



BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

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WINTER 1976

UPCOMING STUDIES

The Bureau will undertake a number of interesting studies during the coming year. By listing these potential topics, it is hoped that readers of BMR in Review will offer suggestions regarding possible areas of concentration and, within each subject, the availability of information pertaining to these studies.

Urban Housing Accommodation

Are current housing programs going in the right direction? What are the impediments to building small, inexpensive, detached housing? What is the future for urban rental accommodation?

Citizen Responsibility

Along with increased citizen involvement, perhaps there should be increased citizen responsibility, especially regarding the willingness of citizens to do more for themselves and demand less of government. In what areas is this most practical? (Recreation, welfare, public health, public safety, etc.)

Police Protection in Metro

How are decisions made in the police department? Should the public know more or less about how their tax dollars are spent on police? Is more community involvement the answer to reducing crime?

Landlord-Tenant Rights

Is it possible to design a system which protects the rights of both the landlord and the tenant?

STOL Airport for Toronto Island

What are the actual advantages and disadvantages environmentally, economically, and socially, of locating a STOL airport on Toronto Island?

Urban Transportation

Are there practical, less expensive ways to make car pools work and to open up express bus lanes to downtown? Has the spiralling costs of subway construction and limited tax dollars dictated a re-thinking on this question?

Vandalism in the Schools

What are the root causes of the growing trend toward vandalism of our schools? What, if anything, have school systems been able to do to stem this expensive wave of vandalism?

REPORT ON LEISURE TIME PATTERNS OF APARTMENT DWELLERS IN THE CITY OF LONDON

In the summer of 1974, the City of London conducted a study on the leisure patterns of people in high-rise apartments in London. The city then asked the Bureau of Municipal Research to assist them by providing an analysis of the results of this study.

The first step in this analysis was to determine

the nature of leisure time patterns and the factors influencing the amount of recreation activity. It was found that the major activities enjoyed by high-rise dwellers were watching TV, reading, swimming and listening to the radio. It was also found that the number of activities increased as facilities, time, the activities themselves and money were available. The individual's degree of interest was also a major variable.

Another area that was analyzed was the willingness of tenants to pay something above the monthly rental for increased facilities. It was found that 48% were unwilling to pay more, and of these, two-thirds were in low rental buildings and a majority on low incomes.

People generally expressed a desire for parks and open space that could be utilized for walking, jogging, bicycling, concerts and music. Access to downtown was most important to those 65 years of age and older. They desired an opportunity for walking and entertainment, going to the theatre, movies, concerts, and clubs.

The Bureau offered several recommendations regarding open space, the recreation programs of the Public Utilities Commission, parks, gardening, pools, and libraries, as well as guidelines for developers and planners.

(11 pages: Published July 1975 — Comment)

FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES IN METRO: IS UNIFICATION THE ANSWER?

The Robarts Commission has undertaken a review of the governmental infrastructure in Metro to develop recommendations for possible reform. The provision of fire protection emerged as one of the critical components to the Royal Commission review, and while the Commission included a public safety report in its terms of reference, it was designed to be fairly general.

Therefore, the Bureau drew terms of reference for a study which would provide heretofore un-gathered information about fire fighting in Metro. The study is broken down into three basic areas. The first is a review of the operation of Metro's six fire departments, with specific examination of various key indicators of the quality of service being provided. These indicators, such as station location, training, manpower, prevention, etc., also served as a focus for the identification of problems in the existing decentralized system.

The second area of concentration deals more

specifically with the possible advantages and disadvantages of amalgamating the six existing fire departments into one. The cost and benefits are examined, including comparisons to experiences elsewhere.

The final section of the report develops a series of suggestions for improving fire protection in Metro without amalgamation.

(57 pages: Published Nov. 1975, Civic Affairs)

THE TEACHING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN OUR SCHOOLS

The Bureau and the Ontario Conference on Local Government felt that it was time the important subject of teaching local government in the secondary schools was given adequate attention. A study format was designed which incorporated three survey tools:

- (1) A student questionnaire in selected school districts around Ontario testing their knowledge of local government.
- (2) An opinion poll of community leaders in several districts asking the degree of importance which local government as a subject should have within the school system.
- (3) Briefs from a number of teachers, students, parents and other interested individuals.

The findings of our research were rather conclusive. Students do not know very much about local government but particularly disturbing was the fact that grade 8 students knew as much as grade 13 students. A vast majority of our community leaders felt that not enough is being taught about local government, that much more should be taught, and that the impact of such a change would have many positive returns. The briefs seemed to reinforce the findings of our two questionnaires, as over and over again the training of teachers and the availability of resource materials were mentioned as the key ingredients to change.

Our recommendations included several suggestions for developing an increased emphasis on the teaching of local government in the schools. However, the first and most important recommendation is that a series of seminars be held around the Province in order to call together teachers, government representatives, parents, students, university representatives, publishers, and others interested in this topic, to help design the terms of reference for reform.

(21 pages: Published Oct. 1975 — Comment)

COUNTY SCHOOLS: THE EFFECTS OF THE COUNTY SCHOOL TAKEOVER ON ONE ONTARIO TOWNSHIP

The purpose of this Comment is to examine the impact of the 1969 consolidation of school districts into county units. As a case study, it offers a snapshot view of what the county plan means for one township in one county, namely Oro Township in Simcoe County.

The three major goals of school consolidation were:

- 1) equalize educational opportunity across the province,
- 2) raise the quality of education for most communities,
- 3) give more power to local communities.

Looking at the Oro experience six years after consolidation, we are able to test two of these assumptions. We found improved quality of education occurring mainly in the field of special education.

Many services which used to be available only in the larger urban centres are now provided in Oro schools. However, on the quality of educational services generally, we suggest that the overall picture is mixed — some gains, some losses.

The second assumption examined in this study — that the larger boards increase local autonomy — is even more open to question. While the larger county boards possess more power than the small local boards, they are not viewed as "local", and the personal sense of community control over education has been lost with power centered in the bureaucracy, not the elected trustees.

The residents of Oro Township recognize that centralization has probably been beneficial. Our research suggests, however, that the county set-up is probably too big and that it undermines the sense of local responsibility for the kind of educational services provided.

(22 pages. Published Dec. 1975 — Comment)

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Annual Meeting of the Bureau of Municipal Research will be held on April 23rd at 12:00 noon in the Dominion Room of the Four Seasons Sheraton Hotel in Toronto. The guest speaker will be the Honourable John P. Robarts, CC., QC., Commissioner, The Royal Commission on Metropolitan Toronto. Mr. Robarts will utilize the occasion to discuss various aspects of the Commission's work which, by that time, will be nearing completion.

On May 12 and 13, the Bureau will host a seminar on the Media and Local Government. Key questions will include — does the press do its proper job in helping people to understand local government? how much influence does the media have on decision makers? how can the mass media be made more effective in local government matters? Workshops and demonstrations will be included, and we are attempting to attract such speakers as Pierre Berton and Arthur Maloney.

Please make your reservations early for the above events.

BMR in Review is published every 3-4 months and summarizes reports completed during that period. Copies of these reports may be obtained by writing or calling the Bureau. The cost of reports is \$1.00 for Comments and \$3.00 for Civic Affairs.

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