

BMR ^{In} Review

DAY CARE IN THE WORKPLACE

Employer assistance in the provision of day care has become an issue which many employers and employees are beginning to discuss. The Bureau has just published a study entitled "Work-Related Day Care - Helping to Close the Gap" which clearly outlines for the first time why some companies and unions have become involved and what benefits they have obtained.

Work-related day care is not a new idea. It has been around for years and can take a wide variety of forms. The Bureau outlines the history and options as well as documenting the advantages and disadvantages.

A case study of an employer-subsidized day care centre shows how need was assessed, how planning proceeded and what the costs and subsidies were. A recent editorial in the Toronto Star stated, "Governments, both at Metro and Queen's Park, as well as employers and labour unions, would do well to start implementing the good ideas in (this) report."

GOVERNMENT DIRECTORY AVAILABLE

Do you do any business with the governments within Metro Toronto? Do you ever wonder who to phone for information in a particular area?

The Bureau's "Directory of Governments in Metropolitan Toronto, 1981-82" helps provide these answers. It is the only directory published which covers the Metro area and is invaluable. Copies are available from the Bureau's offices at a cost of \$5.00 each.

NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS

At the last Bureau Council meeting two new Council members were elected for a one year term to fill existing vacancies.

W. R. Foster is with Carling O'Keefe Limited and Lou Sage is the Chief Administrative Officer with the City of Hamilton. Both of these individuals will be valuable additions to our governing Council.

A complete list of Council members may be obtained from the Bureau office.

DO WE REALLY NEED 4,000 LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN ONTARIO?

Fragmentation has characterized local government in Ontario for more than 10 years. Few people would believe that there are over 4,000 local governments making decisions and directly and indirectly spending taxpayers' money. Besides the 838 municipalities, there is a wide range of other groups such as school boards, library boards, police commissions, health boards, which spend close to 75% of the total expenditures at the municipal level.

There has been agreement between the Province and municipalities that this fragmented situation is unwieldy. In 1968 the Province introduced its "Design for Development, Phase II" program which, according to John Robarts, was designed "to make local government as strong and meaningful as possible".¹ The main thrust of the program was to decrease the number of very small municipalities and introduce regional government. Table I shows the re-

sulting decrease in the number of municipalities and the shift in structure.

At the same time, the Province also recognized that to truly increase the effectiveness of local government, there was a need to decrease the number of special bodies. The municipal associations agreed and urged that action be taken. Despite this, the situation has changed little in the last 13 years.

TABLE I — NUMBER OF MUNICIPALITIES

	1968	1981
Metropolitan Government	1	1
Regional Governments	-	10
District Municipality	-	1
Counties	38	27
Cities	33	45
Boroughs	5	4
Separated towns	6	4
Towns	146	140
Villages	155	119
Townships	562	479
Improvement Districts	18	8
	964	838

What are special bodies?

Table II outlines some of the most common bodies in Ontario which have been in existence since at least 1968. Those listed are constituted under Provincial statutes. Besides this group there is a wide range of other bodies which have developed since 1968 such as Business Improvement Areas (136), Land Division Committees (37), Property Standards Committees (54), as well as advisory groups such as Children's Services Committees and District Health Councils.

The proliferation of these bodies - mandatory and advisory - has been amazing. The Bureau did a report in 1968 entitled "The 101 Governments of Metro Toronto". That same report could be written today but with a different title - "The 157 Governments of Metro

Toronto", representing 62 types of bodies. Reform across the Province has only been instituted in limited degrees - such as with school boards - but the overall problem has not been addressed.

TABLE II
SAMPLING OF MAJOR PROVINCIALLY
CONSTITUTED SPECIAL PURPOSE BODIES

	1968	1981
Hydro Commissions	215	325
Planning Boards	328	394*
Community Centre & Arena Boards	274	669
Parks Boards	150	60
Library Boards	328	545
Police Commissions	67	72
Boards of Health	75	44
Children's Aid Societies	18	51
Conservation Authorities	14	39
Parking Authorities	14	27
Committees of Adjustment	142	354
Public Utility Commissions	144	200**
Suburban Road Commissions	17	18
Museum Boards	21	101
Transit Commissions	n/a	15
	1,807	2,914
Public School Boards	777	77
Separate School Boards	482	48
Secondary School Boards	235	-
	3,301	3,039

n/a - not available
* - excludes unorganized areas
** - approximate figure

Why is action in the area so slow to come? One of the difficulties is the nature of the bodies themselves. They take a variety of forms; are created by a variety of methods; operate in a variety of ways; and have varying degrees of power. They do have some common characteristics, however.

- * They have a degree of independence in policy making from the normal municipal government.
- * They deal with one service or a range

of functions which are usually considered to be public services.

- * They operate in a specifically defined area either at the local or regional level.
- * They can receive revenue from either taxation (as in the case of school boards), the municipal and/or Provincial government or by user charges (as with utility commissions).
- * They can be created by the municipality on their own or through enabling legislation or can be made mandatory by the Province (a majority of the cases).

Problems

The actual autonomy of the body from the municipality is set down in a statute or bylaw. Legally these bodies "are supreme within the limits of their statutory powers and the courts have frequently prevented any interference by the municipality, through its function as the provider of their funds, with the administration of the function assigned to such bodies".²

The effect is that municipalities have limited control over policy making and spending. School boards are totally autonomous but do have direct accountability to citizens through the election process and participation procedure and in this sense are a separate form of local government. The other bodies who spend 25% of the municipal budgets are many times totally beyond the control of the elected politicians and thus there is little direct accountability. These 2 points are the major problems. Councils cannot control revenue, and therefore, taxes. They also cannot be held accountable to voters for actions of say the police commission or local health board.

Councils are also not able to effectively coordinate services, ensuring a comprehensive service delivery. The earlier Bureau report found "while each separated service or function can be considered as being effectively performed . . . a broader perspective detects duplication and voids. The whole becomes considerably less than

the sum of its parts".³

With such service fragmentation it is difficult for citizens to even know who is responsible for a particular service. As part of the Waterloo Regional Review done in 1978 a "Public Attitude Survey" was undertaken. Citizens were asked who was responsible for education, flood control, fire and police - the 4 services which spend the most money. 43.5% of the people could not even answer one of these correctly. For education, which has trustees directly elected to a school board, 58% said they did not know and only 28% answered the Board of Education.

Solutions

None of this is new. Solutions have been suggested for years. Each of the major Regional Government Reviews done (for Ottawa/Carleton, Waterloo, Niagara, and Metro Toronto) have addressed the problem and expressed concern. Both the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Association of Counties and Regions of Ontario recently have reaffirmed their support for drastic changes in this area.

What is needed now is some action on the part of the Province. Provincial statutes do not allow a municipality to abolish a majority of these bodies. This must be changed. There are few, if any, functions for which the mandatory use of a special purpose body can be argued.

Can municipalities handle technical services? Some of the services currently handled by municipal councils are as complex and technical as any of those done by a transit or public utilities commission. Should some services be "above" politics? All functions have political implications and all decisions whether by councils or special bodies have ramifications on the citizenry. By having some functions for which there is no direct accountability to the electorate, an inequitable situation occurs.

Can council ensure maintenance of

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standards required by Provincial programs? Operating guidelines exist for the administration of services and can be equally followed by a separate body or the municipality directly.

What about coordination of service between municipalities as in the case of conservation authorities? The coordination can be achieved equally by having responsibility at the regional or county level. This can be supplemented by joint committees between municipalities.

All the arguments which can be presented for having special bodies can be easily refuted. The need for less fragmentation, more financial control, more accountability and more coordination cannot be.

The Province should act immediately to eliminate Provincial requirements for boards and allow municipalities to decide for themselves how best to provide the services.

¹Honourable John Robarts, Design for Development, Phase Two, November 28, 1981, p. 5.

²Ian M. Rogers, Municipal Councillor Handbook, (Toronto: Carswell Company Ltd., 1977), p. 116.

³Bureau of Municipal Research, The 101 Governments of Metro Toronto, 1968,, p. 16.

BMR IN REVIEW

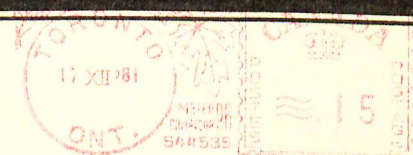
BMR in Review is published on a periodic basis. It serves as both a newsletter on Bureau activities and a vehicle to provide information on various issues. If there is a area that you feel should be covered in future editions please contact the Bureau office. Any comments are welcome.

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