

Urban Issues

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The Institute of Urban Studies





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The Institute of Urban Studies is an independent research arm of the University of Winnipeg. Since 1969, the IUS has been both an academic and an applied research centre, committed to examining urban development issues in a broad, non-partisan manner. The Institute examines inner city, environmental, Aboriginal and community development issues. In addition to its ongoing involvement in research, IUS brings in visiting scholars, hosts workshops, seminars and conferences, and acts in partnership with other organizations in the community to effect positive change.

community committees

(The first of a series)

On January 1, 1972 a unique experiment in local government will have begun. The largest city on the Western Prairies will attempt a bold combination of unification of the municipalities and de-centralization of the political process. This combination, according to the Provincial Government which introduced this plan, will effectively ameliorate the major difficulties of the Winnipeg area - those difficulties being defined as fragmented authority, segmented financial capacity, and lack of citizen involvement.

This article will concern itself with the new government structures intended to deal with the problem of citizen involvement. The idea of citizen participation and the necessity for it, was one of the major themes in the Government's proposals. Mechanisms to ensure the opportunity to participate were written into the legislation.

In broad terms, the legislation provides for a division of the Greater Winnipeg area into fifty 'wards'. One councillor was elected from each ward and will represent approximately 10,000 people. Three, four or five of these wards will come together to provide a Community Committee Area, of which there are thirteen.

All elected representatives will sit on the Regional Council made up of the thirteen Community Committee Areas, as well as sit on Community Committee Council made up of three, four, or five wards.

The Government sees the Community Committee concept as being the key to citizen participation by providing a link between the citizen, his elected representative and the regional council. According to the Government, Community Committees can make democracy a working reality at the local government level.

The legislation carries many safeguards for the citizen, as far as his right to know and his right to be heard are concerned. But these safeguards are only on

paper at present, and they will remain there until the new council develops a policy on how to make them work. And, a council policy will not be sufficient if the citizens are not encouraged and aided in their efforts to establish their rights in practice.

Community Committee. The manner of election, the number to be elected, and term of office of these people is left up to the community to decide. In some communities, however, councillors have already made attempts to determine in light of their own interests, these things.

In St. Boniface the councillors held a very extensive publicity campaign to advertise their first community committee meeting. As a result some 350 people showed up, and encouraged by the councillors elected 146 persons to the Citizens Advisory Group.

However in the neighbouring community of St. Vital only 140 people turned up for the first community committee meeting. The councillors there proceeded to suggest that an adequate representation of citizens on the Advisory Group would be four persons per ward, and as a result 12 local citizens were elected to the group. The difference in number is illustrative of the attitudes of councillors towards the concept of citizen participation.

Community Committee meetings shall be held at least once a month and shall be open to the public. Some Councillors have already made moves to have this amended so that they may hold closed meetings, an action which is entirely contrary to the spirit of the law.

Community Committees have the responsibility to develop effective ways and means to keep citizens informed of what their Council is doing, planning or proposing. This means, in effect, that if the Regional Council is holding closed meetings dealing with a matter in a Community Committee, the councillors from that area, have a legal and moral right to make this matter public in their area. This would no doubt bring cries of agony from many councillors but none of them have sworn an Oath of Secrecy.

At least once a year the Community Committee will hold a large public meeting, to which all residents of the area will be invited. At this time the councillors will review progress reports on programs and projects undertaken by the City and

proposed by the City. The citizens will then have an opportunity to assess and discuss these programs.

The Regional Council must provide for the Community Committee, office space, meeting rooms, staff and equipment. Here is an area where citizen participation would be most valuable but an area which no councillor has yet mentioned.

The following articles in the series will examine attitudes of councillors to this concept, attitudes of people to this concept, and some speculation and comment as to how it would work and how it is working.

Special attention will be paid to what is perhaps the most interesting and influential role these new structures could play in an urban setting where problems are ever-increasing and becoming ever complex. The return of government to a 'grass-roots' level at such a time could create an entire new perspective on the city and its people. This is especially true in areas which have been designated as Urban Renewal areas and where increasingly, new voices are being heard - voices demanding a say in policies and decisions which affect them. These voices now have a legal vantage point upon which to stand and from which they cannot be arbitrarily moved.

role of business

The Institute of Urban Studies has recently been commissioned to undertake a study on the role of business in solving the problems of housing and urban development.

The study, which is currently in its first phase, is based on the idea that serious problems in the cities - lack of adequate housing for low and moderate income families, deteriorating inner-city areas, problems of poverty and unemployment - confront the business community with some serious problems. First, the state of the health of the urban area affects the environment in which business operates. If things begin to go wrong, then it can have adverse, sometimes costly effects. Many American corporations realized this fact as they felt the impact of costly urban riots in 1968. Secondly, Government is increasingly called upon to be the agent that responds to these urban problems. Extensive public housing, large scale redevelopment and new social programs result in larger government expenditures and a bigger role for government. If this trend continues, the balance between public and private enterprise becomes precarious. It is important to consider the alternatives. Thirdly, more and more business is being challenged on the nature of its social

responsibility. Young people are suspicious, attacks are made on the area of private exploitation of the environment, and there is a growing climate of opinion - that business must be more accountable for its actions in the community.

Such questions require answers. Within the urban areas, there will be a growing requirement for innovation, change and reform. In order for the business community to develop answers, and make an effective response, it should first examine what kinds of feasible courses of action are open to it. Obviously private enterprise corporations cannot perform the role of a social agency or a government department. They still must show a profit to survive.

However, there may be ways that business can respond to the problems of housing and urban development, and serve the public interest. What is needed is an appraisal of what is happening in the cities, what actions are open to business, what options have been tried, what has worked, and what range of alternatives or new solutions might be introduced. It is to these ends that this project is directed.

IUS DOCUMENTS

In response to a number of requests, the following is a list of some of the reports and documents available from the Institute of Urban Studies. Cost has been indicated where applicable.

The Structure and Organization of a Downtown Development Corporation (\$0.50).

- A study designed to assist the Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg in the formulation of proposals for a development corporation. Prepared by Lloyd Axworthy, J. McNiven and G. Siamandas, April 1970.

The Housing Task Force - A New Policy Instrument

- Lloyd Axworthy. Presented to the 42nd Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, June 4, 1970.

National Goals for the Urban Environment - A Democratic Society

- Lloyd Axworthy. Presented to the Town Planning Institute of Canada National Conference, July 21, 1970.

Urban Democracy and the Canadian Constitution

- A brief presented by the Institute of Urban Studies to the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons, September 1970.

Urbanization and Leisure - What About Me?

- Lloyd Axworthy. Presented to the Community Planning Association of Canada, September 30, 1970.

The Politics of Urban Innovation

- Lloyd Axworthy. Published in *Living in the Seventies*. Allen M. Linden (ed.) Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Limited, 1970.

The Indian-Metis Urban Probe

- A study by the Indian and Metis Friendship Center and the Institute of Urban Studies, January 1971.

Private Low-Cost Housing

- Published in "Canadian Welfare", Volume 47, January-February 1971.

The Future City

- A Selection of Views on the Reorganization of Government in Greater Winnipeg. Lloyd Axworthy (Ed.) Published by the Institute of Urban Studies. February 1971.

The Roosevelt Park Project: Short-Form Evaluation

- Professor Ralph Kuropatwa, March 1, 1971.

Final Report of Satisfaction in an Urban Neighbourhood

- Grace Parasuik, April 1971.

Brief to the Canadian Radio Television Commission

- Institute of Urban Studies, April 1971.

An Experiment in Community Renewal:

- Observations and Proposals Arising from a Demonstration Project in Winnipeg. Professor Lloyd Axworthy and Professor Ralph Kuropatwa. Presented to the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, St. John's, Newfoundland, June 9, 1971.

A Report on the Rehabilitation of Older Houses in a Lower-Income, Inner City District

- Eric Barker, June 30, 1971 (\$0.50)

An Analysis of Four Social Planning Interventions in the Fort Rouge Area of Winnipeg

- David Vincent, June 1971 (\$0.50)

Institute of Urban Studies Report on Community T. V. in Radical Software

- No. 4, Summer, 1971; J. Cassidy

A Second Report on the "Kinew Housing Incorporated" Experiment

- David Henderson, July 30, 1971

Towards a Better City: An Examination of the City of Greater Winnipeg Act.

- A brief presented to the Municipal Amendments Committee of the Legislature of Manitoba, Lloyd Axworthy and Tom Axworthy, July 1971.

Report on the First Phase of the Community Television Project.

- Institute of Urban Studies, July 22, 1971

An Urban Coloring Book

- Institute of Urban Studies, August 1971

Provincial Communications Policy

- Prepared by the Institute of Urban Studies and the Ad-Hoc Committee, August 1971

An Evaluation of Kinew Housing Incorporated

- Prepared for the Institute of Urban Studies by Professor J. McNiven, September 1971

Design Feasibility Study for Injecting an Infill Housing System into an Older, Residential District

- Eric Barker, September 1971.

The Housing Task Force: A Case Study

- Lloyd Axworthy - Published in *The Structure of Policy-Making in Canada*. Edited by G. Bruce Doern and Peter Aucoin, Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1971.

A Public Communications System

- A study of the use of the new communications technology by government to enhance citizen participation and increase program effectiveness. Prepared for the Committee on Government Productivity, Government of Ontario, by Professor Lloyd Axworthy, with J. Cassidy, J. O'Hara and J. Badertscher, October 1971. (\$0.50)

A Progress Report of Stage II of the People's Committee

- Wally Kubiski, November, 1971.

Innovation Inner-City Program

- Eric Barker, November 1971.

Participation and Planning

- Lloyd Axworthy, Presented to the *Congres d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme* held in Brussels, Belgium, November 22, 1971.

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