



IN REVIEW

BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

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FORTHCOMING STUDIES

The following studies are currently in progress or under consideration. Comments and suggestions are welcomed during every stage of research.

THE TEACHING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN OUR SCHOOLS

This Civic Affairs will bring together information from seminars and other research compiled over the past two years. The report will recommend ways of improving the current methods of teaching local government and will act as a resource for teachers wishing to improve their ability to relate to this important topic.

MANAGING LIMITED LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

The Bureau will examine newly developed ways and means of improving cost effectiveness in the delivery of local government services and suggest ways of improving the distribution of this valuable information.

COMMUNITY IMPACTS OF SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Declining enrolments are forcing many school boards across Ontario to shut down certain schools. Are these decisions being made in full knowledge of potential community impacts? In part these impacts will depend on the alternative uses proposed for school buildings. This project will involve a case study of one community where school closings have occurred.

A RESPONSE TO THE GREEN PAPER ON RENT REVIEW OPTIONS

The provincial government is proposing to phase out rent review in December 1978 and in this regard has published a Green Paper outlining four options that could be followed. The Bureau will comment on the alternatives and make recommendations on the key features to be included in any new system.

Studies Completed

IN RESPONSE TO THE ROBERTS REPORT (BMR Topic, No. 2, October 1977, 29 pages)

This **Topic** evaluates the proposals of the Roberts Royal

Commission on Metropolitan Toronto. It generally endorses the Roberts approach as a timely and positive step in the evolution of metropolitan government in Toronto.

The **Topic** notes that the proposals to give the Metro and area municipal councils general powers to legislate, to delegate responsibility and to vest in them the authority over all special purpose bodies (except for school boards) are among the most innovative in the Report. It also supports the proposed division of responsibilities between the two tiers, with Metro having a somewhat enlarged coordinating role. It agrees that direct election of Metro councillors then becomes imperative.

The **Topic** sets out our reservations. One is the potentially increased vulnerability of the City of Toronto resulting from the shift in the balance of power to a directly-elected, suburban-dominated Metro Council; specific suggestions for helping to safeguard the City's position at Metro are offered. To reduce area municipal level anxieties about Metro's coordinating role in planning, the report suggests that Metro Council not be required to adopt an "official plan" to which area municipal plans and by-laws would have to conform. It prefers the Comay approach, proposed in The Planning Act Review, whereby Metro could object to local plans or planning decisions on the basis of its own established regional policies, but would not have approval powers over local planning.

With respect to Metro's internal boundaries, the **Topic** does not find the proposed revisions satisfactory, although it affirms that the general rationale upon which they are based is sound.

CHANGING THE PLANNING ACT: RISKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

(BMR Topic, No. 3, November 1977, 30 pages)

This **Topic** examines and evaluates certain key reforms of Ontario's municipal planning legislation as proposed in the Report of the Planning Act Review Committee (the Comay Report). The Committee was concerned mainly with the distribution of power in the planning system. The main thrust of the Report is to clearly lodge increased decision-making authority and responsibility at the municipal levels of government. A second underlying thrust is that the burden for intervention into planning decisions is shifted: the objector should demonstrate the approach taken by the Committee, and the main proposals which follow from it.

The **Topic** points out several aspects of the proposed system that should be emphasized in the revised legislation, and offers several suggestions for making the transition from the old to the new planning system. It also identifies 2 weaknesses in the Comay Report: first, the Report is

unclear as to the role for regional-level planning in a two-tier system; second, the Report does not explain how a municipality's overall social, economic and financial planning will be accomplished, given its restriction of "municipal planning" to physical and land use concerns.

The **Topic** concludes that the Report's value lies in the challenge it poses both to municipal councils and to the provincial government. However, it cautions against assuming that planning decisions will be "better", even if the Comay Report proposals are accepted by the Province. Improvements to structure will not necessarily have impact on the substance of planning policy.

SHOULD THE ISLAND BE AN AIRPORT? (BMR Civic Affairs, November 1977, 105 pages)

This **Civic Affairs** reviews and analyses the various proposals for use of the Toronto Island Airport site resulting from an extensive study process involving the four levels of government. It examines three proposals for aviation uses, including the introduction of STOL services, and four proposals for non-aviation uses, such as housing and recreation.

This report indicates that the immediate need to utilize the site for non-aviation uses has not been clearly established. Moreover, it shows that there is a strong case for retaining the Island as an airport. It maintains that associated noise, pollution and traffic congestion would remain within acceptable levels and that aviation use is entirely compatible with the preservation of Island ecology. The report states that inherent physical constraints on the Island site would prevent it from ever becoming a large commercial airport.

The report concludes that, of the seven proposals, the retention of the Island Airport and the addition of Extended STOL services on a user-pay principle is the best option.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AS COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTRE (BMR Topic, No. 4, February 1978, 17 pages)

This **Topic** examines the history of the London Urban Resource Centre, a community information and referral service established by the London Public Library in September, 1974. The study assesses the performance of the agency against its often unclear objectives and puts forward a proposal for a reconstituted Urban Information Centre.

The overall finding is that the London Urban Resource Centre was an innovative and potentially beneficial project, which suffered from inadequate planning, a muddled execution, poor administration, and from the lack of direction and support. Of its three-year trial period, only the first year offered enough activity, free from crippling problems, on which to base an assessment of its worth. Nevertheless, the conclusion is that an information centre should continue. The report offers ten specific recommendations regarding matters such as staffing, managing and funding the Centre, the Centre's objectives, and its integration with Information London, the City's principal information and referral agency.

WHAT CAN MUNICIPALITIES DO ABOUT ENERGY?

(BMR Topic, No. 5, March 1978, 45 pages)

This **Topic** demonstrates that Ontario municipalities can play an important role in promoting the more efficient and less extravagant use of energy and the development of renewable energy supplies.

The study argues that the case for municipal initiatives in energy planning must be seen in the context of the provincial and national energy picture. Over the next 50 years we must pass from a reliance on non-renewable fossil fuels to a reliance on renewable energy sources. To accomplish this transition we must conserve the energy supplies we now have, and develop new ones. Thus there are good reasons why a municipality should act. First, a municipality has the capacity to influence how energy is used at the local level, by virtue of its planning and other regulatory powers. Second, a municipality can save on energy costs, for itself or for the community it represents. Third, a municipality would be wise to develop some measure of local energy self-reliance where possible. Finally energy concerns can reinforce other municipal objectives such as efficient land use and environmental protection.

The opportunities we outline are consistent with the Science Council's "conservation society" principles now receiving much public attention. We suggest that municipalities should initiate internal energy management programmes and encourage school boards to do the same. Municipalities should instruct staff to develop a comprehensive energy management programme, covering key land use and transportation factors, for the municipality as a whole. Municipalities should encourage and be receptive to applications for energy-efficient design or upgrading of buildings. They should sponsor or participate with other groups in demonstration and pilot projects of renewable energy technologies and processes. They should pressure the local utilities to adopt an aggressive conservation role. Finally, municipalities should lobby senior governments for needed financial, legislative, and administrative changes.

Coming Events

The Bureau's Annual Meeting and Seminar is tentatively set for June 2, 1978. The theme will be rating the management capability of local government.

The Bureau will also be hosting the annual conference of the Governmental Research Association, August 20-23. This will be the first time this organization of BMR-type agencies has held its conference outside the United States. Among the issues to be discussed will be metropolitan government reform, accountability in education, and urban growth control.

For further information, contact the Bureau.

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 \$2 for Topics and \$4 for Civic Affairs.

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