power. In addition William Kilbourn, David Crombie, Art Eggleton, Reid Scott, David Rotenberg and Ying Hope were considered somewhat "reformist" in the eyes of some observers.<sup>4</sup>

Following the 1969 municipal elections the Spadina issue again came to the fore. By that time the Stop Spadina movement, according to one estimate, numbered some 450 workers.<sup>5</sup> A con-

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1. Alan Powell, the leader of the Stop Spadina—Save Our City Coordinating Committee and teacher of urban sociology at the University of Toronto, is currently in the process of writing the history of "Stop Spadina". An interview with Professor Powell was most helpful in writing this section of the study.

2. The initial meeting was called in the early fall of 1969 by PRAXIS, a social action oriented research group which included reform-bent academics such as Jane Jacobs, Abe Rotstein, Meyer Brownstone, Stephen Clarkson and two hired researchers, Howard Buchbinder and Jerry Hunnius.

3. James Lemon, *op. cit.*

4. "Jaffary, Sewell Balk Formation of a Reform Coalition," *Globe and Mail*, (Dec. 5, 1969).

5. James MacKenzie, "Spadina Opponents Plan to Switch Fight to Queen's Park," *Globe and Mail* (Feb. 23, 1970), p. 5.

frontation occurred in January, 1970, between the SSSOCCC leadership and public officials over the matter of obtaining information. A map was subsequently published in the press showing not only the Spadina expressway but a whole network of expressways which were on the drawing board. Suddenly SSSOCCC was inundated with offers to help and with donations. By February, 1970 over twelve hundred names were on the list of volunteers.

The highlight of the Stop Spadina experience occurred in April and May, 1970, with the public hearings held by the Metro Transportation Committee. The opponents of Spadina came forth in significant numbers; over 200 briefs, almost all of them anti-Spadina, were presented. The thrust of their arguments was that new values and concerns had made the expressway-oriented 1964 Metro Transportation Plan obsolete and that an independent review of transportation was needed. The tone of most of the reports was generally considered to be deliberately reasonable and moderate. In contrast, the attitude of some Metro politicians was hostile and at times members of the Metro Transportation Committee became rude and abusive.<sup>1</sup>

After losing the fight, as expected, at City Hall (Metro Council endorsed the Metro Transportation Committee's recommendation that the Spadina Expressway be completed) the anti-Spadina people turned to Queen's Park. Deputations by individuals and groups were again made, this time to the Ontario Municipal Board, which approved Metro's application for and endorsed completion of the Expressway in February, 1971. In the meantime, a third organization had been formed to lead the fight—the Spadina Review Corporation, under the leadership of Colin Vaughan.

In June, 1971 Premier William Davis

overturned Metro's recommendation and the OMB decision and stopped the Spadina Expressway. While some observers have interpreted the Premier's action as a major "citizen participation victory", others have been more cynical and dismissed Davis' decision as a vote-getting and image-making move—a calculated attempt to establish the new Premier as a decisive leader. A recently published book on Ontario politics argues that in stopping the expressway Davis seems to have been genuinely convinced by the arguments of the opponents of Spadina; for in doing so he had to defy the very adamant advice of close political advisors and several cabinet members. It was the opposition of the citizens' movement that created enough of a stir and enough pressure that gave Mr. Davis the confidence to defy Metro and therefore made the decision politically possible.<sup>2</sup>

What can be said about the impact of the Stop Spadina campaign on Toronto's citizen participation movement? Very clearly, the Spadina episode was the catalyst which awakened many citizens to the whole participation issue and hundreds of people became involved because of "Stop Spadina". The eventual success of the struggle and the boost this gave to participatory efforts in 1971-2 must be stressed.

The Spadina issue received an extraordinary amount of media coverage, dominating the press for over a year.

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1. "Borough Controllers Accused of "Bullying" Expressway Foe," *Toronto Star* (April 21, 1970), also *Toronto Globe* (April 21, 1970), p. 5.

2. Jonathan Manthorpe, *The Power and the Tories: Ontario Politics—1943 to the Present* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada Limited, 1974).



According to several reporters who were on the scene, no other single specific local issue has had such extensive press coverage. This exposure appears to have had a triple effect:

First, it publicized the issue itself. In doing so, the press found itself in the position of "proving City Hall wrong", for in the course of covering the issue, the press was publicizing evidence which undermined Metro's case on the Expressway. More importantly, it exposed the arrogance and disdain with which citizens were being treated by some of their elected representatives at City Hall; and this, it is fair to speculate, had an important effect on the general urban climate of opinion.

Second, the Spadina experience perceptibly influenced the press itself, affecting in a long-range way the press treatment of citizen issues by making certain political journalists more sensitive to and more sympathetic to citizen participation. No longer was the legitimacy of citizen groups and their right to make a case a matter of debate.

On a more specific level, we know that the campaign had a pronounced "radicalizing" effect on certain individuals, serving as a training ground for some in the strategy and techniques of protest, turning university lecturers into advocate teachers<sup>1</sup> and contributing political candidates, campaign managers and campaign workers to the 1972 civic elections.

### **Citizen Reformers and "Social Control"**

Looking back at the citizen participation movement in Toronto in its formative period, one is reminded that the early drive for citizen power was indirectly connected to a short-lived social action participative movement. In 1969 a group called The Just Society was working to organize and to mobilize low income and welfare citizens to

become an effective pressure group. As essentially a poor people's movement the Just Society had as its main objective social action in areas such as welfare and housing.

The most forceful expression of this concern to achieve social reform through active involvement of the poor people themselves was the struggle to reform Metropolitan Toronto's Social Planning Council, which climaxed in 1969-70.<sup>2</sup> While this type of citizen participation—participation of the poor (as patterned after the American participative movement that grew out of the War On Poverty after 1964)—is outside the scope of this study, it is worth noting that several of those involved with the JSM and the confrontation over the composition of the Social Planning Council's Board of Directors were also prominent in some of the early citizen battles against City Hall. Certainly to several of those involved in the struggle, the SPC issue was very much a part of the whole reformers—versus—the establishment conflict, as Stephen Clarkson pointed out in his analysis of the battle:

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1. One important example is a new course which was introduced at Innis College, University of Toronto, entitled "Power and Strategy in City Politics"—an action oriented course which emphasizes "student participation in the practise of power in City politics." Its director, Professor Alan Powell, former Chairman of SSSOCCC, acknowledges that several of his students have gone on to take an activist role in civic politics.

2. Howard Buchbinder, "Twenty-Nine Questions: Twenty-Nine Answers", *Praxis Notes* (April, 1971).

“Agency politics is, after all, part of the fragmented world of the municipal political system. In the SPC as in City Hall, the issue is whether the system can be made to serve the people”.<sup>1</sup>

The nature of the relationship is imprecise but it does suggest at the very least that the citizen participation movement which we currently associate with the issue of neighbourhood protection was for some connected to a broader consciousness of social-economic reform possibilities. From one perspective, this shift in citizen activism from a focus on welfare rights issues to development issues by 1969-70 has very definite class implications.

#### **Citizen - City Hall Confrontation: 1969-1972**

The period between 1969 and 1972 is often referred to as the “heyday” of citizen group organization in the City of Toronto. In 1971 some of the most bitter citizen-City Hall battles were fought. In St. Jamestown West the Meridian Building Group won its effort to expand in spite of a petition which had some 2000 signatures against the project.<sup>2</sup> In the Bloor-Dufferin area citizen opposition successfully stalled Lionstar’s proposed high-rise complex—but only after a confusing contest in which it turned out that the developer had not attained control of the development site. In the case of the huge Windlass apartment complex on McCaul Street vigorous citizen resistance began in 1970; a compromise was finally negotiated in September, 1973. And in the Quebec-Gothic area, near High Park, two hundred and thirteen opposition briefs by homeowners and tenants were unable to convince the 1969 City Council to vote against the development.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of these and similar frustrations, citizens began to organize col-

lectively—both to give themselves a stronger voice on specific issues which politicians would “hear” and to elect a more responsive municipal Council in 1972.

Tracing the growth of citizen groups in the City is difficult. In 1969 when the BMR undertook a study of neighbourhood groups,<sup>4</sup> there were forty-four groups officially listed at City Hall—and only fifteen of these were found to be active. Around the same time the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto compiled a list of local associations and ratepayer groups<sup>5</sup>, which included over eighty neighbourhood and community groups. This was obviously a far more complete inventory, though still preliminary according to the SPC. It was only in 1974 that the City of Toronto Planning

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1. Stephen Clarkson, “Critic Looks at Social Planning Council”, *Toronto Star* (April 26, 1971).

2. The struggle only ended in 1973 when City Council voted 12:11 against revoking the previous Council’s permission for Meridian to build its high-rise development in St. Jamestown West. For a clear summary of the debates in City Council during 1973 over whether the West St. Jamestown, Windlass and Quebec-Gothic high-rise developments should be repealed (they had all been approved by the previous Council) see Jon Caulfield’s *The Tiny Perfect Mayor* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 1974), Chapter 3.

3. The new reform Council voted in February, 1973 to repeal the original high-rise development; early in 1974 the City hired an architect to work with the developers, local residents and the City planning staff to design an acceptable plan for the area. See *Toronto Citizen* (July 19 - August 1, 1974), p. 3; also, Jon Caulfield, *The Tiny Perfect Mayor*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

4. *Neighbourhood Participation in Local Government: A Study of the City of Toronto*, BMR: *Civic Affairs* (January, 1970).

5. This list was published in November, 1970 by the Metropolitan Toronto Library Board.



Board began to devote itself to the task of maintaining a comprehensive, up-to-date index of all known citizen groups in the City. The present Planning Board listing<sup>1</sup> includes over two hundred groups—but we cannot say for certain whether this increase is totally the result of the outcropping of new groups or partly indicative of a more complete listing procedure by the Planning Board. It is evident, nevertheless, that many new groups have been created or revitalized since 1969.<sup>2</sup>

### Characteristics of the new-style citizens' groups

Certain generalizations can be made about the citizens groups which came into existence or were re-activated in this 1969-72 period. The old-style type of ratepayers associations had functioned as traditional pressure groups which would lobby politicians when their own interests were threatened.<sup>3</sup> The citizen group activity which emerged in the late 1960's appeared to have several "new" features:

#### (a) Organizational thrust

Firstly, there was an interest in organizing on a wider scale than the local neighbourhood and on a more formal basis than before: concerned citizens now looked to mobilize and to coordinate the efforts of many groups—within the community, across the City, and even on a Metro-wide basis.

The most significant coalition organization to emerge was CORRA—the City-wide Confederation of Resident and Ratepayer Associations; created in 1969, CORRA had thirty-six affiliate groups by 1972. CORRA's primary focus has been on City-wide policy questions—it has spoken out on many controversial issues and produced influential briefs on the Spadina Expressway, Metro Centre, Housing issues and the Ontario Municipal Board, to name but

a few. On the whole it has tried to steer clear of dealing with local neighbourhood problems except where they have grown into general public concerns, as in the case of major development battles.

A Metro-wide association—METRRA<sup>4</sup>—was formed in March, 1970 to serve as a federation of city and borough coalitions. At the time it began only three of the six area municipalities had area-wide citizen group leagues (York, East York and Toronto<sup>5</sup>) and a fourth was initiated in Etobicoke with METRRA's help in 1971. Originally envisaged as a vehicle for taking ratepayer views to the levels of government above the local councils METRRA held monthly meetings of delegates from the existing local federations during the 1971-73 period.<sup>6</sup>

One product of this new organizing trend was a movement called Community Organizing for 1972. C.O. '72

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1. As revised, May 23, 1974.

2. This pattern of growth is confirmed by the experience across the province. Data gathered by the Office on Community Consultation of the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services for a soon to be published directory of community groups shows that there has been an upward spiral in the number of groups that have been formed from 1969 onward, with the largest increase being in 1972 and 1973.

3. Notable examples are the South Rosedale Ratepayers Association (established 1914) and the Annex Ratepayers Association (established 1923), well-established citizen groups representing primarily upper-middle income citizens.

4. Metro Toronto Residents and Ratepayers Association.

5. These were the York Federation of Ratepayers Associations, the East York Federation and CORRA.

6. METRRA has not met in over a year—since 1973.

emerged in late 1971 with the primary aim of strengthening community groups throughout the City in their efforts to elect "reform" aldermanic candidates. C.O. '72 refused to become a political party or to become involved with party politics. In order to encourage the people in the wards to work to elect responsive aldermen the loosely structured group devoted itself to raising money, pooling information and liaising with ward neighbourhood groups. While C.O. '72 did not endorse David Crombie for Mayor it supported fourteen aldermanic candidates of whom eleven were elected.

The Riverdale Community Organization (which was regrouped into the Greater Riverdale Organization—GRO—in the fall of 1972) was a different kind of movement—far more radical in its approach and objectives. The RCO was founded in 1969 to serve an area bounded by the Danforth, Coxwell and the Don Valley; included were representatives from local neighbourhood groups, churches, schools and various agencies. Following the Saul Alinsky grassroots formula, RCO set out to organize the people of the area into small groups in order to build a mass-based community power block. The aim was to organize the people so they could win control over their own neighbourhoods, with the ultimate goal of challenging the existing power structure. In November, 1972 the Greater Riverdale Organization with a base of support which was broadened to include a substantial ethnic population was created to succeed RCO.

#### (b) Style of action

Secondly, the style of action of the emerging groups was more aggressive in challenging local and Metro councils and in appealing to the Ontario Municipal Board or the provincial cabinet. As motivation increased and more and

more people become involved, citizens groups become more vocal, even militant on occasion.

#### (c) Type of leadership

Thirdly, the leadership and membership was more politically aware and articulate. For example, many present city aldermen had been prominent in the citizen's movement prior to the December, 1972 elections. The leadership consisted of a closely interconnected group of people linked to one another in a way described by one observer as "web-like".<sup>1</sup> Thus the movement was dominated by a group of highly motivated outspoken individuals whose perception of such general issues as development and growth united them into a virtual brotherhood.

#### (d) Objectives

Fourthly, their objectives in many cases were more far-reaching. While specific local issues relating to the character of neighbourhoods remained vital to the inception and continued activism of citizens' groups, the articulated aims now included changes in the process of decision-making and the distribution of power. There was serious talk of the need for a decentralization of decision-making, especially on planning questions, and of "citizen control."

### The 1972 Civic Elections

The December, 1972 municipal elections were widely hailed as a major victory for citizen participation in

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1. James Mackenzie, "Citizens Power: A New Improved Web of Connections Surrounds City Hall," *Globe & Mail* (Dec. 25, 1972).

\* Another difference which Jim Lemon, *op. cit.* points to is the inclusion of tenants in what had traditionally been ratepayers homeowner's groups.



Toronto—not just in the City where a solid majority of the new council was considered “reformist”—but across Metro. As the *Globe and Mail* summed up the election’s meaning:

The message to Metro Council from the Metro Toronto electorate yesterday was clearly a demand that the civic federation in future give more attention to citizen representation. . . . Each of the new mayors has stressed the need for citizen participation in all levels of civic government.<sup>1</sup>

In the City the victory of David Crombie and more than a dozen reform aldermen was interpreted as a major “turning point” in the citizens’ movement. Political observers explained the triumph of the reformers in terms of two closely related issues: the public cry to control development and the demand for a municipal government responsive to citizens’ groups.

In North York the message of the voters was less clearly an affirmation of citizen participation. While the new mayor, Mel Lastman, did describe the victory of so many political newcomers across Metro as promising “a new fresh approach for people”<sup>2</sup> none of the aldermen elected in North York had any concrete identification with the notion of community control. A few of the newly elected officials were viewed as “anti-establishment,” pro-neighbourhood and, therefore, reform-minded. But in general, the importance of the citizen participation issue in the North York elections did not go beyond the usual references in the campaign literature of some of the candidates.

### Since the 1972 Elections: In the City of Toronto

Less than a year after the so-called citizen participation triumph at the polls, uncertainty had set in amongst

citizen activists. “Whatever happened to the citizens’ movement?” asked Jack Granatstein, a veteran of the movement, in an article published in the *Toronto Citizen*:

Before the election of 1972 there were large and vocal turnouts at ratepayer meetings and overflow crowds at important City Council meetings. CORRA (the Confederation of Resident and Ratepayer Associations) was regularly one of the best shows in town, and the Stop Spadina movement had trained a large cadre of people in the practices and techniques of successful protest. The City was going to be altered completely, the people would be in control, and responsibility would be demanded of aldermen and the mayor.

But what happened? The election went better than anyone had dared to hope, and suddenly in the full flush of victory the movement seemed moribund. Is there a single alderman today who meets on a regular basis with his constituents for guidance on policy? Does the Mayor hold the regular town hall meetings he promised he would? Is there any indication that residents’ organization is being pressed forward in the working class areas of the City? Is there any sign of life outside of the reformers of Council and the regulars at CORRA and its component associations?

Answering his own question, Granatstein was somewhat optimistic, concluding that while the citizen movement may be “dormant”, it is still “alive and living” and capable of rising again if the need arises.<sup>3</sup>

1. *Globe and Mail*, December 5, 1972.

2. *Globe and Mail*, December 5, 1974.

3. *Toronto Citizen*, (October 26-November 8, 1973), pp. 10-12.

Several factors explain this apparent decline in citizen group activity:

- a) The most obvious factor was the reform victory itself, for it produced a general confidence that the new Council would protect citizen interests and that constant vigilance was no longer needed.
- b) Council decisions and policy innovations helped to defuse the drive for citizen control. Such measures as the 45' holding by-law, experiments to control traffic in residential neighbourhoods, attempts by the Parking Authority to discourage cars from coming downtown, the request to the Province for the power to control demolition of residential buildings, the setting up of task forces early in 1973 like the Core Area Task Force, the Task Force on the Disabled and the Elderly and the Task Force on the Old City Hall and the new housing policy—"Living Room" all seemed to confirm that the new reform Council was moving in a "pro-citizen" direction.
- c) The election of many of the movement's leaders to City Council deprived ratepayers and citizens' groups of some of their best organizers; many other "activists" were "coopted" into the governing system—to serve as aldermanic assistants or on boards and task forces.
- d) The setting-up of over thirty local planning committees greatly increased citizen involvement in planning and further undercut the participatory drive, or at least for existing organizations which depended on the same people.
- e) An inevitable problem in any protracted effort is fatigue and the citizen participation struggle was no exception. Many reform leaders dropped out, as Granatstein stressed, simply because they were "tired, bone-tired, from fighting every day".<sup>1</sup>

Given this general loss of spirit

amongst citizen activists and the striking absence of the political ferment which characterized the 1972 civic elections, the obvious question is: What did the 1972 reform victory really mean for citizen participation in Toronto? Has it resulted in more citizen involvement in decision-making?

### **Public participation in City Hall business has increased since the 1972 elections:**

On many boards and commissions to which City Council appoints members such as the Planning Board, the Toronto Parking Authority, the Toronto Harbour Commissioners and the Toronto Transit Commission, citizen representatives have replaced politicians and business leaders. As a result of these new appointments there is a noticeable increase in the concern shown by these boards about the issues that are important in the minds of citizens.<sup>2</sup>

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1. *Toronto Citizen* (October 26 - November 8, 1973) p. 11. Professor Peter Homenuck of York University is currently engaged in research on the activity level of community groups and his preliminary findings indicate that most community groups go through a cycle of activity of 4 identifiable stages going from the initial organizational stage, through a growth stage and back down to an inactive, dormant stage after the issue is resolved.

2. A recent report produced by five students of York University, entitled *Special Purpose Bodies in Toronto: An Analysis of Appointments and Operations* (York University: Urban Studies, March, 1974), examines the effect of the 1972 elections on appointments to five different boards and commissions. These included: the Toronto Transit Commission, the Toronto Harbour Commissioners, the Toronto Parking Authority, the Toronto Hydro Commission and the Committee of Adjustment. The study found a positive correlation between "the citizen-conscious new Council and the sharp increase of new board appointees' involvement in citizen groups".



On advisory bodies studying city-wide issues (including the Mayor's Task Force on the Status of Women in Toronto, the Mayor's Task Force on the Disabled and Elderly and the Task Force on the Old City Hall) participation is occurring in a new way. These task forces are in turn taking active steps to promote participation of interested parties.<sup>1</sup>

Above all, on the local level citizens are working on task forces and planning committees to solve local planning problems. Undoubtedly this is the most significant innovation in terms of citizen participation where shared decision-making on questions of physical planning appears to be a reality.

#### **City Council decisions have been reflective of citizen concerns:**

Notably development control and neighbourhood preservation. A list of the policy recommendations which have been made and in some cases implemented attests to the fact that in the last year and a half the City has begun to move in a new reform direction:<sup>2</sup>

- the 45-foot height limit, followed by the drawing up of design criteria for downtown development;
- the new housing effort as defined in the document *Living Room*, which calls for an aggressive City Council policy of public land acquisition and new housing;
- changes in the use of downtown parking lots by the Toronto Parking Authority designed to encourage the reduced use of cars downtown;
- the achievement of a compromise with Meridian Development Company over the future of South St James-town (which provides that 41 per cent of the units—the senior citizen and moderate income housing—will be public assistance housing.);

- the attainment of demolition control legislation from the province to increase City Council's power over the demolition of residential buildings.

### **B The Rise of Citizen Activism in North York**

The recent history of citizen participation in North York in many ways presents a mirror image of that of the City. Some citizens groups in that borough seem lately to be showing an interest in "people power" which recalls the pre-1972 civic election mood in the City. In North York the use of citizens' groups and the period of their greatest activity occurred in the early 1960's. By the end of that decade just as the City was suddenly becoming a "hotbed" of activism, citizen political activity in North York dropped off sharply.

In noting the differences in this citizen group behaviour pattern it is helpful to remember the general social context. The decade of the 1950's had been characterized by a major exodus of middle and upper middle class residents from the inner city; attracted by the clean and peaceful suburban image, larger lots and new houses as well as favourable mortgage terms, young couples moved out to the newly-developing suburbs like North York. North York itself was in the early stages of subdivision so that the new homeowners felt vulnerable and insecure.

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1. For example, the Task Force on the Status of Women held a September conference in which all groups relating to women in the City and Metro were invited to participate.

2. While we cannot be certain as to the absolute social and economic impact of such decisions, they do reflect the new Council's desire to be responsive to citizen concerns.

With no official plan to protect them from many possible changes in land use, citizens in North York began to organize into groups and the early 1960's saw the rise of several associations. As the decade wore on, however, North York became increasingly built up, the possibility of drastic changes in land use lessened and the vigour of these early ratepayer groups declined.

In the meantime the City was experiencing significant social change as well. During the fifties, many of the houses of those who had left for the suburbs were inhabited by newcomers from Europe, immigrants who had no familiarity with the notion of citizen participation. But by the sixties the City, which was experiencing a veritable growth explosion, was "rediscovered" by young middle class couples as "the place to live". At the same time, the Province began to draw up its plans to control urban sprawl which, if anything, reinforced the trend toward the rising value of land and homes in the City; and more middle class professional types moved to buy them. The rise of citizen opposition to urban redevelopment schemes in the inner city during the late 1960's—as in Don Vale in 1969—is directly connected to this return of the middle class population into the City.

As explained above, the most vigorous citizen group activity during the 1968-1972 period took place in the City. However, since 1972, in large part in reaction to the power which residents groups in the City seemed to be wielding, citizens in North York once again began to organize.

The key umbrella group which emerged in North York was FORA, the Federation of Residents' Associations of North York. Founded in May, 1973 FORA presently has 28 member associations which come from all but one

of North York's fourteen wards. The Federation was created in response both to specific controversies and a general concern about the need for citizens to make themselves heard. The specific issues which concerned many residents of the borough included: the cancellation of the Spadina Expressway, the re-alignment of the Spadina subway route and the question of aldermanic salaries. For the founders of FORA these specific questions served to make it

"very clear (that) a stronger voice is needed for the people of North York—one strong enough to be heard at borough council, at Metro and at Queen's Park"<sup>1</sup>

The leaders felt that North York needed an organization which had more political "clout"—in part to counter the powerful and highly organized groups in the City, whose effect on Metro politics appeared inordinate.

The role which FORA has played to date has been deliberately "low key" and is very different from that which CORRA has assumed in the City. At the outset the leaders of FORA decided that the Federation was not intended as a pressure group. It was hoped simply that the coalition would provide "a constructive channel of communication" between the politicians and their constituents and thus enable the elected officials to better represent the people. In contrast to CORRA's objectives there has been no talk of "citizen power" or "control". The concept of the elected representative as "representative" does not seem to have been questioned. Essentially the Federation was set up to coordinate and fo-

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1. From a bulletin sent by the Executive of FORA in the fall of 1973.



cus the interests of all citizens' groups in North York and to improve the two-way communication between politicians and citizens.

In addition to FORA, a smaller coalition of citizens' groups—Task Force 12—was created in one of the Metro planning areas in the north-east section of North York, known as District 12. As a joint effort of eleven associations, Task Force 12 is one of the most significant examples of community organizing in the borough. The group was formed early in 1973 in response to the announcement of the quin-quennial review of the official plan for the area. Financed through a Local Initiatives grant by the Federal government, the Task Force hired five researchers to assist in preparing a report to express the needs and aspirations of the residents of their district. A working group was formed from representatives of each of the eleven groups to work with the staff; this group met regularly every two to three weeks. A two hundred page report, in three parts, was produced in June, 1973 after extensive consultation with the member groups; it was then presented to North York Council and tabled. Since the summer of 1973 the interest of those involved in Task Force 12 has waned and presently it is inactive. However, as the Report indicates, while there is no single overriding issue, there are several concerns—including the nature of the planning around Fairview Mall, the extent of high rise in the area, and recreational issues—which could bring the Task Force back to life when the official plan for District 12 comes up for review.

### A Comparison

A Comparison of the citizen movements in the City and in North York in general terms reveals distinct differ-

ences in their nature and extent:

a) An obvious difference is the degree of organization. In Toronto, both stimulated and emboldened by the Stop Spadina campaign as well as a series of development issues, the citizens' movement was established on a city-wide basis, capable of a concerted effort as during the 1972 civic election. In North York, lacking the dual borough-wide focus of high-rise rezoning and the Expressway, what citizen group action there was remained focused on individual neighbourhoods before 1972.

Only recently has a broader consciousness begun to emerge, in part as a negative reaction to the impact of CORRA.

b) With regard to style of action, the North York ratepayers movement has been less aggressive and less militant than the pre-1972 City movement. In North York the preference appears to be for quiet presentations as opposed to the more vigorous forms of urban action such as demonstrations and sit-ins. Of course, it might be argued that citizen group victories in the City have conditioned North York politicians to be more responsive to citizen concerns thus obviating the need for the kind of militancy which occurred before the 1972 elections in Toronto.<sup>1</sup>

c) In terms of leadership, the difference between the borough and city movements is striking. The citizen group movement in North York has no cadre to compare with the highly articulate, semi-professional leadership

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1. For example, note the sympathetic response given by politicians representing North York at all governmental levels to citizens protesting the conversion of apartment rental units into condominiums. In one case, the efforts of the elected leaders caused the landlord to extend tenancy agreements. See the *Globe and Mail*, (August 6, 1974), p. 5.

corps which was perhaps the chief factor in the Toronto citizen movement's success. A list of the forty or fifty key figures in Toronto's citizens' movement would find architects, left-wing academics, urbanologists, and professional organizers well represented; with a high percentage of New Democratic party members the city movement benefitted from an ideological impetus and systematic approach which seems to be almost completely lacking in the borough experience.

d) The resulting differences in their objectives are evident from discussions with those involved in the City and North York movements and were confirmed by our survey findings.<sup>1</sup> A reading of the books and articles of James Lorimer, John Sewell, or the now defunct newsletter *City Hall*, for example, indicate the depth of the Toronto citizen movement's critique—i.e. the whole social-economic system as reflected in the political system—and the consequent scope of its goals. The North York movement has not produced anything comparable to the body of reform literature which came out of the Toronto experience.

## C The Current Situation

In assessing the current situation three main questions come to mind:

- is it accurate to suggest as some observers have,<sup>2</sup> that the passion for participation which was so strong in 1972 is now a thing of the past?
- how representative of their communities are citizens' groups?
- can we conclude from the recent signs of backlash against citizen activism that a negative shift away from more public participation is likely?

### Status of the "movement": in the City

From numerous discussions with citizen leaders past and present we

came away with the following general picture of what was the citizen movement. First, it is no longer a "movement" (only a very few of the people we spoke to argued that it never was); it no longer has a unity of motives, an identifiable leadership or a sense of internal cohesion.

Second, a schism appears to be developing between middle class groups and the groups representing the non-propertied poor. Several of the citizen spokesmen whom we interviewed expressed the view that the reform victory of '72 was a middle class victory—a success for those who had joined the movement in order to save neighbourhoods and old buildings and preserve the status quo generally; but that for the lower social-economic groups, the '72 results have led to no real gains. A brief look at the different issues which are vital to the various groups lends support to this argument that the former movement is splitting along class lines. While the key issues for middle class groups have been controlling car traffic in their neighbourhoods, preventing high-rise developments and altering the proposed provincial electoral boundary changes, citizen groups in the working class and urban renewal area of the city, such as Ward 7 are clearly more concerned about "class" issues—low income housing, tenants rights, legal aid etc.<sup>3</sup> Another indication of the schism is the voting pattern which

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1. Discussed in Section IV.

2. For example, see Ron Haggart, *Toronto Life*, (June, 1974).

3. Groups active in these causes include the Don Vale Residents' Association, the Trefann Court Residents' Association, the Regent Park Community Improvement Association, the Greater Riverdale Organization.



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has evolved in City Council, where those aldermen who identify with less affluent constituencies, have voted quite consistently in what is often termed a "hard-line" or radical reform direction. The half-dozen other aldermen and the Mayor who were known as "reformists" in 1972 have broken with their former allies on many key votes.<sup>1</sup>

Within the broad middle class sector of the Toronto citizen movement the sense of unity seems to have evaporated. Lacking a binding issue like Spadina, efforts to become involved have been sporadic and reflective of specific concerns of particular groups.

At the same time the level of activity has been high. The Toronto Island community's fight against Metro Council's decision to evict the islanders—a major issue throughout 1974—has been perhaps the most outstanding example. But according to the City Clerk's office the last two years have seen greatly increased communication from the public to their elected officials.<sup>2</sup> Moreover their reports, briefs and deputations have become much more comprehensive and more "professional". The groups seem more confident and conscious of their "rights". Many ratepayer groups which formerly represented a street have joined forces with other groups to speak as a united community on certain issues. Further evidence of this continued interest in participation comes from CORRA, the official body uniting over thirty of the City's ratepayer and resident associations. While there was a feeling throughout 1973 that CORRA was tired, recently a more positive mood seems to have taken hold, perhaps based on a more realistic sense of what CORRA can hope to accomplish.<sup>3</sup>

All of this is to say that while a unified movement for citizen power may

no longer exist, the potential for and interest in more public input into local governmental decision-making is there. With municipal elections approaching and a provincial election due next year citizen groups across the City may become re-invigorated.

### Status of the "movement": in North York

Citizen group activity in North York has never had the continuity, the sense of unity or the central leadership which has characterized the City movement. And even now, despite the establishment of the coordinating organization, FORA, citizen activism in North York remains essentially a local phenomenon. We were surprised, for example, in our discussions with several representatives from groups located throughout the borough, at how many had never even heard of FORA.

At the same time, in a number of sections in North York where specific local issues have arisen, the level of activity is high. As in the City the two

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1. This block would include Aldermen Sewell, Jaffary, Heap, Thomas and Goldrick. Curiously Anne Johnston of Ward 11 has also been allied with this reform group. See Jon Caulfield, "Kissing Off Reformism," *Toronto Citizen* (May 24-June 6, 1974), p. 5.

2. The pattern has been one of steady increase in communication from the public since 1968—with a levelling off in the 1971-2 period and a definite upsurge after the elections.

3. Among CORRA's major recent efforts are: a brief to the Ontario Electoral Boundaries Commission which argues vigorously against the Province's redistribution proposals and a series of briefs responding to City Council reports, including *Living Room* and the *Pickering Impact Study*.

most volatile issues are high-rise development and transportation,<sup>1</sup> and it is evident that when they feel their interests are being threatened, North York citizens are participation-minded.<sup>2</sup> Other issues which are of concern include community recreation (e.g. tennis courts), services (sidewalks, street lighting), and education.

Almost all of the people we talked to are "conservative" when it comes to how they want to participate. They do not object to the existing system or feel that any institutional change is needed to permit more meaningful participation. The methods presently being used are the conventional techniques—briefs, letters, petitions and telephone calls. While opinion about the North York Council ranges between extremes, with some groups finding their Alderman helpful and others finding theirs totally unresponsive, most feel that the ballot box offers adequate control.

Because of the social-economic makeup of North York, it is not as relevant as in the City to discuss middle class/lower class divisions. It is interesting that in the case of one large community association<sup>3</sup> which embraces middle-class homeowners and O.H.C. tenants, no rift between the two is apparent—though this may be because the group as a whole is facing frustration in its struggle to get the Council to undertake a study of high-rise development in the area.

The overall picture of North York citizen activism which emerged from both our questionnaires and discussions is of an irregular scattering of individual groups which are issue-oriented and moderate in approach.

### **How Representative are Citizens Groups?**

A favourite argument put forward against more citizen participation in

government by some critics is that the groups are representative of only a vocal minority of the population. Group spokesmen who appear at hearings and Council meetings are almost certain to be asked: who do you speak for? How many people do you represent? What the officials are really asking is: why should we support your point of view? Where is your mandate? Will the interests of the majority of the community be denied if your case is accepted?

Such questions are difficult to answer. Each of the three hundred-plus groups in the City and North York is different, created out of different issues; some are active, some virtually defunct; some are large, claiming over five hundred memberships, others have but a handful of members<sup>4</sup>; some have executives which meet regularly and are genuinely responsible to the general body; others have executives of two or three people who act on their own.

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1. Almost all of the respondents to the questionnaires listed either development or transportation issues as reasons for joining their citizen groups.
  2. Currently two of the most active groups are: the Don Mills Residents' Association, which has mustered the opposition of over 700 families to fight the Lawrence Avenue Extension, and the Downsview-Weston Action Community which has concentrated its efforts on the high-rise issue.
  3. The Downsview-Weston Action Community.
  4. Of the 28 groups in North York which responded to our questionnaire, 5 claimed a total membership of over 500, including 1 group which claimed 1200; another 12 groups indicated more than 100 members. In the City, data was gathered from 36 different groups; 7 claimed over 500 members and another 14 showed over 100 members. It should be noted that it was not always indicated whether the number of members represented families or individuals.



The question of how many people a group represents is, in our view, not the essential question, for it begs the issue. The right of citizen groups to be heard and respected as legitimate manifestations of public opinion need not be based on any specially claimed mandate. If one is committed to the ideal of citizen participation beyond the ballot box as essential for a responsible and accountable government then it is clearly necessary to permit and encourage this input—and groups offer a logical means for expressing the will of citizens who are like-minded on a given issue or issues. The role that groups should play in a democracy is of course, a matter of debate among political theorists as well as among politicians—and the relevance of this controversy was discussed in Section I. What must be emphasized here is that without in-depth investigations into a majority of the hundreds of groups in existence it is not possible to generalize on “how many people they speak for?”

Our information did show that citizen leaders perceive their groups to be representative.<sup>1</sup> In response to the question, “How representative do you think your group is of various classes, cultures or interest groups in the area?” a large majority of both North York and City citizen respondents described their groups as either “very” representative or “moderately” representative.<sup>2</sup> A slightly higher percentage of North York citizens described their group as “very” representative than did so in the City. The segments of the population which are most under-represented in both municipalities according to the survey are ethnic groups and non-home owners.

A similar question was put to elected and appointed officials and it is interesting to compare their answers. The question read:

“Would you say that citizen groups are broadly representative of their community on a) all issues, b) most issues, c) some issues or d) no issues?”

The elected officials responded thus: 7/18 chose “most”, 11/18 chose “some” and none chose (a) or (d). Appointed officials were less positive: 14/19 thought they were only representative on “some” issues and 1 even indicated “no” issues, while only 4 chose “most”. City planners were more optimistic with 12/29 indicating “most” and 17/29 “some”.

These results suggest that officials do not have as much confidence in the representative value of citizen groups as do citizen members. But the gap is clearly not that great and the attitude of elected and appointed officials does not appear to be completely unreceptive or sceptical as to the credibility of residents and ratepayers groups.

### Is a backlash against citizen participation on the way?

In a recent editorial the *Globe and Mail*<sup>3</sup> summed up the misgivings about citizen participation which have been heard lately in several quarters:

The virtues of participation are there, but like most virtues they can be carried to the point of absurdity. There are segments of the population who interpret the promise of

1. See Appendix A for explanation of our methodology re: questionnaires sent to involved citizens and public officials.

2. The results from the City were as follows: out of 41 responses, 15—“very”, 19—“moderately”, 6—“somewhat”, 1—“not very”; the results from North York were: 14—“very”, 13—“moderately”, 5—“somewhat”, 3—“not very”.

3. “A Matter of Proportion” (Aug. 16, 1974).

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participation as a promise of obedience on the part of council as though there were a kind of transferable mandate. They assume, of course, that they are "the people". The real challenge to the council is to avoid sharing the delusion; to maintain a proper perspective about the voices they are hearing . . .

The onus would seem to fall on city council to filter this input and try to restore proportion to the argument. Even those citizens who don't show up for public meetings—for reasons of inability, shyness, ignorance, or perhaps a degree of apathy—should not be discounted. Council represents them, too.

Citizen opposition to major developments like Metro Centre, station design proposals for the Spadina subway and, particularly, public housing ventures have elicited public declamations by developers, public officials from all government levels and journalists alike.<sup>1</sup> More significant is the shift in the attitude of the Ontario Municipal Board that has taken place over the past two years, since the retirement of former OMB Chairman, J.A. Kennedy. The ruling of the OMB (November, 1973) that only incorporated residents' associations can appear before it has effectively denied residents the right to a collective voice before the OMB.<sup>2</sup> (Incorporation involves legal expenses, annual auditing and all of the regulations required for corporations.) Whether these signs betoken a backlash against reformers and citizens groups is not certain—the election results this December may give some indication—but there can be no doubt that signs are there.

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1. E.g. "Citizen Groups Blamed for Delay in Public Housing" *Toronto Star* (Sept. 19, 1974), p. 1.

2. The OMB ruling occurred against the Bedford Park Residents' Association which was appealing a ruling of a Toronto Council Committee. The Ontario Cabinet then upheld the OMB decision (August, 1974).



### III – METHODS OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

There are many different methods by which citizens may participate — and these methods may be used alone or in varied combinations. Evaluating them is difficult because of the many variables inherent in the political and social environment. We propose to describe some of the most common methods of participation and to explain the evident advantages and disadvantages of each.<sup>1</sup>

1. Public Meetings
2. T.V. Citizen Response Programs
3. Ward Offices for Aldermen
4. Polls and Surveys
5. Written Submissions
6. Citizen Appointments to Boards
7. Task Forces
8. Working Committees
9. Citizen Advisory Groups (as in Winnipeg)
10. Ward Councils
11. Plebiscites

It will be noted that certain common techniques which encourage or permit participation such as,

- (1) the distribution of resource material and all government reports
  - (2) the holding of hearings which are well publicized and easily accessible to those persons likely to be affected by the proposal in question
  - (3) responsive communication via telephone and letters
- are not mentioned above. Such methods are taken for granted as basic requirements of a democratic political system. Without these necessary conditions citizen participation is obviously precluded. Our concern is to examine methods which will facilitate an increased level of participation within our system.

#### 1. Public Meetings

Public meetings and public hearings

are traditional methods for informing the public and for providing feedback to the authorities. The obvious limitation of public meetings as a participatory method is that, regardless of whether they are required or optional, there is no way to ensure that the citizen contribution will have any effect on decisionmaking. As the Task Force on Citizen Participation at the Man and Resources Conference (November 1973) emphasized, under some conditions public meetings can even be used to undermine citizen participation:

Meetings between the decision-maker and the citizens can be turned into vehicles of limited one way communication by the simple device of providing superficial information, discouraging questions, giving irrelevant answers or using information the layman cannot comprehend. The way in which various types of information are provided to citizens can discourage citizen participation, and actually increase apathy and alienation . . . .

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1. Some might find this approach too simplistic and insist that a more sophisticated description of the different techniques is necessary. In fact, such a model of analysis for evaluating participatory techniques has been proposed in a recent publication entitled "Analysis and Design of Public Participation Programme Evaluation in Ontario", prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services (July, 1974); it calls for the use of a whole range of descriptive devices, including "change indicators," "effectiveness indicators," "performance indicators", and the like. However, as we explained in the Introduction, our approach is based upon an empirical effort to define workable methods for public involvement. Whether or not an "objective" analysis using a sophisticated evaluation model would yield different conclusions is not known.

A second situation is one where authorities "sell" their decisions to the public in the name of citizen involvement; participation is distorted into a public relations tactic for the decision-maker.<sup>1</sup>

Meetings, on the other hand, can serve as a meaningful form of interaction between citizens and their public officials. Their value depends on how they are used. It should be noted that public meetings allow people to participate in a *group* setting so that some of the dynamics of group activity are operative, (e.g. certain individuals may dominate the meeting while others may decline to speak).

## 2. TV Citizen Response Shows

Television (and to a lesser degree radio) offers new techniques for citizen participation. Regardless of the specific format adopted, citizen response shows on TV and radio allow a few members of a vast audience to communicate their concerns directly to politicians and to hear and see their questions discussed. Like public meetings, "hot-line" shows facilitate a two-way flow of information and thereby promote involvement. They can also be used to perform an "ombudsman" function, whereby some viewers can get help in solving their individual problems.

Another television citizen response possibility involves a mass survey using television programs to present the issues and providing widely available questionnaire forms to enable citizens to respond. The most ambitious undertaking of this type was "Choices for '76" – sponsored in 1973 by the Regional Plan Association in North-eastern United States.<sup>2</sup> Briefly, "Choices for '76" utilized all the media (tv, radio and the press) of the New Jersey – New York – Connecticut

Urban Region in what was termed a town meeting project. A series of five "town meetings were held" – on Housing, Transportation, the Environment, Poverty, and Cities and Suburbs – which citizens attended via the television screen; each program presented a series of possible solutions to a major urban problem in the form of eight to ten basic choices on where the Region ought to be headed by 1976; many citizens were encouraged to view the programs in small groups, discuss the issues and then vote on their "choices" while other viewers marked their ballots as individuals. The overall aim was to provide for meaningful citizen participation in planning the future of the region. While electors in an election must choose between candidates, the town meeting project, according to its sponsors, would enable citizens to indicate their preferences on issues in a better informed and more accurate way.

The use of television as a vehicle for citizen participation has not gone beyond the experimental stage. T.V. citizen response programs, as presently utilized, provide for only a limited involvement. Many suggestions have been made for citizen and community group use of television and radio channels which would require sub-

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1. *Proceedings of the Man and Resources Conference*, Part I (Montreal: 1974) p. 9. In this connection, also note the recent warning by Richard Soberman, transportation consultant for Metro, that it was not hard to coopt the opposition if you don't give them all the information about the issue . . . to have public involvement, later, when a firm decision is already taken is to have public manipulation. *Globe and Mail* (Sept. 24, 1974) p. 5.

2. William Caldwell, ed. *How to Save Urban America: Regional Plan Assoc., Choices for '76* (N.J.: The New American Library, 1973).



stantial government support (including the provision of equipment and technicians). Some predict that in the near future television will become a very important participative vehicle, that people will one day be able to conduct mass meetings from their homes, to debate and even vote. For the present, however, the interactive potential of television is something for the future. Existing formats such as phone-in and audience participation programs can increase public access to decision-makers and permit a very limited kind of participation.

### 3. Ward Offices

The setting up of ward offices has been advocated by some as a means to promote citizen participation by making local government more visible and more accessible. While the idea is a familiar one it has not been widely attempted at the local level in Metro.

A few aldermen in the City have made efforts in this direction. In one instance, after the '72 elections the alderman set up a ward "office" and attended it once a week for a couple of months;<sup>1</sup> however, finding that few constituents took advantage of it (it was advertised in the local community press only) and that it was generally less productive than other methods, the alderman ended the experiment. In a second case, the alderman established a store-front community office which is proving to be highly successful. Attended by the alderman on a bi-weekly basis, the ward office functions as a genuine community-access centre, providing all kinds of information, stocking such items as old age pension applications and generally helping people with their problems.

The success of this operation suggests that ward offices can work but it takes

effort: regular attendance by the alderman, a suitable location, volunteers to help, special fund-raising events to defray the cost and adequate publicity. Ward offices can be beneficial in the traditional ward-healing sense of solving individual problems and in the overall sense of educating the public and encouraging citizen communication.

Should they be financially supported by the government — as federal riding offices are? Those who say "no" point out first, that there are political implications — for ward offices inevitably serve to promote the aldermen themselves — and second, that they are not necessary at the local level, where elected representatives are easily accessible. Perhaps a more feasible idea would be government-aided community access centres, which would serve as both a ward office for elected officials and as a local service centre.

### 4. Polls and Surveys

*Polls* seek to measure public opinion on a specific issue. Unlike plebiscites, polls are not preceded by an educational campaign but rely on whatever information has reached its audience through regular media channels. A recent example which demonstrates how polls work and the effect they can have is the poll that was conducted in Metro to ascertain the attitudes of Metro citizens on the future of the Toronto Island community. The poll was taken after

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1. A room in a local church served as the office.

Metro Council had voted not to renew the leases on the Island homes; and the poll results showed that a majority of the Metro citizenry disagreed with this decision. Following the publication of the results several Metro politicians indicated publicly a willingness to reconsider their vote. Polls thus offer a method of informing elected officials of public opinion on a subject. The chief difficulty with polls is that their results are only as good as the sample chosen and the question(s) asked. Results which are inaccurate or invalid may be publicized and mislead both public officials and citizens.

*Surveys*, as opposed to polls, attempt to measure public perceptions on a broader level, trends of thought and overall needs and goals, rather than opinions on specific topical issues. As in the use of polls, there is no advance educative effort. Like polls, surveys contribute information for the use of government officials — but they do not aim at directing the politician's vote on a specific issue. Surveys can be extremely useful in providing data and in indicating general attitudinal trends for planning decisions and for policy and program formulation. Like polls, surveys can serve as a valuable source of feedback to officials by fairly reflecting the views of all citizens.

Surveys have limitations and dangers that need to be recognized for they can be misused if legitimate techniques are not employed. For example, the sample size must be large enough and properly selected to be representative; questions must be carefully worded; the timing must be right and not distort the survey results because of proximity to certain key events; nor should the survey be timed to affect election results; above all, the analysis and interpretation must be sound. A further limitation on the use of extensive surveying as a method

for citizen participation is the high cost.<sup>1</sup>

## 5. Written Submissions

Petitions, briefs and depositions are traditional means of citizen communication with elected representatives. Written submissions permit a strictly one-way communication and there is no guarantee of response from the elected official(s). However this still serves as the most common form of citizen participation today.

Petitions, briefs and depositions are different forms of communication and each municipality has its own rules and regulations as to their presentation.

A petition is a formally drawn request bearing the names of individuals concerned about a specific issue. A brief is simply a statement of the position taken by the concerned individual or group and the justification for that position. A deputation goes one step further, stating the viewpoint, giving the reasons for it and requesting an appearance before the appropriate Council or committee to personally represent the position taken.

The City of Toronto has a formal system which channels all communications from the public to the appropriate committee.<sup>2</sup> For example, a brief or deputation concerning park

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1. In-person interviews which are generally believed to be the most accurate kind of survey are also the most expensive. For a clear and concise summary of the uses and dangers of surveys for local government uses, see Kenneth Webb and Harry P. Hatry, *Obtaining Citizen Feedback: The Application of Citizen Surveys to Local Governments* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1973).

2. Although certain individuals we spoke to emphasized that there was no guarantee that this referral system always worked to facilitate participation.



facilities would be forwarded to the Parks and Recreation Committee; and if this committee deemed it worthwhile, it would take it to Council. There is a time limit by which submissions must be presented to ensure that they will be on the next committee meeting agenda — this time limit is generally one week before the scheduled meeting.<sup>1</sup>

North York's system is less formal. Section 14 of the by-law concerning citizen presentations to Council states that a 3/5 Council majority is necessary before Council will hear a deputation from an individual or group. However this by-law has apparently never been strictly enforced and citizens are allowed to address Council concerning a specific issue whenever that issue appears on the agenda. For a deputation to be listed on the agenda, it must be presented to the Clerk's office by Thursday, noon, of the week prior to Monday's Council meeting.

While this avenue of participation is open to everyone in the community we were informed by City and Borough officials that it is rarely used by individuals, but is often used by citizen groups. Petitions and briefs represent a minimum level of participation at best; deputations can have greater impact because of the opportunity for media coverage. However, written submissions generally must be viewed as a limited channel for public input which does not involve citizens being consulted in decisions or participating in the development of alternative solutions.

## 6. Citizen Appointments to Boards

The idea of appointing citizens to boards and commissions was originally connected with the municipal reform movement of the late 19th

century. During the 1890's in Toronto, evidence of corruption, abuse of patronage and excessive power being wielded by special interests led reformers to demand many structural changes in the city's government, including citizen-dominated boards.<sup>2</sup> Reformers looked to appointed boards and commissions staffed by skilled citizens for two reasons; first, because they would remove the administration of services out of the hands of corrupt politicians; second, because they would permit objective "experts" to run a more efficient government.

By the middle of the twentieth century, attitudes had changed and "experts" were no longer revered. People became aware that administration could not be separated from politics, that so-called administrative decisions often had political implications. A new reform movement sought to give power back to the people via their elected representatives.

The case for ending independent boards is persuasive. In the first place, appointed boards can be used for patronage purposes and can develop their own set of vested interests. They do not necessarily increase efficiency and in instances where conflicts be-

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1. For Executive Committee, the communication must be presented by Monday, 10:00 a.m., to be on the agenda for the following Wednesday; for Building and Development it must be received by Tuesday a.m. for the following Monday; all other committees have a time limit of one week.

2. For a recent article on this municipal reform movement, see John C. Weaver, "The Meaning of Municipal Reform: Toronto, 1895," *Ontario Historical Society*, Vol. LXVI, June 1974, pp 89-100. The most important structural innovations were the creation of the Board of Control and the establishment of permanent department heads. Later, other Canadian cities followed Toronto's example.



tween the board and Council develop, they can prove costly. From the standpoint of democratic theory, they are neither representative nor directly accountable to the electorate. Decision-making authority is diffused and boards can be used by politicians as a means of avoiding their political responsibility. The existence of many separate boards and commissions can lead to citizen confusion which impedes participation. Moreover, as appointments tend to reflect the mood of the elected Council there is no reason to believe that citizen appointments will make the boards and commissions more responsive and sympathetic to citizen viewpoints if the general political climate is unsympathetic to citizen participation.

On balance it is our impression that attitudes to appointed boards will continue to shift from time to time, according to how their performance is viewed. Historically they have served and can serve as a check on unwise decisions of the elected majority and as another source of access for public input. In this connection, one advantage of having independent boards is that their reports are published, rather than simply forwarded to Council, so that interested citizens have easy access. At best, this is a very limited form of participation.

## 7. Task Forces

Task forces or special advisory committees are now widely in use at all levels of government in Canada and reliance on them is increasing. When the government wishes to research a certain issue prior to formulating policy, it can set up a committee or "Task Force" to study and report on it. The merits of task forces have made them understandably a popular device. They utilize the resources and talents

of people in the community and they give representation to relevant interests which may or may not be organized. Government officials benefit from the experience and knowledge which goes into the task force's recommendations; and in return, by consultation and discussion with these representatives, decision-makers can help to educate the public as to the government's aims and thus secure widespread cooperation. While the committees are advisory only, they can provide for meaningful "consultative" participation, whereby citizens have the maximum opportunity to become well-informed and comment on an issue. If the task force itself makes efforts to consult with the public (through such devices as surveys, neighbourhood meetings and public hearings) the resultant report can be an important statement of public wishes. Several special purpose municipal task forces, created after the December '72 elections, including the Task Force on the Old City Hall, the Task Force on the Disabled and Elderly and the Task Force on the Status of Women, demonstrate the value of this method.<sup>1</sup>

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1. The Task Force on the Disabled and Elderly, for example (Feb. 1973) involved some 80 people over a 1 year period in the production of a 103-page report on the plight of handicapped and elderly citizens. People became involved through word of mouth, aided by press notices and participation remained open throughout—with public meetings every 2 weeks at first, then monthly. The final report, costing only \$3000 came up with 59 recommendations to improve the design of buildings, public transportation and services for the use of the handicapped and aged (presented June, 1973). While there was some frustration caused by long meetings, repetition, etc., the general feeling is that it worked well, involved many people who were directly interested, and who otherwise would not have played such an active role, and produced a valuable report.



## 8. Working Committees

Working committees or local planning groups have been established in various parts of the City to give citizens the opportunity to take part in the process of planning their community. There are presently thirty-three of these working committees and task forces<sup>1</sup> with most of them being located south of St. Clair Avenue, in the less affluent areas of the City. There is no uniform pattern for the different committees. Some were established by City Council directly, others by a Council Committee (like Buildings and Development) while others like Yonge-St. Clair began on their own initiative and secured City Council support afterwards. The memberships of the working committees vary too. Many like the Bathurst-St. Clair Task Force include representatives of residents' associations, schools, churches, local business groups and the ward aldermen; others, like the Dufferin-Grove Neighbourhood Steering Committee and the Southeast Spadina Working Committee, involve citizens from the community at large, rather than representatives of existing groups. Only a few of these committees have storefront site offices but they all have assigned staff from the City of Toronto Planning Board.<sup>2</sup>

Because of the fact that they are all different in structure, composition, and modus operandi, it is difficult to generalize about the working committee as a model for public participation in city planning. Their basic objectives tend to be similar—to identify the concerns and desires of the people in the neighbourhood for the purpose of helping to develop specific plans and policies for the area. All working committees have an advisory power only and their influence depends strictly on the support they get from the Planning Board and

City Council.

Our overall feeling, based on our questionnaire results, together with discussions with planners and citizens involved, is that the working committee format is working well in many cases and that it is the most promising method for real citizen 'input' in planning. In their responses to our questionnaire, city planners showed an overwhelming preference for working committees as the most desirable method for citizen participation.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, involved citizens in the City strongly affirmed their preference for working committees as the most desirable method for participating. It is interesting that in North York, where working committees are not used and where there is no citizen experience with them, this method scored very low—North York citizens looked instead to more familiar methods like plebiscites, polls and surveys and written submissions and presentations. Thus we concluded from this evidence and from our interviews that where citizens and planners have tried working committees, they are generally satisfied.

There is no doubt that they can be productive and effective. The Yonge-St. Clair experience is a positive example. Created back in 1970 the

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1. To avoid confusion with the specially appointed Task Forces described above, we shall refer to all these planning groups as working committees, regardless of their name.

2. The 1973-74 City Council has put substantial sums toward encouraging citizen involvement in local planning by increasing the planning staff and creating ten site offices.

3. Out of 23 questionnaires returned 18 chose working committees as their first or second choice. This contrasts with the preferences of other appointed officials who favoured written submissions and presentations.



Task Force completed a study in the spring of 1972, which made recommendations to the Planning Board about development around the Yonge-St. Clair intersection.<sup>1</sup> At first, the Planning Board, despite an agreement to cooperate with the local citizen Task Force, ignored the Task Force recommendations and presented a planning study which went against the Task Force viewpoint. When the Planning Board's report was presented at a public meeting in May 1972, it was overwhelmingly rejected by the hundreds of citizens who attended. A motion was passed calling for further study and for the Task Force's approval as a prerequisite to new development. Following the public meeting, the Task Force was accepted by City Council and by the Planning Board and terms of reference for further study were developed.

By mid-1973 the subcommittees of the Task Force had completed their in-depth studies dealing with traffic and transportation, open space, land use alternatives and urban design and these reports were synthesized into a comprehensive Position Paper. The ultimate significance of this citizen input is evident in the Planning Board's Part II Study for the Yonge-St. Clair Area, which now reflects the concern of residents to protest their neighbourhoods, expand park facilities and limit development. The Yonge-St. Clair Task Force served as a precedent for other citizen associations, such as the Merton Street Task Force, and helped to popularize the working committee concept.

There are serious problems with the working committee method of participation. The most common complaint from planners and aldermen is the difficulty of getting people involved on a regular and sustained basis, particularly when the task drags on tediously

over months, even years. Problems have arisen with some groups because the money needed to implement the plans they are working on is not forthcoming from the higher levels of government and projects are getting stalled.<sup>3</sup>

Considerable concern was expressed too about the fact that working committees are not really representative, that they tend generally to under-represent the business interests in the area, for example, and may over-represent homeowners seeking to preserve the status quo in their neighbourhood.<sup>4</sup> Thus conflicts between different interests in a community do not always get worked out at the working committee level. Some planners observed that working committees tend to attract certain "political" types who are in sympathy with the current "control development" mood and identify with the reform-minded planners and Council. As a result, it cannot always be assumed that the views of the working committee reflect fairly the attitudes of the community. Conversely, in situations where the committee is unstructured and functions via a series of public meetings on a given planning issue, it has been found that it can be a difficult process to reach a consensus. Like any committee system, the working committee approach is time-and energy-consuming.

In spite of these problems the working committee method has positive benefits. While they are not

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1. The Yonge-St. Clair area had been designated as one of two regional commercial centres in the City, and was therefore slated for high density commercial and residential development.

2. *Yonge-St. Clair Study, Report II* (City of Toronto Planning Board; May, 1974).

3. See "Neighbourhood Program Stymied," *Ward 7 News* (Sept. 14, 1974), p. 4.

4. One example which was pointed to by several people is The Core Area Task Force.



always representative, they do represent some of the people who care most about local issues and do provide an opportunity for the most interested people to express their views. It offers, therefore, an important additional source of public opinion for the elected official. Planners and aldermen alike agreed that the local working committees do have the effect of making the alderman more responsive and accountable. The committee method itself has value as a constructive opinion-making process: the group format involves interaction and, because people tend to stimulate each other, results in more creative thinking about area needs and goals. Finally, it is a method which utilizes the resources and expertise in the community.

Should the planning committee idea be expanded into a more formal system of working committees? The people we spoke to were apprehensive about institutionalizing working committees. The feeling is that the differences in format of the many groups reflect the different styles and histories of the areas in which they function – and that this is good. Above all, as they are not necessarily representative of all the citizens or interests in the community, to institutionalize them would really amount to institutionalizing a lobby.

## 9. Citizen Advisory Groups

The concept of Resident Advisory Groups, one of the most innovative features of the City of Winnipeg's new local governmental structure, grew out of the desire to devise a framework at the community level within which citizens could keep informed of the issues affecting them and act effectively in their own interest.<sup>1</sup> In July, 1971 the NDP provincial government of Manitoba<sup>2</sup> passed legislation which

created a new local government in what was the Greater Winnipeg area. Twelve separate municipalities were disbanded and amalgamated into one city; the city was then divided into fifty wards, with one councillor elected to represent each ward on the central council. To combine the principle of administrative and financial centralization with the political decentralization needed for maximum citizen access, Community Committees were created – these were comprised of from three to six wards, over an area approximating the old municipalities. The councillors sit both on the central Council and on their Community Committee. Attached to each Community Committee is a Resident Advisory Group (RAG) composed of private citizens who are to work with and advise councillors on community matters.

One of the major goals of this new structure was to develop greater citizen involvement in local government. According to the powers of the Community Committees – which include the responsibility of supervising the delivery of local services – the Committees and the RAGs were intended above all to provide access to the residents of the area and bring them into closer contact with government. It was not intended to give them real decision-making power for their power is advisory only.

Since their creation RAGs have been the object of much discussion and con-

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1. For an extremely clear explanation of the Winnipeg system and the role of Resident Advisory Groups, see Lloyd Axworthy and Jim Cassidy, *Unicity: The Transition* (Winnipeg: The Institute of Urban Studies, 1973).

2. The NDP's surprise victory in June 1969 was a very important factor in the shaping of Winnipeg's new system.



trovery. They have been criticized as “ineffectual” and “meaningless” and as a “failure” by some. But a recent study entitled, *Unicity: The Transition*, done by the Institute of Urban Studies at the University of Winnipeg, points out that while they do have problems, and while they have “not been overwhelmingly successful”, the verdict is still undecided.<sup>1</sup>

In terms of numbers, there are some 410 citizens who are registered as resident advisors in the various community committees in the city and only approximately two-thirds participate regularly.<sup>2</sup> From their research, the I.U.S. found that the level of communication with the community has not improved because of the RAGS, that citizen interest in them seems to be diminishing and that their role is viewed with scepticism by many members of Council.<sup>3</sup>

The RAGS vary in their structure and in their style of operation. There are different numbers of advisors per group ranging from 200 in St. Boniface to 12 in St. Vital; in some cases the advisors are elected while in others the RAG is open to all interested residents. All of them have some type of committee structure and most meet as a whole. They also differ in their agenda and discussion areas with some being more concerned with administrative details, while others, notably in the inner-city, are more concerned with larger, more policy-oriented issues. Similarly some resident advisors see their role as reactive, limited to consultation, while others perceive a more active role.

Why have the RAGS had only limited success at best? The I.U.S. study blames all parties: the provincial government – for not providing the back-up services and the incentive and encouragement which would have added

credibility<sup>4</sup>; the City Council, which has been largely negative toward the concept of citizen participation; the Community Committees which have not given the advisory groups any resources and direction; and the RAGS themselves – for becoming bogged down in trivia and in many cases for viewing themselves as an elite group, apart from the rest of the people.<sup>5</sup>

In evaluating RAGs and judging their success, it is necessary to bear in mind the political situation in Winnipeg. While some councillors listen to the views of their advisors, the Council as a whole is very conservative and not interested in encouraging citizen participation. Inevitably, this hostile climate contributes to a sense of failure about the groups. The apparent weak showing of the Resident Advisory Groups in this early period may

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1. *Unicity. op. cit.*, pp. 107-135

2. Moreover, the evidence indicates that approximately 80% of all advisors have been previously involved in community affairs, so that it cannot be claimed that RAGS have involved many more citizens in civic affairs, *Unicity, op. cit.* p. 120.

3. Also see a recent article in the *Globe and Mail* entitled “Winnipeg Shows Apathy Toward the Unicity Council” (Nov. 1974). The article points to the mass apathy during the past civic election in Winnipeg (October, 1974) when only 34.9 per cent of eligible voters turned out at the polls. The new RAG system does not appear to have stimulated citizen interest.

4. For example, the province could have insisted on participation by the Community Committee and RAG as a prerequisite to funding certain programs. It is interesting to note that the Manitoba Government has in fact granted \$5000 per RAG for research, as of this past summer, to assist the RAG system.

5. In 1972 an effort was begun to strengthen the RAG by creating an association which would provide a needed resource base for all RAGs. Application was made to the Federal government for funds.



not mean that the concept itself is unworkable, but rather that the political climate necessary for citizen participation is not present.

Notwithstanding these and other problems, the I.U.S. concludes that the system does have potential:

"An easily recognizable vehicle for involvement on the community level is there and, though it has to date drawn only the activists, that is to be expected, especially in the transition period. But . . . when an issue of concern appears, then the average citizen can use the RAGs to express his feeling, gain information, and mobilize support for one position or another.

The RAG system has led people to become more involved on a more constant level than has been the case in the past . . . . On an overall assessment their performance during the initial period has been . . . very encouraging. ."<sup>1</sup>

However, to make the RAG system work, some reforms are recommended; above all, City Council needs to develop a more positive policy on RAGs and to work with RAG members to define responsibilities; the province needs to clarify the role of RAGs in the structure of city government and also help by assisting the city to provide support service for RAGs.

In addition to the practical problems of involvement and influence which the Resident Advisory Groups are experiencing, the RAG system raises the same theoretical question as do the working committee - task force and ward council concepts - what assurance is there that the RAG speaks for the entire community and not just one point of view?

## 10. Ward Councils

There is no single definition of a

ward council. To some people a ward council is an open community forum, held regularly, at which issues are discussed and then voted on. According to this concept, the ward council is intended to have advisory power only and the ward alderman is not formally bound. To others, a ward council is a more structured body with the council comprised of representatives of existing groups who would elect an executive. The council would meet regularly, discuss and vote on issues, but again would exert advisory pressure only.

A far more radical concept of a ward council can be found in Milton Kotler's *Neighbourhood Government*.<sup>2</sup> Kotler's idea of a ward council requires both a decentralization of the existing structure and a decentralization of services. The council would evolve from a "development corporation" whose jurisdiction would coincide with the original boundaries of the community before annexation by the central city. The corporation would then wrest power from City Hall and work towards setting up a City Hall in miniature for the neighbourhood community. The ultimate goal for Kotler is to make the neighbourhood a constitutional unit of government.

Whether or not one looks to an informal ward assembly or a highly structured council, the purpose of the ward council concept is to provide for maximum information flow and consultation between the elected representative and his constituency. In addition, even if the ward council cannot bind the alderman, it is intended to increase citizen control over the alderman and shift the balance of power away from the central Council. In its most extreme

1. *Unicity, op. cit.*, p.134

2. (N.Y.: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1969)

sense, ward councils can be conceived of as another level of government — as replicas of area municipal councils, but on the local ward level. Decentralized units along these lines are most conceivable under amalgamation, where ward councils would replace the area municipal governments.<sup>1</sup>

The difficulties with the ward council concept point up a major dilemma underlying the whole citizen participation issue. The aim of ward councils is to encourage more public participation, to bring decision-making closer to the people. In order to do this, to interest and involve people, some power must reside there. But who and what ensures that ward councils serve the whole community and not just certain self-serving groups or individuals? Historically public participation in Toronto over the past eight years has shown that by and large most people do not want to be involved on a day-to-day basis unless threatened by an immediate crisis. Admittedly it is a circular argument, for the other side of the coin is the argument that citizens will only want to participate fully when forms exist that make their influence real and that without real power citizens are less inclined to participate. Nevertheless, the concept of ward councils (resembling the first two types as opposed to an additional level of government) raises basic questions about the relationship between the alderman and his constituency, the source of his mandate and who he should be responsible and accountable to. Another problem with ward councils, especially if they are to possess a veto power, could be that parochialism would be encouraged. Finally, they could prove less efficient and more costly than our present system.

## 11. Plebiscites

Plebiscites represent an attempt to plug citizens directly into the decision-making process. Rather than relying on the politicians' interpretation of the "wishes of the people" on a specific issue, plebiscites purport to allow an accurate testing of the popular will by means of the ballot. Many argue that this method fosters real grass-roots democracy and in effect replaces the "town-meeting" of old. In cases where a plebiscite has been called to permit a public decision on a major issue, (e.g. the public vote on flouridation of the water supply in the early 1960's) it is usually preceded by an intensive educative effort. The obvious democratic appeal of the plebiscite is that it gives citizens a direct decision-making power and offers maximum participation on a given issue. Those who are distrustful of the role which political pressure groups play in the regular democratic process prefer plebiscites because they rely on an *individual* response.

While plebiscites may have value in certain circumstances, there are evident disadvantages. First, plebiscites circumvent the established political process which assumes that conflicts between different interest groups are inevitable

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1. The concept of ward councils as a means of political decentralization or community control is not being rejected here. Because we are dealing in this study with the *present system*, we are not considering governmental decentralization as a participatory method. The support for decentralization of the political and administrative system at the municipal level among those calling for more citizen participation is, of course, extensive and the case made for going back to smaller units of government is persuasive. In fact, we conclude this study with a statement of our view that meaningful citizen participation is dependent upon an adequate representation system. And we intend to elaborate our views on this in our submission to the Robarts Commission on Metropolitan Toronto next year.



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and should be resolved through political bargaining. Extensive use of referenda would diminish the need for politicians and various interest groups to negotiate and bargain in good faith. Those who view this adjustment process as essential to the health of democracy therefore are alarmed by the prospect of frequent plebiscites. Second, plebiscites have a potential for demagoguery. Because of the difficulties involved in making the public informed enough to vote "yes" or "no" on an issue, some educational effort beforehand is required. Particularly given the persuasive power of our present-day media, there is a real danger of manipulation. We need no reminder of the popularity of plebiscites with totalitarian leaders.

#### IV – ATTITUDES TOWARD CITIZEN PARTICIPATION OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND COMMITTED CITIZENS

One of the problems in defining appropriate methods for citizen involvement in local governmental decision-making is determining what people mean by "participation", why they want to participate and how. Similarly the attitudes of interested citizens must be related to the views of elected and appointed officials to learn what methods of participation are most acceptable to decision-makers.

In this section we shall be reviewing the results of our questionnaire surveys with three central questions in mind:

- *why* do citizens want to participate? what issues motivated them to become involved? to what extent is their quest based on ideological and power objectives?

- *what* do citizens mean by participation? how do their definitions compare with the views of politicians and appointed officials?

- *how* do citizens want to participate? what role do citizens expect government to play in facilitating citizen organization? how do officials want citizens to participate? what role do officials think government should play in promoting citizen group organization?

In measuring these attitudes, we shall be examining the relationship between "committed" citizens, elected officials and appointed officials in both the City and North York.

As was outlined in Chapter I, two sets of questionnaires were sent out: to citizen "activists" and to civic officials (including elected and appointed officials).<sup>1</sup> To learn the attitudes of involved citizens over 600 questionnaires were mailed to the chairmen of citizens' groups in North York and the City, according to lists

provided by the City and North York Planning Boards. Our selection of groups was limited essentially to neighbourhood and community groups which are concerned with local politics, primarily as it relates to the physical development of Metro Toronto. Our choice of officials included all members of Metro Council, City and North York aldermen and those City and North York Commissioners whose departments would be likely to have some scope for a citizen role; in addition we sent forms to members of the City and North York Planning Boards and to all City planners because of their extensive current involvement with citizens on working committees.

At the outset we wish to acknowledge that this survey of attitudes represents a limited enquiry into a subject for which the research possibilities seem inexhaustible and about which information is difficult to quantify. Nevertheless we believe that the findings are genuinely reflective of the opinion of the so-called "informed public"<sup>2</sup> of Metropolitan Toronto.

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1. See Appendices B and C.

2. According to political theorists, public opinion has a stratified pyramidal structure – at the base of the pyramid is the uninterested and uninformed mass public; near the top of the pyramid is the middle stratum, the "informed" or "attentive" public; at the top are the opinion-makers and the elites who determine policy. This study investigates the views of citizen "leaders" only so that we must ask what relations their attitudes have to those of the mass public. It would be very interesting to survey the public at large to compare responses. It is possible that the reluctance of citizen activists to endorse the ward council idea, for example, betokens the fact that these people already have the "ear" of their representative, and don't need more so-called radical devices to improve their representation. In other words, their responses may reflect an elitist bias which is not reflective of what the uninvolved citizenry would want.



Our confidence springs from the very high degree of corroboration between our survey findings and the results of many discussions and interviews held with individuals and groups concerned. When we talk about the attitudes of citizens we are referring only to the so-called "activists", the leaders of citizen groups and their close associates. By defining the expectations of citizen leaders together with the views of elected representatives and civic staff toward participation of the public, we hope to show the extent to which their attitudes are complimentary and where the common ground lies.

\* \* \* \*

It may be remembered that the Bureau undertook a study of neighbourhood groups approximately five years ago entitled, "Neighbourhood Participation in Local Government: A Study of the City of Toronto".<sup>1</sup> A basic assumption of this report was that there existed a "fundamental disagreement between politicians and neighbourhood groups"—a disagreement rooted both in different priorities and in different perspectives about how decisions were to be made. The report emphasized:

The politicians see their role as elected representatives as relatively independent from the demands of their constituents. They deny that the groups are representative of the areas they purport to represent and insist that the groups should not attempt to pressure the politician into a particular course of action on an issue. The groups, on the other hand, feel that most politicians are unjustly trying to hold power to themselves and that the politicians should rely more on the wishes of their constituents and less on their own interpretation of their constituents' best interests. This fundamental disagreement between the

politicians and the neighbourhood groups means that for the most part, they talk past one another on specific issues, and that they are rarely able to come together for discussion on more complex issues such as urban renewal.

The study then went on to recommend a set of ground rules that needed to be developed to ensure increased participation of neighbourhood groups in local government.

One significant result of our research, given this somewhat pessimistic picture of five years ago, is the apparent reduction in the conflict of viewpoints. The expectations and attitudes of citizen leaders toward citizen participation and the role that they expect public officials to play do not seem to be incompatible with the expectations and attitudes of elected representatives. The variance in opinion between citizens and appointed officials is greater, but again, the differences do not seem irreconcilable. The general overriding impression from our questionnaire surveys and from our in-person interviews is that the political climate in Metro Toronto is favourable to citizen participation within the "consultative-partnership" framework.

### 1. Why do citizens want to participate?

Several of the questions put to citizens dealt with why they wanted to participate and what issues elicited their involvement.<sup>2</sup> The responses suggest that the vast majority of citizens in both the City and North York joined their citizens' group mainly in response to a specific issue. The development issue was named as the chief catalyst by 26 of 33 North York respondents and by 22 of 41 City citizens. The next

1. BMR *Civic Affairs* (January, 1970).

2. See Appendix B, Nos. 3, 4, 11 and 13

most important motive force was transportation,<sup>1</sup> with education and recreation factors being cited by nearly 30% of North York citizens and 20% of City citizens. At the same time almost half of all citizen respondents indicated that they became involved at least partly because of general convictions about the value of citizen participation.

In response to a question asking citizens to identify the purpose of their group, a definite majority pointed to "self-protection" of their "community from specific planning decisions or legislation" which threatened their area (from high-rise to traffic regulation) as the most important aim. Very few checked the two answers which had ideological or power-seeking implications as their first or second choice.<sup>2</sup> For example, not one citizen respondent in North York viewed their group as working for "the decentralization of decision making to give neighbourhood groups more power", while only five North Yorkers and four City citizens saw the organizing and activity of citizens to have "a continuing input into the decision-making process" as a primary objective.

Almost all citizens viewed their groups as successful or meaningful in general, again largely because of their influence on specific decisions.<sup>3</sup>

To summarize, the overall impression gained from the questionnaires is that citizens interested in participating in local government are primarily issue-oriented; that planning and development issues are the chief concerns; and that the majority are not motivated by ideological and power objectives.

Comparing the responses of North York and City citizens, we did sense, however, that committed citizens in the City were more ideologically oriented than their "suburban con-

freres" to the extent that a much higher percentage defined the primary purpose of their group in terms other than self-protection.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. What do citizens mean by participation? What do public officials mean by participation?

Two of the questions addressed to citizens and public officials were designed to learn what citizens and public officials mean when they talk about "citizen participation". Since virtually all elected and appointed officials affirmed their belief in participation by citizens, beyond voting, as a democratic right, we were especially interested in how much participation they really wanted. Our findings can best be explained by citing the questions and the results.<sup>5</sup>

(PLEASE SEE NEXT PAGE FOR CHART)

Taking this admittedly oversimplified question at face value, it appears that City citizens have a more "radical" view of participation than do North York citizens—while 50% of the North York responses interpreted participation as "information" or "consultation", roughly 80% of City respondents

1. The Spadina Expressway issue was a factor for about 1/4 of City citizens but was apparently of negligible significance for the North York movement.

2. See Appendix B, No. 11(c) and (d).

3. Appendix B, No. 13.

4. Appendix B, No. 11: Out of 38 responses, 16 City citizens ranked "self-protection" as their main purpose while 22 checked (b), (c), (d) or (e). Compare with: 22/32 North Yorkers ranked self-protection first.

5. Please note that the numbers do not always add up to 100%. In some of the questionnaires certain questions were omitted, while in others more than one answer was checked.



Which of the following concepts of participation most closely fits your own view of participation?	City Citizens 38 replies %	North York Citizens 30 replies %	Elected Officials 22 replies %	Appointed Officials 20 replies %	City Planners 28 replies %
a) information—in which the objective is to create a more informed electorate but not to promote sharing in decision-making	2.6	10.0	.09	20.0	0
b) consultation—in which citizens obtain information about and comment on issues and help to develop alternative solutions by reacting to policy options	34.2	50.0	59.1	60.0	28.6
c) partnership—in which citizens are allowed to share planning and decision-making power through such devices as joint planning committees	55.3	33.3	50.0	20.0	46.4
d) citizen control—in which citizens have a direct and controlling influence on the elected representative who really serves as a delegate	26.3	26.7	.05	.05	25.0

opted for a higher level of participation implied by the “partnership” and “citizen control” categories. Elected officials are more conservative than both groups of citizens but not as limited in their interpretation of participation as appointed officials. Interestingly, City planners, who have had the most extensive first-hand experience with local planning committees, have very different attitudes than other appointed officials—over 70% interpreted citizens participation within the partnership-citizen control framework and not one felt that “information” sufficed as a participatory model.

A second question designed to find out what citizens and officials mean by and expect from citizen participation focused on the role of the alderman. It read:

What do you see as the chief function of the Alderman? Please rank

in order of importance, 1 to 4, with 1 being the highest.

- a) \_\_\_ to represent the views of his constituents, using his experience and best judgement
- b) \_\_\_ to represent his constituents after having informed them of the issues and having consulted with them
- c) \_\_\_ to help form citizen groups so as to promote active citizen involvement and facilitate extensive consultation
- d) \_\_\_ to serve essentially as a delegate of the citizens of his constituency.

Because respondents were asked to rank the various functions in order of importance, the results are more complicated and less suitable for reproduction here.

In interpreting the answers, we viewed (a) and (b) as consistent with an

information-consultation concept of participation and (c) and (d) as tending toward a less reactive and more aggressive role for citizens in decision-making.<sup>1</sup>

The responses showed the following:

- the majority of citizens, in both the City and North York, view the role of the alderman as “representative”: “to represent his constituents after having informed them of the issues and having consulted with them”.

- neither the most conservative choice (to serve as representative “using his own best judgement”) nor the most radical (“to serve essentially as a delegate”) fit in with most citizens’ expectations. A fairly high percentage (about 1/3) of all citizens do not see the creation and active encouragement of citizens’ groups as a central aldermanic responsibility.

- most elected officials agree with citizens that the chief role of the alderman is to represent his constituents after consulting with them. While a slightly higher percentage checked (a), the most “conservative” option, as a group they were more sympathetic to the idea that aldermen should help to form and promote citizens’ groups.

- appointed officials were predictably more “conservative” on this issue than citizens, elected officials or City planners, with the overwhelming majority checking (a) and (b) as a first or second choice.

- the response of City planners was interesting. As citizens did, the majority ranked (b) as the alderman’s chief function; but a surprising number (10/23) selected the alderman as “delegate” option.

A third question designed to give a further indication of attitudes of public officials toward citizens participation read:

What are the practical consequences of more citizen participation in

decision-making? (You may check more than one)

- a) \_\_\_ it takes more time and effort
- b) \_\_\_ it accomplishes little in the end
- c) \_\_\_ it prevents unwise and costly decisions
- d) \_\_\_ it may take more time but helps speed implementation

Very few elected or appointed officials checked (b), the most negative option and over half of all groups of officials checked (d). This reaffirmed our feeling that Toronto public officials do see value in citizen participation, although they tend to interpret the role of the citizen in decision-making within the so-called “partial participation” approach.

In comparing the attitudes of citizens and public officials we were interested in learning the extent of the variance, that is how far apart committed citizens and officials were in their understanding and expectations of public participation. We decided to try and delineate the overall profile by representing each group’s approach in graphic form. By rating the responses to certain questions on a scale<sup>2</sup>

1. Inevitably, many of the respondents were not always clear as to what the question implied—as evidenced by inconsistencies in the rest of the questionnaires—so that these results can do no more than suggest attitudinal trends. Percentages are cited simply to highlight the results and must not be interpreted as having any statistical significance.  
2. We selected three questions from each questionnaire (two were identical) which we felt gave us an index of positive or negative feelings toward citizen participation. Each response was then determined to be “positive” or “negative” in nature. A “split” designation was used when both positive and negative options were checked in the same question. The following scale represents the full range of possible combinations and their weighted value:

PPP	— +4	NSS	— -1
PPS	— +3	NNP	— -2
PPN	— +2	NNS	— -3
PSS	— +1	NNN	— -4
PSN	— +0		

The questionnaires in each category (elected officials, appointed officials, City planners, City and North York citizens) were then totalled and averaged.



ranging from the most negative toward citizen involvement to the most positive, the graph on the following page can be drawn.

As the graph shows there is a discernible disparity in attitudes, with appointed officials, as a group, apparently the most hesitant about citizen participation, and with City citizen leaders apparently most positive. However, the actual spectrum is significantly narrow,<sup>1</sup> with all groups—from non-elected officials on the one hand to City citizens on the other—interpreting participation within a consultative-partnership framework.

### **3. Which methods of participation are most acceptable to citizens and officials? What role should citizens' groups play? To what extent should government promote and support citizens' groups?**

Several questions were aimed at finding out how citizens want to participate, how public officials want them to participate and what role both citizens and officials expect government to play with regard to citizens' groups.

One question asked citizens and public officials to rank various possible participatory methods in terms of their desirability.<sup>2</sup> We realized, as we were tabulating the results, that this question had been too vaguely worded; however, taken together with the responses to other questions, they tend to confirm the general picture of attitudes described above:

- City citizens by far favoured working committees for local planning as their first or second choice; community committees (i.e. citizen advisory groups) ranked second.

North York citizens, on the other hand, generally leaned to the more familiar and traditional participatory methods:<sup>3</sup> written submissions and presentations; plebiscites, polls and surveys; public meetings.

We were somewhat surprised that elected officials indicated a preference for methods which permit a high degree of participation, namely: working committees, resident advisory groups and even ward councils. Methods which ranked the lowest with elected officials were TV citizen response shows, plebiscites, polls and surveys, and mass meetings.

Appointed officials were fairly definite in their choices: written submissions and presentations and citizen appointments to task forces and boards were most preferred, with working committees a very close third.

City planners overwhelmingly endorsed working committees as the most desirable method.

Thus, the majority of citizens and elected officials appear to be open to methods which have a real potential for meaningful participation. The method which appears to have the greatest potential and which appears most acceptable to all groups is the "working committee".

Elected and appointed officials appear to have some reservations about the credibility of citizen groups,<sup>4</sup> with appointed officials being the most skeptical. While half of the elected officials said that citizen groups were "broadly representative of their community" on "most" issues, only 20% of the non-elected officials agreed —

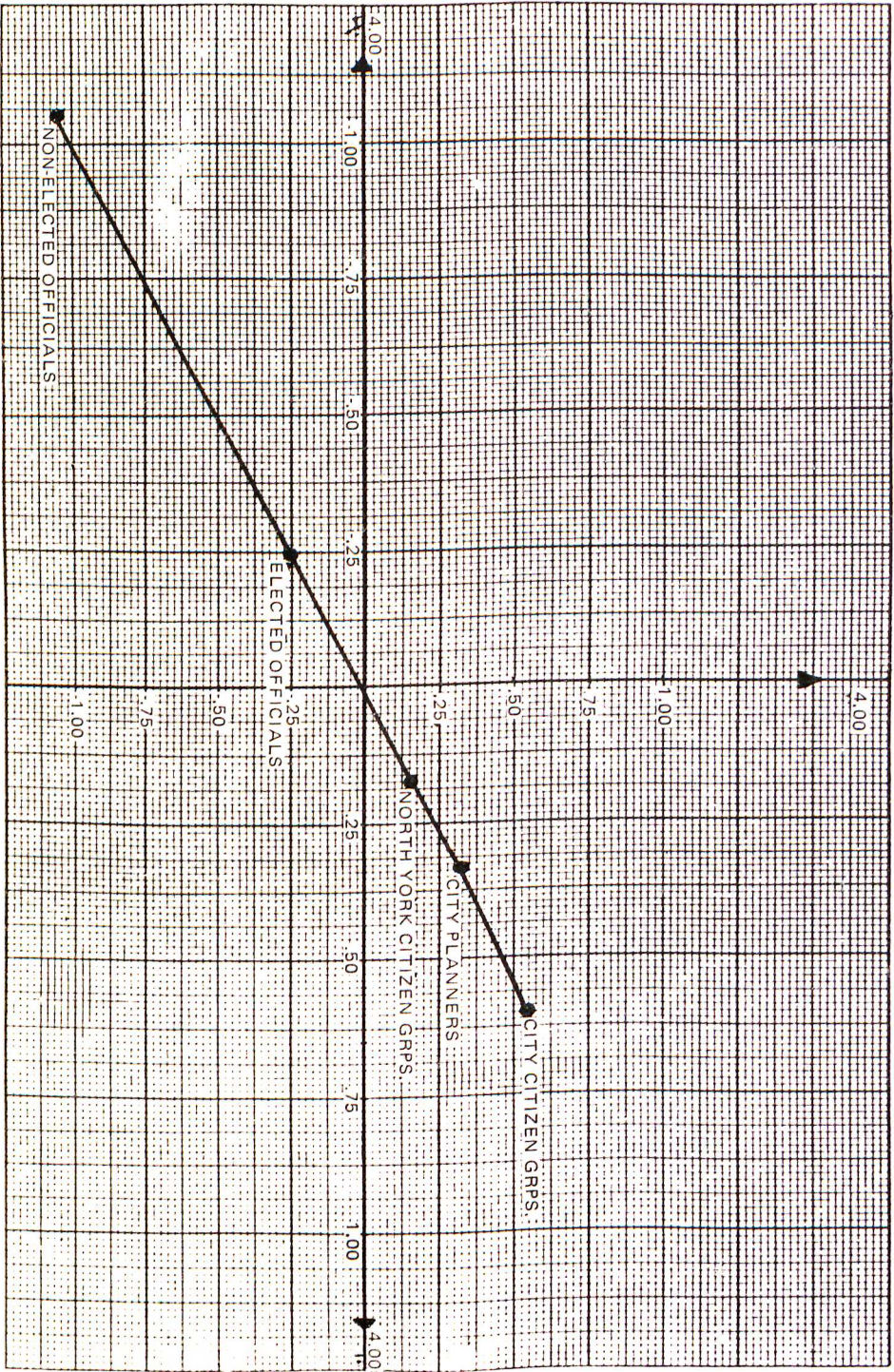
1. On an eight-point scale, all groups fell within 1.75 points of each other.

2. See Appendix B, No. 17 and Appendix C, No. 9.

3. Based on totals of 1st and 2nd choices.

4. As mentioned above, p. 46.







14/19 answered "some" issues and one staff person even answered "no" issues.<sup>1</sup>

Both citizens and officials were asked whether government should actively help to form and/or sustain citizen groups, and, if so how.<sup>2</sup> Their responses suggest the following:

- that the majority of committed citizens in both the City and the suburbs do not want the government to help create or support citizens' groups; they feel instead that it is more important for citizens to preserve their independence from government
  - those citizens who do favour active government support look to such aids as funding, the provision of planning staff and of secretarial services and to generally giving citizen groups "more power within the system"; the idea of government sponsorship of community organizers appears to be the least acceptable means of help
  - the majority of public officials (including elected, appointed and City planners) do not favour active government involvement in the establishment and maintenance of groups, although City planners, as a group, had the highest number of affirmative answers
    - again, like citizen respondents, the minority of officials who would welcome assistance are least enthused about government-sponsored community organizers
    - thus on the issue of whether local government should give more aid to citizens' groups, citizens and officials seem to be in agreement: most do not favour more direct aid, while a large minority do favour financial, secretarial and staff resource support.

### **Political Parties at the Local Level?**

One question which was asked both of citizens and public officials elicited

an extremely emphatic response.<sup>3</sup> In view of the conviction of some reformers that citizen participation can work best in terms of political parties so that those elected are committed to a comprehensive program, it is noteworthy that the notion of political parties at the local level does not appeal to most citizens or public officials. The group which seems most sympathetic to the idea is elected officials and even in their case only 7/21 answered affirmatively. Approximately 90% of all citizens checked "no" to the question: "Would you favour the introduction of political parties at the local level?"

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1. Appendix C, No. 6.

2. Appendix B, No. 16, Appendix C, No. 7.

3. Appendix B, No. 19 and Appendix C, No. 12.

## V EVALUATION OF THE AVAILABLE METHODS

In evaluating the available participatory techniques, it is helpful to begin by relating the methods to alternative concepts of participation. While the formulations vary, the four most common models of participation are:<sup>1</sup>

1) Information model – the emphasis in this situation is on a one-way flow of information, from the authority to the citizen; the objective is to create a more informed electorate but not to promote sharing in decision-making.

2) Consultation model – in this situation the citizen is given the opportunity to obtain information about and comment on the particular issue and to participate in the development of alternative solutions. Although decision-making in this model rests with the decision-makers, this is the stage at which many theorists argue that citizen participation really begins.

3) Partnership model – here citizens are allowed to share planning and decision-making responsibilities through such devices as joint planning committees.

4) Citizen control model – the fullest form of public participation in which the decisions are made by the citizens themselves; this requires a decentralization of decision-making and a delegation of authority to put power in the hands of citizens.

A useful suggestion for organizing the techniques in relation to this range of participation concepts can be found in two recent publications by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. In Professor Bregha's analysis, mentioned above, a number of participatory techniques presently available to government were grouped

into the four general categories which were then discussed as part of a continuum of citizen involvement, one building upon the foundation of the previous one. In the summer of 1974 a second publication by the same Ministry expanded Bregha's categories, indicating, in the form of a table, how different techniques related to them.<sup>2</sup> We have borrowed their arrangement and substituted our own list of available methods in the following chart:

PLEASE SEE NEXT PAGE FOR CHART

In each case, the listing of a device in a category signifies its potential impact as an aid to citizen participation.<sup>3</sup> The actual success of the

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1. For example, see a recent formulation in the *Proceedings of the Man and Resources Conference, Part I* (Montreal: 1974). Also Francis J. Bregha, *Public Participation in Planning Policy and Programme* (Ontario Government: Community Development Branch, Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1974), chapter IV. According to Professor Bregha's formulation this information model does provide a channel for feedback – and it therefore permits some participation. Bregha argues that a more meaningful feedback process should become the aim of information released by the government. For the sake of clarity we have not included feedback in the information category, but view it as part of the consultation concept.

2. T. K. Eger and J. T. Johnston, *Analysis and Design of Public Participation Program Evaluation in Ontario* (Ontario Government: Ministry of Community & Social Services, July, 1974), p. 12, Table II: "Participatory Technique Continuum".

3. Thus an aldermanic ward office as a participatory aid can be conceived of as an access centre to information, a means to consult with the alderman or, in a less restrictive sense, as a community service centre which would provide secretarial and printing services, media equipment for disseminating information, opportunities for citizens to become involved in planning and administrative activities, etc.



Ward office for alderman TV Citizen Response program Public Meeting	Citizen advisory groups Citizen appts. to boards Written submissions Polls & Surveys Ward office for alderman TV Citizen Response program Public Meeting	Working Committees Task Forces Citizen advisory groups Citizen appts. to boards Written submissions Polls & Surveys Ward office for alderman TV Citizen Response program Public Meeting	Plebiscites Ward Councils Working Committees Task Forces Citizen advisory groups Citizen appts. to boards Written submissions Polls & Surveys Ward office for alderman TV Citizen Response program Public Meeting
Information	Consultation	Joint Planning	Citizen Control (Delegated Authority)

method in terms of the quantity and quality of participation depends, of course, on a host of variables: the stage of the decision-making process at which the method is used, the response of public officials, the individual citizens who participate and the information facilities and services available to them.

What guidelines should be used to evaluate the various methods and devices? There are at least three basic considerations:

(1) *the aims and benefits of citizen participation*

One should begin with the goals and benefits of participation and look at the various methods in terms of the significance of the participation permitted. The overall merits of citizen participation as an essential function of democratic government have been widely extolled. Particularly on the local level citizen participation is seen

as one of the keys to improving the quality of urban life. In brief, the oft-cited benefits of citizen participation are:

- participation, as a fundamental political right, helps make government more accessible, responsive and accountable and thereby strengthens the democratic process
- the participation process is educative and developmental for the individual, increasing the individual's sense of responsibility and his awareness that he does "count".
- citizen participation increases the interaction between members of a community, promotes a sense of identity, reduces alienation in a society in which the individual is becoming more and more anonymous and is thus salutary from a societal point of view
- on specific issues citizen participation can contribute to better

decision-making, for the people who are directly affected by the decisions define priorities and clarify issues on their own behalf. The process releases creativity at the grass roots level and can provide relevant information not otherwise available.

- citizen participation can help speed and facilitate the implementation of policy by securing the support of citizens during the formulation of the policy and thus reducing the potential for confrontation.

In Section III we described the most common available methods and their potential as aids to citizen participation. Keeping the above general aims of citizen participation in mind, we found that the value of each of the methods depends on how it is used. Above all, it depends on the extent to which decision makers are cooperative and receptive.

Certain methods obviously fall short of the aims of participation. This can be shown in a simple graphical form:<sup>1</sup>

#### SEE NEXT PAGE FOR CHART

There is no easy answer to the central dilemma of citizen participation — namely, how to be sure that citizens who do participate represent the viewpoint(s) and interests of the whole community. Those methods which are most satisfactory in terms of helping citizens identify with and relate to their community through group interaction (e.g. working committees, resident advisory groups and ward councils) are also most vulnerable to becoming unrepresentative of the majority interests of the total area involved.

#### (2) the attitudes toward citizen participation

A second obvious guideline is the

attitudes and expectations of citizens and public officials. This would seem to be the decisive consideration for, as the Winnipeg experience confirms, no matter how carefully designed the participative structure might be in terms of providing for meaningful citizen involvement, the political climate must be favourable if it is to be successful.

As explained in Section IV, our questionnaire results and our interviews have led us to the overall conclusion that the climate of opinion in Metro Toronto is favourable for the encouragement of so-called “partial” participation, that is, citizen participation within the framework of the consultation-partnership models. Methods of participation which aim simply to improve the information function of government are therefore not enough in terms of what both citizens and officials want and expect. On the other hand a participatory structure, which would seek to decentralize decision-making and which would necessitate the creation of permanent ward councils, is far too ambitious given the current mood.

This is not to argue that a major effort is not needed. For we are far from a situation of even “partial” participation in Toronto. Many other studies on the subject have stressed the commitment and effort needed to include genuine citizen participation in decision-making and planning.<sup>2</sup>

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1. We realize that these rankings are arbitrary and that the benefits of the various methods vary in accordance with how they are used.

2. For example, see David Smith and Valerie Ross, *Enhancing Citizen Participation* (Intermet Working Papers Series, Sec. C.6, May 1973) and Simon Miles et al. *Developing A Canadian Urban Policy* (Intermet Metropolitan Studies Series, 1973), ch.IV.



METHOD	PARTICIPATION AIMS				
	More democratic	Educative and self-developmental	Increase community identity	Improve decision-making	Foster policy implementation
Public Meeting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
TV Citizen Response	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ward Offices	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Polls & Surveys	✓			✓	✓
Citizen Appts. to Boards				✓	✓
Task Forces	✓	✓		✓	✓
Working Committees	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Citizen Advisory Groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ward Councils	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Plebiscites	✓			✓	✓

Our purpose here is simply to argue that the time is right to pursue some meaningful participatory methods. While programs which aim at fundamentally redesigning our system will not find support among the citizenry or public officials, we believe that a higher degree of participation is feasible and should be encouraged through such common devices as public meetings, through a selective use of surveys and especially through such methods as task forces and working committees. In cases where mass participation programs are needed (e.g. Metroplan) the methods should be selected on the basis of realistic participation objectives, without exaggerated claims of "joint planning" and "shared decision-making".

*(3) the costs of citizen participation*

A third consideration is the costs of citizen participation. In the immediate

sense citizen participation requires time and effort. We know from our own experiences in Toronto, for example, that public participation in the planning process extends the time period involved, requires more staff, consumes more money in salaries, etc. If citizens are to participate extensively in detailed planning decisions they will require technical assistance and support. We need not belabour the point that citizen participation in decision-making is more expensive and less efficient in the short run.

In general, the greater the degree of participation permitted by the device, the more expensive it is. Written submissions, citizen appointments to boards and lay task forces, for example, are relatively low-cost methods; but they are also limited in terms of the numbers of citizens they involve and

possibly in their impact on decision-making.

Public meetings as a participatory method are flexible and can be organized in a variety of ways. While they need not be expensive to run, their degree of success is usually related to the amount of publicity preceeding them and to the nature and extent of the information provided – which adds to their cost. Similarly, ward offices can be expensive, particularly if they take the form of community service centres that provide meeting facilities for groups, secretarial and printing services, equipment to gather and disseminate information, etc.

Polling and surveying are extremely high-cost methods, with the personal face-to-face interview which is considered to produce the best return being the most expensive.<sup>1</sup> The costs include planning, sampling, developing questionnaires, printing, training, interviewing, data processing and analysis and there are few short-cuts, for the validity of surveys depend upon the use of legitimate techniques and careful interpretation.

Those methods which permit the fullest participation – including working committees, citizen advisory groups and ward councils – are also the most costly in terms of time, money and administrative efficiency.

The question thus becomes – how does one weigh the costs against the benefits? Is a cost-benefits approach to citizen participation valid or relevant? We do not think that it is. Once the commitment to increased citizen participation is made, methods should be selected on the basis of the first two criteria – the role that the method can play and the participation goals of citizens and officials.

The question of cost then becomes relevant in relation to all of the services and programmes of government.

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1. Webb and Hatry, *Obtaining Citizen Feedback*, *Op. Cit.*, ch. 5, "Costs and Funding Sources" The two other common interview methods are telephone and mailed, self-administered surveys.



## VI CONCLUSION

1. Citizen group activity in Toronto has been mainly issue-oriented, with development and transportation issues being the chief catalysts; an ideological commitment to citizen participation as a means to decentralize decision-making and transform the existing political system is characteristic of only a small minority of involved citizens.
2. There is no single citizen participation "movement" across Metro. There appears to be a discernible difference in the attitudes and expectations of citizen groups in the City and the suburbs. Our comparison of the citizen "movements" in the City and North York reveals that they differ in the degree of organization, in their style of action, in the nature of their leadership and in the scope of their goals. This suggests that different participatory techniques and programs are appropriate for different parts of Metro.
3. The 1972 municipal elections have had a positive impact on citizen participation in Metro Toronto, most notably in the City, to the extent that public participation in City Hall business has increased and Council decisions have been more reflective of citizen concerns.
4. Since 1972, citizen group activity in the City has seemed less vigorous and impassioned than in the 1968-72 period; the movement itself has lost its cohesiveness and unity, and to an extent the former movement seems to be dividing along class lines. However, the level of citizen activity has remained high so that while a unified movement may no longer exist, the potential for and interest in more public input into local governmental decision-making is there. In North York, citizen group activity

continues to be mainly a local phenomenon with citizens organizing and reacting in traditional non-militant ways when threatened.

5. Our survey of the attitudes of involved citizens and public officials toward citizen participation confirms what we learned from our interviews and discussions, that the political climate in Metro is favourable to the encouragement of the spirit of participation within the so-called "consultative-partnership" models. While there was a variance in the views of the different groups questioned, the spectrum was reasonably narrow. Most citizen activists and most officials appear to favour a participation situation in which decision-making rests with the elected officials but which allows citizens to obtain maximum information about and comment on issues, participate in developing alternative solutions and share in planning responsibilities through such devices as joint planning committees. A small minority of citizens and a smaller minority of officials look to the fullest form of participation in which the decisions are made by citizens themselves.

6. Methods of participation which aim simply to improve the information function of government are therefore not enough in terms of what both committed citizens and officials want and expect. On the other hand, a participatory structure which would seek to decentralize decision-making, by such means as creating permanent ward councils, (within the present political system) is not consistent with the current mood or value structure in Metro. We believe that a higher degree of participation is feasible and should

be encouraged. Public meetings and hearings can be effective in instances where the government wishes to inform citizens about policies and options. In situations where meaningful consultation is needed, especially where local planning issues are at stake, working committees seem to be the most promising participatory method. We also feel that the idea of a combined aldermanic ward office and community service centre should be tried as one means of promoting local government visibility and improving two-way communication. While, plebiscites theoretically offer maximum participation on a given issue, they have shortcomings and do not contribute as much to the total aim and benefits of participation.

7. A central dilemma underlying the whole citizen participation issue relates to the fact that we have no assurance that citizen groups are representative of the views and interests of their community. Thus in developing methods for more effective participation — whether we are talking about existing citizen groups or new groups or committees created as part of a participatory program — we must be cautious and wary of proposals which would institutionalize them as a formal permanent part of the political system.

8. At the same time, we recognize that group action has very positive benefits and offers perhaps the most effective means of public input. In our present system they are needed as additional sources of public opinion for elected officials and local planners. Therefore, we endorse the idea of increased support for citizens groups to a limited extent. For example:

- initial financial aid to help establish the group, where certain criteria are met (such as a “petition of interest” representing a specified % of the community)

- nominal funding of capital expenses to start up an office
- special grants (e.g. for special research projects, legal aid etc.) on occasion, again where certain qualifications as to the nature and membership of the group and the purpose of the grant are met.

In general, we believe that ongoing funding should be avoided to prevent making citizen groups financially dependent on government, thereby compromising their independence. Other forms of direct government aid, most notably government-sponsored community organizers, do not seem advisable.

9. Thinking beyond the terms of reference of this study to the general problems involved in facilitating effective and meaningful citizen participation without giving power to certain “participants” at the expense of the wishes and interests of the majority, we have a final observation. We know that viable, effective citizen participation really depends on two factors, above all:

- the extent to which the public is informed and motivated and
- the extent to which citizens have access to the system.

Many of the available methods for improving participation discussed in this study are designed to increase the public’s access to information and to this extent they are valuable. Other innovative and imaginative programs to inform, educate and motivate the public should be encouraged.<sup>1</sup> The

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1. The Bureau has in this regard developed a major proposal for the establishment of governmental expositions at the local level as a method of increasing citizen awareness and therefore citizen involvement. The Ministry of State for Urban Affairs indicated an interest in this approach as a complimentary effort to the United Nations Human Settlement Conference to be held in Vancouver in 1976.



other methods which we described deal with increasing the access of citizens to the political system; yet we have seen that there are problems inherent in these methods. The primary key to improving access to the system is adequate political representation. In Toronto both at the Metro level and at the area municipal level, the ratio of elected to electors is very large and perhaps this is a primary problem. We conclude with a suggestion that a critical factor in improving the participatory process in Metro Toronto is the reform of the political representation system.

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## APPENDIX A

### METHODOLOGY

The so-called citizen "movement" in its broadest sense is amorphous and defies precise delineation. Two distinctions helped us in our selection of groups. First, it was decided to focus on those citizens' groups which have sought to participate primarily at the local and regional level.<sup>1</sup> A second distinction was made according to the chief interest of the groups. Since all of the major battles between citizens and City Hall over the past half-dozen years has been related in some way to governmental decisions about the physical environment—namely land use and roads—we concentrated on citizen groups whose chief frame of reference was municipal government and the physical environment. We did find that most of the protest of these issues had organized along neighbourhood lines so that while we included all community groups in the two selected area municipalities, Toronto and North York<sup>2</sup>, the large majority of these were neighbourhood based.

We relied on three main sources of information:

- existing literature of both a theoretical and case study nature.
- extensive interviews with citizens involved in the movement (both presently and in the past), politicians and non-elected officials.
- questionnaires: two sets of questionnaires were sent to citizen "activists" and civic officials (including politicians and planners). The questionnaire sent to involved citizens was designed to learn the history of their involvement, their understanding of the goals of their groups, and their basic attitudes about participation.<sup>3</sup> The questionnaire mailed to civic officials was

designed to learn their assessment of the impact of citizens' activity and their views as to the role citizens should play.<sup>4</sup>

---

1. Thus groups like "People or Planes" and "Right to Life" which look to the federal and provincial governments rather than the local councils were excluded.

2. We felt that it would be over-ambitious to try to cover all five boroughs so that in addition to the City (where most of the action has occurred) we chose North York, a suburb with noticeable citizen activity, which spreads over the top of the City.

3. Our list was drawn in the main from the lists provided by the City of Toronto Planning Board (May 1974) and the North York Planning Board (currently revised); these were supplemented by the Social Planning Council files and the Directory of Ontario Community Groups (Ministry of Community and Social Service: March 1973).

4. See Appendices (B) and (C) for questionnaire forms to "Methodology".



## APPENDIX B – QUESTIONNAIRE TO CITIZENS

Please note: The information gathered from this questionnaire will be used only to determine general trends and will not be used in specific reference to any group.

	For Official Coding Office Use Only			
1. When was your group formed? _____	9	10	11	12
What is your total membership? _____	13	14	15	16
How many people are on the executive? _____	17	18		
2. How long have you been associated with a citizens' group? approximately _____ year(s)	19	20		
3. Why did you join? If in response to a specific issue, what issue?				
a-1 _____ development issues	21			
a-2 _____ transportation, expressways			22	
a-3 _____ education	23			
a-4 _____ recreation			24	
a-5 _____ other	25			
b _____ because of general feelings about the value of citizen participation	26			
c _____ other	27			
Comment (if any) _____ _____ _____				
4. Did the Stop Spadina movement influence you to join a citizens' group?				28
a _____ yes				
b _____ no				
c _____ I was already involved but became more active				
5. How many times does your entire group meet per year? _____	29	30		

- How many times does the executive meet per year? \_\_\_\_\_ 31 32
6. How often have you attended over the last 2 years?
- a \_\_\_\_\_ regularly
- b \_\_\_\_\_ occasionally
- c \_\_\_\_\_ seldom
7. How is your membership informed of meetings?
- a \_\_\_\_\_ by phone 34
- b \_\_\_\_\_ by mail 35
- c \_\_\_\_\_ by circular 36
- d \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_ 37
8. How many people usually attend the general meetings? \_\_\_\_\_ 38 39 40
9. How representative do you think your group is of various classes, cultures or interest groups in the area? 41
- a \_\_\_\_\_ very
- b \_\_\_\_\_ moderately
- c \_\_\_\_\_ somewhat
- d \_\_\_\_\_ not very
- Which segments of the population are under-represented? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 78
10. Would you describe your group as 42
- a \_\_\_\_\_ active on a continuing basis
- b \_\_\_\_\_ active in response to specific issues
- c \_\_\_\_\_ inactive
11. Which of the following statements best applies to the purposes of your group (as far as you can tell)? Please rank in order of importance, from 1 to 5, 1 being the highest.
- \_\_\_\_\_ self protection—to protect your community from specific planning decisions or legislation which threaten your area (from high-rise to traffic regulation) 43
- \_\_\_\_\_ to promote certain common objectives of the group 44
- \_\_\_\_\_ to organize and activate the citizens of your area to have continuing input into the decision-making process — as a matter of principle 45



- |       |  |   |    |
|-------|--|---|----|
|       | <input type="checkbox"/>   | to work for the decentralization of decision-making and give the neighbourhood groups more power  | 46 |
|       | <input type="checkbox"/>   | other _____   | 47 |
| <hr/> |  |   |    |
| 12.   | Has your group been active on any specific issue(s)?<br>(if yes, please describe)                  |   |    |
|       | _____  |   | 79 |
|       | _____  |   |    |
| <hr/> |  |   |    |
| 13.   | Do you see your group as successful or meaningful in general?                                      |   |    |
|       | a <input type="checkbox"/>   | yes   |    |
|       | b <input type="checkbox"/>   | somewhat  | 48 |
|       | c <input type="checkbox"/>   | no  |    |
|       | If yes, why?   |   |    |
|       | a <input type="checkbox"/>   | because of its influence and potential influence on specific decisions  | 49 |
|       | b <input type="checkbox"/>   | because it promotes awareness and understanding of local government   | 50 |
|       | c <input type="checkbox"/>   | because it helps to involve citizens in decision-making   | 51 |
|       | d <input type="checkbox"/>   | because it makes elected officials more responsive  | 52 |
| 14.   | Which of the following concepts of participation most closely fits your own view of participation? |   | 53 |
|       | a <input type="checkbox"/>   | information—in which the objective is to create a more informed electorate but not to promote sharing in decision-making                              |    |
|       | b <input type="checkbox"/>   | consultation—in which citizens obtain information about and comment on issues and help to develop alternative solutions by reacting to policy options |    |
|       | c <input type="checkbox"/>   | partnership—in which citizens are allowed to share planning and decision-making power through such devices as joint planning committees               |    |
|       | d <input type="checkbox"/>   | citizen control—in which citizens have a direct and controlling influence on the elected representative who really serves as a delegate               |    |

15. What do you see as the chief function of the Alderman? Please rank in order of importance, 1 to 4, 1 being the highest.
- |   |   |    |    |
|---|---|----|----|
| a | _____ to represent the view of his constituents, using his experience and best judgment                             | 54 |    |
| b | _____ to represent his constituents after having informed them of the issues and having consulted with them         |    | 55 |
| c | _____ to help form citizen groups so as to promote active citizen involvement and facilitate extensive consultation | 56 |    |
| d | _____ to serve essentially as a delegate of the citizens of his constituency  |    | 57 |
16. Do you believe that the government should actively help
- |   |                                 |    |  |
|---|---------------------------------|----|--|
| a | _____ to form citizen groups    |    |  |
| b | _____ to sustain citizen groups | 58 |  |
| c | _____ both of the above         |    |  |
- If so, how?
- |   |  |    |    |
|---|--|----|----|
| a | _____ funding                                    | 59 |    |
| b | _____ provision of planning staff                |    | 60 |
| c | _____ provision of secretarial services          | 61 |    |
| d | _____ sponsoring community organizers            |    | 62 |
| e | _____ giving groups more power within the system | 63 |    |
| f | If not, why? _____                               |    | 64 |
- 
17. Which of the various methods of participation do you think are the most desirable? Please rank in order of preference, 1 being highest.
- |   |  |    |    |
|---|--|----|----|
| a | _____ plebiscites, polls and surveys                             | 65 |    |
| b | _____ TV citizen response programmes                             |    | 66 |
| c | _____ mass meetings and open forums                              | 67 |    |
| d | _____ ward offices for Aldermen                                  |    | 68 |
| e | _____ written submissions and presentations                      | 69 |    |
| f | _____ citizen appointments to task forces, advisory boards, etc. |    | 70 |



- g  working committees for local planning 71
- h  community committees (as in Winnipeg) 72
- i  ward councils 73
18. How would you like to see the political structure of Metro changed? 74
- a  more power to the area municipalities
- b  more power to Metro, but keep a two-tier system
- c  amalgamation without formal political decentralization
- d  amalgamation combined with local community decision-making bodies (e.g. ward councils)
- e  no change
19. Would you favour the introduction of political parties at the local level? 75
- a  yes
- b  no
- Please explain your answer:
- \_\_\_\_\_ 76
- \_\_\_\_\_
20. If you have any further comments, please write them below: 77
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

June 1, 1974

## APPENDIX C – QUESTIONNAIRE TO PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Please note: The responses you give will remain confidential and you will not be identified in any way in the final report.

For Official Coding  
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- |    |   |    |
|----|---|----|
| 1. | Do you personally believe in participation by non-elected citizens, beyond voting, as a matter of political right in a democratic society?                    |    |
| a  | _____ yes   |    |
| b  | _____ no  | 14 |
| 2. | Which of the following concepts of participation most closely fits your own view of participation?  |    |
| a  | _____ information – in which the objective is to create a more informed electorate but not to promote sharing in decision-making                              | 15 |
| b  | _____ consultation – in which citizens obtain information about and comment on issues and help to develop alternative solutions by reacting to policy options |    |
| c  | _____ partnership -- in which citizens are allowed to share planning and decision-making power through such devices as joint planning committees              |    |
| d  | _____ citizen control -- in which citizens have a direct and controlling influence on the elected representative who really serves as a delegate              |    |
| 3. | What do you see as the chief function of the Alderman? Please rank in order of importance, 1 to 4, 1 being the highest.                                       |    |
| a  | _____ to represent the views of his constituents, using his experience and best judgement   | 16 |
| b  | _____ to represent his constituents after having informed them of the issues and having consulted with them   | 17 |
| c  | _____ to help form citizen groups so as to promote active citizen involvement and facilitate extensive consultation   | 18 |
| d  | _____ to serve essentially as a delegate of the citizens of his constituency  | 19 |



4. Where and how do you believe elected officials get their most reliable information concerning the public's opinion on issues? Please rank in order of importance, 1 to 5, with 1 being the highest.
- |   |   |     |     |
|---|---|-----|-----|
| a | ___ from friends and acquaintances      | 20  | ___ |
| b | ___ from public hearings or open forums | ___ | 21  |
| c | ___ from polls or surveys               | 22  | ___ |
| d | ___ letters and telephone calls         | ___ | 23  |
| e | ___ from meetings with citizens         | 24  | ___ |
| f | ___ from the media                      | ___ | 25  |
5. (To be answered by non-elected officials only)  
Are citizens presently involved in your area of work?
- |   |  |     |     |
|---|--|-----|-----|
|   |  | ___ |     |
|   |  | 26  |     |
| a | ___ yes                                      |     |     |
| b | ___ no                                       |     |     |
| c | ___ question not relevant to the work you do |     |     |
|   | If yes, are they involved in                 | ___ |     |
|   |  | 27  |     |
| a | ___ all stages of decision-making            |     |     |
| b | ___ most stages of decision-making           |     |     |
| c | ___ playing mainly a reactive role           |     |     |
|   | Please describe how they are involved:       |     |     |
| a | ___ help prepare reports                     | ___ |     |
| b | ___ submit briefs                            | 28  | ___ |
| c | ___ attend open meetings                     | ___ | 29  |
| d | ___ sit on staff working committees          | 30  | ___ |
| e | ___ share in project implementation          | ___ | 31  |
| f | ___ other _____                              | 32  | ___ |
|   |  |     | 33  |
6. Would you say that citizen groups are broadly representative of their community on
- |   |                 |     |  |
|---|-----------------|-----|--|
| a | ___ all issues  |     |  |
| b | ___ most issues | ___ |  |
| c | ___ some issues | 34  |  |
| d | ___ no issues   |     |  |
7. Do you believe that the government should actively
- |   |                                      |     |  |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----|--|
| a | ___ help to form citizens' groups    |     |  |
| b | ___ help to sustain citizens' groups | ___ |  |
| c | ___ both of the above                | 35  |  |

If so, how?	—	—
a — funding	36	—
b — provision of planning staff	—	37
c — provision of secretarial services	38	—
d — sponsoring community organizers	—	39
e — giving groups more power and status within the system	40	—
	41	—
If not, why? _____		

- 
8. What are the practical consequences of more citizen participation in decision-making? (you may check more than one)
- |  |    |    |
|--|----|----|
| a — it takes more time and effort                        | —  | —  |
| b — it accomplishes little in the end                    | 42 | —  |
| c — it prevents unwise and costly decisions              | —  | 43 |
| d — it may take more time but helps speed implementation | 44 | —  |
|  |    | 45 |
9. Which of the various methods of participation do you think are the most desirable? Please rank in order of preference, 1 being the highest.
- |  |    |    |
|--|----|----|
| a — plebiscites, polls and surveys                             | —  | —  |
| b — TV citizen response programmes                             | 46 | —  |
| c — mass meetings and open forums                              | —  | 47 |
| d — ward offices for Aldermen                                  | 48 | —  |
| e — written submissions and presentations                      | —  | 49 |
| f — citizen appointments to task forces, advisory boards, etc. | 50 | —  |
| g — working committees for local planning                      | —  | 51 |
| h — community committees (as in Winnipeg)                      | 52 | —  |
| i — ward councils  | —  | 53 |
|  | 54 | —  |
10. How would you like to see the political structure of Metro changed?
- |  |    |  |
|--|----|--|
| a — more power to the area municipalities  |    |  |
| b — more power to Metro, but keep a two-tier system  |    |  |
| c — amalgamation without formal political decentralization                                 | 55 |  |
| d — amalgamation combined with local community decision-making bodies (e.g. ward councils) |    |  |
| e — no change  |    |  |



11. In your opinion, the role of civic staff is to:  
(you may check more than one)
- |   |  |    |    |
|---|--|----|----|
| a | <input type="checkbox"/> serve as objective technical experts for elected officials                            | 56 |    |
| b | <input type="checkbox"/> provide technical expertise for citizens and politicians                              |    | 57 |
| c | <input type="checkbox"/> function as policy advisors   | 58 |    |
| d | <input type="checkbox"/> function as policy advocates (i.e. by promoting policies which are perceived as good) |    | 59 |

12. Would you favour the introduction of political parties at the local level?
- |   |                              |    |
|---|------------------------------|----|
| a | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | 60 |
| b | <input type="checkbox"/> no  |    |

Please explain your answer: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 61

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Additional comments on the above questions or on citizen participation generally: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 62

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

June 1, 1974

11.20  
fol. 6



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