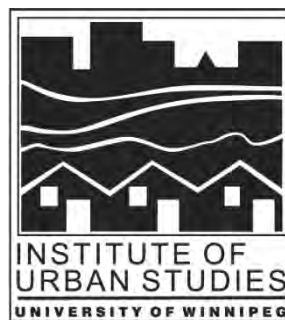
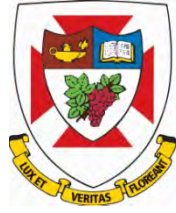


Presentation to the Institute of Public Administration of Canada Seminar, February 16, 1973

**by Lloyd Axworthy
1973**

The Institute of Urban Studies





THE UNIVERSITY OF
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Presentation to

The Institute of Public Administration of Canada

Seminar

February 16, 1973

by

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NOTES: THE NEXT PHASE: FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR THE GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM OF WINNIPEG

(1) INTRODUCTION

It may appear too early to begin thinking of future changes in the system of Winnipeg government, when the existing system is only one year old. But there is wisdom in reassessing this new experimental vehicle after its first trial run before the weaknesses in the structure impair its ability to operate, or before the structure becomes sanctified and thus difficult to change.

First, let us accept the twin goals of the provincial government in enacting Bill 36 - of achieving greater efficiency and effectiveness in local government and of increasing the access and involvement of the citizen in the affairs of local government. It is according to these objectives that present performance and prescriptions for future improvement should be based.

Thus, an analysis of the Winnipeg system must rest on the issue of what does this government produce for the citizen. Does it provide a system of government that can meet the demands of a growing, active urban environment in an effective way, and be responsive and reflective of the interests of the full range of people within city boundaries? Local government in Canada traditionally has been the most important provider of services - so the criteria for judging whether a system is good or bad - or whether it needs improvement and in what way it depends, in the first instance, upon how well it provides those services.

But, this is not enough. The role of urban government is changing from being a provider of services to being a solver of problems and an initiator of new forms of action. The scale and tempo of urban government is increasing and it is now being thrust into the frontiers of having to meet a new generation of issues arising out of the all-encompassing fact of urbanization.

(2) WINNIPEG - PAST PERFORMANCE AND FUTURE ISSUES

Unfortunately, there are not any accurate data for determining how well Winnipeggers were served by their government in the past. In some preliminary work on social indicators, using a model developed by the Urban Institute in the United States¹, we were able to ascertain that generally most Winnipeggers, if they were fortunate enough not to be poor, had a good quality of life, and received a decent level of government services. The different municipalities that made up the system of government in Winnipeg provided a good standard of local services and amenities, with the exception of open space and park land. And, once the Metro Corporation began operating, the quality of physical services, roads, sewage, bridges, transit, also improved, as did the development of new park areas. One area, however, where the performance was weak was in the portion of expenditures paid for by local property tax. Winnipeggers tended to receive less benefit and assistance from senior levels of government² than other cities across Canada. It can be expected that this relatively good level of basic services and amenities will continue.

1. See Michael J. Flax, A Study in Comparative Urban Indicators, (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, April 1972).
2. W. Irwin Gillespie, The Urban Political Economy, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1971), Table 12, page 38.

The issue of how good our government is, however, must go beyond the provision of basic minimum services. In a period of expanding and complex social, technological, and economic change, a city government must face more difficult and challenging problems than snow removal, or organizing civic celebrations. A generation of contentious and difficult problems related to environmental conservation, urban poverty, mixed transportation uses, citizen participation, housing and urban development face city government and they require a very different kind of urban government. New forces of citizen demand are emerging as we have seen in Toronto and Vancouver; there is a demand for new forms of governmental institutions; sophisticated forms of management are required; senior levels of government will become more involved and change their approach, witness the new NHA Act; there must be new partnerships between the public and private sector. The very activity of local government will become far more turbulent.

Thus, past standards; old practices and existing conventional wisdoms about how city government should run could prove to be very damaging, particularly if they restrict the capacity of local government to cope with change. The keynote of modern urban government is: 1) its ability to innovate - to apply useful solutions to new problems, and 2) its ability to maintain a harmonious order in the community and handle social stress.

In specific terms, I would single out the following issues that will test the capacity of the new system of government in Winnipeg:

- 1) the continued influx of rural migrants, particularly native people, who have limited education, skills and a different cultural pattern, and who

will need jobs, homes, decent opportunities for creating a decent life inside the city. This could become a source of major tension in the community;

- 2) growing disparities in services and opportunities for good housing, transportation, gainful work and cultural activity between the majority of the populace and the groups such as - the poor, young, old, women and handicapped; the present conflict over public housing is an example;
- 3) reconciling the demands for growth with a sense of preserving the human scale in a city - or how to offset the freeway against the neighbourhood, or how to build new communities in our suburbs which promote healthy family life, good community relations, safety and excellence in design and cultural opportunities.
- 4) building a democratic system suited to a city of three-quarters of a million people--insuring that citizens know what is going on and has a belief that if he or she wants to act, he or she will have an impact, and develop a style of government that wins confidence and respect;
- 5) developing a basic strategy on the issue of land control and the development of new communities to shape future growth and insure a proper and mutually beneficial relationship with rural areas.

(3) OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

These are general conditions obviously but perforce stand as some measure of what kind of issues city government will have to face in the near future. Thus, it is important to prescribe what kind of principles should

guide future operations of the new system, both in terms of program and priority, as city government changes its focus from being a supplier of basic services to a problem-solver. Suggested operational guidelines are as follows:

1. allocation of priority of resources to meet social problems and environmental problems; the major emphasis in Winnipeg action has been physical building, while the major stress and strain will be in the human issues;
2. greater political control over decision-making; this will combat a tendency towards administrative decision-making which can become too abstract and self-possessed;
3. public accountability of politicians; people need to know what their representatives do;
4. better information to citizens; involvement requires information;
5. more open style of planning which can lead to programs more reflective of community needs;
6. development of new organizational forms, particularly participative institutions for handling new problems such as neighbourhood renewal, land assembly;
7. improved management and administrative techniques; better research and information for urban government;
8. wider revenue base;
9. co-operation and enlistment of private sector in meeting problems - turn over many services and programs to private groups;
10. establishment of new standards for environmental preservation and

provision of alternative forms of urban settlement.³

(4) SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS ON PRIORITIES

The following are some specific areas of change or improvement based on these calculations of what kind of government we need to meet future demands.

i) Executive and Administration: One of the major weaknesses in the system is the division between commissioners and elected representatives. This was most noticeable in the budget on capital estimates where decisions appeared in no way to reflect community demands nor have any initiative from Council. One major administrative option is to give elected executive, primarily the mayor and committee chairman, responsibility for budgeting and the power of co-ordination - the argument is therefore for stronger executive power in the hands of elected officials, through power of budgeting, appointment, and strengthening of executive office. Perhaps a central Budget Office or Policy Planning Group, working as an adjunct to the Executive Policy Committee would strengthen elected officials' position to set priorities and co-ordinate different activities.

ii) Organization of Council: There is a growing chorus of opinion, especially from councillors, to reduce the size of council. Evidence shows that this Council is no more or less efficient than smaller councils in dealing with issues, though it is fair to comment that it does bog down on detailed matters that could be dealt with on community committee levels. This is not a failing unknown in the past. One major advantage of the present ward system is that

3. For a discussion of basic principles required for modern urban government, see Ann-Marie Hauk Walsh, The Urban Challenge to Government, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969).

it provides opportunity for a wide range of interests to be represented on Council. To return to the multiple member, large ward system, as existed under the previous City of Winnipeg arrangement, would result in denying many of the minorities in the city representation. A second advantage is that smaller wards produce the potential for greater contact between citizen and elected representative. It is thus very important not to be lulled into accepting the criteria of greater efficiency, an argument that some councillors citing the Urwick Currie Report, seem prone to make.⁴

One major issue, however, is accountability. Right now records are not kept on Council of who voted for what, unless a councillor specifically requests it at the time. This means that responsibility for decisions cannot be assigned. It is a handicap in determining who is accountable for what decisions. Therefore it should become a primary fact of the new system to undertake recorded votes by machine, if necessary, as is the case in some United States Council Chambers.

A corollary to that is the formation of more recognizable political groupings within Council so that alternative possibilities are visible. This is something, however, which unfortunately cannot be designed, but must evolve on its own.

iii) Financial Reform: A major priority is to establish a sound financial base for future needs, both by reforming existing systems of taxation available to the City of Winnipeg and by acquiring new sources of revenue. The initiative taken by the City of Winnipeg in its tax sharing proposal to the Provincial Government was a good and necessary first step. The provincial

4. For an analysis of the relation of scale of representation to elements of democracy, see Sydney Verba, Participation in American Political Life, (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

response suggesting a new form of land tax is also a good beginning. An important principle to retain is that the provincial government should offer new revenue sources rather than take on any city functions. Other considerations that need examination are:

- the application of user taxes for direct city services;
- making existing property tax more productive, particularly by employing new schemes of assessment;
- negotiations with individual provincial departments of provincial government, such as industry and commerce, tourism and recreation to equalize allocation of funds, between city and rural areas.

One means of bringing this about would be a joint Provincial Legislative-City Council Committee on Local Tax Reform and Revenue to detail a strategy for building a secure financial base for the city.⁵

iv) Planning and Controlling the Urban Environment: There is no issue which is in greater danger of disrupting the confidence of citizens in their government than the continued ad hoc and at times irresponsible decisions taken by city council to impose major development projects at great expense with damaging results. The rebellion against freeways, high-rises and downtown development projects is occurring across North America and is beginning to happen in Winnipeg.

5. For a useful discussion of possibilities of reform in urban finance, see Werner Hirsch, The Economics of State and Local Government, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1970), and Joseph Martin, "Real Property Tax - Stirrings of Reform", Canadian Tax Journal, September-October, 1972, and Selma Mushkin, (editor), Public Prices for Public Products, (Washington, D.C.,: The Urban Institute, 1972).

City government too often appears to be dominated by commercial interests and not interested in values of preserving communities, working renewal on the small human scale.⁶ At fault is the style and approach of planning. A city needs growth and new buildings. But, decisions on such enterprises should be taken in an open fashion, in full public view and with active consultation with those who are to be directly affected by a project. This was not the approach taken in such projects as Downtown Development, the Kenaston project, Trizec, WATS and Railway Relocation.

As immediate steps, indicating a change in approach and act of good faith, City Council should: 1) immediately reopen the Trizec project for new negotiation and full public disclosure of the terms and the impact of those terms in accurate cost-benefit terms, and 2) reserve any decisions on railway relocation until there has been an overall review of transportation priorities in the city, particularly in reference to the expressway system being prescribed by the WATS plan. Transportation is the lifeline of the city and cannot be subject to piecemeal planning which is the present situation.

These kinds of steps, while perhaps slowing down progress as measured in a public relations sense, would demonstrate a major shift in the orientation of city government towards a concern over the quality of our urban environment and the nature of urban growth.

v) Urban Information Systems: Related to the above recommendation is the need to develop a more effective system of information for urban

6. See the analysis by Boyce Richardson, The Future of Canadian Cities, (Toronto: New Press, 1972).

residents. There are signs that resident advisory groups are performing a valuable function, particularly as a forum wherein local, neighbourhood concerns can be expressed. However, they are handicapped in 2 respects -- resources for research and information for resident advisors and local councillors, and secondly, a capacity to communicate with residents of the respective wards about matters of importance to the area. It would be a major benefit to:

- a) Have city propose to the federal and provincial governments that funds be allocated to support the resident advisory system; community committee system;
- b) a system of community communication be developed in the community committee. For example, space bought in local community neighbourhoods, provision for weekly radio show, use of community television channel.⁷

vi) Urban Management Training and Research: Two necessary features to help make the new government run well, and to aid in the development of good policies are improved resources for training urban managers and administrators/ and applied problem research. As the city changes, the requirement for new skills of management grows and an understanding of the urban environment increases. Young people coming into local government must be specially trained and so should those in mid-career and senior administrative positions receive training in new approaches.

7. See Alan F. Westin, (ed.), Information Technology in a Democracy, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971).

There is a growing knowledge of new management techniques that can save money, time, and produce better policies. They are not often applied because there are not people who know how to use them, nor a willingness to use them. A reluctance to upgrade and constantly refresh the process of administration is a handicap.

Equally important is the need for more and better research on Winnipeg. There tends to be a natural aversion by councillors and administrators to research -- it is often dismissed as not being practical. Yet, the right kind of research on future population trends, new techniques for renewal, policy analysis methods, administrative structures could again result in much better decisions.

Taking these two requirements, it would be of significant value for city officials, in company with provincial officials of the Urban Affairs Department, to sit down with the various interested educational and urban research bodies in the city and begin laying out plans and programs to develop management programs and develop research priorities that would have direct value to city decision-makers,⁸ and to create the kind of organizational arrangements to insure that the best intelligence available in the city is brought to bear on city problems.

vii) Citizen Power: A good deal is heard of citizen power these days, normally in a negative context. Citizens are showing a power to oppose - to veto, to object -- and often it is a legitimate and necessary form of negativism, designed to stop many of the excessiveness of government zeal to do things for them.

8. For a fuller detailing of ideas in this area, see Richard S. Rosenbloom, and John R. Russell, New Tools for Urban Management, (Boston, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971).

But, can the power of private citizens not also be turned towards constructive, creative activities. The city is a rich storehouse of resources. There are talented professionals, trade unions, businesses, universities and many volunteer groups, with a capacity and often a willingness to work as citizens for the betterment of their city. In Scandinavian cities, trade unions and non-profit groups are the major sponsors and initiators of low-income housing. In several American cities, coalition of private businessmen, academics and professionals initiate innovative experiments in renewal, help to start new business in slum areas. In cities across Canada, even in our own, citizen groups are showing initiative in setting up their own housing programs, health clinics, recreation programs.

What this represents is the need to change the style of government. It is not necessary for government to always be the planner, the interventionist, the renewer - involving itself in every last detail of the city. What it can become is a stimulator of private action and a partner in helping all kinds of private people and resources to work out solutions and strategies to the problem ahead.

Thus, the city should begin recruiting task forces of private citizens to begin planning strategies to deal with suburban development, housing, renewal. It could, for example, establish a separate Main Street Development Corporation, jointly run by community people, and councillors to begin a long overdue attack on the problem of Main Street. It might use the resident advisors not just to refer studies or decision for comment, but give to them the responsibility for improving the neighbourhood, building a park.⁹

9. In an analysis of the use of community corporations in New York City, it was concluded that "they accomplish more in concrete program results than the more centralized system of municipal control that previously existed". See, Howard Hallman, Neighbourhood Control of Public Programs, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), page 206.

It is obvious that no structure of government, however good it may be; no group of administrators, however talented they may be; no group of local politicians, however devoted they may be, can ever get enough time or resources to deal with the myriad issues facing a modern city. They will have to use private people, private resources.

Perhaps the real test of just how good a government is depends on how well it recruits private citizens to work on behalf of the community, and how good a partnership it forges between the public and private sector. The role of local government is to set guidelines, establish basic policies and priorities, act as an orchestra leader in melding the different private groups into a harmonious activity.¹⁰

These are the directions that I believe we should head in to make the new system work well. In some cases, it is minor adjustment of the machinery that is needed, in other cases, a major change in orientation and approach; in yet other instances, the development of new resources and machinery to be added on to the existing structure.

Ultimately, however, it is men not structures and organizations that shape the future of our city. Leadership, foresight, political and administrative skill, a capacity for innovation, are needed if we are to build a city that will provide good life for our citizens. Our concern with the structure and administration must therefore be centered on how the organization of local government enables these human qualities to come forth and flourish in the pursuit of a better city.

10. See Peter F. Drucker, The Age of Discontinuity, Part Three, (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).