

1936

**TWENTY-TWO
YEARS
OF
COMMUNITY
SERVICE**

1914 - 1936



**BUREAU
OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH**

**137 WELLINGTON STREET WEST
TORONTO, CANADA**

TWENTY-TWO YEARS
OF
COMMUNITY SERVICE

1914) 1936
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THE TORONTO BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH IS

1. A fact-finding and fact-telling organization.
2. An independent civic agency of constructive criticism.
3. A co-operative agency for the development of informed, steadfast citizenship, which is the only sure foundation for efficient government and operation of public undertakings.
4. The only citizen organization which for twenty-two years, year in and year out, day in and day out, has made continuous study of civic affairs in the interests of all citizens, whether contributing to its support or not.
5. A co-operative organization, offering to all citizens one avenue by which they may make their citizenship more effective.

Why the Citizen-Stockholders of the Municipal Corporation Need a Fact-Finding and Fact-Telling Agency, that is, a Bureau of Municipal Research.

1. They need it because the municipal corporation is a huge undertaking, the fundamental facts with regard to which are difficult to ascertain and still more difficult to get reported without bias. A Bureau of Municipal Research tries to do for the municipal citizen-stockholders what they are not in a position to do for themselves, that is, provide an independent study of facts on which judgment can be based. The city will never again be small enough and uncomplicated enough to permit the individual citizen without co-operation with other citizens to ascertain the basal facts necessary for citizen control of the citizens' business. **The Toronto Bureau of Municipal Research offers such an opportunity for co-operation in citizenship, and it is the only citizen organization in Toronto which for twenty-two years without change in its basis of organization has offered and still offers such an opportunity, unique in all Canada.**

2. They need it because the municipal corporation provides basal services for the citizens of Toronto and for the business and industry which make it possible for citizens to live in Toronto, earn a living and bring up families. A wasteful or inefficient civic administration can, and must in the end, cripple or drive out business and industry and therefore reduce the resources of Toronto citizens or force them to follow business and industry out of the city. **A Bureau helps to maintain the City as a place in which it is good to live, earn a living, maintain homes and bring up families.**

3. **They need it because the investments of citizens in Toronto must be safeguarded if much hardship and misery is to be avoided.** Probably six hundred million dollars are invested in Toronto homes. The equity in these is held by or the rents paid by about 136,000 families. A huge amount is invested in mortgages on these homes by insurance companies and other investing corporations. These act for citizens in investing citizen savings. The financial stability of the corporation is essential to the citizens both as property owners and as direct or indirect investors in real estate securities. There is probably \$300,000,000 of business property in Toronto. Those who pay rent for business space, those who have titles to business property directly or through investing corporations, are alike interested in the efficiency and economy of the administration of the municipal corporation.

4. They need it because the very existence in a City of an independent fact-finding and fact-telling organization promotes the adoption of sound

policies and prevents the adoption of unsound policies which would otherwise go into effect. **The very presence in a city of an independent civic agency of constructive criticism also tends to secure a more thorough consideration of proposals made.** This in the last analysis is more important than the securing of any particular improvement or the defeat of any undesirable proposal, as most mistakes in policy and administration arise from insufficient knowledge of salient facts.

The Bureau's Work During the Past Twenty-Two Years.

1. It has published over 300 reports, white papers and bulletins dealing with every important activity of the city. Every one of these was based on careful inquiry. They contained statements of the pertinent facts, analyses of these facts and constructive suggestions based on these facts. Whenever the Bureau has made a criticism, it has also made a constructive suggestion. **It has never indulged in negative or destructive criticism.**

2. Early in its history, the Bureau saw and stated the necessity of a centralized finance department with a Commissioner of Finance who would be responsible for collecting all revenues and making all payments authorized by Council, who would be the chief administrative budget officer of the corporation, would control the city's accounts, would prepare and publish the city's financial reports and would advise Council on all financial matters. **The adoption of this policy in 1916 has undoubtedly saved millions of dollars for the citizens and taxpayers.**

3. When the Bureau was founded, the city had outstanding tax rolls going back four years and some taxpayers were borrowing from the City for from 1½ to 5%. This is now a thing of the past. The tax collection branch of the Finance Department was never more efficient than at present and provides a great contrast to the state of disorganization in 1914. **The Bureau by its persistent publicity provided essential co-operation in the necessary work of re-organization.**

4. Up to 1914, when the Bureau was established, there was a continuous civic deficit on current account. Until recent years, such accumulated deficit disappeared, and will again vanish when an era of balanced budgets returns. As a matter of fact in 1934, for the first time in five years the city took in in cash from taxes more than the current net tax levy. (See table, p. 11). **No person or body has been more influential in bringing about popular recognition of the necessity of balanced budgets than the Bureau.** When the City deserted its budget balancing policy in 1932, the Bureau reported the fact and has continued with each succeeding budget to do the same, with the result that there is now a general admission that budgets must be balanced, and that in the meantime public documents must show

the degree of unbalance where this exists. The Bureau since its inception has set forth the advantages of a budget passed early in the year in order that the City might operate on a financial plan for at least eleven months of the year. The time of passing the estimates has been greatly advanced, but until the tentative budget is drawn up in December for final adoption in January, the end sought will not be fully attained. If such tentative budget were made available for the civic election campaign, it would help the discussion of civic affairs on real civic issues and would compel candidates to state their exact positions before rather than after the elections. While individual members of the City Council have stated their adhesion to this policy, not till this year did any mayoralty candidate make it a plank in his election campaign.

5. In 1913, the debenture branch of the finance department was in what might be described as a chaotic condition. In that year the city sold 44 lots of bonds varying in amount from \$487 to \$5,231,667, with increasingly unsatisfactory results in net return. Not all sales were public. Sinking funds bonds were the style. Now sales are in large lots, sales are timed judiciously, are all public, and only serial bonds are issued. **The result has been a saving on capital and current accounts amounting to millions. The Bureau's part in this change was important, as an examination of its files and list of publications will show.**

6. The Bureau has made two extensive surveys of the Department of Health and continuously supported, until it was accomplished, the move for amalgamation of the Medical Inspection Branch of the Board of Education with the Civic Department of Health.

7. The Bureau made in 1918 one of the first, if not the first, of the surveys of Toronto slums and published the pamphlet "What is the 'Ward' going to do with Toronto."

8. In 1918, the Bureau made a study of the private philanthropic giving in Toronto, and published the pamphlet "Toronto Gives." Out of this study and report and the co-operation of several groups of interested citizens grew the Federation for Community Service, which has multiplied the number of givers by five or six, has kept alive during the depression essential privately operated welfare organizations which without it would probably have perished, and, in doing so, has saved large amounts to the taxpayers of Toronto.

9. **The Bureau has pointed out in season and out the essential administrative unity of public welfare and public health. This policy was gradually being adopted until the formation of an independent Department of Public Welfare and the disruption of the then existing degree of co-ordination in the Department of Health, with results known to all.**

10. The Bureau has insisted on the possibility and desirability of **amalgamating related departments** and centralizing the operating of the large spending departments under one department head. There never was a time when the adoption of this policy was more essential, and the time is rapidly approaching when it can no longer be avoided.

11. For years the Bureau pointed out the desirability of decreasing the size of City Council. In 1933, the Council was reduced in size by 8 or over 25% by the reduction of ward representation for each ward to two aldermen. The Bureau has also recommended the adoption of the British system which provides for longer terms in Council, so as to promote the independence of its members, and staggered terms, so as to promote assured continuity of membership and of policy. **This should be one of the first advance steps taken by the City as soon as the necessary legislation can be obtained.**

12. The Bureau has made available to all parties much information otherwise unobtainable. This has found its way into editorials, news articles, radio programmes and discussions of candidates. In this way it has penetrated the thinking of thousands of citizens and has indirectly influenced for good the trend of civic affairs. This method, though indirect, has had a powerful effect, similar in its action and results to those of indirect advertising. Growth in governmental efficiency and of citizen effectiveness is a matter of continuous long-time education. **Such long-time education cannot safely be neglected in view of the insidious long-term campaigns, destructive in their nature, which are now becoming obvious to all.**

What Some Citizens in a Position to Know Say of the Bureau's Work.

Not long ago, for its own purposes, a United States organization wrote to some representative Toronto citizens asking their opinion of the work of the Toronto Bureau. Some of these opinions, reproduced below, are therefore entirely independent and unsolicited.

Toronto Bureau of Municipal Research

1. From an Insurance Executive and former City Finance Commissioner

"I have no hesitation whatever in saying that the Bureau of Municipal Research of this City is filling a place of great worth and value. The Bureau, through its publications and through the services rendered by its officials, has brought to light defects in our municipal system, and suggested ways and means of improvement, which have not only assisted the municipality itself but have been of inestimable value to the taxpayer.

"While Canada has had on the whole a good municipal experience, the recent years of depression have brought to light weaknesses in our

municipalities, and these have enabled the Bureau to emphasize the underlying factors which have been responsible for these defects, and have provided an opportunity of pointing out the steps that should be taken to effect a remedy and to prevent repetition.

"To investors in municipal securities it has proven of great service, in indicating the municipalities which are conducted according to sound and economical methods, and whose obligations are worthy of purchasing, while on the other hand it has disclosed errors of judgment and errors of practice, which have warned investors of the weakness of debentures issued by the municipalities.

"The Bureau of Municipal Research here is highly regarded, not only by municipalities, officials and taxpayers, but by investors and many others who are more or less interested in our municipal undertakings."

2. From an Investment Manager

"I have been a supporter of the Bureau ever since its formation, and was a Director for some years, but felt it necessary to resign when I became a candidate for election as Alderman.

"The Bureau is maintained by a group of earnest and unselfish business men in Toronto. Dr. Brittain, its executive director, is an outstanding authority upon all matters connected with municipal finance and municipal government, and is in frequent demand to advise other cities in Canada.

"It is my feeling—and I believe that of the general public here—that the Bureau has given outstanding service toward better municipal government in Toronto, and, indeed, throughout Canada."

3. From a Realtor

"During my terms, 1931, 32 and 33 as Alderman in this City, I found the material of the Bureau extremely useful and invariably accurate and fair.

"The Bureau has suggested reforms in recent years, which our City Government has, for various reasons, been slow to adopt. However, the Bureau's point of view is commanding a great deal more public attention recently. It suggested a smaller City Council. Our Council was reduced by almost one-third 18 months ago. It has suggested that the City Budget be prepared in draft form before our annual elections instead of, as at present, two or two-and-a-half months afterwards, so that the budget may be discussed and explained to the public previous to election. There is some evidence that the press and the public now realize the wisdom of this suggestion.

"The Bureau's recommendation in favor of a balanced budget and against the funding of all relief expenditures, carried a great deal more weight with the public than with the City Council but here again there is evidence of a growing respect for its opinion.

"While, for various reasons, I have never been a subscriber to the Bureau of Municipal Research, and have even, on rare occasions, disagreed with its conclusions on minor questions, I regard it as an extremely useful—even indispensable—influence in the cause of better government and cannot commend its activities too highly."

4. From a Social Worker

"The Bureau of Municipal Research is in my opinion one of Toronto's most useful institutions. Ideas advanced in a reasonable way from an unbiased source, and which are sound in themselves, cannot help but influence even those whose first reaction to them is one of antagonism.

"The history of an idea is often a very curious one and its origin lost sight of. The Bureau of Municipal Research has consistently, through the years, brought to the attention of the business groups, particularly in Toronto, information as to the conduct and situation of their own city and its government. The facts have been stated clearly, not in any provocative or antagonistic fashion. Some of the suggestions of the Bureau have been adopted "as is," and one of these conceptions and suggestions alone was worth much more to the city of Toronto than the cost of the Bureau since its inception.

"The value of the Bureau, of course, depends wholly upon the calibre of the men who are responsible for it, and we are particularly fortunate in that regard in Toronto. Granted ability in the Director, the value of such an organization to a community cannot be questioned."

5. From an Industrialist

"Naturally as President, I have a profound belief in the mission and work of this organization, and believe it a factor of no small importance in its effect upon civic policy and administration.

"The existence of such an agency, supported by citizens and business firms, bringing an impartial and independent judgment to bear upon civic policy and finance, has a wholesome influence in keeping expenditure within reasonable limits and in preventing the adoption of unwise measures.

"The Bureau is very favorably regarded by the entire press as an authority in its field, and its Bulletins and Open Letters appear to carry considerable weight with members of Council and Board of Control.

"Our Director, Dr. Horace L. Brittain, is a most capable, well-informed and indefatigable student of civic affairs, and the effect of his work and that of his staff has undoubtedly a far-reaching result upon municipal affairs throughout this Province and the Dominion."

6. From a Board of Trade Executive

"Those who have been in touch with the work of the Bureau are fully convinced that its work and the dissemination of information which it has made available has been an important factor in bringing about more economical and efficient public administration. The work of the Bureau is being more generally appreciated to-day than ever before, and many are convinced that if governmental bodies generally had taken cognizance of the information and suggestions which have been put forth by the Bureau from time to time, much of the difficulty which has been encountered during the past few years might have been avoided."

**SOME FACTS ALL CITIZENS OF TORONTO SHOULD KNOW
1929-1935**

	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
1. Population.....	606,370	621,596	627,231	626,674	623,562	629,285	638,271
2. Total Net Debt.....	\$145,258,837	158,394,534	165,072,053	172,000,062	168,019,344	163,896,196	155,300,000†
3. General and Educational Net Debt (a charge on taxation).....	\$ 55,856,405	63,357,141	67,251,485	72,070,203	72,371,922	73,172,223	71,000,000†
4. Amount of Debt Charges on General Debt paid out of Taxation*.....	\$ 5,708,212	6,201,950	6,914,937	7,188,790	7,209,565	7,511,082	8,200,374
5. Annual Debt Charges on Total Debt affecting Taxation.....	\$ 7,671,292	8,349,218	9,121,583	9,504,423	9,723,756	10,090,288	10,857,615
6. Assessment (total).....	\$968,532,329	1,013,408,615	1,050,204,868	1,063,798,134	1,049,465,163	1,027,224,018	1,019,457,678
7. Income Assessment.....	\$ 71,544,530	82,227,919	79,933,958	74,525,416	62,824,735	49,658,566	41,700,859
8. General Tax Levy**.....	\$ 31,449,922	33,634,838	36,820,958	37,522,157	36,378,545	34,903,843	35,521,338
9. Estimated Salaries, Wages and other payments for personal services.....	\$ 17,043,319	18,076,871	18,659,092	18,852,387	18,025,079	18,261,816	18,442,384
10. Accumulated Tax Arrears at Dec. 31st.....	\$ 5,496,762	6,518,842	8,034,358	10,134,166	12,065,416	11,487,591	10,048,389
11. Excess of total Current Levy (net) over total tax collections.....	\$	537,533	1,135,694	1,612,161	1,488,028	.....	.....
12. Excess of Total Tax Collections over total Current Tax Levy (net).....	\$ 532,878	.....	.....	.....	.....	1,092,994	1,843,941
13. No. of Names on Voters Lists Made up in.....	305,895	311,682	313,300	314,619	313,229	318,841	325,784
14. No. of Individual Voters (Est.).....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	280,000†	285,000†
15. No. who Voted for Mayor in the year following.....	108,251	114,887	Acclamation	114,312	104,647	126,848	125,136

†Estimated.
*Exclusive of T.T.C., T.H.E.P.C., Owners' share of Local Improvements.
**Includes Ratepayers Share of Local Improvement Rates.

No worth while research can be carried on without adequate funds. This is as true of governmental research as of medical, industrial or commercial research. At the same time it is more difficult to secure the necessary finances in the field of governmental research than in other fields; first, because, like religion, the results, while real and important, are often not measurable; second, because, on account of the desire to get recommendations adopted, credit cannot be claimed for results; third, because it makes slight emotional appeal and but indirect appeal to personal self-interest.

Its results, however, although often negative and indirect, are cumulative and impressive. Research and publicity in government offer the only effective method by which, over a term of years, forward looking citizens can exert a constructive influence on the processes of government. Government is becoming even more complex or technical. If citizens of this generation are to deliver to those of the next generation an estate undevoured by the exactions of inefficient governments, a moral fibre without which no government can be maintained and a freedom preserved and augmented through a millenium of development, they cannot safely neglect this opportunity to co-operate in effective citizenship.