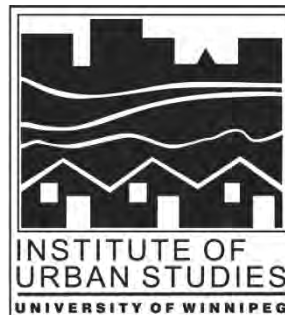


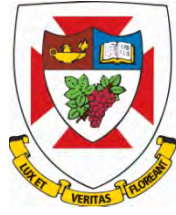
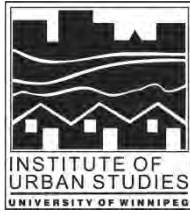
The State of Unicity – 25 Years Later: Conference Proceedings (October 3-4, 1997)

Occasional Paper No. 35

**edited by Nancy Klos
1998**

The Institute of Urban Studies





THE UNIVERSITY OF
WINNIPEG

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THE STATE OF UNICITY – 25 YEARS LATER: CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS (OCTOBER 3-4, 1997)

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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.

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The organizers would like to extend their sincere thanks to the individuals and organizations who helped to make "The State of Unicity—25 Years Later" Conference a success. The invited panellists and speakers prepared outstanding presentations which are printed in these proceedings, and made a significant contribution to the discussion during the conference. The organizers are also grateful for the support of Her Worship Mayor Susan Thompson and the participation of moderators William Norrie, Marsha Hanen, Lorne Weiss and Ian Wight in conducting the panels and the question periods. Leslie Vryenhoek of University Relations at The University of Winnipeg and Bruce Cherney, Editor of the *Winnipeg Real Estate News*, provided invaluable assistance with event publicity. Claudius Soodeen provided multi-media support throughout the conference. Heather Nelson staffed the registration desk. Christian Douchant, Ragini Dayal and Edward Cloutis of the Institute of Urban Studies assisted in the multitude of tasks involved in the organization of the conference. The Conference Advisory Committee made up of Tom Carter, Peter Diamant, Christian Douchant and Christopher Leo deserve special mention for their advice in planning this event. Generous financial support for the conference and these proceedings was provided by The Winnipeg Foundation, the City of Winnipeg and The University of Winnipeg Department of Political Science.

Nancy Klos
Mary Ann Beavis
Conference Co-ordinators



INTRODUCTION

On January 1, 1972, a new form of municipal government known as Unicity came into existence in the Greater Winnipeg area. This innovative experiment in local government reform officially established the City of Winnipeg as one unified city which incorporated the former municipalities of Winnipeg, St. James-Assiniboia, St. Boniface, Transcona, St. Vital, West Kildonan, East Kildonan, Tuxedo, Old Kildonan, North Kildonan, Fort Garry and Charleswood, and replaced the two-tier metropolitan system established in 1960. Winnipeg's Unicity was to *centralize* service delivery and administration while *equalizing* mill rates and *decentralizing* the political process to bring local government closer to the people. Unicity captured the attention of cities and city reformers across Canada and North America for this unique combination of goals as well as for its key features: a large Council with 51 members (50 Councillors and a Mayor elected-at-large), small wards, 13 Community Committees, an Executive Policy Committee, a Board of Commissioners, and the formation of Resident Advisory Groups (RAGs). Now 25 years later, how has the Unicity experiment turned out, and where are we going as the future presents even greater challenges?

To mark the 25th anniversary of Winnipeg's unified civic government, the Institute of Urban Studies organized "The State of Unicity—25 Years Later Conference," held at The University of Winnipeg, October 3-4, 1997. The 25th anniversary of Unicity presented a unique opportunity to revisit this important event in post-war Canadian urban reform, but more importantly, to examine the present state of local government in Winnipeg and other municipalities, and the future of urban governance. The conference was funded by The Winnipeg Foundation, the City of Winnipeg and The University of Winnipeg Department of Political Science, and was well attended by a diverse audience made up of current and former elected officials and civic administrators (local and regional), community group representatives, academics, students and interested citizens.

Her Worship Mayor Susan Thompson delivered the conference opening remarks on the evening of October 3 and introduced Andrew Sancton, who provided "An Outsider's View" of Unicity in a public keynote address. Local and national experts and practitioners in urban affairs and government (see pp. 142-44) were invited to participate on four panels held on October 4 which discussed Unicity—25 Years Later, Municipal Democracy and Citizen Participation, Amalgamation in the 1990s, and Urban Governance for the twenty-first Century. The conference also included two luncheon addresses. Warren Magnusson spoke about "Politicizing the Global City" on October 3 as part of the "Building Urban Community Lecture Series" in association with the Department of Political Science, while Bernie Wolfe provided his personal "Reflections on Unicity and Local Government in Winnipeg" for conference registrants on October 4. Special recognition was given at the conference to Saul Cherniack, former Metropolitan councillor and the first Manitoba Minister of Urban Affairs.

This volume contains the papers presented by the 12 panellists as well as the keynote and luncheon speakers over the two days of the conference. The papers reflect the varied backgrounds of the authors, at least eight of whom have held political office or have worked at the local or provincial government level. Due to a time limit imposed on panellists, the majority of the papers are brief in length,⁷ although each makes important observations about local government which have practical and theoretical significance for Winnipeg and other Canadian municipalities. The papers presented here contribute to our understanding of the impact of the Unicity experiment and municipal amalgamation, and provide insights to help inform plans for the next 25 years of local government in Winnipeg.

Many of the comments made by the panellists and speakers, as well as by members of the audience, suggest a prevailing admiration for the vision of the original Unicity designers, despite the ongoing debate over the success or failure of unification. While the debate will continue, it is evident that a vision for the next 25 years cannot exclude the citizens of Winnipeg, neighbourhood initiative and the growing urban Aboriginal community in particular—plans are currently underway for Aboriginal community revitalization in the North Main Street district which will have a major impact on the district, the Aboriginal community and the city.⁸ Key points raised during the conference and in these proceedings are briefly highlighted below.

- *Citizen Participation.* At the heart of the Unicity concept was the need to create a climate for active citizen participation in local government, but 25 years later, the original mechanisms for greater participation have been frustrated: RAGs are almost non-existent; ward boundaries and community committee areas have increased in size while the size of City Council has decreased. The Winnipeg experience has, however, demonstrated that municipal government structures have not curtailed neighbourhood involvement and citizen participation, although we could do better. A decline may be explained in part by larger societal trends and political circumstances (Diamant, Levin), and even basic satisfaction with government performance (Thomas). Interestingly, recent figures indicate that Winnipeggers have a higher rate of municipal voting compared to some other Canadian urban centres, although voter turnout at municipal elections remains well below provincial and federal election percentages (Levin). Among the major challenges facing the City of Winnipeg is how to involve the burgeoning urban Aboriginal population, and encourage as well as strengthen community

*These proceedings include a paper submitted by Ian Wight, but do not include the pre-conference address at The University of Winnipeg by Warren Magnusson.

**The papers by Greg Selinger and Christopher Leo represent an expanded version of their presentations. The paper by Bernie Wolfe is an edited version of the recording made of his luncheon address.

***Unfortunately, Wayne Helgason's discussion of Aboriginal self-government and Neeginan were not recorded for these proceedings.

“owned” processes of renewal (Helgason, Selinger, Wight).

- *Provincial/Municipal Relations.* One simple fact is central in provincial/municipal relations: municipalities are the creatures of the provinces. Provincial reforms at the local level have fallen short of transferring the powers and resources needed to respond to increasingly complex urban problems (Diamant, Levin, Selinger). Indeed, what might be required is a constitutional amendment giving larger urban centres constitutional status (Levin). What is necessary for the future of Unicity is a co-operative approach and efforts to find consensus (Smith), not more of the “two solitudes” that characterize the present province-city relationship (Wolfe).
 - *Municipal Amalgamation.* Twenty-five years ago, the Manitoba Government, equipped with its constitutional powers over local government, significantly altered municipal powers and responsibilities, and municipal boundaries and structures, to create Winnipeg’s unified civic government against, at times, fierce opposition. Unicity was unique, but municipal amalgamation was not. Provincial approaches to municipal amalgamation vary across time and circumstance, although massive change continues to provoke similar responses to those that arose in the Greater Winnipeg area. Today, municipal amalgamation is largely motivated by economic arguments (Sancton, Cournoyer, McLaren). Rural areas in particular face immediate challenges: as a result of rural depopulation and declining fiscal resources, a growing number of rural municipalities have chosen to merge for survival (Rounds). Municipal reform is difficult, universally challenging and constantly evolving (McLaren). The impact of municipal structures on urban functioning cannot be underestimated or overestimated, in the case of Winnipeg and in other municipalities (Artibise, Sancton).
 - *Representative, Accountable Government.* The need for a representative and accountable government was well understood by the original designers of Unicity. The previous two-tier metropolitan system fragmented authority for services, planning and decision-making, and was a source of internal conflict as well as citizen confusion. Compared to two-tiered systems, Unicity is more easily understood (Artibise) and arguably cheaper, with substantially lower increases in expenditures (Diamant). Still, reforms over the past 25 years aimed at reductions in the number of Councillors have resulted in a Council that is not as representative of the community of interests, including Winnipeg’s Aboriginal and diverse ethnic community (Selinger), and inevitably dominated by suburban perspectives at the expense of the inner city (Helgason, Thomas). Local government is run as if it were a business; the corporatization of civic government and the pursuit of private sector management solutions and business models have continued despite the fundamental differences between markets and communities (Selinger, Magnusson, Wight, Sancton, Wolfe). The new approach has reduced the status of citizen to that of client/customer, implying a reactive rather than
-

active role (Thomas). Local political parties, distinct from federal and provincial parties, could help to address municipal issues and accountability within local government, bringing Winnipeg closer to the original plan envisioned by those Unicity designers (Levin, Selinger).

- *The Winnipeg Region.* The fragmentation of planning authority over the Greater Winnipeg area was one of the key problems that ultimately led to the creation of Unicity, as well as the appointment of a provincial minister responsible for urban affairs. As described in the *Proposals for Urban Reorganization in the Greater Winnipeg Area* (1971), confusion and ambiguity in authority and jurisdiction had frustrated planning and development of the area as a whole, and measures to control urban sprawl and haphazard fringe growth. Twenty-five years later, Unicity has not been the solution to the outward expansion of the city, but rather is faced with similar pre-amalgamation issues and the same need for “genuinely effective” planning and development of the Winnipeg region (Sancton, Diamant, Selinger, Wight). Population growth in neighbouring municipalities has mushroomed in some cases, but, overall, is substantially higher than the rate of growth in the City of Winnipeg, while conditions in Winnipeg’s inner city have deteriorated; residents in Headingley have successfully seceded from Winnipeg and formed their own municipality, while efforts by residents in St. Germaine-Vermette have been unsuccessful (for now); the Provincial Government eliminated the additional zone which gave Winnipeg some control over exurban development, while establishing an urban limit line to restrict outward growth within the city boundaries (Leo *et al.*, Diamant, Wight, Selinger).

The City has offered a tax break to new home buyers within the city, but alternative solutions could be pursued: a regional tax in addition to other new forms of taxation and the reinstatement of Winnipeg’s additional zone powers (Selinger). Christopher Leo *et al.* argue that the health of the city and the region rests on an important realization that Winnipeg is a slow-growth rather than a fast-growth centre, and in the pursuit of programs and policies for housing, infrastructure and services, economic development and immigration that reflect our present slow-growth reality, not the North American obsession with rapid growth. For example, the city has much to gain from compact urban development, increased immigration, and housing programs that encourage affordable housing and housing reinvestment in the inner city, as well as efforts aimed at the cultivation of the local economy. The next 25 years will present even greater challenges to Winnipeg and its region, demanding a much more proactive approach by the city and the province, and moreover, will require new post-modern interpretations of regions, neighbourhoods and municipalities. The alternative vision of Unicity may be represented as a “citistate” comprising the area closely resembling the original “postage stamp” province. Steps include a reformulated Ministry of Urban Affairs as a Ministry of Capital Region Affairs, greater responsibility for regional servicing vested in this Ministry, increased governance responsibilities for Capital Region MLAs, and municipal government reorganization within the Capital

Region (Wight).

- *The Downtown and the Inner City.* The advent of the new unified local government in 1972 was intended to benefit the downtown and central area residents, namely through structural reforms aimed at increased citizen participation and access as well as through the equalization of mill rates and services, and greater equity across the Greater Winnipeg area. Twenty five years later, conditions in the downtown and the inner city cast doubt on the impact of Unicity on Winnipeg's downtown and on inner-city residents (Sancton, Helgason). The Unicity structure may have enabled the City of Winnipeg to work with the other levels of government in establishing the innovative, tri-partite Core Area Initiative (Artibise), but the undeniable need to respond to inner-city decline and strong federal support from Lloyd Axworthy for action may have been at least as important (Sancton, Selinger, Wolfe). Without the resources to respond itself, the City required the participation of the province and the federal government, while citizen participation played a relatively minor role (Levin). Increasingly, the revitalization of inner city neighbourhoods is being undertaken by residents and communities themselves (Helgason). Key urban issues include ecological sustainability, aging infrastructure, growing unemployment and social costs, the provision of low-cost housing, safety, and urban sprawl (Smith).
- *Unicity—A Success or Failure?* Many of the early concerns and issues expressed about the new system of government for Greater Winnipeg persist, despite significant changes since 1972, to fundamentally challenge the present and future state of Unicity. Winnipeg's Unicity may have been able to equalize the tax base, centralize administration and co-ordinate regional service delivery, but it fell short of improving participation and failed to provide strong government (Diamant). Citizen participation is the most oft-mentioned casualty of the original Unicity concept, although expectations of the changes proposed for local government in Greater Winnipeg seemed to greatly exceed the capacity of new structures and old politics. Conference participants were reminded that structural change is no panacea and to be mindful of negative unintended consequences; we ought to work on improvements to the functioning of Unicity and move beyond debates over structures to the task of governing (Sancton, Artibise). There is no accurate way to predict what would have occurred in the absence of Unicity, although there is support for the view that the city would have been worse off without it, and moreover that its failures have little to do with organization (Artibise). But, again, there were no doubts that an overhaul is in order (Selinger).

Interestingly, as it moves further away from the original Unicity model, the City of Winnipeg has come closer to Canadian norms, at the same time that other cities have sought to copy such Unicity innovations as RAGs and Community Committees (Sancton). After 25 years, the need to focus on communities and the people who make them continues to be integral to the city's future and

is evident in repeated calls for “community building” (Helgason, Selinger, Wight, Sancton). The post-modern transformation of Unicity advocated by Ian Wight is instructive: “Winnipeg and its associated environs . . . reconstituted as a network of new millennium municipalities, confederated in a provincial/municipal blended citistate of sorts—bringing together public authority, private enterprise, and community service in a new post-modern governance collaborative . . . in accord with ecological principles” (p.137-38). The future of urban governance will not be contained by geographical boundaries and outdated conceptions of the urban world; the urban is a mode of human life that transcends such boundaries on a global basis (and beyond) in which the identification of new processes of governance is the real challenge for the twenty-first century (Magnusson).

After 25 years, Winnipeg’s unified civic government has reached an important crossroads which demands much closer analysis as we approach the next century. By bringing together both urban theorists and practitioners, this conference has contributed to the discussion of key issues and concerns about local government in Winnipeg that must be addressed in planning for the city’s future.

The City of Winnipeg has undertaken a major reorganization since the conference, however, with minimal prior public consultation or deliberation, while more changes have recently been approved by the provincial government. The changes are based on recommendations from the Fall 1997 report by consultant George Cuff, who was hired by the City of Winnipeg to conduct an organizational review and performance assessment of the existing political and administrative structure, aimed at improving city hall. As a result of the report, the City has appointed a Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to replace the Board of Commissioners and has revamped the senior management and departmental structure; proposed amendments to the City of Winnipeg Act include four-year terms for Winnipeg City Councillors and the Mayor, a tie-breaking vote for the Mayor along with greater appointment powers, and Council authority to chose vehicles for citizen participation (not restricted to Resident Advisory Groups). Understandably, the changes have increased the debate over the city’s future and the weaknesses of Unicity, and will figure prominently in the upcoming civic elections in October as the Winnipeg electorate prepares to decide who will lead the city into the twenty-first century.

Nancy Klos
Institute of Urban Studies

PART ONE

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

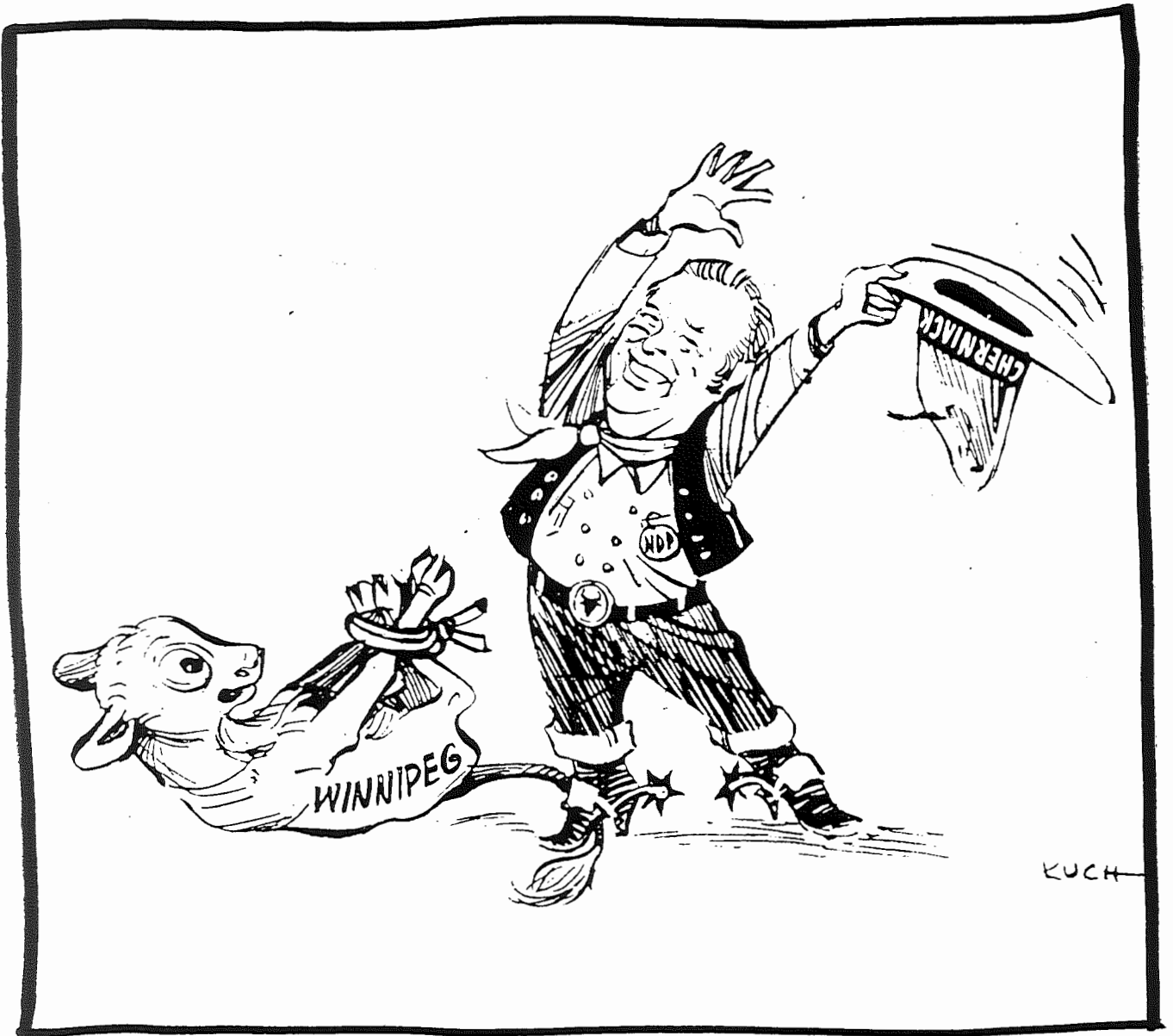


Figure 1: Saul Cherniack and calf Winnipeg, after successfully steering the Bill that resulted in the amalgamation of Winnipeg and surrounding areas through the Legislature (Credit: Peter Kuch, Source: *Winnipeg Free Press*, July 23, 1971).

WHY UNICITY MATTERS: AN OUTSIDER'S VIEW

Andrew Sancton

It would be an honour for *anyone* to be invited to give a keynote address at an important conference such as this. But, for me, a student of Canadian local government, the occasion is truly special. Nineteen seventy-two was the year in which I decided to pursue a doctorate in political science with a specialty in local government. What was going on in Winnipeg at that time was one of the factors that influenced my decision.

Winnipeg was significant to me for at least three reasons:

1. By pursuing Unicity, the Government of Manitoba was saying that the structure of municipal government was important;
2. By taking an *innovative* approach to Unicity's structures, the province was indicating that municipal government need not always be the same, that change in our institutions of representative local democracy was genuinely possible; and
3. By taking seriously the views of prominent academics, the government was demonstrating that life as a university professor need not mean isolation from active involvement in the issues one studies.

I hope you will forgive this temporary autobiographical focus. I do *not* really mean to imply that the main importance of Unicity has been its effect on *my* career. I mention the importance of Unicity to me personally because I doubt that many people in Winnipeg realize how central their city's experience has been for the study of local government in Canada *and* because I want to structure much of my talk around the three important reasons I just referred to.

You will be pleased to learn, I hope, that my views on local government have changed somewhat over the past 25 years. Part of what I want to do tonight is to explain how the Unicity experience has changed these views and how Unicity remains even today as a central part of any informed debate about municipal government in Canada.

I want now to turn to the first of the three points I just raised. The question is this: In what respects did the NDP Government of Manitoba consider municipal government to be important? In its White Paper preceding the Unicity legislation, the government outlined the problems caused by the contemporary state of affairs: there was little or no connection between regional planning and municipal policies concerning land development; service and tax levels varied dramatically from one municipality to another; central-city taxpayers were unfairly bearing the burden of core-area problems; and citizens were confused and alienated from a municipal system that was unduly complex and fragmented.

In the context of current debates about municipal restructuring, it is important to note the one reference to economic concerns. The White Paper stated that: "With control of services divided, and the

power to make decisions and carry them out fragmented, the community's human resources are dissipated, and its economic abilities to a considerable extent squandered." I don't know if this is a reference to the kind of "waste and duplication" so often cited in Ontario as the reason for dramatic municipal restructuring. I do know that the Unicity planners made no attempt to quantify the alleged savings from amalgamation. By no stretch of the imagination was Unicity ever about reducing the size of government or about cutting costs by having one fire chief instead of twelve.

Unicity was about *increasing* the capacity of municipal government to control and shape urban development and about promoting greater social and economic equality. Unicity was, after all, the creation of an NDP government in the 1970s, not a neo-conservative government in the 1990s.

After 25 years we are entitled to ask whether Unicity has achieved the objectives set for it. There is unlikely to be much agreement on the answers. We shall never know what Winnipeg would be like now if Unicity had not been created. Those of you who live here are far better qualified than I to make judgments.

Nevertheless, I cannot resist comment. There can be no question that Unicity has promoted equality in terms of taxes and services. Unlike some Canadian cities, and most American ones, Winnipeg simply does not have wealthy suburban enclaves with low taxes and high service levels. Nor does it have the reverse. Of this, Manitobans and Winnipeggers, I believe, should be proud. It is possible, of course, that not all people living in particular areas are receiving the level of services they collectively desire. Some might willingly pay more for more, others would prefer less for less. The attempt to find a middle ground for a city as large as Winnipeg is, in my view, inherently wasteful. In short, I believe Unicity probably costs more than it would if it were still possible to vary service and taxation levels in response to local demand in various parts of the city.

The planners of Unicity believed that the creation of the new structure would itself lead to a better urban environment, in terms of both suburban development and the city core. Here I believe they were probably mistaken. Like urban reformers a hundred years ago (such as that famous Winnipegger J.S. Woodsworth), they assumed that new structures would attract new participants or at least change the behaviour of the existing ones. But just because everyone now shares a common tax base does not mean that elected members of council divert a disproportionate share of tax resources to the city core. I doubt that anyone would want to claim that Unicity has dramatically benefitted the core. Indeed, it is interesting to think about whether the core might be better off today if it had been directly controlled over the last 25 years by a municipality whose base of political power was clearly associated with *core* interests, rather than suburban interests.

Such a core-based municipality would have needed considerable outside financial support—from the suburbs, from the province, and from the federal government. But such assistance could have been arranged—even from the suburbs—without the creation of Unicity. Some will want to argue that the Unicity structure

enabled the municipal sector to negotiate more effectively. They might be right. But I ask you to think about these questions: Would Winnipeg's tri-level Core Area Initiative have been possible without Unicity? Or was the presence of a strong Winnipeg-based federal cabinet minister with a strong interest in urban affairs more important than the structural arrangements of municipal government? Would the Province of Manitoba have paid so much attention to Winnipeg through its Ministry of Urban Affairs without Unicity? Or is it now the case that Winnipeg is now so important to the province that direct provincial involvement is inevitable whether the municipal governments are amalgamated or not?

Even if we acknowledge that Unicity is really based in the suburbs, can anyone claim that it has been especially innovative in its plans for new suburban development? I genuinely don't know the answer. I do know that, in general on such matters I agree with Jane Jacobs (whose life and work is to be celebrated at a conference in Toronto in mid-October, 1997). In opposing the megacity in Toronto, Jacobs argued that having a single municipal government for a large urban area makes innovation more difficult because there is no opportunity for one municipality to advance a policy in one part of the city before others copy it or reject it.

The designers of Unicity wanted it to be able to control outward urban growth. For it to do so now, its boundaries would now have to be expanded because the rate of population growth in the Winnipeg census metropolitan area is higher in the area outside the City of Winnipeg than within it. But the political pressure, as I understand it, is to further reduce the City's boundaries, not to expand them. Indeed, the fact that Unicity has experienced the Headingley secession merits close study, not the least by those outside Manitoba who are still advocating massive amalgamations combining both urban and rural areas.

There are many reasons to celebrate Unicity's accomplishments. Finding the ultimate solution for planning the outward expansion of the city is, unfortunately, not one of them.

Twenty-five years ago I think we all tended to believe that, by making significant changes in our governmental structures, we could bring about significant changes in the way our society works. In my view (but not in everybody's), the creation of Unicity was a significant structural change. Nevertheless, the changes it brought to urban life in Winnipeg were not as great as many expected.

Amalgamating municipalities was not in itself innovative. Such amalgamations were a common feature of nineteenth-century North American urban history, the great New York amalgamation of 1898 being the most important. But Unicity was not meant to be just another amalgamation; it was supposed to be an especially innovative one. It is to the discussion of Unicity as innovation that I now turn.

The perceived needs were to dramatically expand both the policy-making capacity of municipal government and the opportunities for citizen involvement. The consultants who designed Unicity tended to believe that the first objective could be achieved by encouraging a form of local *parliamentary* government,

which implied the emergence of coherent municipal political parties. They proposed that the mayor be elected not by the direct vote of citizens but by members of council, the idea being that potential mayors would effectively have to organize parties to get elected. A party holding a majority on council could then be held directly accountable, through the mayor, for what it did and did not accomplish. This idea was ultimately rejected by the government in part because it was opposed by Winnipeg's popular mayor, Stephen Juba, whose support the government badly needed but also because the government thought that a directly elected mayor (such as Juba) would be more likely to favour the city core than a mayor who owed his or her election to councillors whose wards were mainly suburban.

On the subject of increasing citizen participation, one consultant, James Lorimer—now a prominent Canadian publisher—believed that the Unicity should contain local community councils or corporations that would control urban development within their areas, have the authority to *instruct* local Unicity councillors how to vote on particular issues, and be able to set local tax rates so as to hire staff, including community organizers. When the cabinet rejected these ideas, Lorimer quit, thus insuring that the eventual mechanisms for citizen participation were much more conventional.

Once Lorimer had gone, the consensus was relatively clear. Unicity was to have a single source of political and administrative authority but citizens would be given new mechanisms through which to make their views known. One such mechanism was a large 50-person city council elected from small single-member wards. Others were the Community Committees and Residents' Advisory Groups. Members of the Residents' Advisory Groups were to be elected at open public meetings, stirring visions among some of Athenian city democracy or New England town meetings. Notwithstanding Lorimer's position, these were heady times. Everything seemed possible. Winnipeg was to be the laboratory in which a new kind of municipal government was to be fostered.

Once again—what has happened in Winnipeg *since* Unicity is at least as important as what happened at the time Unicity was created. On the subject of open party politics, my suspicion is that they are probably now less relevant to municipal elections in Winnipeg than they were in the 1970s (perhaps parties at *all* levels of government are now less relevant). There has certainly been no serious attempt, to my knowledge at least, to resurrect the idea that the mayor should be elected by the councillors.

There has, however, been a dramatic reduction in the size of city council. With 16 members, the size of the Winnipeg city council is now well within Canadian norms. Except for the mayor's authority to name Executive Policy Committee members and the fact that the mayor does not preside over council, there is little to distinguish Winnipeg's council from those in Canada's other English-language provinces. Indeed, making Winnipeg's council more like other ones is what the *post*-Unicity changes have been all about.

While I am attending this conference I want to learn more about what has happened to the Community

Committees and the Residents' Advisory Groups. It is you who are the experts on this, not I. I think I am justified in concluding, however, that this experiment in citizen participation has not lived up to expectations. Such evaluations were appearing within months of Unicity's creation and I know of nothing that has happened since then to change these first impressions. Maybe most of Winnipeg's citizens have ended up agreeing with Lorimer that these new institutions of participation were mere tokenism. Would Winnipeggers have become passionately involved in genuine neighbourhood governments of the kind advocated by Lorimer? Perhaps the issue will be debated at subsequent sessions of this conference.

Despite the disappointments that resulted from Unicity's institutional innovations, they have been copied elsewhere. The new City of Toronto is to have a council comprising a mayor and 56 members. I believe I have been the only megacity commentator to point out that Winnipeg once had a large council and then chose to *reduce* its membership dramatically. I noted that, if Toronto were to do this on the same scale as Winnipeg, then Torontonians would end up with the *highest* ratio of residents to councillors in the entire country. Winnipeg was able to cut its council and still not have an unusually high ratio because in the original system established for Unicity the ratio of residents to councillors was unusually *low*.

Judging from attempts to copy them elsewhere in Canada, one would think that the Community Committees and Residents' Advisory Groups had been an unambiguous victory for citizen empowerment. In three different cities with which I am familiar—Halifax, Toronto, and Hamilton—government reorganization proposals have involved a massive municipal amalgamation combined with the establishment of Unicity-style mechanisms for citizen participation. They *have* been established in Halifax, *are* to be established in Toronto, but do not exist in Hamilton because the whole amalgamation scheme has been blocked.

There is no evidence that the authors of these various schemes really knew much about the Winnipeg experience. I wrote a paper for the Hamilton-Wentworth Constituent Assembly pointing out that the mechanisms for citizen participation in Winnipeg did not live up to original expectations, but that did not prevent that same body from recommending that they be established.

Today's advocates of municipal amalgamation turn to community committees and councils for the same reason the Unicity planners did: they appear as a way of cushioning the harsh effects of eliminating local councils. They have less to do with enhancing citizen participation and more to do with neutralizing opposition at the time of the amalgamation. The Toronto plan is especially obvious. Unlike Unicity, the Toronto community councils are to be based on the boundaries of the old municipalities.

At least the designers of Unicity demonstrated some originality. They had limited international experience—and none from Canada—on which to draw. I believe they were genuinely convinced that Unicity could capture the benefits of size while avoiding most of the costs. In my view such innovators deserve the benefit of the doubt. The people who deserve criticism are those who copy from elsewhere without making

any effort to understand what it is they are copying.

The last issue I want to address is the role of the consultants hired by the Schreyer government to design Unicity. Four of them (not counting James Lorimer) were based outside Manitoba (three in Ontario), although one, Meyer Brownstone, was a native of Winnipeg who had been Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs in Saskatchewan before becoming a professor of political science at the University of Toronto. Would it now be politically possible for any provincial government to bring in so many experts from outside the province? What does it say about the nature of our country to suggest that provincial governments now rarely seek advice openly from outside their borders?

None of these consultants were experts on management. None of them worked for global trans-national management consulting companies. The problem in the early 1970s was not seen as a management one. The issue was municipal *government*: how best to set up a system so that equal *citizens* (not customers) could be in charge of their own urban environment. The consultants were experts on municipal government. This was before the days when it was assumed that governments could learn only from the latest management trend in the private sector.

So far in this part of the discussion, I have looked back somewhat nostalgically to the days when out-of-province municipal experts were viewed with favour. I realize that, because I am an out-of-province expert, these comments might be seen as either ungrateful or self-serving. I hasten to add, however, that, if I am an "expert" at all, I am quite different from the people who designed Unicity. The experts of the early 1970s drifted back and forth between the university and government. They might not have known much about structural Marxism or public-choice theory but they knew how government worked in Canada because they had been there. They knew what was going on in universities because they had been there too. I have never drawn a regular pay cheque from any institution other than a college or a university. Much of what I have learned about the practical aspects of municipal management in Canada I have learned from those of my students who are municipal managers, some of whom have been employed by Unicity and are here tonight. But I have not been there myself.

I would suggest that we now have various kinds of "experts" in Canadian local government, but none of them have the wide-ranging experience of the people who designed Unicity. We have the academics such as myself and others on tomorrow's conference program. We have provincial civil servants, most of whom now have to be professional *managers* rather than experts on the subject matter of the department they are currently working in. Then there are the management consultants, the people who convinced provincial governments in the first place that the civil service requires experts on management, not experts on the various facets of government policy. For such consultants, designing structures of municipal government is much the same as designing the management structure of a branch-plant company. Finally, there is a

growing army of retired and displaced provincial and municipal senior managers who sell their own particular experience in the consulting marketplace. Only a very few have the broader knowledge that was brought to Unicity by the municipal consultants of the 1970s.

I think the role of consultants was important in the creation of Unicity, but not as important as the conviction of members of the Schreyer NDP government that creating Unicity would lead to a city that was better and more fair. Indeed, the only reason the consultants had any influence at all was that they shared the fundamental values of the government. In other words nobody at the time believed that there was any such thing as neutral, apolitical expert advice on the subject of organizing municipal government.

Unicity was created so as to promote equality within the province's largest city. Notwithstanding all its shortcomings, Unicity remains, in my view, a noble experiment. Had I been a Winnipeg citizen in 1972, I have no doubt that I would have supported it. In some respects, the actual *experience* of Unicity has been part of the reason why I have become a critic of large-scale municipal amalgamations. But the most important reason I am a critic is that amalgamation is usually sold today on the grounds that it will save money and/or promote economic development. These are both important objectives—but there is no evidence that amalgamation promotes them.

Indeed, today's opponents of amalgamation often use Winnipeg's experience in making their case. Despite the most dramatic and comprehensive amalgamation in North America since 1898, few in Winnipeg would accept the notion that amalgamation led to cost savings and lower taxes. Few would point to Unicity as the catalyst for dynamic economic growth in the era of globalization. I return to one of my original themes: Unicity was born at a different time for different reasons.

Whatever we might think of that time or those reasons, the Unicity is now an integral part of Winnipeg's make-up. Just as I would counsel residents of other cities not to sacrifice existing municipal institutions at the altar of amalgamation, I would counsel Winnipeggers to celebrate the motivations for Unicity; to exploit its institutional advantages; and to work around the disadvantages. We have learned in the past 25 years that structural change is no panacea and that negative unintended consequences are inevitable. It is better therefore to get on with the business of governing and building our communities rather than constantly squabbling about structures.

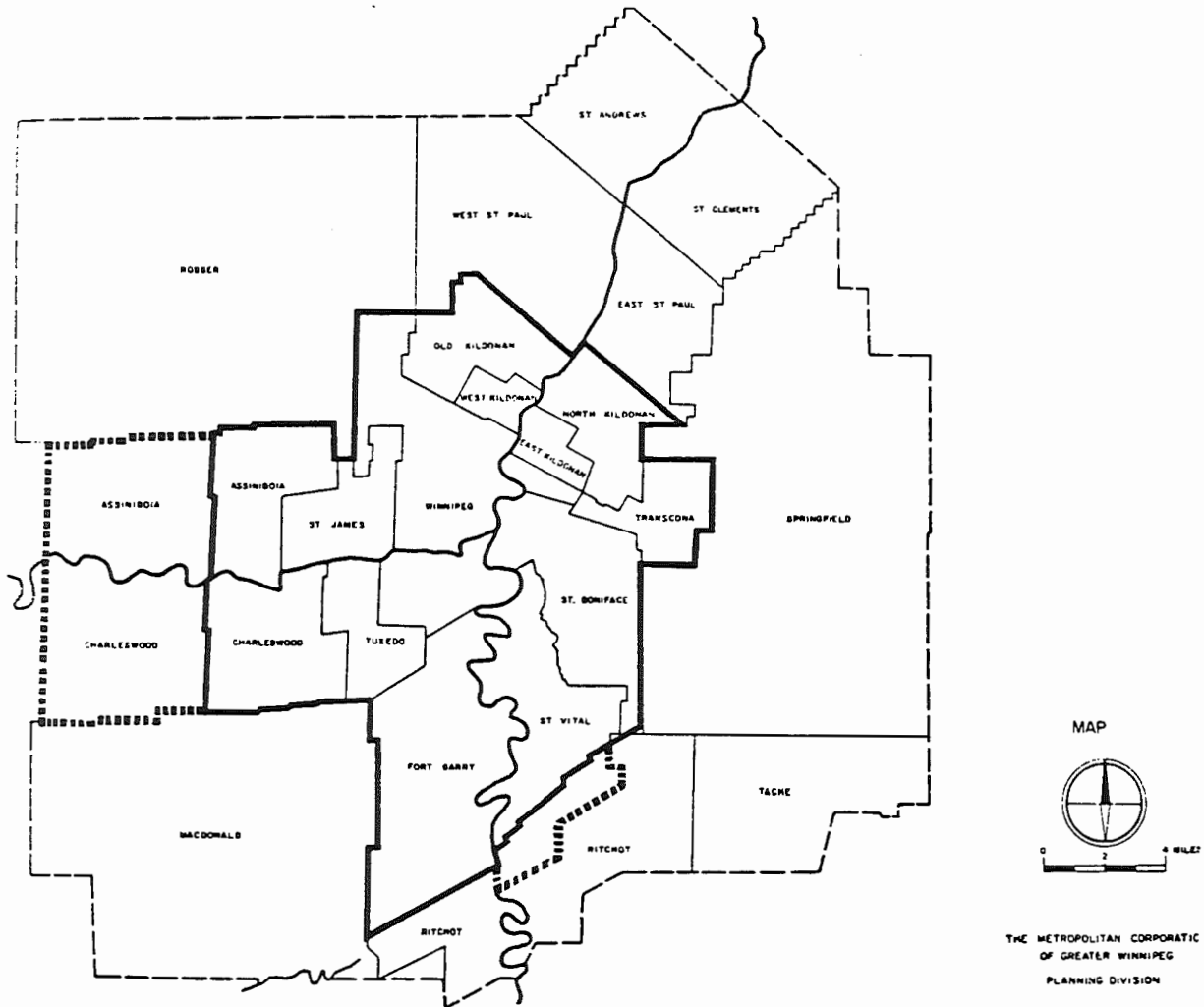
In 2022 we shall be celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Unicity and the twenty-fifth anniversary of Toronto's megacity. I predict that both will survive at least until then (although I warn you that I have made my share of wildly inaccurate predictions). I hope I never feel that I can celebrate the motivations for megacity in the way that I feel now I can genuinely celebrate the motivations behind Winnipeg's Unicity. Megacity is based on the bizarre notion that one big urban government is more efficient than a few small ones. Unicity is based on the more uplifting principle that one big urban government facilitates sharing and promotes

equality.

Even though I now believe there are better ways to achieve Unicity's original objectives, I continue to admire and support them. The challenge for those of us who are paid to think about local government is to work out ways whereby these objectives can be promoted without at the same time destroying the municipal institutions that enable residents of territorial communities to govern themselves within our increasingly complex cities and regions.

PART TWO
UNICITY—25 YEARS LATER

Map showing Boundaries of Municipalities in the Greater Winnipeg Area



LEGEND:

- Boundaries of area under former Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg.
- - - - - Additional areas included under "Unicity."

Map 1: Map showing boundaries of Municipalities in the Greater Winnipeg area (Source: Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg Planning Division in Thomas Plunkett, *Winnipeg, Canada's Third Largest City: An Explanation of its New Government*. Winnipeg: City of Winnipeg, 1973).

“STAY THE COURSE”: REFLECTIONS ON UNICITY

Alan F.J. Artibise

INTRODUCTION

My reflections on Unicity grow out of over two decades of writing about urban governance issues and a good deal of close analysis of municipal government at work—here in Winnipeg, across Canada, and internationally. This experience includes five years as Director of the Institute of Urban Studies, three years as Director of the International Centre for Sustainable Cities, service as a founding board member of the Forks Renewal Corporation, and over two decades as an active consultant and academic. Most recently, I completed a detailed analysis of the effectiveness of the Greater Vancouver Regional District, the current favourite of urban governance analysts.

My comments are also based upon my role as a member of the City of Winnipeg Act Review Committee that sat between 1984 and 1986 and conducted some 29 public hearings and received over 300 submissions.

I should also note, at the outset, that my comments stem from a strong belief that governmental structures can make a difference. As Gilbert Stelter and I noted over 15 years ago, cities can be analyzed in a variety of ways. The most common, unfortunately, is the concept of “urban as product” in which cities are viewed as places whose form and structure are determined by large scale, external, economic, social and political forces. The city is thus regarded as a dependent variable, the simple product of these forces.

A far more important approach—and one that I want to focus on at this conference—is “urban as process.” In this approach, the city is an independent variable that influences social organization, behaviour and form and structure, depending in large measure on how it organizes itself. In this mode of analysis it is possible to begin to see the complex feedback loops and the unanticipated consequences that emanate from changes within the urban community, be they changes in leadership, demography, or political organization. In short, organization does make a difference.

OBSERVATIONS

With this as background, I will share with you four observations that I trust are of some importance in this reflective examination of Unicity experience.

1. THE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

First, from an international perspective, it is clear that urban governance issues are increasingly seen as fundamental in the success or failure of urban regions, and only those areas that are up to task will be able

to prosper in the twenty-first century. It is necessary, as environmentalists and economists tell us, to "THINK GLOBALLY" but we must "ACT LOCALLY." And "locally" in this context means on a city-region basis.

Notably, however, the acceptance of city regions as the dynamic motors of economic and social change in the global economy is seriously recognized more in Europe than in North America, be it in the Netherlands, France, Italy or the U.K. The new governmental structures being put in place in Europe are like nothing else in North America, *except* Unicity. The goal is to undertake—on a city-region basis—economic development, planning, infrastructure and the needs of human capital development and training, ensuring coherent development and seeing that the benefits are equitably distributed.

The fact is that Unicity was about these same things. Has it succeeded? Like all organizations, it has had both successes and failures, but by and large the answer is yes. Or, to put it another way, its failures have little to do with organization; indeed, without the organization of Unicity, the challenges facing Winnipeg today would be far greater.

To repeat, structures do matter. In and of themselves they do not cause change, but they certainly provide a context in which change can take place.

2. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

My second point continues on this theme. One of the most important experiments of the post-war era in Canada was Winnipeg's Core Area Initiative, an undertaking—interestingly—that is far better known in Europe than it is in North America. It is inconceivable to me that the CAI could have been put in place and been able to continue to operate for a decade without Unicity, since it required—in a *de facto* if not *de jure* sense—the recognition of urban government as an equal at the table. Despite the fact that in a simple constitutional sense the City of Winnipeg was a creature of the Province, the City was also a full and equal partner of the CAI—it signed the original agreement, it had equal representation on all decision-making bodies, and it delivered many of the programs. There was, in short, an overriding principle of equality in decision-making and cost sharing. Of equal importance is the fact that this tri-level model was replicated in other agreements in Manitoba—such as the Forks Renewal Corporation.

In an era in Canada when constitutional arrangements are in desperate need of renewal, here in Winnipeg, we have successful experiments that indicate clearly that there is another way.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY

My third point relates to the principle that in a democracy all governments must be accountable, open and accessible. Above all, it must be understood by the citizens it governs.

Unicity meets this test very well, particularly when compared to other jurisdictions, including my own

in Vancouver where, I venture to say, virtually no citizen could explain how the system works.

Indeed, in Vancouver and across the country a great deal of nonsense has been written and exposed about local vs. regional governance. Many seem to believe that somehow local or neighbourhood constituencies are more important than regional ones, and that any attempt to govern on a regional basis must be resisted at all costs. Hence the absurdity of the public-choice arguments that lead—in the case of many American metropolitan areas—to city regions with, literally, hundreds of local governments. The fact is that city-regions are governable, and a single tier system can work. To be sure—as Unicity advocates recognized at the outset—local interests must be recognized and understood. Hence, through mechanisms like Resident Advisory Groups, local and regional interests can be defined. But we must not believe the analysts who wax eloquent about the clash between local and regional, and who argue that consolidated governments cannot work.

It is, I believe, exceptionally notable that during the City of Winnipeg Act Review in the mid-1980s, not one of the 300 submissions suggested a return to a two tier system of local governments and a regional government. The fact is that citizens are way ahead of our politicians; they intuitively understand that there is something called an urban region and that it should be governed accordingly. Change, however, is difficult when the beneficiaries of the fragmented systems—hundreds of local politicians and bureaucrats and provincial administrators that want to “divide and conquer”—are in charge.

The achievement of Unicity was that it cut through this rhetoric (I was going to call it something else), and forged ahead with a bold, innovative and far-reaching experiment with urban governance.

4. GETTING ON WITH THE TASK

My final point looks to the future rather than the past or present. I do not believe that there is some magic formula that can be discovered and applied to any situation and—presto—nirvana. I do believe, however, that in the coming years, city-regions must address issues of governance realistically if they are to survive and—more importantly—thrive. In addressing these issues, certain tests must be passed; tests that are clear and precise even though passing them will mean different answers in different places. In this respect, Unicity is far ahead of other Canadian jurisdictions. Consider the following issues. Any effective government system must meet three process tests and three substantive tests.

Under process, it must be:

- *Democratic*, with clear lines of representation, accessibility and accountability.
- *Jurisdictional*, with clear lines of responsibility, for both forming policy and implementing policy.
- *Geographic*, with appropriate boundaries to deal with the effective urban region.

Under substantive issues, it must be:

- Economically Competent
- Socially Effective
- Environmentally Capable

In applying these tests to Unicity, one would have to give Winnipeg a high grade. This is not to say that continued evolution is not needed, or that there has not been slippage in some of the categories over the past quarter century. There has, and I trust that a renewed interest in these issues might lead to new energy in bringing the Unicity system of governance back into balance.

In contrast, when I apply these same tests to Greater Vancouver, it fails virtually every test. Indeed, as one political scientist recently noted, the much vaunted, flexible GVRD system is really a case of the emperor having no clothes.

CONCLUSION

If Unicity had not been instituted in 1972, it would need to be today. The fact is that Winnipeg—by dint of character and circumstance—was at the forefront of governmental reform in 1972. For the past 25 years, other jurisdictions have messed and fussed over institutional arrangements and consumed inordinate amounts of precious energy discussing processes and structures, instead of getting on with the task of governing. Here in Winnipeg, you have had the distinct advantage of having in place a system that works. To be sure, problems exist. But I am convinced that a significant degree of the city's success is the result of the Unicity organization.

For those of us who live elsewhere, let me suggest to you that perhaps it is time for Winnipeg and Manitoba to lead the way again by making the functioning of Unicity as effective as the fundamental design.

UNICITY: BUREAUCRATIC SUCCESS, POLITICAL NIGHTMARE

Peter Diamant

It is a pleasure to be on this panel and to have the opportunity to reflect on some of the successes and failures of the Unicity experience that many of us here today sometimes participated in and sometimes just watched.

In sitting down to organize my thoughts for today, my working title for this presentation was, “Bureaucratic Success, Political Nightmare.” What is it about local government in Winnipeg that causes many to dismiss it as inefficient, out of touch with what the citizens of Winnipeg want and incapable of making a decision? True, the same commentary could be applied to the other two levels of government—and to other cities. But it does reflect how many Winnipeggers view their city. Interestingly, they do not blame amalgamation for the problems. After 25 years it is doubtful that people even relate the two. But after 25 years Winnipeggers do note that:

- the province is still tinkering with the City of Winnipeg Act and the structure of local government in Winnipeg;
- the province is still in constant conflict with Winnipeg over differing positions on planning and exurban sprawl; and
- the province is still complaining about Winnipeg’s mismanagement of its financial resources and its high level of property taxes.

This presentation is not intended to discuss local government structures, amalgamation trends, citizen participation and access to local government decision-making. What it will focus on is the political relationships between Winnipeg and Manitoba, and the political difficulties that have arisen since amalgamation. The comments will be directed towards the political conflicts that have resulted from:

- creating a unicity that is 60 percent of the province’s population;
- creating a mayor that is elected by 60 percent of the province’s population; and
- creating a council that, if structured as a strong local government, has the potential to be a political threat to a provincial government, regardless of which party is in power.

In short, it will be argued, that to a significant extent, the apparent weakness of Unicity has little to do with the amalgamation 25 years ago, and less to do with structure. In fact, the Unicity concept as it has evolved over the past 25 years in Winnipeg, is a significant step forward in the reform of local government in Canada. Cities such as Halifax and Toronto could avoid some of the pitfalls if they look at the Winnipeg experience. Winnipeg’s failures are most closely related to the unwillingness, or inability, of successive provincial governments to take the necessary risks; the unwillingness of provincial governments to risk giving

Winnipeg the autonomy, the financial resources and the responsibilities needed to function as an independent level of government.

The seeds of the problem go back a long time. Much has been written about the reform movements at the turn of the century and the distrust of local politicians and the delivery of local services. The proliferation of single-purpose boards and agencies, whether they be parks boards, transportation commissions or hydro corporations, continues today. But the seeds also were present when the two-tier Metro Winnipeg was established in 1960. If local government was to be more like a business with a board of directors and a strong administration, then Metro was a good example. Ten councillors were elected in large pie-shaped wards with little accountability to their constituents. It was a time of prosperity, growth, generous federal sewer and water subsidies—a time of seemingly unlimited funds. It was a time of action and activity—a time when politicians and administrators could get things done. Many former participants of Metro reflect on that time with romantic nostalgia.

But within ten years, there was general dissatisfaction with the two-tier metropolitan government. Metro had been an administrative success. The modernization of Winnipeg's infrastructure had its foundation in Metro. The administrative accomplishments were many. The administrative success of the amalgamation in Winnipeg is in no little part the direct result of the administrative amalgamation of services undertaken by Metro. But as pointed out by Brownstone and Plunkett in their book, *Metropolitan Winnipeg: Politics and Reform of Local Government*:

Metro had not been a political success. The Metropolitan Corporation was misunderstood and disliked, got little backing from the provincial government, had few political resources of its own, and in Mayor Juba confronted a powerful opponent who took every opportunity to attack.*

But far too much, in my mind, has been made of Mayor Juba's influences, whether it be on Metro, or whether it be on the decision to have the mayor elected at large instead of elected by council, as was originally proposed. Of more relevance are the comments in the quote, "little backing from the provincial government, and few political resources of its own."

The province during the time of metro was not prepared to give Metro the autonomy and resources it needed to function, just as the province was not prepared to give Winnipeg the autonomy and resources it needed to function. This is neither surprising nor unique. Metropolitan areas in the 'sixties and 'seventies were faced with rapid urbanization and expansion across the country. Small municipalities and fragmented metropolitan areas were not organized to deal with the problems of suburban development and changing

*Brownstone, M. and T.J. Plunkett, *Metropolitan Winnipeg: Politics and Reform of Local Government* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), p. 32.

transportation patterns. Provinces questioned whether municipal governments were mature enough to handle the situation. If municipalities are the creatures of the provinces, then the provinces were the parents of the municipalities. And the provinces were not prepared, and many would argue rightly so, to give over complete control of their offspring.

There were two forces at work in early Unicity. One was the force for administrative centralization. This led to the centralization of political power at city hall. While the stated intention was to centralize the delivery of regional services on the one hand, and to decentralize political access on the other, the centralization forces dominated at both the administrative and political levels. When the community committees were established, their role was unclear, their responsibilities restricted and their influences on budgeting and planning limited. The provincial government was ambiguous about political decentralization. It was not ambiguous about centralizing power at the city hall.

The second force was the strong resistance to overt political parties at city hall. The intention, apparent in the amalgamation process, was the establishment of a political structure that would encourage party politics at city hall. While few will argue that political groupings were absent from city hall after Unicity, witness the continued dominance of the ICEC, the Independent Citizens Election Committee, party politics in any formal sense were avoided. Policy development, political platforms and strong party leadership were left to the individual councillors. The political bargaining necessary to gain advantage for one's ward occurred at city hall, not at the community committee. In the absence of parties with coherent policies, the councillors focused on projects. The politicians controlled the project agenda. It was left to the administration to control the policy agenda.

While there was a debate over what were the appropriate roles and responsibilities for Winnipeg at the time of amalgamation, it was tradition rather than innovation that won out. The City of Winnipeg Act was very specific and restrictive in what the city could do. Any new activities the city might want to initiate required legislative amendments. The city was dependent on the province for approval. It is interesting to note that although Stephen Juba argued for home rule years ago, Alberta is the only province that has moved to give municipalities some control over certain spheres of jurisdiction. Other provincial governments still are hesitant to provide permissive powers in municipal legislation. Electing the mayor by council, although it does not automatically lead to party politics, was intended to encourage political parties. The province, in deciding to have the mayor elected at large with limited powers, continued the Canadian tradition of a weak mayor/strong council system—a system that works against strong leadership, which makes policy development difficult and which tends towards the dominance of parochial interests over city wide interests.

What is interesting, however, about the past 25 years is that, almost unnoticed by the literature and the many commentaries on the Winnipeg experience, there has been a slow but steady evolution of the

powers of the mayor. Today, the mayor of Winnipeg has more control over budget and planning issues, more power of appointment and more responsibility for the administrative structure than in any other city in Canada. It is not the political structure that is the problem.

There has, over the past 25 years, been an uneasy relationship between the province and the city. The province, uncertain of, and worried about, the potential political strength of a strong Unicity, has always kept a very close watch over the city. Establishing the Department of Urban Affairs had two goals. It could monitor the activities of the city, provide a direct contact and respond to issues as they arose. Its second purpose was to act as a buffer—a buffer to ensure that the mayor and council were not perceived to have the status of a premier and provincial government—a buffer to confirm that local government was the third and subordinate level of government.

From the very beginning the province has been unsure of how to deal with Winnipeg. On the one hand, it has frequently ignored the city's wishes, and on the other hand, it has just as frequently intervened in the city's activities. It is not suggested here that provincial intervention is unjustified, unwanted by Winnipeggers and unnecessary. But inconsistent intervention, *ad hoc* and based frequently on political imperatives, has created a schizophrenic response at city hall. It has limited council's ability to act on its own. Examples of intervention abound:

- The province is constantly changing the political structure. The number of community committees has gone from 12 to 6 to 5. Now there is no relationship to administrative divisions or traditional community and neighbourhood boundaries. The number of councillors has gone from 50 to 29 to 15.
- At the same time as the province was allowing extensive exurban development and removing the city's control of planning in the additional zone, the province tried to force an urban limit line on to the city to restrict development within the city boundaries. The province only partly succeeded in establishing the urban limit line, but it did sour provincial/municipal relations. And exurban development is fast becoming a regional problem. In fact, many of the issues raised in 1970 at the time of amalgamation are present today in the Winnipeg region.
- The province played its part in pushing the city towards the debt crisis it has today. The province forced Winnipeg to stop transferring operating revenues to the capital budget to offset capital expenditures. At the time the city was transferring approximately \$10 million to capital. Shortly after, the city went from a high tax/low debt city to a high tax/high debt city. While the province cannot be blamed for the debt problem, the consequences of its intervention in how the city budgeted for capital expenditures had an influence.
- Not all the intervention was negative. The province was aware of the potential for a negative backlash if amalgamation resulted in higher property taxes. The province took a keen interest in the city's mill

rate and was very careful to ensure that provincial operating grants were adequate to keep mill rate increases down to a minimum. But it was this paternalistic attitude that persisted into the early 'eighties and set the tone for Winnipeg/Manitoba relationships.

Much of this discussion has questioned the role of the provincial government in making Winnipeg's amalgamation a success. This does not mean that Unicity was necessarily a failure. Quite the contrary. This author believes that the critics of amalgamation in general and of Winnipeg in particular are missing the point. The criticism are based on two principles:

- that amalgamation does not bring the promised savings; and
- that there is a loss of local identity, loss of access to local decision-making and decreased neighbourhood and citizen participation.

It is worth taking a look at these criticisms. While short-term savings may not be apparent, the long-term benefits of an equalized tax base and centralized administration for regional services do exist. When one looks at the increases in expenditure of major metropolitan governments in the six years from 1990 to 1995 inclusive, the figures suggest that expenditures in two-tiered metropolitan systems have increased substantially more than in amalgamated cities such as Winnipeg and Calgary. Maybe the problem is that two-tiered systems, with their split jurisdictions, competing activities and dual administrations tend to force costs up, particularly at the upper level.

The long-term consequences of fragmented neighbouring jurisdictions with differential tax rates and varied assessment bases is not dependent on the short-term savings or costs. In a time when municipalities are moving into a global economy, economic development at the metropolitan level in Canada is non-existent. Where it has occurred, it has been initiated by provincial rather than metropolitan governments. Municipalities in metropolitan areas compete against each other for new economic activity. This may be good for businesses, but it can only make the inequities even greater and increase the gap between the have and have not municipalities.

The second criticism is more significant. The initial reaction is that the political decentralization envisioned in the original Unicity White Paper has failed. Certainly, the Resident Advisory Groups are almost non-existent and Community Committees have little relevance. But does the Winnipeg experience really show that neighbourhood involvement and citizen participation have been hindered by Unicity? They have been hindered by lack of resources and lack of commitment from both the municipal and provincial governments. And certainly the decreased size of council and the increased size of ward now means that each councillor represents over 40,000 constituents. But those changes have more to do with the province's tinkering for its own political purposes than it does with the principles of amalgamation. Although the size of council is not the issue or problem, 15 councillors is too small a council. But even so, the Winnipeg tradition of community and

neighbourhood action is still strong. And because of amalgamation and the decision to limit the planning responsibilities of the Community Committees, Winnipeg, without a forum at the larger scale, has been forced to respond at the neighbourhood level. The neighbourhood characterization analysis done by the Winnipeg Planning Department in the late 'seventies and early 'eighties has formed the context for Winnipeg's neighbourhood action.

Neighbourhood Improvement Programs are still active, Business Improvement Zones have been successful and interest groups have proved themselves capable of organizing and influencing council. The St. Boniface residents took a development case all the way to the Supreme Court and a small group of residents in one of the poorest areas of the city saved their Logan community, even though the Core Area Initiative recommended its demolition. The urban Aboriginal community is organizing and expanding its activities. In fact, one might argue that Unicity, as it has evolved, has changed little. It has neither encouraged or discouraged neighbourhoods and interest groups to organize themselves. Certainly, there are few councillors who would not respond to a well organized residents' group, no matter how large his or her ward might be. Winnipeg's tradition of community action is still alive. A decrease in citizen participation may have as much to do with societal changes as it does with changes to local government structures.

Better mechanisms for the inclusion of citizens in the decision-making process are needed. The size of the municipality has little to do with the success or failure of those mechanisms. The commitment to citizen involvement by elected provincial politicians through their municipal legislation, and the commitment to citizen involvement by municipal politicians through their actions, does have an influence on whether or not there is successful participation. To suggest that an amalgamation in a large metropolitan area will automatically decrease participation is to confuse the issue. Both governance and participation in a town of 2,000 with a council of five is completely different from governance and participation in a metropolitan area, whether it be 700,000 or 2.4 million residents.

In conclusion, Unicity may have been a success in accomplishing its goal of equalizing the tax base, of centralizing administrative power and of coordinating the delivering of regional services. It has the potential, still unrealized, to maintain and improve participation and access to local decision-making. But it has been a failure in providing strong local government. And to a great extent this is the result of the unwillingness or inability of successive provincial governments in providing Winnipeg with the autonomy and resources to function independently in its spheres of influence. The same unwillingness is evident in Nova Scotia with the amalgamation of Halifax where there is still a differential tax base. It will be interesting to see which powers are given to the new Toronto and to the proposed Greater Toronto Management Board.

Provinces are anxious to wrestle more powers and access to resources from Ottawa. The same does not seem to be the case when it comes to giving powers and access to resources to municipalities.

Amalgamations today are favoured by governments in Nova Scotia and Ontario as a means of effecting savings and off-loading delivery of certain services. The results may be political bodies with the potential to rival the provinces themselves. These municipalities have to come to grips with how to balance neighbourhood and metropolitan wide interests. Fragmented metropolitan areas will have trouble competing economically. The future depends on strong municipal governments that have the powers to co-ordinate regional services and the sensitivity and mechanisms to respond to local concerns. It will take a new attitude at the provincial level to go beyond political restructuring and to provide the autonomy and access necessary to create those strong municipalities.



Photo 1: Swearing in of first City Council of unified Winnipeg at special Legislative Building ceremony on October 8, 1971. At head table: Finance Minister Saul Cherniack, Mayor Steve Juba, Premier Ed Schreyer and Resource Minister Sidney Green (Source: Western Canada Pictorial Index *Winnipeg Free Press* Collection).

UNICITY: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Muriel Smith

I approach the topic of “Unicity—25 Years Later” from my personal experience. Being of relatively “advanced years,” I knew the city and other cities long before Unicity was born. My perspectives come from that experience.

I grew up in one-industry mining towns in B.C., Washington State and at Snow Lake in Northern Manitoba, the “first planned town in Manitoba.” These were all company towns, although the latter two had both a company town section and a privately owned residential and commercial section. The survival of these towns was also very tightly tied to the fate of the mine, which was in turn dependent on fluctuating global commodity prices.

There is only a remnant of one town; the core of the other has been preserved as a church retreat, and the third had a renaissance when another mine was discovered nearby. What I enjoyed in these towns was a sense of community and belonging, although when I look back, I realize my towns had major characteristics about which I would not today feel quite as comfortable or complacent. They were “benevolent dictatorships” with the labour unions providing some balance of power. As a child of management, I may have had some bias.

My first brush with city living took place in the fall of 1945 when we lived in a rented floor of a home at Stradbrook and Wellington Crescent (one of the two removed for the redeveloped system of one-way streets in the 1980s). Being strangers to the city, we explored Fort Rouge and Riverview, and attended baseball games at the old Osborne stadium—replacing in part the routines we had enjoyed in our mining town homes. I still didn’t know where young people, particularly young women, could safely go to make friends and socialize.

I was sent to a downtown boarding school (Rupertsland on Carlton and Broadway) because my mining parents would soon be moving north. Forced to take two daily half hour walks, we explored that section of the inner city, and even found some respite from the cold in the stately Legislative buildings. We were just a short walk away through the city’s oldest residential area, complete with its own red light district, from the Auditorium, that relic of Depression Public Works, where we attended the renowned Celebrity Concert Series that brought the world’s greatest musical artists to our doorstep. I was gradually discovering the riches of city life.

High school was followed by university, first at Junior Division at Broadway and Memorial Boulevard, later at the Fort Garry Campus. I stayed at one home in River Heights for two years, at the Fort Garry residence for another two, and in what is now Osborne Village for another one. We were heavy users of public

transportation—streetcars and buses—and also covered extensive areas on foot. The frequency of streetcars and buses became a matter of deep concern, especially when the temperatures were many degrees below zero and trousers were not yet accepted garb for women students.

After graduating, I spent two years in England. In London, I relied completely on public transit; spent many hours prowling around areas being redeveloped after the blitz with huge blocks of publicly subsidized and affordable council flats. The impact of the Labour Government's programmes for public health, public education and income support were clearly weakening some of the class divisions. Throughout, much of the character of London as a series of small villages was being preserved, particularly since the era of the mammoth shopping centres had not yet supplanted the friendly (if time consuming) networks of local shops. That was also the era of the green belt development that ringed London, and the first efforts to revive the Thames and clean the air and prevent those dreadful unhealthy smogs. We actually drove into London the day of the infamous fog that killed dozens of cattle at the White City stockyards, and sent many people into respiratory crisis.

My second year was spent in Oxford as a married woman. I discovered the values of getting around by bicycle in a crowded urban environment. My bike was my salvation as far as getting to work was concerned once I became pregnant and had to cope with morning sickness. I was also an easy captive to the charm of this historic English town even as I grumbled along with everyone else about the absence of some of my accustomed creature comforts like central heating and refrigerators.

Back in Winnipeg, I settled down to being wife and mother (4 children in 6 years) in the newest part of South River Heights. We had no car, no sidewalks, few neighbours and sparse bus service, but we were happy and preoccupied. My beefs about the city arose when I just had to get myself and the four children to the dentist or doctor or downtown—too few buses, no bus shelters . . . you get the picture. To keep myself occupied and in pocket money, I marked essays and city planning theses for their English. The Professor (Joe Kostka whom some of you may remember was quite capable of editing but didn't think he was) inadvertently gave me a short course in city planning: from a focus on "zoning" and "engineering installations," through the fascination with "amenities," to a surprising focus on "rehabilitation" and "people participation."

Because of that interest, I became a member of the Community Planning Association of Canada (CPAC). I took part in a mock trial of city planners and councillors as the suburban woman witness where I recounted some of my struggles with buses and the poverty of nearby places within the walking capacity of myself and my children which would offer playground activity, natural beauty and some opportunity to socialize with other adults. Prospects are much better today but I'm a grandmother and don't have quite the same need for that kind of recreational opportunity.

My awareness of urban issues was further expanded during those years at home through the CBC.

That's where I heard discussions about the folly of letting cities develop according to the "doughnut model" —with suburban spread and inner city blight, spaghetti-like development of streets and ring belts; the concentration of the poor, the ill, the most recent immigrants and the elderly in the older inner city neighbourhoods, the predominance of tax systems that stimulated unlimited growth over a better quality and more egalitarian form of rehabilitation and development, the tendency of developers and lawyers to win elections over social activists and "ordinary" citizens.

I also heard about Jane Jacobs, that indomitable New York woman who challenged the wisdom of warehousing people in huge, identical high-rise apartments rather than through selective infill building and general rehabilitation with the local people serving as active participants . . . And about Saul Alinsky, that Chicago activist who was using unorthodox ways to enable poor people to act collectively on their own behalf to improve their neighbourhoods.

Through my involvement with the YWCA, I rubbed shoulders with people involved in federally supported urban housing renewal schemes, and with social and recreational agencies who were trying to add so-called "soft" services to the development mix. These were exciting initiatives, but always on a scale that fell far short of what was needed to reverse the other more dominant trends.

About the time when I became active in the NDP, Unicity was being brought in. Arguments within the party centred around whether city politics should be partisan or non-partisan. Several city councillors had always run under a party label. The question was whether the municipal wing should be fully integrated with the provincial party or not. Since it was an NDP Government that had introduced the Unicity legislation, the debate was intense. I favoured integration because I thought the issues were value based and involved the appropriate role of the "state." I felt that coherent policy approaches at both levels would help advance the cause of equity, and later of sustainability. The Premier of the day seemed to prefer a "balance of power" approach. The issue of inter-jurisdictional relations continues to affect the well-being of today's Unicity. The *Winnipeg Free Press* editorial page was ardently opposed to party politics at city hall, but by the mid 1990s appeared to have done a flip flop.

The main arguments in favour of Unicity were said to be efficiency and better co-ordination. Emerging issues such as energy efficiency, environmental protection of air and water quality, appropriate waste disposal, were just beginning to appear on the agenda. On the social and popular participation side, the original plan called for social animators/community developers to be assigned to each community committee to assist in the distribution of accurate information and to foster wide public participation, but this element was never adequately funded or developed.

In the 'eighties, I saw the issues from the provincial government's perspective. I knew something about the history of inter-jurisdictional disputes. The BNA Act's Division of Powers had hardly recognized

municipalities, but had set out a provincial-federal division of powers that seemed appropriate in 1867. Since then, not only have cities grown that operate under Provincial Acts, but the functions of each level of government have undergone considerable evolution. Enormous strains arose during the Depression when the responsibilities of municipal and provincial levels of government were in no way matched by their ability to raise the necessary funds. These dilemmas were resolved through administrative agreements rather than through constitutional amendments. Many tensions remain and will require continual negotiation and adjustment. Many have argued that the municipal levels have suffered the most.

The main tensions I recall from my days on the province-city liaison committee were: different philosophies about development: should it be almost exclusively private sector driven, with supportive tax regimes, or should the “state” set some parameters, e.g., for public transportation and special services for seniors and people with disabilities—even for purchase of buses; for public/affordable housing; for social/recreational/cultural services; for areas needing special or compensatory services; for the relative amount of capital committed to new construction *versus* that committed to rehabilitation of older homes and neighbourhoods. How should tri-level government agreements such as that on the Forks be developed? Who should be included? We held out for Aboriginal, cultural and historical elements and participants. Should the province play a role in setting social assistance rates or eligibility criteria? Since the province controlled not only the City of Winnipeg Act but also the annual grants, these issues were of particular concern to the City. They sought complete autonomy, but lacked the financial resources, or even the capacity to go into debt, to back up their demands. The inter-jurisdictional tensions involving fiscal responsibility for Manitoba’s Aboriginal population, many living off the reserves and in Winnipeg, have introduced new, challenging elements to the debates.

The existence and location of the urban limit line was another contentious issue, an issue about which the present government took a very different position from the previous government. Currently, this issue has been revived in connection with liability for flooding compensation. Environmental issues have more recently emerged as critical issues which involve the two levels of government.

Since then, structural changes driven by economic globalization, and the federal cutback strategy chosen to deal with debt and deficit problems, have had fallout impacts on the city. There are new costs relating to ecological sustainability, renewal of aging infrastructure, growing unemployment and the resulting increase in social costs, the withdrawal of the federal government from providing lower cost housing, the tendencies to blame the poor for their difficulties, and the emergence of safety concerns, particularly those affecting women, children and seniors; the influx of Aboriginal peoples, greatly accelerated urban sprawl with no urban limit line, the enormous costs of dealing with heavy snow falls and the 1997 flood, all these issues bedevil Unicity.

THE FUTURE

To sort out my thoughts on priorities for the future of Unicity, I think it is helpful:

1. To pursue a co-operative approach to the greatest extent possible (others have spoken about the structural changes they think would be helpful);
2. To recognize the different priorities that different political philosophies bring to the table as a first step to identifying where consensus can be found;
3. To identify the tri-partite issues and the options available, short and longer term, for dealing with them;
4. To experiment with more and more effective ways to inform and involve the public in meaningful ways.

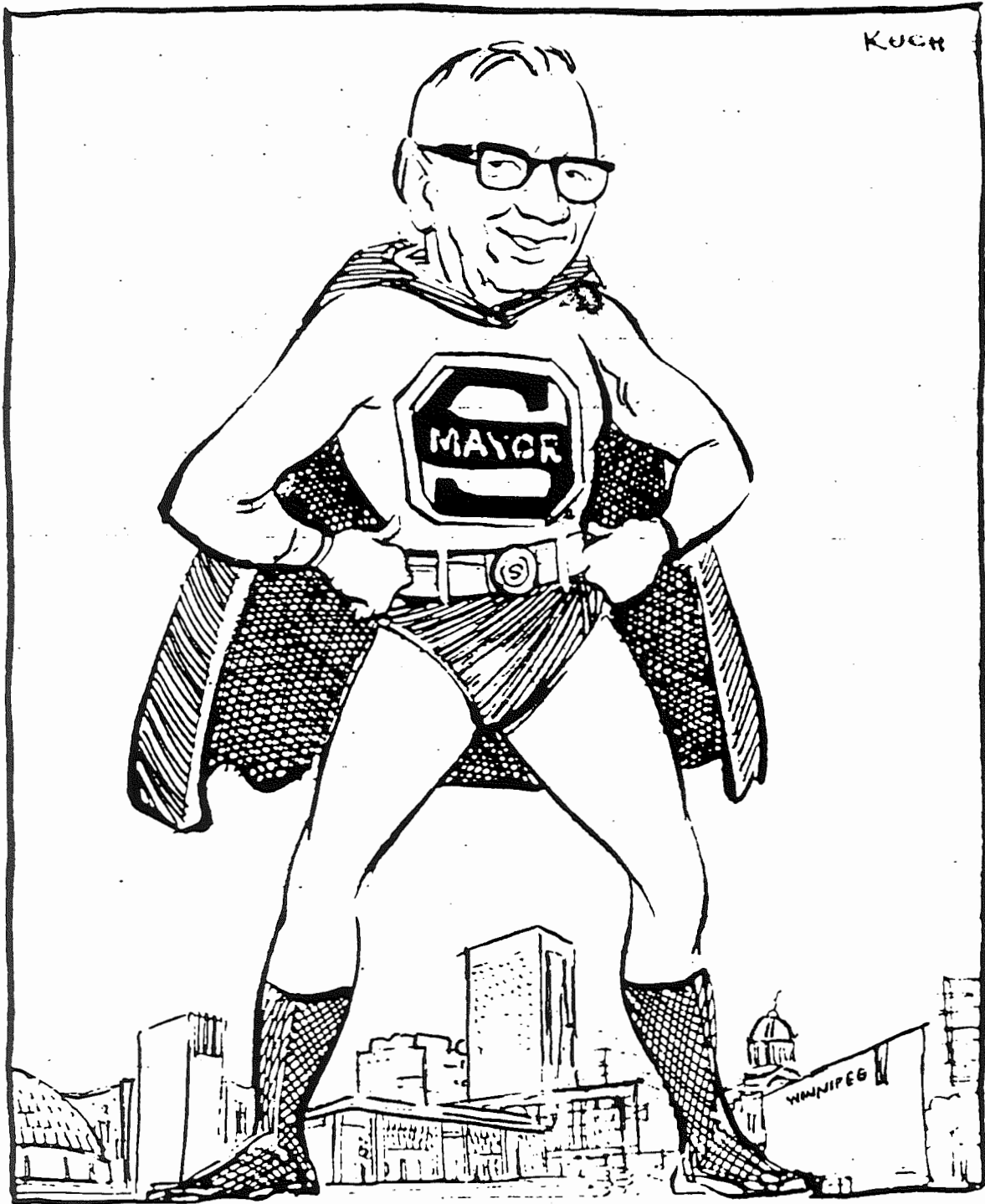


Figure 2: Steve Juba as Super Mayor after unification of Winnipeg (Credit: Peter Kuch, Source: *Winnipeg Free Press*, October 7, 1971).

REFLECTIONS ON UNICITY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN WINNIPEG*

Bernie Wolfe

My few notes are based in large part on the publication by Tom Plunkett, whom I consider to be one of the best urban planners and urban government specialists of his day.” Tom Plunkett worked for us at the Canadian Federation of Mayors. The Canadian Federation of Mayors held three tri-level conferences at which the federal government and the representatives of municipal government and all ten provinces attended, which is more than you can say today. From that flowed the establishment of the Department of Urban Affairs under Bob Andras from Thunder Bay. Thunder Bay was going through the great throes of unification—from Fort William and Port Arthur into Thunder Bay. Oddly enough, about five years later, because of pressure from the provincial governments, particularly the municipal ministers, the federal government caved in and wiped out the Department. That was rather a sad day in the history of municipal government for all of us, because we had a direct line of communication to people who were passing federal legislation that affected the growth, development and the life of people in urban Canada.

Before I plunge into my few comments about Unicity, I have a quotation that was made during the Canadian Federation meeting in Edmonton, 1968. It puts into perspective the kind of problems we face in urban Canada today and faced then, and so help me, not a great deal has changed since:

We have created in our cities, vast commercial and industrial complexes which increase our wealth, but we have created them only to see too many of them blot out the beauty of our landscape or pollute our air and water. We hold out to our people the promise and even the realization of rising economic opportunity in our urban centres, only to degrade them socially and humanly with inadequate housing, lack of open space and impossible transportation conditions.

Now, doesn't that sound familiar. This is 1997, thirty years later almost, and it applies today as much as it did then. By the way, some fellow by the name of Pierre Trudeau said that.

Tom Plunkett put into perspective the objectives Unicity was to try to accomplish. I say *try* to accomplish. He said, “the act places emphasis on the primary responsibilities of the committees [talking about the various standing committees of the City] as being the formulation of policy recommendations, and the evaluation of policy implementation by the administration.” In other words, develop a program, develop a policy, give it to the administration and see that it is carried out. And that is what we did back in 1972 in Winnipeg. That was one of the best civic administrations in Canada, headed by D.I. MacDonald, who was

* Luncheon address, October 4, 1997.

**Thomas Plunkett, *Winnipeg, Canada's Third Largest City: An Explanation of its New Government* (Winnipeg, 1973).

the Chief Commissioner. They were committed, talented, capable administrative professionals who would run any city. You do not get too many like that across this country today. "The structure provides the means whereby council can focus mainly on policy decision-making, the initiation of which will come primarily from the committees." That was the role and function of the elected person. You had to give a thing called leadership which is a mighty important ingredient in any level of government. "Under the structure, it is anticipated that council, when meeting as a whole, will be expected to act more as the deliberative and legislative body concerned largely with issues and policies rather than administrative detail." That should strike a chord! Just look at the daily papers which tell you what goes on down on Main Street. "Rather than administrative detail as has been the frequent preoccupation of municipal councils in the past." Well so much for the past, because it's *déjà vu* all over again.

It is reminiscent of what Earl Levin and I have often looked at—the change in government across Western Canada where you saw the change from an agrarian existence to an urban one as people fled the farms and villages, which disappeared. Places like Saskatoon, Regina, Calgary and Edmonton got bigger and bigger and bigger and there were fewer towns out in the country. That is a fact of life.

I want to correct some of the statements made yesterday [in the Keynote Address]—not to correct, just to clarify, to be somewhat more accurate, to get the history in proper perspective. When Unicity came in, a lot of the municipalities brought a legacy of infrastructure that had been paid for. The storm sewer systems in places in St. Boniface, Transcona and St. James were in place and paid for, but when they joined Unicity, they suddenly found out they were going to have to pay the bill for the replacement of the inner city joint sewer system. So they paid twice. More than that, St. James brought five or six million dollars in cold cash. Transcona gave them a beautiful golf course that is probably worth a million bucks. They did not come to the marriage of Unicity empty-handed, they brought some legacy. Most of the municipalities did. And quite frankly, let us be clear in all our minds collectively: there was not a great demand from the eight or nine municipalities that said, yes, we want Unicity! Quite the opposite! You talk to the people in St. Vital, St. Boniface, Kildonan, Fort Garry, St. James, West Kildonan, the last thing they wanted was to lose their identity and the closeness of serving their people. Because government is not a business.

I hear people say, "You have to run city hall like a business." If that was a business, nobody could buy shares in it. No one would want to buy shares in it. It is not a business. What it is, is a service delivery system for people. You deliver service whether its fire, police, water or streets. So let us not delude ourselves and say that government is a business.

We live in this realm of fantasy land. You say you are going to bring back the whole core by opening up Portage and Main. Now that's a classic! Have you been down to Portage and Main lately? There is not a store for blocks where you could buy anything. We just finished spending probably \$60 or \$80 million for

two bridges on Main Street to bring traffic where—downtown to Portage and Main. Strange, isn't it, that suddenly we discovered that we are going to wave this magic wand and everything is going to change. Well, I quit believing in Alice in Wonderland a long time ago. I believe there is a difference between nostalgia and reality.

One of the things I pride myself on is when I had to make decisions, I made them. In the words of Harry Truman, if you made a decision, and it's the wrong one, he said what do you do is—you make another one. It is that simple. Admit your mistake and make the next decision. That was part of what Unicity was all about. Look at Unicity today: One gets the feeling that you are looking at a municipal administration that is functioning on steroids. You have to take a good hard look at the reality between the role and the function of what they are supposed to be doing, and what they are actually delivering in the way of service. Someone said yesterday that the savings forecast for Unicity were never realized. Well I was not one of those that forecast savings. I knew it was going to cost more money, because you equalize at the top level. People wanted the same service in St. Vital as they got in Tuxedo, like where Bill Norrie used to live on Wellington Crescent. So, if there was any illusion that services were equalized, this is again a piece of pure fantasy land, because there was no question that it depended on where you came from. When it was a local government, you could get to the local engineer and the local councillors and say, "Hey, you're not doing your job." And we lost that.

I have to say that, with respect, and I never speak ill of the dead, you would never have had Unicity come into being if someone else was heading the City of Winnipeg other than the incumbent at that time. It was an on-going guerilla warfare that was unbelievable! It did not matter what Metro said, the City would know it's wrong. It's black, it's white. What a way to run a government! It was fun!

You hear people say the magic was when we had the Core Area Initiatives. Lloyd Axworthy made darn sure he got all the money he could out of Ottawa and poured it into Winnipeg. I guess that's why he is where he is today.

Now we are going through it again with the WDA [Winnipeg Development Agreement] and I would like to see some results pretty soon. Seems to me I made representations to that, on behalf of a number of organizations about two and half, three years ago. I would like to see some results. Less conversation and more action! More decisions and less talk!

That is what is happening at Unicity. We talked about the initial establishment of community committees. Well, by a strange thing it was a contradiction in itself. They established Unicity and then set up community committees that were identical to the former municipal units and the three wards in the city. So what was changed?—not a great deal. It was a contradiction in the whole concept of unification.

I will not take time to talk about the assessment fiasco because it is going to be with you for a long

time, so get used to it. It is not just going to go away. I wish more people could understand what you do when you read a bottom line. If it does not come out black, you're in trouble. If it is in the red, you'd better go down to the bank and borrow some more money, because you have a problem. I think one of the problems we face with some facets of the present government is they have a tough time reading a balance sheet. Where else would you find a government that would spend a million and a quarter to buy a building they could have got at tax sale for about two hundred thousand bucks? That is your money and mine we are talking about. And I'm not fooling you. They turned down the advice of their own administration when they went ahead and did that.

The legacy that Metro left Unicity was a development plan, the area transportation plan. They are still building the bridges where Metro told them to 20 years ago. The last one was the Murray Haney extension from Charleswood to St. James. The blueprint that was left, that they inherited, they did follow. At least they were able to read that much. You look at the whole concept of sewer and water, that's a fundamentally important issue if you are running a city. If you run short of water you have a problem; if you cannot get rid of your sewage you have got a bigger problem!

The difficulty I have in accepting the way they run this city today is the relationship between the elected person and the staff. They work on the basis, that what you do, is terrorize your staff. You beat them up in public. You say you are going to be fired, your job is finished. In my day, and Steve Juba was no different; if we had a difference between a member of the Board of Commissioners or one of the staff, he would say can I see you in my office and you close the door. But you do not do it in public, because what they have done, they have left this city a legacy of a completely demoralized administration. You cannot get people to function when you have not got their loyalty; you do not trust their judgement. When you are elected, that does not mean you suddenly become knowledgeable in every phase of government. We use to say to the people who went to the House of Commons, the moment you sit in a seat in the House of Commons does not suddenly transmit all the knowledge of the people who sat in that seat before you. That is not how information flows.

Again, we go back to that old rural concept of where the councillor said you are going to get gravel on your road, and I will clean your ditch, and you had better be nice. That is how we made sure he was re-elected, the way we use to pave asphalt in Nova Scotia. It was called "political asphalt." Boy, come an election everyone got asphalt on their road!

You cannot run a government that way. You cannot work on the basis that the mayor can hire and fire. Now that is ridiculous. First of all, what I find really hard to understand: you are running a billion dollar business, almost as big as the Royal Bank (not quite). But do you go out and hire someone who has got the experience, who brings the knowledge and understanding of what government is all about? Do you go out and

get a bunch of rookies to run the Royal Bank? Like hell you do! You go out and get the best brains you can get, who know what competition is all about and know how to make a dollar work. The difficulty is that it is very expensive to train people on the job politically. It can lead to all kinds of problems. You should come with some background of community service, whether you come through the chairs as Bill Norrie did: he was a school trustee; he was a councillor; he was the mayor. I did almost as well, but not quite. But you bring something called experience!

You have to define the role of the politician and the Commissioners and understand how they integrate and how they work together. It's a team operation. One of the things that has come out of this whole Unicity omelet is the need for leadership. Earl Levin and I got into a discussion one day. He said the two ingredients that are needed in any level of government is (a) leadership and (b) money. Well, whatever way you have it, you could have the money first and leadership will come. But you cannot run the city and you cannot run the business without money. That's why I said last night when you look at the revenue that accrues to the province, almost 70 percent of the entire provincial revenue comes from Greater Winnipeg. And most of it is in the growth tax area. Saul Cherniack will remember the day he and Saul Miller came to a meeting when we had about 130 representatives from some 100 municipalities show up at city hall. To his great credit, he went back and he rewrote the legislation. It was the first time in this country you had a growth tax sharing with the municipality. Give Saul full credit for that. And that's where you have to get more of that kind of thing.

Another thing is the communication between the city and the provincial government (I won't mention the minister). I meet with the minister at least once a month and another one every couple of months to exchange ideas and have them pick my brains, and I do the same for them. The line of communication between the provincial government and this city is astonishing. I think at times it just does not exist. I find that strange, because Gary Filmon used to be Chairman of Works and Operations. Eric Stefanson was the Finance Chair. Is there something, some sort of transformation that gets to you when you hit Broadway? You forget where Main Street is? In the good old Metro days and the early days of Unicity, when Ed Schreyer was there and before him, Duff Roblin, we met every month, at least once a month. We met for lunch, sometimes it started at noon and finished at four. It was a long lunch, but we covered a lot of ground. There was an understanding, a communication and a sharing of responsibilities and ideas. We worked together. The only way you are going to make this city function is to develop that kind of relationship. I do not think it is there.

John Robarts did a study on the amalgamation of Toronto a number of years ago. He and Ken Cameron from the University of Waterloo came out and spent a couple of days in the city. When he got through looking at Unicity and the old Metro, he said I will never recommend one city for Toronto. Well, he didn't know this guy Harris was coming down the pike.

Take a look at the abdication of responsibility and leadership. Let me put it into perspective this way. There are some eight or ten if not more, BIZ groups (the Business Improvement Zones); that tells you something. It means that people in those areas, particularly in business, and representative of their community, aren't getting the kind of leadership or support or direction they want from city council. Why else would they come into existence? Some of them have budgets of a couple million bucks because they get it off the business tax. And every time we face a problem, we establish another committee. One for North Main, one for Portage Avenue, another one CentrePlan, another one for Transport 2000.

This is not the role or function of an elected person. When you're elected, you're responsible. You take responsibility for your actions. You lay down the policy guidelines and you live with them. You can get all the help and advice you can and need. Fine, because you do not know all the answers, nobody does. But for heaven's sake, quit farming out your role as an elected representative. That isn't what you should be doing. You can give leadership. It will reach the point in this city (and I have to put it that way): Everybody plans. When everybody plans, nobody plans. They react. They don't act. You want to build a hog plant, well come on in, we'll sit down. Maybe over here, maybe over there. Well look over there. Well that's fine. You want to build an arena, we'll try it here, if not there, over there. Same thing with the stadium. And it's just not the way you plan a city. You have a development plan, a blueprint that says this is how you want your city to grow. You do not do it on a hit, miss and *ad hoc* basis as problems arise.

Worse than that, some of the planning I see coming is not coming even from the advisory groups. You know where it's coming from, you pick up the editorial pages. I've got somebody that used to be from Thunder Bay telling me how to redevelop Winnipeg. Don't preach to the people of Winnipeg on what they should be doing, including tearing up a lane on Portage Avenue and putting a garden on it. That highway or roadway has been there since the beginning of time; that's where the oxcarts went from here to Edmonton and Regina on the Buffalo Hunt, to bring back hides for the fur trade. More and more of this planning is done in bits and pieces in isolation. You get people doing planning who forget the roads were there to move people, and they have a role to play.

Just stop for a minute and look at it. You have the Red River going north and south, parallel to Main Street, that takes you from St. Mary's/St. Anne's Road over the bridge down Main and over to North Main and up to the Disraeli and out on Henderson Highway. That's the only north-south connection you have there. The next one is probably the St. James Bridge. People say, oh well, we're gonna divert the traffic down Broadway. Well they better take a good hard look. At the afternoon peak at Portage and Main in one hour, you have to move close to 7,000 vehicles. You know what that is, that's 120 cars or vehicles a minute. Somebody said put a constable out there on point duty. He would be a nervous wreck in so fast a time, it wouldn't even be funny.

Let me close on this happy little note. It's difficult to hold elected representatives accountable when you do not know what they stand for. Tell me what you believe in and what you stand for. What are you going to do for me? Tell me. So that if you don't do it, I'll remind you. I'll remind you in a hell of a hurry too.

Anyhow I could go on and as I said its pretty tough to take 25 years and pour it into 20 minutes. It's been fun. I was glad I was part of it, both at the Metro level and the Unicity level and nationally. And it's even been fun being here today.

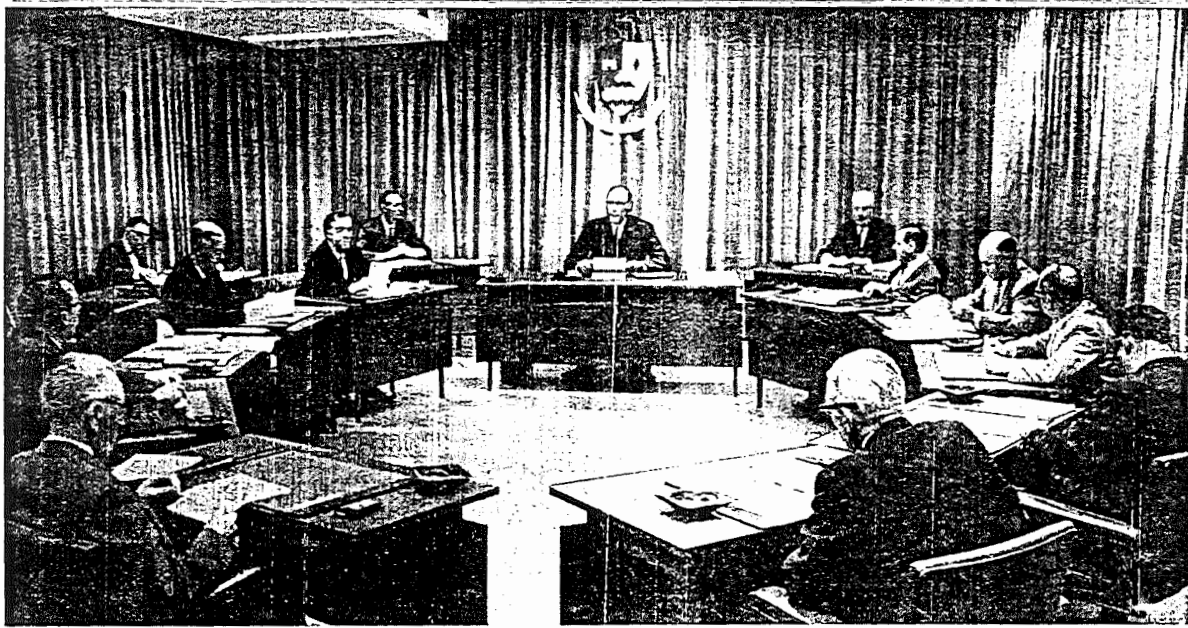
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Location	Temp	Wind	Clouds	Precip
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Brandon	20	10	Partly	0
Regina	18	8	Partly	0
Saskatoon	16	6	Partly	0
Edmonton	14	4	Partly	0
Calgary	12	2	Partly	0
Victoria	10	0	Partly	0
Vancouver	8	0	Partly	0
Seattle	6	0	Partly	0
Portland	4	0	Partly	0
San Francisco	2	0	Partly	0
Los Angeles	0	0	Partly	0
Chicago	-2	0	Partly	0
New York	-4	0	Partly	0
London	-6	0	Partly	0
Paris	-8	0	Partly	0
Brussels	-10	0	Partly	0
Amsterdam	-12	0	Partly	0
Stockholm	-14	0	Partly	0
Helsinki	-16	0	Partly	0
Oslo	-18	0	Partly	0
Reykjavik	-20	0	Partly	0
Copenhagen	-22	0	Partly	0
Berlin	-24	0	Partly	0
Munich	-26	0	Partly	0
Frankfurt	-28	0	Partly	0
Zurich	-30	0	Partly	0
Geneva	-32	0	Partly	0
Basel	-34	0	Partly	0
Vienna	-36	0	Partly	0
Budapest	-38	0	Partly	0
Warsaw	-40	0	Partly	0
Prague	-42	0	Partly	0
Brno	-44	0	Partly	0
Olomouc	-46	0	Partly	0
Plzeň	-48	0	Partly	0
Hradec Králové	-50	0	Partly	0
Jablonec nad Jizerou	-52	0	Partly	0
Liberec	-54	0	Partly	0
Ústí nad Labem	-56	0	Partly	0
Česká Lípa	-58	0	Partly	0
Žatec	-60	0	Partly	0
Střekov	-62	0	Partly	0
Chomutov	-64	0	Partly	0
Bohemian Paradise	-66	0	Partly	0
Špindlerův Mlýn	-68	0	Partly	0
Sněžná	-70	0	Partly	0
Stará Planá	-72	0	Partly	0
Nová Paka	-74	0	Partly	0
Čáslav	-76	0	Partly	0
Blatná	-78	0	Partly	0
Písek	-80	0	Partly	0
Č. Budějovice	-82	0	Partly	0
Hluboká nad Vltavou	-84	0	Partly	0
Strakonice	-86	0	Partly	0
Č. Zhoř	-88	0	Partly	0
Čáslav	-90	0	Partly	0
Blatná	-92	0	Partly	0
Písek	-94	0	Partly	0
Č. Budějovice	-96	0	Partly	0
Hluboká nad Vltavou	-98	0	Partly	0
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The metro council — left to right: Jack Blumberg, Arthur Coulter, A. H. Fisher, clerk Kenneth Porter, R. Darwin Chase, R. E. Moffat, secretary Duncan Lennox, Chairman R. H. Bonnycastle, executive director Elswood Bole, Saul Cherniack, Jack Willis, A. E. Bennett, B. R. Wolfe and L. E. Ostrander.

Photo 2: Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg Council: Jack Blumberg, Arthur Coulter, A.H. Fisher, clerk Kenneth Porter, R. Darwin Chase, R.E. Moffat, secretary Duncan Lennox, Chairman R.H. Bonnycastle, executive director Elswood Bole, Saul Cherniack, Jack Willis, A.E. Bennett, B.R. Wolfe and L.E. Ostrander. (Source: *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 12, 1960).

PART THREE

MUNICIPAL DEMOCRACY AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION



MUNICIPAL DEMOCRACY AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Earl A. Levin

I understand that I am expected to say whatever it is that I have to say to you this morning in 20 minutes or less. Our theme of Municipal Democracy and Citizen Participation could not possibly be covered adequately in such a short period of time—the scope of the subject lends itself to virtually interminable discussion. In order to comply with the time constraint—which is quite reasonable since other speakers also have something to say—I thought it best to touch upon only two aspects of the theme while acknowledging that there are many other aspects which are relevant, and I expect that some of those will be touched upon in the papers which follow this one.

The two facets of municipal democracy and citizen participation which I am going to look at are, first, the statutory context, and second, the interesting anomaly in citizen participation in municipal and provincial elections.

Let me then begin my remarks on the statutory context with the statement of a simple fact—one which I am sure is familiar to all of you, but a fact which cannot be ignored in any discussion of municipal democracy and citizen participation because it establishes the jurisdictional limits within which municipal democracy must operate and within which citizen participation is contained. That fact is that municipal government has no statutory status in the Canadian constitution. Our constitution establishes only two distinct and separate levels of government—the federal and the provincial. The only reference in the constitution to municipal government is in the section which sets out the powers of the provincial government, among which is the power to legislate municipal institutions, that is, the power to create municipalities and to prescribe the terms and conditions of the municipal jurisdiction. Municipal government in effect is a creature of the province. Whatever municipal government can do, it can only do by virtue of provincial enabling legislation and citizens can only participate in our municipal democracy to the extent permitted by the same provincial legislation.

From the beginning, the province's main purpose in creating municipal governments was to relieve the province of the burden of providing municipal services throughout the entire area within the provincial boundaries. Far more sensible to place that responsibility in the hands of a local authority on the spot and leave the provincial government free to attend to more important matters of provincial concern. Municipal services were roads and water supply and sewage disposal and other similar services which were essentially services provided directly to land, and through the land indirectly to the residents. Citizen participation in municipal governance was simple, even primitive. It did not involve much more than the election of the council by a gathering of men—usually merely a handful—who owned property. Elections were frequently by voice vote and were not always peaceably conducted. Women did not have the vote, although those who owned

property in their own name, in some instances, did have the vote.

Today, the eligibility to vote in our municipal democracy has been greatly expanded. Apart from certain age and residency requirements, everyone is entitled to vote in a civic election. But the realm of municipal jurisdiction has barely been changed since the beginning. Municipal services of a physical, land-oriented nature and the regulation of the use of land still constitute the major elements of the municipal mandate. But the problems of municipal government are no longer the simple housekeeping problems of a century ago. The issues which confront municipal government have undergone profound changes over the last 125 or so years. The major force which has driven those changes has been the growth of the urban population. In 1871, five years after Confederation, there were 3,689,000 people in Canada. Of these, about 18 percent, or some 675,000, lived in urban centres of 5,000 or more people. There were only 38 such places in the entire country. The 1996 census of Canada found 28,846,761 people living here. There were 25 census metropolitan areas each with over 100,000 people, with a total of 17,846,646 people living in the CMAs—that is close to two thirds of the population of Canada lives in these metropolises.

This massive increase in our urban population occurred in the years following the end of the Second World War, and it has wrought profound changes in the nature of our society. It has shifted the locus of national economic and social dynamism into the major urban centres. The cities are now the place where most of us live and work, where most of our material wealth is produced and consumed, where most of our new ideas and skills are conceived and applied, where our national culture is created. The post-war urban explosion has also produced problems of a type and scale that are unprecedented. Apart from the enormous pressures for the development of land and the provision of services, urban growth has been accompanied by social, economic and environmental problems of a severity and pervasiveness hitherto unknown. Poverty, unemployment, tension, alienation, apathy, hostility, crime, drug abuse, alcoholism are some of the personal and societal problems which afflict the inhabitants of our urban world. There are also daunting problems in transportation, housing, environmental pollution, urban blight, congestion, and still others. Some of these problems have always beset humankind. But in the metropolis of our urban-technological society, they have assumed a character and dimension which did not exist and indeed, could not have existed in our agrarian past.

But from the beginning of our formal democratic institutions we have sought solutions to our problems through the democratic process. The word “democratic” as all of us are probably aware, comes from the Greek *dēmos* meaning the people, and the fundamental tenet underlying our democratic political ideology is that the people must be involved in their government.

The election of the government at any of the levels is perhaps the most common occasion for citizen participation and the ultimate expression of our democratic form of government. The theme of our panel is

“Municipal Democracy and Citizen Participation.” However, the linkage between the province and the municipality is so close that one cannot look at municipal democracy without at the same time taking into account the tightness of the provincial-municipal relationship. Which brings me to the second part of my paper—the interesting anomaly in the degree of citizen participation in the provincial and municipal elections.

It is a commonly held belief that municipal government is the closest to the people. Provincial and federal governments are regarded as more remote from the day-to-day concerns of the population. One would think then, that the municipal government would be accorded the greatest attention by the electorate. And therein lies the anomaly. It is a very common occurrence—one might even say an invariable occurrence—that municipal elections draw a smaller proportion of eligible voters than do provincial elections. For example, in the Manitoba provincial election in 1995, 69.2 percent of the eligible voters voted. In the Winnipeg civic election in that same year, only 53.8 percent of the eligible voters voted. In the last provincial election in British Columbia, held in 1996, 71.5 percent of eligible voters cast their ballots. In the last municipal election in Vancouver, the largest city in British Columbia, also held in 1996, only 32.1 percent of eligible voters voted. And in the civic election in that same year in Victoria, the capital city of British Columbia, only 21 percent of eligible voters voted.

The question then arises “If municipal government is in fact the closest to the people and touches them more immediately and intimately than the other levels of government, why doesn’t a larger percentage of the eligible voters vote in the municipal elections—at least as large a percentage if not larger than the percentage that votes in provincial elections?” My own answer to that question is that although the municipal government may still be the closest to the people, it is no longer as relevant as it may have been in an earlier era. Among the issues which involve the people in our cities today are still the traditional issues of land development and municipal services, but these are no longer the major problems confronting our cities, nor are they the problems in the forefront of our urban dwellers consciousness.

A large proportion of today’s city people are more closely and acutely affected by problems of economic and social distress than they are by the traditional municipal problems. The demands upon the individual in simply trying to live from day-to-day and to cope with the normal but unrelenting challenges of personal and family life are what occupy the attention of the vast majority of our urban citizenry. In the course of their daily lives, it is only on the infrequent occasion that issues of the municipal governance come to the forefront. And even if they are not always at the forefront, they are always present in the background as the unseen but intuitively apprehended context of much of their distress. The urban electorate also perceives whether intuitively or through overt knowledge that the social, economic and even environmental problems which beset the city lie beyond the city council’s powers to solve. If they can be addressed at all within the context of our constitutional structure, they can only be addressed by the federal or provincial governments.

This is perhaps the most intractable aspect of the municipal democracy's dilemma. The governments which have the empowerment to deal with these problems of the cities are farthest removed from the cities and have the least immediacy of contact with them. Each level of government has a genuine interest in these problems, but the constraints of the constitution not only limit the nature and extent of their involvement, but even determine the way in which each one views the problems. As a result, there is ambiguity of jurisdiction and role over every urban issue, and no level of government has a clear mandate to attack the fundamental causes of urban malaise on its own authority and initiative.

We have seen evidence of this jurisdictional ambiguity again and again whenever government has tried to address what are essentially city problems. The urban renewal programs of the 1960's, the NIP and RRAP programs of the 1970's, the Core Area Initiative, Portage Place, and the Forks development programs of the 1980's and the Winnipeg Development Agreement were all attempts to address what were city-based and city-generated problems, but they were all initiatives of the federal government with provincial government participation. When the municipal government was involved it was only as a junior partner and its role in many instances was only administrative. The cities had neither the statutory power nor the financial resources to undertake any of these much-needed city improvement programs by themselves. The federal government did not have direct statutory access to the municipal sphere—that was the realm of the province—so that all of these initiatives required special arrangements between the two senior governments and the municipal government was brought along as a junior member. And when the federal government's participation terminated so did the program. What is relevant to our panel theme in all this is that in these major city-focused programs citizen participation played a relatively minor role, and although the process was democratic, it could hardly be characterized as a process of municipal democracy.

And the event which we are commemorating here in this conference—the creation of Unicity—can hardly be regarded as a triumph of citizen participation in municipal democracy, at least not in a positive sense. The amalgamation of the 13 municipalities was an initiative of the provincial government; it did not arise out of the aspirations of the grass-roots citizenry. In fact, there was initially fierce resistance to it from the area municipal governments and their constituents. On one occasion, there was even a near riot which required police intervention. So here too the senior government—in this case the provincial rather than the federal—conceived the plan and implemented it, and the citizens' objections were acknowledged but bypassed by the provincial power. Today the citizens participate in Unicity in accordance with the provincial legislation, and I do believe that most of them are quite happy to do so.

There are of course other factors which contribute to the lower rate of citizen participation in municipal elections than in provincial elections. One could cite the growth of various charitable and volunteer organizations which serve a variety of needs of the urban community in the absence of municipal government

programs. I think this tends to diminish the interest of citizens in municipal elections. Another possible factor is the political party system, which exists at the provincial and federal levels but not at the municipal. The coherent structure, policy offerings, vastly greater visibility through media advertising, financial resources and deep-rooted tradition of the provincial electoral system, I think, far outshines the municipal system and attracts a greater proportion of the eligible voters to the provincial elections than to the municipal.

One may then ask, "Does it really matter that citizen participation in the municipal democratic process is on a lesser scale than it is in the provincial or even the federal? Aren't the municipal governments and the senior governments' interventions and the citizens action organizations and volunteer groups at the municipal level doing a good enough job for the wellbeing of the municipality and its residents?" I personally think that it does matter that citizen participation is as low as it is. And as for the success of the present measures for ensuring the well-being of our cities and their residents, I think we have managed to make some adjustments to the enormous demands of our contemporary urban society. We could probably stumble along as we are for some time to come. But in my moments of fancy, I think we could do much better. Real and substantial improvement, however, would require some major reconstruction of our constitution and our system of governance. I think a constitutional amendment would be required to give the municipal government the scope and the power to deal more effectively with the problems of today's cities. Perhaps those census metropolitan areas having a minimum population of 500,000 should be given constitutional status and powers equivalent to those of the province with respect to social, economic and environmental issues. Such a constitutional change would probably bring forth a system of municipal political parties, but not related to the present national parties. Parties rather with a focus on the local municipal issues which the present structure cannot deal with effectively. If our system of governance were restructured in some such fashion I think that citizen participation in municipal democracy would be greatly enlarged and strengthened and many of the social, environmental and jurisdictional problems which beset us, which are essentially city-based and city-generated could be dealt with more successfully.

That is not to say that municipal restructuring has not occurred in a significant number of our municipalities since the end of World War II. But none of these have effected the transfer of essential powers from the province to the municipality. Some of them have substantially re-structured *inter-municipal* relationships but none have involved a substantial re-structuring of the *provincial-municipal* relationship. They have been changes in form without an accompanying change in the statutory mandate. It seems to me that without commensurate empowerment, the re-configuration of the municipal structure cannot adequately address the urban problems of our times. I might add that it also seems to me that the possibility of a constitutional amendment of the kind I am talking about here is even more remote than it is for that other constitutional amendment that is being talked about elsewhere.



Photo 3: East Kildonan-Transcona Residents' Advisory Group (RAG) meeting, March 12, 1998. Members present: Alma Cerilli, Doreen Kadash, Rod Klinck, Cam Neirinck, James Urchenko, Elaine Smith, Faye Danku and John Kubi (Chairperson). Members missing: Sue Sobczak, Dina Falk, Charlie McCaw, Tom Seals, Joe Konkin, Thomas Fone, Lana Rosentreter, Russ Wyatt (Credit: Nancy Klos).

DIAGNOSING THE HEALTH OF CIVIC DEMOCRACY: 25 YEARS OF CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT WITH CITY HALL

Paul G. Thomas

Back in 1972, Unicity was a bold experiment in political and administrative reform. It constituted a “reinvention” of city government, even though that slogan had not been invented back then. If the architects of the new city structure had more of a sense of how to market their ideas, they could have become even bigger celebrities than Osborne and Gaebler who coined the phrase “reinventing government” two decades later. Being ahead of your time can be intellectually rewarding, but with the backing of public relations hype, it can also bring significant material rewards.

Unicity was about much more than simply the amalgamation of municipalities. It was based on a “vision” of how city governments should work. Like most vision statements, the conception of Unicity was rather vague, based as much on faith as on reasoned analysis and meant to be an inspirational model for people to work towards.

The vision of Unicity was to promote political equality in more meaningful terms than simply the right to vote. It was intended to address the problem of the *privileged voices* of business, particularly those interests associated with the land development process within the city. For some time it had been recognized that the land-based business community had a degree of access and influence in city decision-making that was unmatched by other political interests in the city. Business people had been able to convert their institutional position within the economic sphere into substantial power within the political process of the city.

The suggestion that the business community, especially that segment tied to land development, had disproportionate influence is not news; this fact has been widely commented upon over the years. I see the history of Unicity as an attempt to *weaken* the alliance between public officials and land-based business by promoting the formation of alternative governing coalitions. Please note that I did not say that the political concerns of business people would be displaced. Their voices would continue to be strong and they would continue to have disproportionate influence because of the community’s concern, reflected on City Council, to ensure local economic growth.

In short, the Unicity vision involved two somewhat contradictory objectives. The first was to promote economic development by eliminating the overlap, confusion and frustration for developers who were required to deal with the sprawling two-tiered structure of the former Metropolitan Government and its numerous special purpose bodies. The Chamber of Commerce and other business interests were convinced that governmental fragmentation was hurting development. The second objective was to promote citizen involvement and thereby place other political actors representing neighbourhoods, broader communities, ethno-cultural groups, non-profits and advocacy groups on a more equal footing with the business interests.

I would argue that the evolution of Unicity over the past 25 years reflects the tension between these two halves of the original vision. Economic inequality has frustrated the drive for more meaningful, real political equality. The drive for efficiency has led to compromises with the ideal of active citizens engaged more continuously with a form of deliberative, local democracy. The developers' concern for growth has led to suburban sprawl and inner-city decay. Unicity has not been the mechanism to redistribute economic and political power that its founders imagined.

For me as a political scientist, the evolution of Unicity illustrates the limits of institutional reform as a basis for bringing about change within the wider political process. Yet one must have some sympathy for the Unicity designers, because structures and procedures were the only tools available. The wider economic and political circumstances were and are, basically beyond their control. Even when institutional reforms like Unicity are adopted, it is difficult for their designers to predict with certainty how those changes will reverberate throughout the political system.

To illustrate these themes, let me contrast the Unicity of 1972 with the Unicity of today. These facts are familiar to this audience; they require little or no elaboration:

- City Council has shrunk from 50 Councillors and a mayor down to 15 Councillors and a mayor;
- The inner city now represents a smaller group of seats on a suburban dominated council;
- The Mayor remains elected at large, but now chooses the Councillors who serve on EPC (in effect her cabinet), and this represents a potential centralization of political power;
- Community Committees were originally 13 in number and were given limited powers for local decision-making (over community services, parks, libraries). Now there are only five community committees and they serve basically an advisory function;
- The Residential Advisory Groups (RAGs) experiment in neighbourhood democracy have disappeared or atrophied badly.

In summary, from the standpoint of formal institutional arrangements there has been a consolidation and centralization of power within the city's political system.

There is plenty of room for debate about *why* this streamlining of city government took place, and whether alternative mechanisms for citizen involvement have replaced the formal institutional features of the original Unicity plan.

It may be that the designers of Unicity—reflecting the animating spirit of participatory democracy of the late 'sixties—overestimated the willingness and the capacity of individual citizens to participate on an ongoing basis in the city's political process at some level. In 1985-1986, when the second City of Winnipeg Act Review Committee did its work, a survey revealed that less than three percent of Winnipeggers had ever had any contact with RAGs. Many people may have felt like George Bernard Shaw who said he gave up on

socialism when he realized it would take too many Monday evenings. Perhaps all along Winnipeggers were content to be mere spectators rather than gladiators in the political arena.

A related possibility is that the Unicity model reflected the upsurge of democratic sentiment and participation of the late 1960s and early 1970s, but that the cultural foundations of that revolution were gradually undermined during subsequent decades. Along these lines, it could be argued that the attempt to promote citizen participation ran up against the wider forces of declining community norms. Here, I am thinking about the writings of people like Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* and Robert Putnam's article called "Bowling Alone" which appeared in the *Journal of Democracy*, January 1995. Both writers emphasize the importance of "social capital" in contributing to both political and economic progress.

Social capital refers to genuine, honest and co-operative behaviour based upon community networks and widely-shared norms. Communities blessed with greater amounts of social capital have more effective institutions because social capital fosters spontaneous engagement, mutual concern, trust, and creative accommodation. In an era when peoples' lives have become increasingly "privatized," when narrow (often craven) individualism is the prevalent value and when community-based organizations face difficult times, the underpinnings of active citizenship may be missing.

Some people will continue to offer a structural explanation for the disappointing results with Unicity as a vehicle for citizen involvement. They will argue that the Community Committees and the RAGs were never given adequate authority and resources to become the focal points for local citizen involvement. They were not even allowed to fulfill the limited roles they were assigned under the Unicity model because councillors and the bureaucracy did not wish to share power.

A final possible explanation for why more Winnipeggers did not take advantage of the participation opportunities available to them is that they were basically satisfied with the performance of City Hall. They looked to the City to provide certain basic services (police, fire, garbage, water, etc.) and they had few complaints about the reliability and quality of those services. Empirical surveys tell us that people tend to rate services of a more uniform, production nature more highly than more subjective, interactive types of services. Since the city government provides more of the predictable, visible services, their performances receive more favourable assessments than do the so-called senior levels of government.

There seems to be some truth in all of these possible explanations and I do not know enough to rank them in terms of importance.

What I do know is that there are other opportunities for public participation which few citizens use. I am referring to: the planning process (Plan Winnipeg, TransPlan on the commutershed, etc.), appearances before Community Committees, the budgetary process, use of the office of the Ombudsman, the access to

information by-law and the tax deduction for contributions to civic campaigns.

One other city initiative deserves brief mention because it reflects corporate thinking and is meant to deal with voter dissatisfaction with City Hall. This is the city's Continuous Improvement Program, which is based upon the total quality management philosophy of the late Edward Deming. The Mayor and the Chief Commissioner insist that the customer focus is necessary, faced as the city is with cost pressures, scarce resources, taxpayer resistance and a disillusioned public. Focusing on quality service supposedly will enhance public perceptions of city government, promote a tolerance of taxation levels, save money over the long term and improve the morale of city employees.

An implicit, symbolic message of adopting the new approach is that individuals become "customers" who have rights (such as the right of easy access, to choices, and to the speedy redress of complaints) more than they are "citizens" who have both *rights* and *responsibilities* to be active in setting the agenda of city government and in debating policy options. The customer-service model may lead to a largely reactive role for members of the public. Administrators are the actors; they survey clients, empower staff, make services convenient, provide appeal mechanisms and decide which programs or services to decentralize or to contract out. Such steps may, indeed, improve service delivery, but they do not qualify as promoting active citizenship in which members of the public as "shareholders" or "co-investors" help to set the agenda of government.

During the past two decades, governments have faced three types of deficits: a financial deficit, a performance deficit and a democratic deficit. Most of the talk and action has focused on the first two of these deficits, since they are seen to relate to efficiency and economic growth. More attention needs to be paid to the democratic deficit—the underlying citizen discontent with City Council and the civic administration. Restoring public trust and confidence in city government will require greater efforts to foster genuine dialogue and a deliberative approach to public judgement.

UNICITY: AN EVALUATION

Wayne Helgason

Good morning, it's a pleasure to be here. I am sure most people are well aware, the City of Winnipeg Act (Unicity) came into effect January 1, 1972.

Briefly, it is my understanding the Act had four clear objectives:

- Achieve financial equity between the 13 municipalities which had existed in the vicinity of the Greater Metropolitan Area of Winnipeg;
- Eliminate the conflict between existing municipalities;
- Achieve greater efficiency in municipal services through amalgamation (i.e., fire, police, infrastructure etc.);
- Develop and encourage a greater degree of involvement and interest of citizens in local government.

No doubt, other sessions of this Conference will debate whether Unicity has lived up to its objectives.

It is clear, however, that almost from its inception Unicity has had to undergo changes.

For example, the debate regarding efficiency and effectiveness continues to rage on 25 years after Unicity. Furthermore, the shift of population to exurban "bedroom communities" just outside of Winnipeg remains a major concern.

Nonetheless, I believe that there is no question Unicity remains, despite its shortfalls, one of the truly innovative municipal reorganizations undertaken in Canada.

What I, and my fellow panellists here today would like to focus on is the question of citizen involvement in local government. And I further want to emphasize the issue of Winnipeg's growing urban Aboriginal population.

As an Executive Director of an agency which focuses a lot of our attention on building, encouraging and fostering the capacity of inner-city neighbourhoods, I have to echo those who suggest the original promise of Unicity failed to materialize for the Central City (old City of Winnipeg).

The attempt to legislate citizen involvement in local government was perhaps the most innovative component of the Unicity experiment. The creation of Community Committees and Resident Advisory Groups (RAGs) originally held the promise of allowing local involvement. But many contend that resident participation in the form of RAGs has not been particularly successful, nor have the conditions necessary for their success been present.

Given representation by population, perhaps it was inevitable that suburban perspectives would come to dominate Council. One of the unintended problems of Unicity is that structural reforms could not eliminate

the narrow parochialism of many City Councillors. This often took the form of "City" (Central City) *versus* suburban voting patterns rather than overall policies that benefitted Winnipeg as a whole.

While local government is readily acknowledged as the level of government in closest contact with citizens, most people don't consider municipal politics very important. Voter turnout at the municipal level is generally much lower compared to provincial or federal elections. Historically, for Aboriginal people, this has been the case.

Given the history of colonialism and the Indian Act, interaction with government for Aboriginal people has been at the federal level. But now, within the last 20 years, cities in Canada, and Winnipeg in particular, have had to respond to a growing urban Aboriginal population.

Winnipeg's Aboriginal population is expected to reach 60,000 when the 1996 Census figures are released. And it is anticipated, given the current Aboriginal population age structure, that the Aboriginal population in Winnipeg may reach 100,000 within a decade.

The impact of the urban Aboriginal population will present one of the most significant challenges for Winnipeg's municipal structure. Aboriginal people want to be involved. They want a say in decisions that affect them. There is ample evidence of this.

The challenge will be whether the municipal organization can respond.

At present, the City has made significant strides forward in encouraging and listening to the voices of the urban Aboriginal population. But there is a growing realization that the real emphasis for change will come not from government but from communities themselves.

We have examples of communities recognizing their own unique capacities and developing "social capital" that in turn drives the movement toward renewed, healthy communities.

I look at what is happening at the Andrews Street Family Centre and the initiatives in West Broadway as examples of community "owned" processes of renewal.

The Social Planning Council has worked with these neighbourhoods to bring groups and coalitions together in an effort to building community from the inside out.

The barriers that such neighbourhood and community groups face, and certainly the urban Aboriginal community, in defining the directions and mechanism of change are interesting. With all due respect to those who are in attendance today, I would suggest just two perceived barriers: (1) the tireless belief in rhetoric; and (2) the illusion of superior thought. With these sensitivities in mind, from a government/dominant power perspective, perhaps true and solid partnerships and an atmosphere of co-operation and trust will enable all of us to define and deliver a promising future for our city.

PART FOUR

AMALGAMATION IN THE 1990s



Photo 4: 1986 City of Winnipeg Act Review Committee: Alan Artibise, Gordon Mackie (Secretary), Donald MacDonal, Donald Epstein, Paul Thomas and Lawrie Cherniack (Chairperson) (Credit: Peter Tittenberger).

MUNICIPAL AMALGAMATION IN THE 'NINETIES IN QUEBEC

Robert Cournoyer

At the outset, I must admit my surprise at being asked to present a Quebec point of view on the subject of municipal amalgamation in any decade, since I have always been underwhelmed by our performance in that area. Having served in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs for many years, I have despaired at the apparent total inability of our political masters to deal with the issue of municipal restructuring. Conversations among officials have often centred on the reasons for such inaction. As you may well imagine, the theories are many, and I will not even attempt to summarize them here. Since I have given up trying to explain why, I will only attempt to describe some of what is happening, and how.

Before going into that, it may be useful, for those less familiar with the Quebec situation in respect of municipal structures, to briefly recall where we started from. In 1855, when the legislation setting out the basic outlines of our municipal system was adopted, there were already more than 400 municipal units in Quebec, closely following the pattern of parishes. The settlement of "frontier" areas, such as the Lac-Saint-Jean or the Abitibi regions, which went on until the 1930s, certainly added many new municipalities. But another factor proved to be more important. As villages and towns grew, many people in the surrounding rural areas were not willing to be taxed for the services which urbanizing centres wanted to develop. As the municipal legislation of the time did not provide for local improvement taxes or allow special levies for capital expenditures, the only solution was the incorporation of separate units. As a result of the settlement of new areas and the splitting up of municipalities into a village and a rural area, the number of municipalities in Quebec culminated at close to 1600 in the early 1950s.

Today, there are 1400, and I will spend the next few minutes reviewing, at a very fast forward speed, the main events that have affected our municipal structures in the past thirty years or so. You may then have a better appreciation of why we still have the 1400.

THE 'SIXTIES: A PARTIAL EFFORT

The first attempts at modernizing our municipal structures occurred during the 'sixties. First, we saw the amalgamation of 14 villages and rural municipalities into the City of Laval, now the second largest municipality in Quebec with a population of 330,000. Then, in 1965, came the first legislation offering financial incentives to voluntary amalgamation. Finally, the government worked on a grand plan to establish second-tier regional municipalities throughout the province. We were then in the last days of the Union Nationale

government, whose sympathies for rural areas were well known. After much internal wrangling, the government introduced its idea only in the three most urbanized areas by creating, in 1970, the Montreal Urban Community, the Quebec Urban Community and the Outaouais Regional Community, the last covering the Quebec part of the Ottawa-Hull metropolitan area.

It is worth mentioning that, contrary to what happened at the same time in Ontario with the establishment of regional municipalities, the setting up of urban communities in Quebec was not accompanied by municipal restructuring within the urban areas concerned. Indeed, the act establishing each urban (or regional) community mandated the preparation of proposals for regrouping local units. Some amalgamations did occur in the Quebec and Outaouais communities, but none in the largest, the Montreal Urban Community. It still has 29 member municipalities, for a population of 1.8 million people. The largest is the City of Montreal, with a million people, and the smallest is Dorval Island, which is a cottage community with an official population of two permanent residents, according to the 1996 census.

THE 'SEVENTIES: THE BIG STICK

In the 'seventies, the government seemed determined to adjust municipal structures, but mostly on a case-by-case basis. Several major amalgamations were effected, mainly by special legislation, and most of those accompanied large-scale projects such as the Mirabel airport, a national park in the Gaspé Peninsula, a major industrial and port development at Bécancour, the expansion of the aluminium industry in the Saguenay urban area. All in all, well over a hundred municipalities were merged with others during that decade, which was otherwise marked by a momentous political event, as far as municipal restructuring goes. In 1973, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, in a government headed by Robert Bourassa and newly reelected with a huge majority, decided to take on the province-wide restructuring plan originally developed by the Ministry in the late 'sixties. Faced with staunch resistance from municipal leaders, and particularly from the powerful union of rural municipalities, the government withdrew and the Minister, who was a former mayor, not only had to resign but retired from politics. That event was so traumatic for provincial politicians that it was still recalled ten years later, when a significant amalgamation case was under discussion.

That was the famous merger of Baie-Comeau and Hauterive, a result of special legislation in 1982. Here we had the case of a relatively isolated northern industrial and rapidly developing community split by two municipalities, one enjoying the large tax base of industry, the other, where most of the plant workers lived, having to tax its residents to provide them with services. Baie-Comeau's leaders resisted with all the means at their disposal and contested the move at every turn, including court actions which went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada.

THE 'EIGHTIES: A LONG PAUSE

Whether or not because of this unpleasantness, the decade of the 'eighties was very sedate in terms of amalgamation. It must be pointed out, also, that while the Baie-Comeau furore was going on, the government was pursuing another tack. In 1980, it had brought into effect a new Planning and Development Act which gave a new regional plan mandate to a completely revamped county structure, the regional county municipality. While it was not presented as one of the explicit goals of this policy, municipal restructuring was certainly part of the implicit objectives. It was hoped that having to look at their interdependencies, from a planning point of view, many local municipalities would come to realize that they could gain from merging. To support that tendency, the legislation was accompanied by other provisions facilitating municipal agreements and joint management of services. It was also suggested that the government might later decide to enlarge the mandate and powers of regional county municipalities, thus hinting at restructuring possibilities.

In actual fact, the decade of the 'eighties was the slowest in the amalgamation business. Two other issues had the effect of putting it on hold. One was the "regionalization" of government. In 1983, an important policy paper (*Le choix des régions*) was made public, outlining significant initiatives in order to involve regions in shaping policies and administering a variety of programs related to regional development. The other issue was decentralization, which was also discussed in that policy document. Municipalities, at the county as well as at the local level, were to be significantly involved in both these developments, but particularly with decentralization. Unfortunately, that part of the policy was outlined in vague terms. The consultations which were announced in the policy paper had hardly taken place when the government lost power in the 1985 general election.

The new government seemed to be strongly committed to downsizing. It immediately appointed a high powered task force, headed by the President of the Treasury Board, to make recommendations for "rationalizing" government. The question of decentralization, under the guise of downloading, came back to the fore. A large scale provincial-municipal conference was held in 1987, to discuss both decentralization and changes in the makeup and functioning of regional municipalities. Urban and rural municipalities were strongly divided on these issues, and the conference was essentially devoted to finding a negotiated solution. Decentralization was hardly discussed, and the government proposals on that score were still quite vague. There was only skimpy information on what responsibilities could be transferred to local government, and even less indication about structural changes to be considered. While the issue was rather delicately broached in the conference document, everybody was aware, particularly on the government side but also among urban municipal leaders, that no significant decentralization could take place if it had to be done on the basis of a local government structure comprising more than 1450 units, at the time.

THE 'NINETIES: ROUGH SPORT

If the 'eighties were the decade for talking about decentralization, the 'nineties, so far, have proved to be the decade for actually doing it, and sometimes in a rather rough way. The government had been re-elected in the fall of 1989, again with a strong majority. Its first budget speech, in April 1990, immediately announced that a substantial transfer of responsibilities to local government would be proposed, and it was in December 1990. The rationale was both short term—budgetary pressures due to the recession and the scaling down of federal government transfer payments—and long term, seeking a new equilibrium between the responsibilities of government and those of local and regional communities. What became to be known as “Mr. Ryan’s reform” was essentially a downloading of about \$400 million worth of responsibilities to municipalities, essentially in the areas of public transit and police services and local roads in rural areas. The transfer was accompanied by mitigating financial aid measures which reduced its overall net impact to \$280 million, or about three percent of total municipal spending in 1992.

There were no measures for municipal regrouping, but in the furious debate that surrounded this operation, many mayors and some outside observers contended that the government was going about it in a devious way by putting enough fiscal pressure on municipalities that they would come to see the merits of combining their circumstances.

The Minister did not strongly deny this. In fact, he admitted that if it were to be an unintended consequence of the new charges municipalities had to carry, it might not be a bad thing. Soon after, in 1993, he made some changes to the voluntary amalgamation support program so as to increase the financial incentives, and the number of voluntary municipal mergers immediately picked up, to about fifteen a year.

A new government was elected in the fall of 1994, and the Minister decided that he was finally going to do something about municipal restructuring. A policy was elaborated and made public in May 1996. While it was ostensibly addressed to all municipalities, in fact it contained really practical measures only for the smaller ones.

Here it may be useful to present a few facts about the distribution of municipalities in Quebec. It is characterized by two facts: a great many small units in rural areas, where one quarter of the population lives, and a concentration of three quarters of the population in only 27 urban centres with a population of 10,000 or more. Of the 1400 local units, two thirds or about 940 of them, have less than 2000 inhabitants. The 27 urban centres, on the other hand, comprise over 260 local municipalities, or an average of close to ten local municipalities in each agglomeration. This is an average: the Montreal census metropolitan area includes 111 municipalities, and the Quebec metropolitan area about 45.

The numerous small rural municipalities and the smaller urban centres fall into two types of situations.

One is the “divided community” where a naturally integrated community is divided by two or more municipal units, as a result of the historical splits already mentioned. One of these units is the central town or village, and the others depend on it for many of the services the whole community needs. There are about 180 of these cases, comprising over 415 municipalities.

The other type of situation is the “one community municipality” where the municipal unit includes a nucleus and surrounding rural areas. Although three quarters of those 720 municipalities are quite small, having a population of less than 1500, they tend to be self sufficient, and regrouping them would not seem to provide benefits that would be easy to realize. On the other hand, merging the two or three separate municipalities involved in each “divided community” would achieve a number of goals. The policy document outlines them under the headings of improving the administrative and financial capabilities of these municipalities, restoring fiscal equity, encouraging more efficient use of community resources and fostering more effective communities when it comes to local development.

THE NEW POLICY: FRIENDLY PERSUASION

The 1996 policy contained three types of initiatives. The most concrete deal with the 180 divided communities and will be detailed shortly. Quite a different sort of initiative was addressed at municipalities in the 27 urban centres. It consisted essentially in an invitation to municipal and other community leaders in those areas to put forward proposals for municipal restructuring. It was also said that the government would itself develop such proposals, in a “second phase” of the policy. Thirdly, as regards the 700 or so “one community” municipalities, it was indicated that the best help for them would come from their respective regional county municipality, and that measures would be announced to enlarge the powers of regional municipalities and improve their capability to serve as regional service co-operatives for small rural municipalities.

Coming back to the divided communities, the real targets of the program, they are essentially faced with a choice: merge, or bear the consequences of going it alone. The program is still voluntary, but the choice is rather more skewed than under the previous voluntary incentive program. First, and for the first time in Quebec municipal history, the government has committed itself by identifying the municipalities to which the policy will apply. All municipalities in that list have to complete a study of the conditions for their merger before the end of 1998. Those which have taken definite steps towards merging, as defined in the appropriate sections of municipal legislation, will benefit, starting with the 1999 budget year, from a variety of financial incentives, including better equalization grants, reduced billing for the police services of the *Sûreté du Québec* and better conditions of access to certain aid programs. Municipalities which will not have completed their

merger study, or taken no steps to effectively merge by the beginning of 1999, will risk being treated as if they had merged for purposes of various government programs, but without the benefits of the incentive program.

For most of them this would mean that the parameters which define access to various government programs (equalization grants, road maintenance grants, charges for police services, *etc.*) would change unfavourably, since most of these programs are designed to help smaller units. I used the expression "risk being treated as if they had merged" since the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, in a revised document published earlier this year, now indicates that each case will be evaluated on its merits. The original policy was quite definite as to the consequences of not merging: municipalities would be considered as being part of a *de facto* larger unit for purposes of program application.

What are the results? Not convincing so far. Before this new policy, there were two mergers in 1992 (the year in which Ryan's reform came into effect), nine in 1993, seventeen in 1994 and fourteen in 1995. The policy was made public in May 1996. There were eleven mergers that year, and seven so far this year. This has reduced the total number of municipalities by 20 in two years. At this rate, sixty years hence, Quebec will have reduced its 1400 local units to 800, the same figure as in present day Ontario.

My former colleagues in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs would consider this forecast quite unfair, and they are probably right since a major earthquake is presently diverting everyone's attention from municipal restructuring. Last April, the government announced that it was downloading \$500 million worth of responsibilities to municipalities and that a negotiated settlement of the conditions of the transfer had to be concluded by September.

The government justified its move by its absolute commitment to reach a zero deficit by the 1999-2000 fiscal year and the fact that substantial cuts had already been made in the education and health sectors, in departmental budgets and in the public service itself. A six percent reduction of the total wage bill was negotiated with the public service unions last winter, and the government is asking municipalities to do the same. This would allow them, it is claimed, to absorb the costs of the new responsibilities without raising property taxes. The unions representing municipal employees, whose remuneration levels are 25 percent better than in the provincial civil service and the rest of the public sector (schools, hospitals, *etc.*) are outraged, and have already threatened the government with an illegal general strike and other civil disobedience if it dares intervene, with special legislation, into the local bargaining process. That process, it must be said, generally works to the advantage of union workers, since municipalities provide public services for which there is no substitute during a strike but have no power to enforce what they consider to be reasonable improvements to working conditions, which the government, as employer, can do when it comes to the rest of the public sector.

It is hard to tell what the outcome will be. Negotiations are disorganized, especially since the

municipal union representing urban municipalities has in fact split into three groups, one being the six major central cities, the other uniting the suburban municipalities on the Island of Montreal, representing 800,000 people, and the third, mostly smaller centres and suburban towns in several metropolitan areas. The contents of the package have changed several times in the past few weeks. The original proposal had a major virtue, that of improving fiscal equity between central cities and suburbs by limiting the financial impact on central cities and containing specific measures favourable to them. Mayors representing suburban as well as rural areas have raised so much noise that government members of the National Assembly seem impressed enough to suggest a new balance. Quebec is no different than the rest of North America, if only on one score: the majority of the middle class now lives and votes in the suburbs.

WHAT PROSPECTS FOR MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING?

The outcome of this rough and tumble exercise will certainly have great impact on the prospects for municipal restructuring, both in rural and in urban areas. If the latest versions of the transfer are finally retained, municipalities will be comforted in their determination to keep going it alone, as a defensive strategy. They will be even less receptive than they are now to exhortations about efficiency, equity and community solidarity. If, on the contrary, something closer in spirit to the original proposal is put into effect by the government, it will have given a strong signal that it is at last determined to do something significant about municipal structures in Quebec. In particular, the road to fiscal equity and better co-ordination of activities in urban areas will have been mapped.

The direction in which the government is going is far from clear, to say the least. Some of its members have shown that they view with suspicion the analysis and recommendations of the Task Force on Greater Montreal, whose report was published in late 1993. The Pichette report, as it is often referred to by the name of the chairman, strongly urged the creation of a form of metropolitan government with major responsibilities in the fields of planning, transportation, environment and economic development. The report proposed to abolish the present second-tier structures (urban community and regional county municipalities) in the metropolitan area and replace them by one co-ordinating structure.

Rather than that, the government has created the portfolio of Minister of State for Metropolitan Montreal and set up a Ministry for Metropolitan Montreal whose mission is both to ensure coherent government action with respect to the urban region and support, with a Development Fund, a wide range of initiatives for the region. The government has also adopted legislation, last June, establishing a Greater Montreal Development Commission, composed both of local and regional elected officials and other community leaders from economic and social groups. The Commission will have essentially a consultative

role, but it is hoped that its members will themselves develop a metropolitan vision and spirit and inspire others to do the same. Its main responsibilities are in the areas of economic development, planning and transportation, and it is specifically mandated to make recommendations to the government about changes in municipal structures and functions. The project has been severely criticized from both sides. Those who thought that it did not go far enough were mainly municipal and community leaders from the central part of the region, the Island of Montreal. Those who wanted no part of it, or thought it would be a useless addition to an already cluttered institutional scene, were mainly from the suburban rings. Many independent observers were also of the view that the government had missed a marvellous opportunity to simplify and rationalize the institutional maze in metropolitan Montreal.

The same could be said about smaller scale urban areas. The report of a Round Table of Central Cities was also published in 1993. It documented the problems of intermunicipal competition central cities faced within their own urban agglomeration. The report asked for a series of specific measures including planning, service co-ordination and municipal restructuring. For two years, the government had responded with more study committees, which were unable to reconcile the points of view and issued separate reports. Then, to the surprise of many, the government appeared to come down clearly on the side of central cities in its original transfer of responsibilities proposal. So far, it has managed to hold on to that position despite all the attempts to distract it with other propositions. But it has yet to say anything that would address the problem of municipal fragmentation in urban areas. At the same time, it is fiddling with side issues such as redrawing the school board map and reducing by half the number of school boards, from about 150 to about 70.

There does not seem to be any view of where local government should be going, whether its role and functions should be broadened, how it should be structured and financed, what should be its relationships to government and to other institutional networks, in the education and social affairs fields for instance, also present everywhere in Quebec. In that context, there is a wait and see attitude, the future of municipal restructuring having to be peered at in a cloudy crystal ball.

GOVERNANCE REFORM IN THE GREATER TORONTO AREA

Elizabeth McLaren

INTRODUCTION

Some thoughts on governance reform in city-regions:

- First It's difficult!
- Second Similar challenges facing city regions in North America
- Third Different solutions—No one *right* solution
- Fourth It keeps evolving
- Last It's difficult!

OVERVIEW

- Bill 103—City of Toronto Act, 1997
- Bill 148—City of Toronto Act 2, 1997
- Greater Toronto Services Board

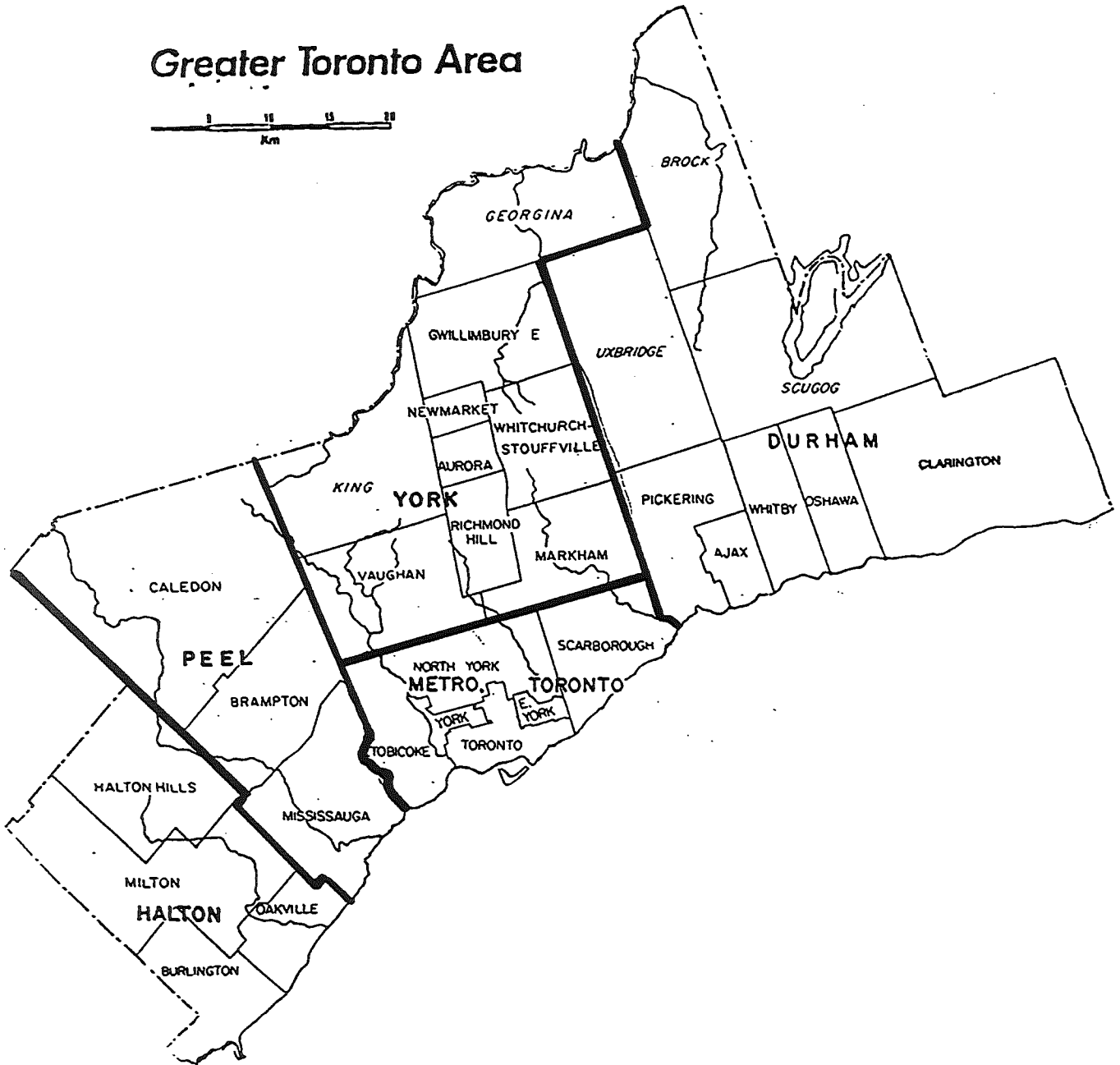
BILL 103—THE CITY OF TORONTO ACT 1997

- Introduced December 17, 1996—Third Reading and Royal Assent on April 21st
- Foundation Legislation to:
 - State Government's intent—to replace the seven existing municipalities (Metro, Toronto, North York, Etobicoke, Scarborough, East York and York) with one new city
 - Ensure 1997 Municipal Elections could continue as usual
 - Provide for an orderly transition
- Creates the new City of Toronto—January 1, 1998
- 56 Councillors, Mayor elected at large

BACKGROUND

- Culmination of several years of intense discussion about governance issues in the Greater Toronto Area
- Work of my office, GTA Task Force Report, and other reports; numerous responses provided many possible options
- Two prime conclusions:

Greater Toronto Area



Map 2: Map of the Greater Toronto Area (Source: Office for the Greater Toronto Area).

- No one was satisfied with the *status quo*
- There was no consensus on what the solution was
- The Government wanted the reforms in place for the upcoming 1997 Municipal Elections
- Toronto is already in fact one city
- One large contiguous urban area—no change in boundaries, no new population, no merging of urban and rural areas
- Decision was to continue the process begun in 1954 by completing the evolution to one municipality
- Any other decision could have resulted in keeping the existing six municipalities or splitting up the already amalgamated services into six or four; or setting up special purpose bodies to administer those services at a time when special purpose bodies are being eliminated

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNIFY TORONTO

- A. Improved economic development potential: one unified Toronto would be presented to business investors—not six cities competing for the same prospects
- B. One strong Council and one Mayor—not seven competing voices
- C. Better political accountability—Taxpayers will not have to deal with two levels of government, only one.
- D. Savings: Taxpayers can save up to \$865 million over three years and \$300 million every year thereafter. Seven to one logically means savings.
- E. An end to duplication and waste—one fire department, not six; one roads department, not seven; one parks department, *etc.*
- F. More than 72 percent of the funds spent on services are already amalgamated. Police, Public Transit, Social Services and Ambulances already operate across the whole region.
- G. A solid GTA core. A strong centre to an area that really is Ontario's economic engine. One Toronto will have the population, political representation and clout to ensure the GTA continues to thrive and grow into the twenty-first century.

DETAILS

1. Financial Advisory Board (3 Members)

Duties:

- 1. Consider 1997 operating and capital budgets;
- 2. Establish and publish guidelines with respect to Human Resources, Finances and other

areas as deemed necessary;

3. Section 14 prohibits existing councils from doing certain things during the transition year:
 - Buying or selling a property worth over \$100,000
 - Using Reserve Accounts for other purposes
 - Incurring a financial liability that extends into 1998
 - Making payments in connection with Termination of Employment
 - Hiring new employees

Board can consider requests for approval to carry out these actions and grant them when the Board considers it appropriate.

Discussion:

- Published guidelines on Human Resources, Finances, Information Technology and long term contracts
- FAB commented on the Capital and Operating Budgets
 - Concern expressed with respect to Phase I of Budget Review in connection with rate of depletion of Reserve and Reserve Funds across all municipalities. (\$129 million) less at year end 1997 compared to year end 1996.
- Applications Review under Subsection 14(2) of the City of Toronto Act, 1997
 - Board received 304 applications; 176 approved; 108 did not require approval or were information items; 18 applications under review and two not approved.
- Quarterly Reports (2nd, 3rd and 4th Quarters)
 - Second Quarter reports received and no concerns noted by the Board
 - Third Quarter reports under review
- Final Report
 - Final Report to the Minister in January 1998

2. Transition Team (6 Members)

Duties:

1. Make recommendations to the Minister on further legislative changes that will be needed to implement the new city;
2. Establish the key elements of the new city's organizational structure;
3. Hire department heads and other key employees;
4. Hold public consultations and make recommendations to the new council re: neighbourhood

committees, functions to be assigned to the Community Councils and the Executive Committee; rationalization and integration of municipal services across the new city, and other transitional issues.

5. Prepare and make recommendations to the new City Council on a Draft 1998 Budget for the City.
6. Make recommendations to the new City Council on remuneration of Mayor, Councillors and senior staff.

Discussion:

- 26 Project Teams
- 700-800 staff involved
- carried out public consultation on role of Community Councils
- on-going surveys of public opinion
- have completed interviews for new CAO
- starting interviews for other key staff
- Interim Report on all of its recommendations in early October
- Draft 1998 Budget for the new city will be done in November

3. **Community Councils and Neighbourhood Committees**

What Bill 103 provides:

- Six Community Councils—one for each existing lower tier
- Councils composed of local politicians who choose their Chair from among themselves
- Chairs of six Community Councils plus Mayor will form an Executive Committee
- Council may delegate some decision making power to Community Councils, such as local recreation facilities and local planning issues
- Council may also establish Neighbourhood Communities to advise the Community Councils
- Council can change the boundaries and the number of Community Councils or abolish them altogether
- Council can also empower Community Councils by by-laws
- As I have already noted, Transition Team will provide advice in this regard.

Why Community Councils?

- Community Councils were not included in the Legislation as originally introduced but were

added in response to many comments received during the hearing process regarding local identity and access to Councillors.

- Area-based committees of Council are unusual (except here in Winnipeg) and are virtually unknown outside Canada.

What Do We Know about Community Councils and Neighbourhood Committees?

- The Canadian Urban Institute did research funded by GTA office on the subject. Title of report—“Community Councils and Neighbourhood Committees: Lessons for Our Communities from Around the World.”
- Reviewed Winnipeg and Halifax
- Found Community Councils in Winnipeg had received mixed reviews but that they still existed, indicating some support
- The Residents’ Advisory Groups in Winnipeg have not received the support necessary for the long term.
- In Halifax, the Community Council system is promising but relatively untested.
- Some of the lessons drawn from the Report:
 - Community Councils, as a vehicle for addressing community concerns over the long term, have had uneven results. This may depend on the way in which they are structured and the responsibilities they are given.
 - The larger the geographic area represented by a Community Council the greater should be their responsibility
 - Access to the local Councillor is important
 - Strong and effective Community Councils may not be compatible with strong and independent Neighbourhood Committees
 - Every municipality is different with a distinct local identity, but lessons learned in one locale will assist others
 - There is a need for municipalities to monitor experiences in other jurisdictions in order to build a system which best meets local needs.

CONSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGE

The Act (Bill 103) was challenged on two grounds:

1. The Act violates rights guaranteed by SS. 2(B)(D), 7, 8 & 15(1) of the “Canadian Charter of

Rights and Freedoms.”

2. The actions of the Legislature disregarded the local democratic autonomy of the Municipalities and thereby exceeded the powers conferred on it by S.92(8) of the Constitution Act, 1967—to enact laws in relation to “Municipal Institutions in the Province.”

Heard—July 7-10, 1997 before Judge Borins.

JUDGEMENT

- Rejected the first grounds, the Charter Challenge, however, an appeal has been filed and will be heard on October 6, 1997.
- I will touch briefly on second ground—the area of most concern to all Provinces
- The Province did not exceed the powers conferred on it by S.92(8) of the Constitution Act.
- While in Judge’s opinion, the Government did not enter into any meaningful consultation, he stated that it is the prerogative of Government.
- Confirmed four principles which apply to the constitutional status of Municipal Governments:
 1. Municipal institutions lack constitutional status;
 2. Municipal institutions are creatures of the Legislature and exist only if Provincial Legislation so provides;
 3. Municipal institutions have no independent autonomy and their powers are subject to abolition or repeal by Provincial Legislation;
 4. Municipal institutions may exercise only those powers which are conferred upon them by Statute.
- Municipalities may not like these principles, but they are what the current law provides.

BILL 148—CITY OF TORONTO ACT 2 : COMPANION PIECE TO BILL 103

- Introduced June 26, 1997—replaces Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto Act
- This Bill, while largely operational in nature, will ensure that the day-to-day services people use will still be in place when the new City of Toronto comes into being on January 1, 1998.
- Bill ensures important local boards and commissions continue to exist—TTC, CNE, the Zoo
- Bill continues the services available to all residents of the City of Toronto such as ambulance services and homes for the aged
- The pension and benefits of municipal and local board employees and retirees is protected.
- Specific transitional issues are dealt with. As an example, official plans of former municipalities will

continue until Council wishes to adopt a new plan.

- The Bill allows the new Council to examine the financial picture and service levels in existing municipalities and take steps to address any imbalances.

GREATER TORONTO SERVICES BOARD

WHAT IS THE GREATER TORONTO AREA (THE GTA)?

- Metro Toronto, Halton, Peel, York and Durham
 - five regions, 30 lower tier municipalities
- 4.2 million people = 42 percent of provincial population—2700 square miles
- Population expected to grow to 6.7 million by 2021
- Roughly half in Metro; other half spread across the regions
- Metro created in 1954—13 municipalities, consolidated in 1967 to six municipalities
- Four regions created between 1971 and 1974
 - Local municipalities reduced from 64 to current 24
- Regions created in a period of strong growth
- Regions were to plan, finance and deliver services in an efficient and timely manner to support growth

A NEED FOR CO-ORDINATION

- Need for service delivery co-ordination has been acknowledged by successive Provincial Governments since the late 1980s
- Office for the Greater Toronto Area set up to promote inter-regional co-operation on issues such as macro-level planning and infrastructure co-ordination
- GTA Mayors and Regional Chairs Committee co-ordinates servicing across the GTA but have no authority to enforce decisions
- Various studies have indicated the issues that lead to the creation of regional governments have risen again over a wider geographic area:
 - Growth spilling over local boundaries
 - Need to share tax base to extend infrastructure
 - Lack of integration of services

THE PROCESS

- Special Advisor, Milt Farrow was appointed December 17, 1996

- Asked to undertake a consultation on what GTSB might look like and what it might do
- Discussion Paper released in February
- Written comments submitted
- Final Report, "Getting Together," was released in June
- Comments on Report were to be submitted by July 31st
- Government still considering the Report

"GETTING TOGETHER" THE GOAL

- A. The Greater Toronto Services Board should be created to:
 - sustain and enhance the quality of life in the GTA
 - support the GTA as a dynamic, interdependent and vital economic entity
- B. Its primary roles would be to:
 - develop an Infrastructure Co-ordination Strategy
 - provide a discussion forum and liaison with other levels of Government
 - resolve inter-regional disputes
 - operate GO Transit
 - provide a long-term Waste Management Strategy for GTA

CONCLUSION

Reiterate five opening comments about municipal restructuring:

1. It's difficult!
2. Cities face similar challenges
3. No one *right* solution
4. Constantly evolves
5. It's difficult!

RURAL CONSOLIDATION OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS IN CANADA

Richard C. Rounds

Both single-tier (horizontally fragmented) and multi-tier (vertically fragmented) municipal governments are common in Canada. Both structures have advantages and disadvantages.

Inherent in the single-tier system used in Manitoba are the following attributes:

1. Relationships among neighbouring municipalities wherein population distribution and different levels of service, economic activity and tax revenues create inequities, often create differences between an urban centre and surrounding rural areas.
2. Fragmentation and the need to deliver services on a regional basis has led to proliferation of joint agreements and special service agencies and commissions.
3. Conflict between pressures for consolidation and the desire for accessible and responsible municipal government at the local level.

Single tier systems are most common and widespread in Canada, but the three most populous provinces have multi-tier systems (Ontario, Quebec, B.C.).

When faced with changes in population, economic activity and revenue, municipalities are presented with three options: (1) maintaining the *status quo*; (2) consolidation; (3) adopting a modified multi-tiered system. The over-riding question, since municipal governments are creatures of provincial governments, is "what role does the provincial government see for its municipalities?" This involves questions relating to:

1. Decentralization of powers
2. Service delivery responsibilities
3. Financial independence and viability

Most change has occurred in large urban centres, and most decisions favour urban centres. Rural areas, however, are very resilient, and when left to their own devices, usually find ways to preserve their identities and strengthen their situations. Rural depopulation, however, continues to add pressure to rural areas everywhere except surrounding major urban centres. These pressures are now being compounded by the downloading of responsibilities and costs by senior governments that are seeking fiscal restraints owing to debt levels.

Decreases in conditional, unconditional and capital grants from senior government result in either or both increased costs to local government or decreased provision of services to rural people. This creates constant pressure for increased efficiency and effectiveness at the municipal level. Purse-tightening at senior levels is a pattern that likely will continue for some time, so the reactions required at the local level will continue to add pressure to local governments. The search for solutions, therefore, will be on-going.

Municipal governments are required by senior governments to keep balanced budgets. Thus, there are no staggering debts at the local level. In turn, this limits the entrepreneurial possibilities of local governments at a time when they may have to change their ways of doing business in order to be “more effective and more efficient.” Although some relaxation has been occurring in the limits on borrowing, *etc.*, the truth is that fiscal responsibility has served municipal governments well, and most remain viable in spite of changing environments.

In total, however, fiscal responsibility is only one part of the question of change in municipal government. Other significant components involved in future municipal government include questions of:

1. identity
2. levels of service
3. local autonomy
4. tax equity, and
5. roles within evolving regional structures.

EVOLVING REGIONALISM

The last 20 years have brought many changes in the governance of rural Manitoba, if not in structure, then certainly in function. Although not an official policy, regionalism has been viewed as the most efficient and effective way to deliver some services to expansive rural areas with limited population. *Planning Districts* were formed by two or more municipalities to deal with common concerns related to land-use development and other factors. *Conservation Districts* range from large to small and are based on natural watersheds that transcend municipal boundaries and may even include only portions of some municipalities. These deal with water, soil and wildlife conservation, and often involve public-private partnerships with even broader mandates. *School Districts* have long involved complex and changing spatial dimensions that involve many separate municipal governments. The provision of *infrastructure*, such as piped water and natural gas are increasingly taking on regional dimensions. Currently, *Health Districts* are being established to deliver services to regions. Although many of these responsibilities never did accrue to municipalities, they all have fiscal and political dimensions that do involve local government.

In essence, although little change has occurred in the local government structures in rural Manitoba, a complex system of special services agreements has evolved to accommodate changing needs to deliver some services to extra-municipal areas. If these continue to increase, there may come a time when a second tier of government naturally evolves—be it county or regional. To date, however, rural Manitobans have been content to work with partnerships to accommodate change.

Should special services agreements continue to increase, however, and citizens view larger units as more effective forms of government, there will be a whole new set of issues to face. First, giving up long-established identities, either as rural areas or small towns and villages, will create a cumbersome “name-game.” Getting past long-established competitiveness among areas will be particularly problematic. Second, few of the special services agreements have coincident boundaries, forming a complex set of partnerships that best serve a specific purpose. It is doubtful that any combination of current municipal government units would form a “natural” larger unit. School divisions, conservation districts and provincial administrative regions are expansive, whereas planning districts and water pipeline systems tend to be spatially restricted. The issues facing the regionalization of waste management in the last five years reflect these challenges. Although cost is a major concern, tradition and convenience also are important. Even the “location” of a regional landfill site becomes highly competitive from a community economic development perspective.

EXAMPLES OF MUNICIPAL CONSOLIDATION

Case studies across Canada suggest that there are a variety of reasons why municipalities have decided to consolidate. As a working premise, it can be stated that studies do not clearly demonstrate or automatically support the argument that consolidation will decrease the costs of delivery of services. In a similar vein, no two provinces deal with their municipalities in the same way, and some view decentralization of power to local government as the most effective approach, while others are retaining or increasing provincial control.

ALBERTA

The Village of Wildwood was struggling to remain fiscally viable. With a 1991 population of about 300, the Village lacked a sufficient commercial and assessment base, had a declining population, had long term debts (at provincial limit), faced major upgrading of infrastructure and equipment and had declining grant revenue. Citizens were faced with and concerned about rising taxes and declining services. The villages’ attendant rural area (Improvement District) had a much better revenue base and much higher population. By disincorporating, village residents would reduce their taxes by one third, even with a special debt recovery levy. The Improvement District, conversely, was only minimally effected by absorbing the Village. The Village voted to dissolve into a hamlet within the ID, but retained its name. The process was rapid and reasonably painless, partly because the answer was obvious.

In Fort Assiniboine, a village of 216 persons in 1991, some residents petitioned the council to dissolve the Village. A study identified: (1) dissatisfaction with the current municipal government; (2) the perception

that services would improve with dissolution; and (3) a feeling that taxation might be reduced. The tax levy per person was on par with the average for villagers throughout Alberta, the debt per person was below the provincial average, and money was available for borrowing. Folding into the surrounding ID would not appreciably change the tax level for villagers, but it also would not impact the ID negatively. Faced with future infrastructure improvement costs, and not supporting the current administration, the Villagers voted to dissolve. In both Alberta cases, therefore, the move to change local government was initiated by the residents.

SASKATCHEWAN

Two very different case studies occurred in Saskatchewan. Two rural municipalities north of the Battlefords, Greenfield and Mervin, amalgamated in 1990. Greenfield had substantial debt and problems in maintaining services and operations. At the time of consolidation, Greenfield had 480 residents and Mervin had 840. Both had a reeve and full councils, and provided necessary services. Both original municipalities had declining populations and grants, but Greenfield was in poorer circumstances than Mervin. Joint service agreements, a split of Greenfield into halves to join two separate municipalities and the formal consolidation of the two existing governments were options. The two councils agreed upon merger. Two councils were reduced to one, some reductions were made in administrative staff, and some equipment and labour savings accrued. Although substantial economies were not achieved, the new RM of Mervin was able to operate without deficit. The consolidation process was initiated by the municipalities, but government played a key role in facilitation.

An early restructuring of local government occurred in the Saskatoon area in 1970. As Saskatoon expanded, the tendency was to annex pieces of adjacent land into the city. Three RMs surrounded Saskatoon in 1970: Cory, Park and Warman. Cory had a good tax base and low mill rates, but Park and Warman were primarily agricultural areas. To avoid being annexed either piecemeal or in one big land/revenue grab, the three municipalities decided to consolidate into one government (Corman Park) to effectively deal with pressures from the City. Warman actually split in half, with the southern portion adjacent to Saskatoon joining Corman Park, and portions of the northern half joining two other municipalities.

Prior to consolidation the mill rates varied widely (Cory 14 mills, Park 35 mills and Warman 43 mills). To avoid dramatic increases in Cory a 15-year, phased-in mill rate formula was devised. A target of 31 mills was set for all residents of Corman Park after 15 years. The phase-in differential was supported by using existing differences in assets as offset. In essence, therefore, Corman Park was able to negotiate agreeable terms with all three original municipalities and establish a position to challenge Saskatoon.

ONTARIO

In 1993, a new municipal government was formed when the Village of Rodney (1000 residents) consolidated with the Township of Aldborough (2500 residents). Another village, West Lorne (1300 residents), voted not to join. All these local governments are within the County of Elgin in a two-tier system of local government. Population in the area was increasing at about one percent per year.

The primary drive behind consolidation was the perception that one larger/stronger unit with a broader tax base could more effectively attract development. Competition among fragmented governments would be reduced. Twenty public meetings were held to discuss the issue, and consensus in Rodney and Aldborough was reached without a referendum.

During the process, a number of duplicated services were identified, and cost efficiencies recognized, including savings (primarily legal fees) in negotiating shared services agreements that were in effect. Where differential costs occurred among residents of the original municipalities, compromises were offered to equalize any major shifts. A provincial grant of \$144,000 was provided to assist administrative restructuring. A marginal decrease in expenditures was realized following consolidation.

In a 1991 Ontario example, the Town of New Tecumseth evolved from the former municipalities of Alliston, Beeton, Tecumseth and Tottenham. Lying within the Toronto commutershed, this example reflects two major differences from all other case studies: (1) a large population of more than 20,000 residents; and (2) the consolidation was legislated by the province. Development pressures and the proposed expansion of a new Honda plant in the municipality forced resolution of five unresolved annexation applications and other boundary adjustments. A major study reviewed input and advice from the Town of Tecumseth, villages and townships in the area and the County of Simcoe. Land-use conflicts, fringe development, preservation of farm land, water and sewer concerns, local government structures, and the location and type of future growth all were on the table.

Once the province ordered consolidation, attention turned to how to make the "forced marriage" work. A strategic plan was used to work through the issues and focus concerns on the future.

OVERVIEW

Much attention has been given recently to municipal reform, but few actual consolidations have occurred. Many provinces have (or are) reviewing and revising their municipal legislation, with the government thrust being that of allowing or even encouraging consolidation of the historically fragmented local governments across Canada. Although municipalities remain under the control of the provinces, forcing change is not viewed as a viable option in all but rare cases. New legislation, however, has loosened control

considerably, opening the door for change, offering process assistance, and attempting to work out financial arrangements that mitigate real or perceived losses among municipalities involved.

Manitoba has revised its Municipal Act over the last three years to include most of the general options viewed as most important to effecting change. The first formal process is underway with the Town of Killarney and its surrounding Rural Municipality of Turtle Mountain actively reviewing the pros and cons of forming one local government. A long history of cordial relations between the two municipalities will assist the process. Major concerns, however, will revolve around traditional identity, the fact that the RM has only half of the population of the Town, and differences in taxation and assets. The first case study in Manitoba may well set precedents for future consolidation—whether successful or not.



PART FIVE

URBAN GOVERNANCE FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY



Photo 5: Winnipeg Mayor William Norrie, MLA Gerald Mercier and MP Lloyd Axworthy at news conference announcing Core Area Initiative plans, June 3, 1981 (Credit: Wayne Glowacki, Source: Western Canada Pictorial Index *Winnipeg Free Press* Collection).

URBAN GOVERNANCE FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Warren Magnusson

The idea of “urban governance” is an odd one. The term is intended to release us from prior assumptions: to break the connections both between “the city” and “the urban” and between “government” and “governance.” These are—or can be—liberating moves: ones that enable us to think differently about old subjects. However, the injunction to think about these matters in relation to the twenty-first century—the century to come, rather than the century that is past—is an indicator that we need to be even more sceptical about the terms of our thinking than the phrase, “urban governance,” actually allows. I want to suggest that we have to make at least three other moves, to open our minds to the challenges of the coming decades.

First, we need to go beyond the old idea that “the urban” can be understood in terms of “metropolitan areas,” and to recognize that our urban world—unlike the urban world of the 1920s or even the 1960s—really is global. Terms like “the net” or “hyperspace” may help us to conceptualize this new reality; however, these terms are rather inadequate metaphors for relations that people experience daily—the business call to Germany, the lunch with Japanese visitors at the local Ethiopian restaurant, the jog about the park in one’s Indonesian (or is that American?) Nikes. We all know that things have changed in ways that Marshall McLuhan had just begun to conceptualize thirty years ago, when I was a university student here in Winnipeg. And yet, we cling nostalgically to the idea that “the metropolis”—a term invented more than a hundred years ago to make sense of an urban reality that spilled over from the cities into the suburbs and the surrounding rural areas—somehow *contains* the urban world in which we live. The idea that our lives can be understood in terms of the geographical containers that enclose them, that what we are and that what we need to do collectively can somehow be firmly bounded and thus centred in a place where we can act—this idea is a persistent one. It is the idea that informs the dream of the nation-state and (by extension) the dream of Unicity. It is an idea that we will have to abandon.

The *second* move that we need to make is to go beyond the notion of “governance” to recapture a conception of “politics.” Politics and politicians are in bad odour now, because people sense that what is on offer under these labels is a fraud. Political debate is supposed to be about the direction of our lives, the condition of our existence. It is supposed to enable us to determine who we are, what we want, and, most importantly, what sort of beings we ought to be, what sort of society or community we ought to have. Politicians are supposed to help us clarify our options. In choosing which of our politicians are to lead us, we are empowering governments that can take us in the direction that makes most sense to us, in terms of our most basic understandings of what we are and what we need to be. Unfortunately, it seems that these

governments are largely impotent, and that “politics” mostly consists of a series of marketing efforts for products that are never delivered. No wonder that people become cynical. The term “governance” is supposed to draw our attention to the fact that the business of commanding and disciplining people is shared by many agencies that are not supposed to be “governments.” Some of these agencies pass themselves off as “businesses,” others as “universities” or “hospitals.” All of them seem part of a system of “governance.” It is a system that penetrates our lives in innumerable ways. What we lack are not effective systems of *governance*—the current ones are all too effective—but rather effective *political* systems that might enable us to become other than what we now are.

The *third* move we need to make is to recover a sense of ourselves as more than economic beings. For much of this century, liberals, socialists, and other progressives dominated political thought. This predominance was partly an effect of their successful critiques of crude *bourgeois* thinking. That was the sort of thinking that reduced “man” to an economic actor whose interactions could be regulated by the market. Although the development of state management in the twentieth century owed much to the *economic* failures of capitalism (and to the economic inequalities associated with its successes), it was also prompted by a sense that a society had to be more than a collection of individuals competing for economic gain. As the hold of the traditional religions weakened, it became more apparent that “society” required a moral purpose that went beyond any consideration of economic gain. That purpose might be articulated within a dream of national or ethnic supremacy, inspired by notions of military virtue and the thrill of violence. Alternatively, and more hopefully, it might be articulated in a vision of compassion and solidarity. Thus it was that the old CCF held the moral high ground in Canadian politics. However, the failures of state welfare and state economic management have allowed for a vigorous re-articulation of the old *bourgeois* notion that society is nothing but a set of economic relations between individuals and that any attempt to make it more than that is ultimately pernicious. In turn, this has allowed for the re-assertion of apolitical and sectarian moralisms that fill the vacuum left by the collapse of social democracy. These rival moralisms occupy the space for politics in a world where political conceptions of self and society have been consistently denigrated in favour of a narrow, economistic conception of humanity. The ugliness, violence, and moral self-righteousness of the contemporary urban world is a predictable effect of the effort to reduce us to the sort of beings who are represented in the economics textbooks.

What I am suggesting, then, is a three-fold move: *away* from an economistic conception of self and society, *away* from an apolitical conception of governance, and *away* from a conception of the urban as a mode of containment. Let me relate these ideas to the question of governance in and for Winnipeg.

Unicity was the product of a social democratic dream. It was an effort to bring down to the level of the city or the urban region a conception of governance—and hence of politics—that had been articulated

earlier at the level of the nation-state. There was a return to origins involved in this, since many of the early social democrats (the Fabians especially) had thought of the welfare state as an ensemble of lesser authorities, each rooted in a local or regional community. The dream of rationalizing local government had long been a part of the aims of social democracy. Unicity was crucial because it showed how a determined social democratic government could bring the appropriate institutions of local government into effect: institutions that would enable the people of an entire urban region to decide democratically on the direction the region should take. The aim was to establish for the first time real political equality at the local level, by removing the main bastions of class privilege (the suburbs) and facilitating the formation of genuine political parties. The new politics of Unicity would thus be marked by a struggle between those who sought to extend social democracy and those who wanted to restrain it in the name of traditional values. Of course, it did not work out this way. The politics of the “new” Winnipeg was very like the politics of the “old” Winnipeg, except that the city was bigger and the downtown less significant than it was formerly. What remained of the dream was a particular, now heavily institutionalized conception of Winnipeg as an urban region. And, this conception was ultimately elided with the notion of Winnipeg as a business corporation.

The idea that a municipality is just a glorified business is a very old one: We certainly can trace it back to medieval times. It is the sort of idea that can be embraced both for purposes of critique and for purposes of celebration. I came across it first in the late '60s and early '70s, in the work of critics like Jim Lorimer and politicians like John Sewell: people who clearly thought that it was a bad thing for municipalities to act as if they were businesses. These critics pointed out that business leaders seemed to think that they “owned” the municipalities where they lived or where they operated their businesses, and that the whole point of municipal government was just to promote more business. *Naïfs* that they were, Lorimer, Sewell, and all the other “reformers” of that era were shocked by the idea that people could treat democratic governments—which were supposed to be for everyone and to serve a whole variety of purposes—as if they were adjuncts of the chamber of commerce. Little did they expect that the “traditionalists” would embrace what was supposed to be a criticism with such obvious relish, and begin celebrating their own activities with all the *chutzpah* of nineteenth century railway barons. Twenty years later, the marriage of business and government could be presented as so natural and necessary that it hardly elicited any comment.

In this context, the idea of the urban region plays a particular part in legitimating the equation of the municipality with the chamber of commerce. The two become one flesh because the “city” is conceived as an entrepreneurial entity that occupies a particular space. The “city” is no longer centred downtown, so much as it is centred in the board-rooms of the corporations and business associations that work with the municipality—conceived as an arms-length public agency belonging to them all, collectively—in articulating “strategies” for the region as a whole. Elections are of course important in legitimating this network of power,

but they have relatively little impact on the course of events. The system of urban governance is complex, and the municipality is but one agency in that system. The public sector as a whole is only a part of the system. What the idea—and institutional form—of “Winnipeg” or “Toronto” or “Montreal” does in this context is to provide legitimation for activities that have relatively little to do with these idealized “communities” and much to do with the aspirations of particular business elites. The three-fold collapse that I have earlier noted—of urban reality into a self-contained region, of politics into a model of apolitical governance, and of humanity into economic man—is the condition of possibility for this rather pernicious situation.

I betray my biases when I use a word like “pernicious.” However, I do more than that, for I invoke a sense of unease that is shared by many who are *not* nostalgic for the era of social democracy. The hollowness of contemporary municipal politics is not unique: We sense the same hollowness elsewhere. There are signs of an unsatiated yearning in events as diverse as the response to the death of Diana and the sudden, unexpected popular resistance to neo-conservatism, which has been apparent both in opinion polls and recent electoral results. Social democrats have been disappointed by the continuing resistance to their own attempts to capture this yearning. Gestures at multi-culturalism and the politics of difference seem like symptoms of the problem, rather than solutions to it. The sense of a lost centre of secular meaning weighs heavily over the politics of our time, and it is by no means only those who have thought of themselves as “progressive” who respond uneasily to the situation. “Family values” and “traditional morality” are in the end no substitutes for politics.

To speak of “politics” is to speak of what is *not* subject to governance, what is beyond the commands and the disciplines, what is prior to self and society, prior to religion and morality and “economic man.” We become what we are politically. We are not such and so by genetic inheritance, nor are we “socialized” into our roles: these depoliticized conceptions of how we become what we are, are ideological misreadings that mystify our relation to ourselves. That relation is actually a political relation, to which we must bring a political understanding. This is not to say that the politics of the self is played out in isolation: on the contrary. The politics of the self and the politics of society are inextricable, and indeed it is only in a certain political situation that one can make an intelligible distinction between self and society. The point is that what we are, individually and socially, is politically determined, and the process of political determination is not something that occurs outside us, but rather within and through us. Our politics *is* what we think, what we do, how we are; by being, doing, and thinking in certain ways we enforce particular possibilities on one another. To insist that these processes are political and not simply social is to say that they cannot be understood apart from the human capacity for creative action. It is this capacity—which is expressed in resistance, indiscipline, and innovation; in the unexpected connection and the new possibility; in the moment of declaring that we can be other than what we are, and acting upon that declaration—which ultimately distinguishes the political and gives

it its place as the primordial human reality: that from which religion, morality, and even economics spring.

To centre the political is *not* to centre the state. On the contrary, it is to resist the ideological moves that put politics over there, in a neat container safely removed from everyday life. It is to insist on the political character of the market and to name as “governmental” those shadowy “businesses” that dominate so much of what we do. It is also to insist on the political character of the institutions that incarcerate the young and the old, the sick and the “dysfunctional.” It is to name as political what passes as governance, but it is also to identify much else under the same rubric. It is to resist the naturalization of relations of power that might well be other than what they are, and to insist that these relations be brought under the sign of politics so that we can examine how they have come to be, how they are sustained, and how and why they might be changed.

So: what are we to make of “the urban” in this context? What is central to it, is in a way what is central to politics. We denote by the urban those centres of human activity—more accurately, that *mode* of human activity—that enable the transformation, the *humanization* of the natural environment. If the “wild” and the “natural” are at one end of a spectrum and the “rural” and the “pastoral” are the middle terms, then the “urban” is at the other end. In the domain of the urban, our physical environment is so obviously our own creation that we begin to imagine ourselves as in control of nature itself. That this leads to *hubris* is obvious: The present concerns of the environmental movement about the effects of that *hubris* are largely valid. However, it is only through a political process that we can come to grips with the effects of our own arrogance and learn to limit ourselves for our own sake and for the sake of other species. The urban is the domain of human self-making carried to its logical extreme, and as such it is the domain in which *political* consciousness is most necessary. To be politically conscious in this sense is to be aware that what we are and what we do is the effect of political choices: to know, for instance, that the global market is as much a political construct as the nation-state, and that what we describe as religions or moralities are effects of our political choices. To think politically is to politicize the urban, for urbanism is the ultimate expression of our political choices: it is that which we make as we exercise our own transformative capacities.

What is most evident now is that there is no “outside” to the urban. What has been set apart as an “outside”—the parks and wilderness reserves, the idyllic villages and farms between the cities—is as thoroughly colonized as what is ostensibly within. There is no “outside” outside: even the terrain beyond the atmosphere is littered with our satellites, space stations, and unwanted garbage. So: to think of the urban is not to think of particular regions, but rather of a mode of human life that extends everywhere on Earth and implicates everyone in it. In this urban to which there is no beyond, there are processes of governance that we have scarcely begun to identify. The task of naming these processes, questioning these processes, and calling *ourselves* to account in relation to them is the most pressing political task of our time. It is to this

task—and not simply to the problems of “economic management” or “service delivery”—that we are called when the question of urban governance for the twenty-first century is raised.

URBAN GOVERNANCE FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: WHAT THE UNICITY EXPERIENCE TELLS US

Greg Selinger

INTRODUCTION

As we enter the twenty-first century, effective urban governance will continue to be problematic in a federal state such as Canada. Provincial governments are unlikely to yield the authority and resources that cities need to address the problems they experience. Federal government spending will be targeted to cash credits or transfers directly to individuals and families in order to increase federal government legitimacy with Canadians and to bypass provincial governments. The corporate globalization agenda will demand tax concessions and greater privatization of services delivered by urban governments. Cities will prioritize their strained budgets to stimulate economic development by attracting new corporate investment. Technological innovations will create job losses as computers displace low-skill workers. Urban issues such as poverty and inequality, safety and security, inner-city and downtown deterioration will lead to exurban citizen flight. As a consequence, healthy neighbourhoods will be difficult to sustain.

In the midst of these trends, urban governance has become more centralized and less representative of and responsive to citizens.

This paper will examine how we have arrived at this point by examining the evolution of Winnipeg's Unicity from a citizen perspective on urban governance. It will then discuss some of the organizational and political challenges that will have to be overcome to enable urban governance to respond to the challenges it faces. It will argue for a structure and process of urban governance that addresses regional issues, while facilitating civic engagement at the neighbourhood and community level.

THE ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF WINNIPEG'S UNICITY

PHASE 1: 1970 TO 1975—THE BLOOM COMES OFF THE ROSE

When the New Democratic government of Ed Schreyer published its "Proposals for Urban Reorganization in the Greater Winnipeg Area" in late 1970, it stated that "almost all of the urban area's difficulties stem, in whole or in part, from three main roots—fragmented authority, segmented financial capacity, and lack of citizen involvement" (pp. 4-6).

Consequently, the Unicity legislation sought to remedy these barriers to effective urban government by first unifying the authority for the services delivered by the 13 existing municipalities and the metropolitan-

wide second tier of government; by equalizing the tax mill rates; and by devising several innovative institutional features to encourage citizen participation in the new reduced and amalgamated 50-member city council (that replaced the 112 elected officials from the previous two-tier system of metropolitan government).

The Board of Commissioners led by the Chief Commissioner became the new unified administrative authority for all the services that were amalgamated under the Unicity legislation. The equalization of the municipal mill rates was softened by generous transition payments from the provincial government. This minimized any tax disruption from the new Unicity, but also allowed a layered bureaucratic structure to absorb all the public employees without any financial pressure for streamlining the public service.

The governance structure divided City Council into eight Community Committee areas that grouped councillors, who each represented some 10-12,000 citizens, roughly along the lines of the former municipalities, to govern on local matters such as recreation, local civic works and services within the budget and policies set by Council as a whole. As well Community Committees would hear zoning, variance, and conditional use applications, and make recommendations to the standing committees of City Council. To assist the Community Committees, the legislation provided for Resident Advisory Groups (RAGs) to be elected at an annual meeting of the Community Committee. The RAGs were intended to ensure grassroots citizen participation in the decentralized Community Committee structure.

The Standing Committees were the second tier of the Unicity structure. They were legislatively required and were intended as a vehicle to hear broader policy matters in particular fields of civic responsibility such as planning, finance, recreation and parks, and works and civic operations such as the municipal utilities.

The third tier for consideration and participation on civic affairs was legislated to be the Executive Policy Committee. It was composed of the Deputy Mayor and the Standing Committee chairs, all elected by the majority of councillors. The Mayor was an ex-officio member of all committees.

The fourth and final level of civic decision making and avenue of citizen participation was the City Council. Chaired by the Mayor, it made the final decision on all budget, policy and zoning matters coming up through the other three levels of governance. The original provincial proposals contemplated that the Mayor of Unicity would be elected by the Councillors and therefore accountable to them for the leadership he or she provided.

Compared to a provincial government system where bills are heard in committees, the only official access point for citizens, the Unicity governance structure provided four levels for citizens and interest groups to intervene on policy and budget matters.¹ On zoning matters, hearings were restricted to the Community Committee level unless a Standing Committee or Council wished, by majority vote, to hear the delegation.

The possibility of a more participatory method of urban governance was aided by legislative provision for local action area plans that could be passed as bylaws to guide development of specific neighbourhoods.

The legislation also included the option to create community plans to guide the development of broader historic community areas.

The Unicity legislative initiative was championed by Premier Schreyer and his Minister of Finance and Urban Affairs, Saul Cherniack. Critical to the initiative was the support of Mayor Juba of the City of Winnipeg who represented half of the urban population, while the other nine municipalities represented the remaining citizens. Mayor Juba drew his strength from the North End and the same ethnic base as the NDP in the urban ridings. Consequently, his continued support for the legislation was crucial, and the price for it was to have the Mayor elected at large. Juba was prescient, because upon implementation, Unicity became dominated by a suburban-led, centre-right, Conservative-Liberal coalition that could trace its origins to the Committee of 1000 that crushed the Winnipeg Strike of 1919 (Masters, 1973). These councillors would not have selected Juba to be their Mayor if the provincial government's original proposal had been implemented (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983, p. 89).

The provincial decision to require the Mayor to be elected at large was seen by many as undercutting the ability of political parties to form on City Council. These political parties would have a policy platform and be accountable for their performance.

Nonetheless, even though it denied it was a political party, the centre-right coalition which came to be known as the Independent Citizens' Election Committee (ICEC), did control City Council. This coalition was not enamoured with either the RAGs or Community Committees and, in addition, they eschewed community plans entirely and discouraged action area plans after the first ones developed by citizen initiative put limits on developer interests in areas such as Fort Rouge.²

Thus, in the first five years of Unicity, the bloom came off the rose as the politics of a corporate, pro-development regime entrenched itself in the governing processes and machinery of the Unicity. The NDP municipal party had no resonance outside of traditional North and West End working class and ethnic districts. An attempt at a progressive civic reform coalition in 1974 elected one councillor in an outlying suburban district in St. Boniface.

PHASE 2: THE 1977 UNICITY REVIEW—THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OPTS FOR “EFFICIENCY” OVER RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

In 1977, the provincial government appointed a committee, chaired by Judge Taraska, to review the functioning of Unicity. The Taraska report's recommendations attempted to reinforce the intent of the original legislation to create a responsible and accountable government and to increase its operating efficiency. The committee recommended once again that the Mayor be indirectly elected from within Council and chair the Executive Policy Committee (EPC). EPC would be given greater powers as delegated by Council, while the

standing committees would have a lesser role as an adviser, holder of public hearings, and undertaker of inquiries. The recommendations made the Mayor more like a Premier, with the ability to appoint the EPC from among the elected Councillors, thus making it more like a cabinet. Despite these increased powers, the Mayor and the EPC still required their recommendations to command a majority of Council votes, but this would be made easier as the Taraska report advocated reducing the number of Councillors to 39. EPC was further strengthened by making the Board of Commissioners responsible to it. This made the administration accountable to the Mayor's cabinet and centralized power in the hands of the Mayor and his cabinet. As an offset, the Taraska report recommended greater resources and support for the RAGs, but reduced the scope of the Community Committees to planning matters, and removed their power to administer local services such as recreation, social services, and public works:

The committee hoped the recommendations would encourage the development of a local party system, as well as create an effective, responsible cabinet-type executive as a focus for the necessary political leadership, and as the principal link between the council and the administration (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983, p. 138).

The NDP provincial government, in a complicated set of amendments, accepted the view that fewer Councillors would increase the efficiency of governance, and reduced the Council to 30 members and six Community Committees. Further, the amendments centralized the administration by making each member of the Board of Commissioners, hired by Council, responsible for designated departments, and only responsible through the Board to the Executive Policy Committee. The Board of Commissioners thus gained centralized power over the entire civic administration. The Board would be accountable to the EPC, but City Council would be responsible for hiring and firing. This gave the Board the power to disagree and resist the Mayor and EPC if they wished, but retain their authority with the support of a majority of Councillors. This hearkened back to the view that professional public administration was a bulwark against political corruption of elected officials (Tindal and Tindal, 1990, p. 203). The Board of Commissioners became a highly centralized force in the administration of civic affairs, while the power of the Community Committees was reduced.

This was accentuated when the provincial government did not strengthen the political powers of the Council. The Mayor was still to be elected at large, but did not chair or appoint the EPC. Thus, the 1977 political changes essentially kept a weak-mayor political system, but strengthened the professional administration through centralizing power in their hands at the expense of the Community Committees and the Standing Committees.

The 1977 amendments gave the City Council more autonomy in the planning process, and removed provincial review of local bylaws on action area plans and zoning matters unless requested by Council. It further gave EPC responsibility for the overall plan for the city, but still required approval by the Minister of

Urban Affairs. The result was that City Council now could control the day-to-day rezoning procedures as long as they were in conformity with the overall plan of the city as approved by the province.

After 1977, Unicity was a centralized administration with a dominant coalition of the centre-right, but without the clear lines and focus for public accountability through a mayor-led majority. The smaller Council reduced citizen access and was less representative of Winnipeg's diverse communities. The community committees were less powerful, and the RAGs still under-resourced and ignored by most Councillors. The RAGs were also questionable in terms of what citizens they represented.

The post 1977 version of Unicity led to a high level of citizen alienation from their local government. This alienation was exacerbated with a loosening of the conflict of interest legislation which allowed those who engage in business with Unicity to run for City Council (Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, 1983). Slowly, a perception started to grow that they were there for more than the common good.

PHASE 3: THE CORE AREA INITIATIVE—SETTING UP A SYSTEM OF PARALLEL GOVERNANCE AND CITIZEN ACCESS

Over the years, the ICEC developed several techniques to circumvent the process designed to give citizens a voice in planning and zoning matters. Log-rolling was commonplace. Councillors would make informal arrangements to let a Councillor appear to support a community concern, but outvote him or her in supporting a development project which residents believed would harm their neighbourhood. This practice confused citizens as to the true intentions of their Councillor. Other techniques included a Community Committee supporting a community's concerns, but then having the Planning, Executive Policy Committee or City Council overturn it. In the case of major projects, EPC would take the matter directly to Council to avoid a hearing at the local level. This latter approach was utilized to initiate a major new bridge project that would disrupt inner-city neighbourhoods.

The Sherbrooke-McGregor Overpass issue ignited a broad-based citizen coalition to fight to protect the inner city and to call attention to the neglect of all levels of government to its growing social issues. Their demand for removal of the CPR marshalling yards to stimulate inner-city renewal became a platform for the Liberal, Lloyd Axworthy, to enter Parliament. Subsequently, the mobilization of dissent by the inner-city coalition pushed him to respond. Unable to relocate the rails without enormous public expense under the Rail Relocation Act, Axworthy came forward with a \$25 million package of regional development funds for inner-city social and economic renewal if matched by the provincial and city governments. Ultimately, the bridge project was stopped by a concerted lobby of City Council with the support of suburban citizens engaged through the churches. But other rail yard crossings were expedited rather than rail relocation proceeding.

The \$75 million Core Area Initiative (CAI) program established a parallel governance structure to

address downtown and core area issues. The policy committee of the CAI consisted of the federal regional cabinet minister (Axworthy, followed by Jake Epp), the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mercier, then Kostyra and then Ducharme) and the Mayor (Norrie). This tri-level committee of politicians focused and co-ordinated the jurisdictions of their respective governments to address the social and economic issues of the inner city. They were aided by an intergovernmental management board made up of senior officials from the three levels of government and chaired by the CAI manager, as well as similar subcommittees to advise on specific components of the agreement. A Core Area Initiative office took responsibility for administering and co-ordinating the three levels of government in implementing the agreement. Notably absent was a strong citizen participation component with a status equivalent to the management board. But citizens were put in charge of various programs and development corporations.

This structure effectively circumvented the machinery of Unicity in addressing downtown and inner-city concerns. Even though all program approvals passed through the Unicity system, they were rarely overturned. This was due to the Mayor's support and the combined prior approvals of the two senior levels of government. The three levels of government cost-shared every project with equal one-third contributions.

In effect, the CAI overcame the divided responsibilities for the community as expressed in the constitution by co-operating at the program and policy level.³ The CAI did not, however, make any long-term legislative or policy changes to institutionalize the successful innovations and administrative and policy arrangements.

Notably, the CAI did reintroduce the fragmentation of civic governance by its very existence as a parallel decision making body focusing on one part of the city. This was expanded through innovations such as the North Portage Development Corporation and the Forks Development Corporation, which was a spin-off of the North Portage Development Corporation.

The CAI was considered by most as a successful mechanism to address inner-city and downtown planning, development and social issues. But the shift in decision-making away from City Council led to public and Councillor criticism about the lack of accountability of these agencies.⁴ The vision of Unicity as unifying service delivery was unravelling in the face of specific issues that required focused attention, expertise and participation by citizens and local business interests that were directly affected.

PHASE 4: THE CHERNIACK REPORT AND THE 1990 LEGISLATIVE REFORMS—BACKDOOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

The provincial NDP government appointed a City of Winnipeg Act Review Committee in 1984. The 1986 Cherniack Report (after the Committee Chair, former City Councillor Lawrie Cherniack) made several recommendations to improve the responsibility, accountability, and functioning of City Council.

Knowing it could not win support to require the Mayor to be elected by Council instead of directly at large, the Committee recommended increasing the policy leadership role of the Mayor by making him the Chair of the EPC with the power to appoint the Deputy-Mayor and the chairs. A new presiding officer (speaker) would then be elected by Council to chair Council meetings. These changes were proposed alongside a recommendation to reduce the size of City Council to 24 members while retaining six community committees. The Mayor and Councillors would be elected by a preferential ballot (allowing for a second choice to be counted to get a majority of votes rather than the current first-past-the-post system). The ward system would also be retained.

The Community Committees were to be given more powers to allocate local budgets for local services and resources on a *per capita* formula adjusted to the level of needs in a Community Committee area. RAGs would be retained with a minimum level of access to resources and facilities.

Thus City Council would be smaller, more responsible and policy driven, while Community Committees would be empowered to tailor and allocate local services and be responsible for local planning within the overall planning policy of the city.

The Committee recommended that the planning sections of the City of Winnipeg Act be amended to ensure a comprehensive plan was done and that there was better environmental and social impact analysis undertaken of planning bylaws, greater procedural justice in the decision-making process, and more intergovernmental co-ordination through a Winnipeg Rivers Corporation for the planning and development of these resources.⁵

Notably, the Cherniack Report recommended the abolition of the Winnipeg Additional Zone which had allowed City Council to veto development projects in municipalities contiguous to the city. These municipalities argued strongly that this power allowed the City of Winnipeg to interfere in their jurisdictions. The planning mechanisms recommended to replace this control of exurban development included criteria for boundary adjustments in the City of Winnipeg Act for maintenance of urban development within the city limits, as well as a Regional Environmental Advisory Panel to provide recommendations to government on major projects and an overall environmental policy for the region in and around Winnipeg. Neither of these mechanisms could directly stop exurban development. That power now rested with the provincial government.

The Cherniack Report recommended several statutory and institutional features to make City Council accountable to the citizens and the provincial government. These included: an annual report on the City's fulfilment of its statutory obligations, a freedom of information bylaw, better records and public disclosure of city activities, improved support for citizen involvement, and a city Ombudsman. The Ombudsman would be appointed and accountable to City Council.

The NDP followed with a White Paper which proposed many of the Cherniack recommendations as

reforms to the City of Winnipeg Act. But in 1988, the NDP government was defeated and replaced by a minority Conservative government before new legislation was enacted.

One noteworthy innovation that the NDP legislated in the City of Winnipeg Act was provision for the establishment of Business Improvement Zones (BIZ). This allowed a group of businesses to form an association and petition the business property owners in their local areas to support a local uniform tax levied and collected on the same basis as the business tax (Section 196 to 203 of the City of Winnipeg Act). The taxes would finance the activities of an elected board of business representatives who would design plans to improve and market their business zone. The BIZ's submitted their annual budgets to City Council for approval as a bylaw. Because local businesses, through their elected boards, control the taxes raised on their own operations for expenditure on local projects that they have themselves developed, this is the one form of taxation that receives strong support from the business community. Accordingly, it is rarely objected to or interfered with by City Council.

The Conservatives, led by Gary Filmon, formed a minority government from 1988-1990. They initiated several piecemeal reforms which followed the Cherniack report. Legislative amendments made the Mayor the chairperson of EPC with the power to appoint and remove the Deputy Mayor and the Chairs of the four Standing Committees. A new presiding officer was elected from among the Councillors to chair Council meetings. This took effect with the new City Council elected in 1989.

In 1990, the Conservatives, as per the Cherniack Report, legislated the abolition of the eroded Additional Zone powers of City Council.⁶ This allowed the rural municipalities to approve new subdivisions unencumbered by the City of Winnipeg. Exurban sprawl could now continue unabated, unless the provincial government wished to control rural agricultural land development. To date, no apparent will on the part of the Conservative government to protect agricultural land from urban forms of development such as golf courses and subdivisions has manifested itself.

During the period of minority government, the Conservatives attempted to reduce City Council to 24 members, but were defeated by the opposition parties. The opposition pushed through changes in the role of the auditor—changing it from a traditional accounts verification function to a “value for the money” one. The opposition parties also combined to legislate the Ombudsman's office as a feature of the City of Winnipeg Act, after lobbying from newly elected Winnipeg In the 'Nineties Councillors.

PHASE 5: THE CONSERVATIVE REFORMS—SHAPING THE CORPORATE CITY

Once the Conservatives formed a majority government in 1990, they legislated new rules to transform Unicity into a corporate city. This was precipitated in part by the outcome of the 1989 civic election, which resulted in a significant challenge to the dominant centre-right coalition tagged by the media as the “gang.”⁷

A centre-left coalition of mostly Liberals, New Democrats, some Red Tories, labour, environmental, and community groups known as Winnipeg In the 'Nineties (WIN) elected seven members to City Council. They defeated some powerful incumbents and in other cases received the support of retiring but disillusioned members of the "gang." Picking up support from other incumbents on City Council, the WIN coalition was able to consistently move about one third of the votes on any issue coming to a vote on Council, and could win the vote through galvanizing the independents. This obvious threat to the long-time dominance of City Council by the centre-left was seen by the Conservative provincial government and the old gang members as requiring a rewriting of the electoral rules. So the Conservatives abolished the right of political parties to make contributions to candidates running for City Council.⁸ Then, for the first time since Unicity, they legislated the legality of donations from corporations and unions. The perversity was now institutionalized that political party fund raising for civic elections was illegal, but corporations and unions were officially special status interests who could finance civic candidates. The corporatization of civic government was initiated with this change in the rules.⁹

This agenda was advanced when the Filmon Conservatives, with the support of the Mayor, decided to reduce the size of City Council from 30 to 15 members plus the Mayor. Wards would now be larger, almost double the size of legislature seats in the city. Meanwhile, rural councils were left untouched. Winnipeg wards now represent about 40,000 residents, while rural ones number in the low thousands.

The combination of corporate and union financing of elections, huge wards and a Mayor elected at large makes it very difficult for a grassroots candidate to get elected with the support of only local citizens. Local democracy in Unicity has consequently been dramatically downsized and debased from the original vision of the framers of the legislation.

The withering of the role of Community Committees¹⁰ and the Filmon government decision to make the RAGs optional¹¹ has left a City Council that is not representative of, nor responsive, to the diversity of neighbourhoods, cultures and grassroots organizations that make up Winnipeg. This is particularly so with respect to city-wide policy, planning and development matters. On the other hand, the advent of community policing has brought this function of community security and law enforcement more closely in touch with local concerns.

The corporatization of the City of Winnipeg has been furthered by the provincial imposition of a single rate of business tax which gives a large reduction to banks and insurance companies, among others. As well, reassessment reapportioning has resulted in large tax reductions for large landlords, and an increased share of the tax burden on single homeowners (Overview, The City of Winnipeg, 1997 and 1998 Preliminary Current Estimates, pp. 57-58).

The continuous pressure on the City to become more privatized and responsive to corporate interests

is largely due to the revenue crunch that it is experiencing. Every year since the recession of 1989-90, the City has had to cut services or raise taxes, usually both, in an increasingly difficult struggle to bring in a balanced budget. Provincial grants and tax credits have been cut (Overview, The City of Winnipeg, 1997 and 1998 Preliminary Current Estimates). The growth of the capital debt has been difficult to curtail in the face of a growing infrastructure deficit and constant pressure to open up new areas in the suburbs for development, and then to provide them with proper facilities and transportation links. Debt charges have commanded a growing portion of the budget, while market-based reassessment has shifted the tax burden off the downtown onto homeowners. Reassessment appeals have eroded the city's reserves. Until recently, real estate growth has been slow and revenues flat or declining (Overview, The City of Winnipeg, 1997 and 1998 Preliminary Current Estimates, p. 28). Finally there has been strong opposition to tax increases. The result is growing pressure to downsize and privatize civic services.

GOVERNING THE CITY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

As we approach the end of the millennium, the original promise of Unicity has been frustrated. The unification of services has been eroded by a new generation of special purpose agencies, while old ones have survived. Unification, originally supported by generous provincial grants, has, with increasing financial stringency, led to greater centralization of civic services and less local responsiveness, in spite of the customer service representatives which have been instituted. The exception has been the new community policing approach. The municipal tax mill rate has been equalized, but the property assessment system which for years overvalued downtown and inner-city properties has just started to be current and more accurate. School tax mill rates remain unequal, and the provincial education property tax levy still takes money out of the city even while the province cuts support to high need urban school divisions (Patterson, 1996). The lack of exurban land controls bleeds residential and industrial development out of the city unless tax breaks and other concessions are offered. The province does nothing substantial to address this issue other than convene meetings of regional municipalities.

The largest failure of Unicity has been its degradation of politics and citizen participation. Every reform of Unicity has reduced the number of Councillors in the name of efficiency. Citizen participation has been a token exercise. There has been a fundamental distorting of urban politics from institutionalizing the support of a democratic, participatory, civic culture to a model of exclusive, centralized, corporate governance.

Nonetheless, citizen interest and engagement persist in spite of the barriers Unicity legislation and political practice have created. How this citizen role can be encouraged is a key to the future of urban governance in the twenty-first century.

After 25 years, Unicity has taken a lot of wear and tear. An overhaul is in order. From a governance perspective, three areas need to be focused on:

- Renewing the formal structures and processes of governance;
- Regional services and planning;
- Strengthening and supporting community capacity.

RENEWING THE FORMAL STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES OF GOVERNANCE

Every single reform of Unicity has resulted in fewer elected officials serving larger and larger wards. The equation that fewer politicians equals greater efficiency in the governance of the city is fundamentally flawed. It ignores the basic purpose of electing someone to office—representation (Pitkin, 1967). Reformers of local government should make the quality of representation the number one priority. This need for quality representation is especially important in large, diverse urban areas such as Winnipeg. The better the quality and the greater the diversity of representation of elected officials, the better the chance that all the interests of the community will be considered in the civic governing processes. The downsizing of City Council has ignored this issue without any obvious efficiency gains nor any apparent gains in effectiveness. There are fewer elected voices representing fewer elements of the community than ever before. This is a tragedy for local democracy. To reverse this situation several reforms would help:

1. Increasing the number of elected representatives on Council who serve smaller wards. This would immediately raise the concern that parochialism will make a dramatic comeback in the governance process.
2. The introduction of urban political formations that publicly bring together elected politicians around common policies. There is a long-standing myth that local political parties are bad, particularly when they are the same formations as provincial and federal parties. However, distinct urban political parties could be a very innovative way to bring new policy configurations to bear on local issues. They could cross provincial and federal party loyalties as they always have in Winnipeg.
3. Currently, the Mayor is elected at large and any challengers from City Council must give up their seats to run for this office. This results in an opposition leadership vacuum that has to be filled when these candidates lose. One remedy would be to allow Councillors who head an urban political party to run for Mayor and a local seat; if they lose but have the second largest number of seats including their own, they could form a focused opposition or a negotiated alliance with the Mayor and her party. Not every Councillor could run for Mayor and a seat unless they met some agreed upon threshold of candidates running with them on a political platform for office.
4. Increasingly, proportional representation is finding its way into national electoral systems. This or the

preferential ballot could increase the chances that those elected represent a greater diversity of community views and interests.

5. A diversity of interests represented on City Council would also be fostered by the abolition of corporate and union donations, and an individuals-only donations law with a reasonable tax credit should be instituted. This would increase the number of citizens who financially contribute to the electoral process.
6. There needs to be a rewriting of the conflict of interest legislation under the Municipal Act that applies to Winnipeg. Present legislation is very porous and allows Councillors or their families to do business with the City as long as they do not directly vote on a bylaw that they have a direct interest in (Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, 1983). This constraint is easily overcome through logrolling deals among Councillors and overlooks subcontracts that Councillors have a direct interest in. As well, it is very difficult to discover and prove conflict of interest due to weak disclosure rules and narrow constructions of what constitutes a conflict.

REGIONAL PLANNING

With respect to regional planning and services, Unicity is in the same dilemma that led to its creation in the first place. It has no effective tools to contain exurban sprawl and has now resorted to offering tax breaks for new housing constructed within Winnipeg. Alternative solutions include:

1. A new layer of regional government which is not likely to be credible these days.
2. A regional tax to accrue to the City for the amenities it provides for non-tax paying Manitobans who work or do business in Winnipeg.
3. New forms of taxation which allow Unicity to capture rent off the value of their market area and economic contribution to the province. Options include: employee taxes which will be attacked like all payroll taxes as making job creation more expensive and leading to job flight; a portion of sales taxes recognizing that Winnipeg is the single most important retail market in the province; or vehicle or gas taxes to recognize the infrastructure requirements of Unicity which contribute to the provincial economy. However, taxes do not necessarily lead to good regional planning. Unintended effects could result.
4. Finally, simply giving the City back Additional Zone powers might be the best tool for long-term planning. This would recognize the City as the *de facto* regional planning authority. The issue of City intrusion on other municipal jurisdictions could be addressed through an independent appeal mechanism with some clear regional, sustainable planning criteria.

STRENGTHENING AND SUPPORTING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

Probably the most important reform of Unicity is to give this level of government the policy tools to strengthen and support community capacity. The nation is currently in a national policy mode that has been characterized as market liberalism or neoconservatism (Eden and Molot, 1993; Teeple, 1994). The elements of this approach include global rules for capital investments, under-investing in public infrastructure, and the dramatic withdrawal of federal and provincial support for communities in a wide range of areas from social housing to labour market training to health, social services and social assistance. Communities are increasingly struggling with the growing inequality and poverty. Winnipeg contends with one or two other cities as the child poverty capital of Canada (National Council of Welfare, 1997).

Local governments with legislative flexibility could institute several programs and supports that would enable communities to mobilize citizens to address local issues. It is not sufficient to invoke the spirit of voluntarism. Government supports and resources are needed to enable communities in their efforts to rehabilitate housing, create employment, run recreational programs, develop leadership and organizations, create safe neighbourhoods, get rid of drug dealers, pimps and slum landlords, foster strong community schools, recover rivers for community use, and improve public health. Markets and centralized government have not proven very effective in addressing these issues. On the other hand, communities that are properly supported with expertise and resources have been very successful at tackling these issues.

We could build on the positive experience of the BIZ's¹² and allow for Neighbourhood Improvement Zones where citizens could petition to levy a local tax to undertake their own renewal projects and pull new resources into their areas.

We can institute housing programs with tax support and legislation to expropriate crack, sniff, booze or boarded-up houses into the public domain. We can partner citizen groups with police, fire and public health staff and foster safe neighbourhoods.

We can co-produce recreational and job programs with private, government and non-profit organizations. We can enable a flourishing of arts and culture groups instead of permitting them into frustration. We can promote literacy through active outreach library and community school programs.

Finally, we can recreate environmental amenities by fixing up the river banks and having affordable, convenient, public transportation and bicycle routes. In short, civic bureaucratic expertise combined with community initiative can lead to a more dynamic, engaged civic culture and to stronger local democracy and government (Rifkin, 1995; Putnam, 1993). If not, the privatization agenda can reduce local government to a payer of contracts and collector of taxes while maintaining law and order.

Many of these changes will, however, require a provincial government willing to make them. And the challenge of electing a provincial government with that kind of vision and interest is at least as large as

reforming Unicity. In the coming years, these tasks need to be taken up by those who care about the future of Winnipeg. How they will be addressed will be a function of the social and political organizing that emerges in the years ahead.



Photo 6: Inaugural meeting of Winnipeg Into the Nineties, October 27, 1989 (Credit: Wayne Glowacki, Source: *Winnipeg Free Press*).

NOTES

1. Even though the formal structure of Unicity decision-making is more open, an argument could be made that the very public nature of formal decision-making has the paradoxical effect of driving the informal decision-making into the back rooms where deals are struck to avoid the stress and exposure of these different levels of public decision-making.
2. To date, there has never been a community plan, and only five action area plans, now called secondary plans.
3. Under the Constitutional Acts of 1867-1982, the federal government has the spending power under section 91, IA, while the provinces have jurisdiction over health (92.7), education (93), social services (92.7), municipal institutions (92.8) and local works and matters (92.10 and 92.16).
4. It should be noted that Unicity did not eliminate the legislation which set up the Winnipeg Enterprises Corporation as an arms-length corporation to run the arena and stadium. This corporation drew its directors from appointed City Councillors who in turn appointed citizens. It has been the focus of controversy over the years for its lack of accountability. City Council also appoints the directors of the Convention Centre Corporation, another arm's-length body. Until 1992, the City Council also appointed and ran the Municipal Hospitals. The City continues to appoint and fund several municipal museums, parking commissions, as well as a municipal housing corporation, a tourism agency and an economic development agency. The Winnipeg Police Commission was abolished and the police now report directly to the Standing Committee on Parks and Protection through the Commissioner of Parks and Protection.
5. Environmental impact assessments had been a part of the original Unicity legislation, but had been deleted.
6. It should be noted that the Additional Zone powers of the City of Winnipeg could be circumvented by two or more municipalities forming a planning district, thereby gaining land-use control powers. By 1990, only three of seven municipalities in the Additional Zone had not joined planning districts. See Government of Manitoba, Technical Advisory Committee on Large Lot Unserved Residential Development in Urban Fringe Areas, *Rural Residential Development in the Winnipeg Region*, May, 1990, p. 8.
7. The ICEC had dispensed with any former title and simply decided to operate as a "no name" caucus to avoid visible media scrutiny and responsibility for their decisions.
8. Some candidates had received donations given to the provincial NDP. As a provincial party, these donations were tax deductible under laws covering provincial political parties.
9. In response to the national unity crisis and the national perception that Manitoba was anti-French, the Conservatives also strengthened Part III of the City of Winnipeg Act, which required the provision of services in French in the historic City of St. Boniface and St. Norbert. Now a plan and annual report had to be done by City Council to ensure compliance with the Act.
10. The Conservatives have reduced the planning responsibilities of Community Committees further by removing their responsibility to hear variances and conditional use applications. These are now heard

by a Council-appointed Board of Adjustment with an appeal to the Standing Committee of Planning and Community Services. Thus local accountability and responsiveness to local planning matters have now been re-centralized and removed from direct local influence by citizens on their Councillors.

11. As well, the Conservatives removed the requirement for a Board of Commissioners in the City of Winnipeg Act and allowed for a city manager model of civic administration to be implemented by City Council. The latest review of Unicity, known as the Cuff report, after its author, recommends the abolition of the Board in favour of a Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and five senior managers. This report recommends that the Mayor have the increased power to hire and fire the CAO. This recommendation, along with Cuff's companion suggestion to abolish Community Committees and reorganize the standing committees to include a more powerful treasury committee, would further centralize power in the hands of the Mayor and her appointed EPC (*Winnipeg Free Press*, 11 October 1997).

On October 29, 1997, City Council adopted their own version of these recommendations and fired the Board of Commissioners. The final stage of the corporatization of the governance process of Unicity has thus begun (see Silva Motion on behalf of the Executive Policy Committee for the Special Meeting of October 29th). Without any requirement to run as a political formation with a platform, the Mayor and the EPC, which is appointed after the election, will concentrate power without public accountability. This is compounded by the lack of legislative support for an official opposition and the fact that losing candidates for Mayor do not remain on Council to act as opposition leaders. As well, City Council has requested that the Province amend the City of Winnipeg Act in order to give the Mayor even more powers. These include the authority to appoint all civic committees and have a tie breaking vote on Council. Further, City Council wants to abolish Community Committees while having the right to hold City Council meetings in camera for certain personnel, legal and land transactions. Also requested were increased powers for the Executive Policy Committee to set department head job descriptions and to delegate authority to the EPC or standing committees by a majority vote of Council. In summary, the requests would further concentrate power in the hands of the Mayor and her chosen committees without any requirement to have final approval on their decisions from City Council nor any review by local citizen participation vehicles such as Community Committees (*Winnipeg Free Press*, 30 October 1997, p. A3 and Appendix "B", Clause 1 of the Report of the Executive Policy Committee dated October 24, 1997).

12. BIZ's have been generally positive organizations for revitalizing older commercial sectors of older neighbourhoods of Winnipeg. They are not, however, universally benign, and depending on their leadership, can lead to demands to exclude and remove marginalized citizens from their territory such as panhandlers and other street people.

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URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN A SLOW-GROWTH CITY¹

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with Kris J. Dick**

1. INTRODUCTION

In North America, growth has long been the Holy Grail of city politics, for reasons that are not entirely frivolous. Since it is of the essence of city life, even more than of life generally, that change is constant, some growth is necessary to avoid decline. As some people or activities vacate a city, or part of a city, either something else must take their place, or decay sets in. A certain amount of growth, therefore, is essential to a city's well-being. But where does this desirable level of growth begin and end?

Growth has especially been associated with the right wing in city politics, both in Canada and the United States. Pro-growth sentiments, and the promotion of growth as a central concern are virtually synonymous with the urban right wing, or at least the corporate right (Stone, 1987)—the developers and other major local corporations that are such an influential element in North American city politics. However, an unconsidered acceptance of rapid growth has become common property at all points on the political spectrum.

In fact, deference to the god of rapid growth has become a virtual given in North American society, a sort of mass neurosis, in the sense that virtually everyone is in some way caught up in the belief that “the big apple”—New York, Toronto, Los Angeles, or the nearest metropolitan centre, wherever one happens to be—is deserving of obsessive attention.

The attention is not all favourable. Those who make their lives outside the metropole's realm often feel resentful of it, decrying it as a breeder of crime and false values, or maintaining that its administration and its residents are the favourites of the national or regional government, while perhaps simultaneously nurturing a sense of inferiority. But whether the attention is favourable or unfavourable, it bespeaks an obsession with growth, a sense that it represents power, importance, legitimacy. The objective of this paper is to put that emotional baggage aside and try to think dispassionately about the differences between major cities and “lesser” centres.

Specifically, we want to establish a distinction between the characteristics of slow growth and those of rapid growth, and to think about the policies appropriate to each condition. Our argument is that the

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common obsession with rapid growth has lulled us into a failure to make that distinction, with the result that we tend everywhere in North America to follow urban policies appropriate to rapid growth, policies that are especially damaging to the health of slow-growth cities. Our discussion is primarily theoretical. While there is a great deal to be gained from a careful empirical study of a representative sample of the two types of cities, the purpose of this paper is to undertake a preliminary exploration of a topic that has apparently been ignored altogether.

However, a theory is not useful if it does not refer to reality. In these pages, the concrete points of reference will take the form of examples, primarily from Winnipeg, which is a reasonable example of a slow-growth city whose growth, we contend, has been flagrantly mismanaged thanks to the unthinking pursuit of fast-growth policies. It has become a local cliché, of both the left and the right, that Winnipeg is a city in decline. Winnipeg's situation is probably more nearly the rule than the exception in North America. Edmonton is sometimes sarcastically referred to as "Deadmonton." Hamilton's inner city is decaying, and the city is widely considered to be in decline, and St. John has been struggling with decline for decades, indeed, for more than a century. More examples could easily be cited. In the United States, examples are even easier to find: Detroit, Duluth, Omaha, Des Moines, Camden, NJ—the list goes on.

Without trying to generalize about all these examples—and referring now to Winnipeg—it is our contention that the decline, which is real enough, has nothing to do with any failure of needed growth. It is true of course that Winnipeg is becoming a less important centre in Canada because a number of other cities are growing faster, but to say that adds up to decline is to be hooked on growth. Metropolitan Winnipeg's population, for a long time, has been growing at about one percent a year. For example, from 1986 to 1991, the population of the Winnipeg CMA grew from 625,304 to 652,354, a percentage change of 4.3 percent, a little less than one percent a year (Statistics Canada, 1986, 1991), and the economy has been growing at a rate of perhaps two or three percent.² For those who are not hooked on growth, that is not decline: It is a description of a metropolitan area that is steadily becoming wealthier, in the aggregate.

In what sense then is the decline real? It is the city of Winnipeg, and especially Winnipeg's inner city that is in decline, not the CMA. Between 1971 and 1991, population growth within the city limits crawled along at less than one percent a year, while municipalities bordering the city grew at a rate of almost 4 percent, and in some instances more than 5 percent. Until recently, new housing starts within the city were about half of those in the CMA, despite the fact that much new municipal infrastructure remains underutilized, and older infrastructure is deteriorating at an alarming rate. Some of the most alarming deterioration becomes visible only when an automobile or truck plunges through a hole that suddenly opens up in the street. This has occurred several times in recent years, thanks to deteriorating sewer lines.

The visible inner city is deteriorating less spectacularly, but possibly at an even more alarming rate.

Despite heroic efforts on the part of all three levels of government and the local business community, once-bustling Portage Avenue is now a problem area, and Selkirk Avenue, the former commercial heart of the North End, is moribund. Unoccupied retail premises are a common sight on Portage and are virtually ubiquitous on Selkirk. There has been substantial housing deterioration in the inner city, and boarded-up residences are becoming an increasingly common sight in some of the worst neighbourhoods. Some neighbourhoods are beset by gangs. Much of the inner city has been red-lined by insurance companies, with the result that homeowners applying for insurance may be refused, or may be required to pay more than the standard premium.

It is our argument that the glaring disparity between the health of the metropolitan area as a whole and that of the city is a result of a set of growth policies based inappropriately on the premise of fast growth—a result of the fact that the obsession with growth makes it difficult to think about city development in any other terms. Our prescription is to accept slow growth as a reality and rethink our policies accordingly. Once we do, it becomes clear that slow growth has advantages, as we will see when we consider alternate policies for housing, infrastructure and services, economic development and immigration.

2. HOUSING

One of the big advantages of slow growth is that it keeps housing prices down. It is a matter of common experience that the “hot” housing market that goes with fast growth—for example in New York, Los Angeles, Toronto or Vancouver—tends to produce house prices that escalate more rapidly than they do in slow-growth centres. That is no problem for those who are capturing the top jobs, but it produces nightmares for the poor. A New Yorker trying to make a living as a cleaner or receptionist in one of the glass towers of Manhattan may be forced to choose between a long commute she cannot afford or residence amid warring gangs in a decaying neighbourhood. Others, unable to pay for any housing at all, find themselves joining the ragged army of the homeless.

In other words, fast growth produces, not only prosperity, but also poverty, and the cost of housing is an important reason for that. It is likely that the proportion of the homeless to the whole population is larger in a fast-growing city, although that point would be difficult to prove conclusively. Counts of the homeless are notoriously unreliable to begin with, and comparisons between different cities are trickier yet. For what it is worth, a comparison of slow-growth Winnipeg with the prosperous, burgeoning Pacific rim city of Portland, Oregon,³ and, in the process, confirms that slow growth has its advantages. On the surface, Portland appears to have it all. It has the public transit system Winnipeg city officials have been dreaming of for years, but cannot afford, with downtown transit malls for buses and a rapidly-expanding light rail system. Aside from transit, the excellent condition of streets and public facilities, the quality, finish and design of downtown buildings, the preservation of heritage: all these speak of the prosperity that comes with

economic growth.

The contrast with Winnipeg is striking. Developers are not clamouring to put up office towers, hotels and malls in the inner city. City Council finds it hard to say no to questionable development proposals, and to demands from prospective developers for public subsidies, while Portland's city government imposes daunting conditions, and cheerfully refuses proposals that are deemed unacceptable (Leo, 1998). The streets have more pot-holes than those in Portland and there are more buildings boarded up downtown. While much of this can be blamed on poor decision-making and gullibility, the reality is that many of the economic opportunities of the 1990s are less readily available to Winnipeg than to Portland, Vancouver, Seattle, San Francisco, and many other cities. But there is another side to the comparison.

A visitor to Portland from Winnipeg is bound to be struck by the numbers of homeless people wasting away on the benches in the well-kept parks, or aimlessly wheeling their shopping carts past the beautifully-finished buildings. There are homeless people in Winnipeg too, many of them in shelters, some of them sleeping in garbage bins, even in the winter—an awesome comment on the will to survive. But the numbers of them are much smaller. That impression is confirmed by figures. According to Susan Emmons, Director of the Northwest Pilot Project, a Portland housing advocacy group that has a reputation for careful documentation, some 1700 people were homeless in Portland in the summer of 1995. That same summer, Darren Lezubski of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg estimated the numbers of homeless in Winnipeg at 200 to 300. If those figures are correct, metropolitan Portland, which has about twice the population of metropolitan Winnipeg, has perhaps three times as many homeless people *per capita* as Winnipeg.

It is no surprise that homelessness is a relatively manageable problem in a city where it is possible to buy a house on a relatively pleasant residential street for \$40,000 (CAD) or less, and where rents are similarly affordable. The fact that housing costs are modest in a city where downtown housing is decaying yields a policy opportunity: Government incentives for the provision of housing for those who cannot afford it do not come at a high price to the taxpayer, and they can bring the added benefit of stabilizing decaying neighbourhoods. In the process, a city that is not notable for its attractiveness to investors can become notable, instead, for its agreeable and humane social environment. Paradoxically, that, in turn, is a selling-point for potential investors.

It would be relatively easy for Winnipeg to make itself an exception to the rule that cut-backs in public spending bring with them the decimation of government-sponsored affordable housing programmes. In 1995 the governments of Winnipeg and Manitoba spent some \$55 million (CAD) in a futile attempt to keep a major-league hockey team in town.⁴ Supporters of this quixotic and financially ruinous venture repeated incessantly that the Winnipeg Jets put the city “on the map.” A mere fraction of that expenditure would have accomplished a great deal in the provision of support and incentives for the creation and maintenance of affordable housing.

Such a programme could have made inroads on homelessness, revitalized decaying neighbourhoods and created jobs.

In the past, decision-makers have shown their awareness of these realities. Over the past two decades a great deal of new housing has been developed in Winnipeg, and older housing renovated, some with the help of government grants and loans, some through private initiative, thanks to the much-criticized Winnipeg Core Area Initiative, together with a welter of other federal, provincial and local programmes. As a result, new and renovated housing for people of all income levels was created throughout the inner city, and home-owners renovated their properties with partially forgivable loans from the government. Co-operative housing for elderly people, immigrants and others offered the stability of home-ownership, together with a sense of community, to people for whom these benefits might otherwise have been out of reach.

But these housing programmes did far more than just provide needed housing and home repairs. The presence of affordable housing for people of all income levels is a priceless asset. It populates the inner city and thereby makes it safer. Thus it helps to make inner city residence a live option for better-off people and bolsters the stability of neighbourhoods that badly need the boost. In the process, it helps to keep the inner city from being abandoned in a flight to the suburbs and provides a crucial support for inner city commerce. In the 1980s in Winnipeg, it helped to keep the inner city marginally viable and supported business, as well as providing support for people who needed help. Winnipeg's inner city may be in a parlous condition, but it would be a great deal worse without the housing that was added, and renovated, in the 1980s.

Ironically, though, Winnipeg, like both slow- and fast-growing cities elsewhere, is no longer accepting the challenge of housing provision. Virtually all the housing programmes that helped to sustain Winnipeg's inner city through the past two difficult decades have been discontinued. When the cutbacks of the 1990s started to bite, Winnipeg had a historic opportunity to distinguish itself favourably from faster-growing cities. It could have found the money to maintain cost-effective programmes for the provision of affordable housing, while those in faster-growing centres were being savaged. In the process, it would have made at least some inroads into the problem of homelessness, provided a crucial support for the inner city, including inner city business, and created much-needed jobs. This could have been one of several planks in an overall development strategy designed to keep Winnipeg vital, even in bad economic times. Instead, City Council and the provincial government tilted at the windmill of major-city status, wasted \$55 million of public money, and placed itself on the map as an NHL loser city with empty pockets. That strategy was typical of those being pursued by slow-growth centres throughout North America, but clearly there is a better way.

3. INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

In this section, we are concerned with the building and maintenance of all the facilities that are needed to serve the city, including roads and public transit, sewerage, water, parks, education, library branches, community centres, police and fire protection. But it is useful to begin with roads. The ideas about road systems that are being applied in Canadian cities, whether fast- or slow-growth, have two sources that are important for our purposes: developer proposals and the norms and conventions of civil engineering. The contribution of developers is that they decide on the parcels of land that they think will be suitable for profitable development. In Winnipeg and many other cities, they have good reason to expect a sympathetic hearing from local government, and, as part of the cost of development, they accept the obligation of building, or paying for, the necessary road connections.

It then becomes the obligation of the city to work out the development of the rest of the city's transportation system to accommodate recent and expected future development. For example, a burgeoning of new subdivisions at Winnipeg's southern edge in South St. Vital and South St. Boniface contributed to a city decision to build an expressway serving that part of the city—Bishop Grandin Boulevard—and occasioned the opening up of an under-used and heavily subsidized bus line into Island Lakes, one of the new subdivisions. It also eventually stimulated the replacement of the Norwood and Main Street bridges with a massive new eight-lane structure. These bridges, located downtown, are part of the road system leading to the newer southern subdivisions.

In all of these respects, Winnipeg was following the conventions of modern North American city-building: developers decide where they want to locate new development and pay for some of the services immediately required by the new subdivisions. The city ensures that they become connected into the city-wide service network, and that the city-wide network is expanded as necessary to accommodate them. It is in deciding on the character of this expansion that the norms of the engineering profession take over.

Engineers now in the profession were trained to develop road systems on the assumption of ever-expanding traffic volumes. They believe in large-capacity roads and bridges, and they have been trained to associate their judgements in these matters with their professional integrity and to resent "political interference" with those judgements. Their belief-system colours the alternatives they present to politicians.

It is important to emphasize that we are pointing to a belief-system, not some special penchant for the pursuit of narrow self-interest. Indeed, engineers are probably less vulnerable to the charge of feathering their own nests at public expense than many other professionals. The Association of Professional Engineers of Manitoba, a typical case, are self-consciously protective of the public interest and show no reluctance to let colleagues whose professional standards are found wanting feel the full weight of the association's censure. The problem is not self-aggrandizement, but a pre-disposition to assume and promote rapid growth,

to favour roads over alternative forms of transportation, and sometimes to go to questionable lengths in promoting them.

Many examples could be found (Leo, 1977), but a recent case in point was that of the Norwood Bridge, the inner city-suburban link already referred to. When the plans for the Norwood Bridge reconstruction were being mooted, city officials presented four alternatives, including the following two: It would cost \$78 million for a six-lane, divided bridge that was pictured as providing a “fair” level of safety, and “poor” traffic capacity, accommodation for transit and accommodation of traffic during construction. By contrast, an eight-lane, divided bridge that was rated “good” in all four categories would cost only \$80 million (City of Winnipeg, 1992). That was an easy decision: only \$2 million extra for a vastly superior bridge. Such “easy decisions” are standard items in the arsenal of public servants who have made up their minds about which course they wish their political masters and the public to pursue.

Council chose an eight-lane bridge, and it soon became obvious—as it often does in such cases—that the “easy choice” was not so easy after all. By the end of 1995, the cost of the new bridge had escalated to \$100 million.⁵ And with only one of the two spans built—still less than the six-lane alternative that was portrayed as inadequate—traffic line-ups at rush hour had greatly eased. Given the bias, or lack of reliability, that is apparent from this course of events, it might well be questioned whether the officials’ advice is deserving of any trust at all. Was a new bridge necessary in the first place? On the face of it, it is not obvious why Canadian bridges are routinely declared to have outlived their usefulness in decades, while European bridges last centuries.

Over-building of bridges and roads exacerbates the dilemmas Winnipeg will face in future. Increased road and bridge capacity has two consequences: First, an improved route draws traffic as it becomes the route of choice for drivers who previously favoured other routes. Sooner or later, this increases pressure on City Council for further road works. For example, traffic line-ups at a bridge entrance may be replaced by line-ups on the bridge. Such consequences are not unanticipated by engineering staff, and resulting public demands for widening of the road leading away from the bridge may be seen by them as long-overdue recognition of necessities they understood to begin with.

A second consequence of increased bridge and road capacity is reduced travel time to the urban fringe, which leads to an increase in the economic viability of sprawl and leap-frog development. The upshot is intensified political pressure from developers for the approval of subdivisions that will be costly to serve—pressure the councils of slow-growth cities have frequently shown themselves unable to resist, precisely because they are predisposed to see rapid growth as a self-evident virtue. It is a vicious cycle, in which each new attempt to solve the “problem” of inadequate road capacity has the ultimate effect of exacerbating the problem (Downs, 1992, pp. 27-33).

The high priority accorded road projects tends to crowd out alternatives. In Winnipeg, City Council has readily agreed to one road project after another, heedless of the fact that each one exacerbates the sprawl dilemma. Meanwhile, transit facilities that could contribute to the amelioration of the problems of sprawl are postponed indefinitely. Since the mid-1970s, plans have been underway for the construction of the Southwest Transit Corridor, a rapid transit line consisting of cost-effective diesel buses running on a concrete strip dedicated exclusively to transit.

This line is considered viable because it connects two population concentrations—downtown and the University of Manitoba—along the relatively heavily-populated Pembina Highway corridor. It would ameliorate traffic congestion along Pembina Highway—the artery connecting the University of Manitoba with the inner-city—and encourage cost-effective, compact development along the route, in contrast to road and bridge projects' encouragement of sprawl. Estimated total cost for the entire facility would be \$70 million (City of Winnipeg, 1997)—less than the lower-cost alternative for the Norwood Bridge, which was deemed inadequate. However, the estimated cost is a moot point, because postponement of the project has been a routine feature of City Council's annual budget deliberations for at least two decades.

Councils need to reconsider their indiscriminate compliance with road proposals, to the neglect of alternatives. Politicians need not accept the norms of civil engineers as the major determinant for the extension of transportation infrastructure. As well, instead of, in effect, delegating to developers the right to decide where the city will expand, cities could exercise their authority to determine the location, development mix, and densities of new subdivisions.

In theory, that power is being exercised now by city councils through their planning departments, but in practice the main influence over those decisions rests with developers. Alternative models are available, both for the planning of roads and transit, and for the development of more compact forms of development. Ironically, they are beginning to be applied in fast-growing cities (City of Calgary, nd; Oregon Department of Transportation, 1995; 1000 Friends of Oregon, 1997), while many such slow-growth centres as Winnipeg continue to ape what they imagine to be the winning ways of rapid growth.

To stick with our main example, Winnipeg could have developed very differently. It seems very likely that the Norwood Bridge project could reasonably have been much more modest than it was. With a less auto-dependent, more compact form of development, the suburban road system—of which Bishop Grandin is only one example—could have been less extensive, and the transit system less of a drain on the treasury. Roads are typical of the situation for other services. Governments are allowing their cities to expand rapidly, at ever lower densities, primarily in response to developers' calculations about where the profit picture looks favourable for them, without serious consideration of how all of these developments will be tied together with infrastructure and serviced.

When a proposal for a new subdivision is brought to Winnipeg city planners, three cost factors are taken into consideration: roads, underground municipal services (sewer and water service) and parks. If the subdivision proposal incurs extra costs in any of these areas, the developer is responsible. When negotiations are complete, and the subdivision proposal comes before City Council, the typical reaction is delight over the “fact” that a sizeable chunk of new tax assessment will be added to the city’s coffers “with the developer covering all the costs.”

Once the subdivision is in place, however, the new residents rightly argue that, as residents and taxpayers of Winnipeg, they deserve services comparable to those other residents enjoy. City politicians have no valid answer when they ask: Why is there no conveniently-located library branch and community centre? Why are police and fire response times here slower than in other subdivisions? Why do we not have a neighbourhood school? City council and school boards have no politically realistic alternative but to spend money to fix the problems.

It is easy to see, therefore, why—with Winnipeg expanding at ever lower densities—residential property taxes have reached tax-revolt levels, while downtown infrastructure deteriorates. Indeed, the problem is now largely out of the hands of City Council. For some time, residents of the metropolitan area have been voting with their feet, and accepting the property tax reductions they can achieve by moving beyond the boundaries of the city. Businesses are beginning to follow. With exurban migration underway, City Council has lost much of the control it once might have exercised over new development. Developers now have alternatives: if the city is not sufficiently generous in dealing with subdivision proposals or commercial developments, it is becoming increasingly easy for them to find a parcel of land for a similar development in an adjacent municipality.

Recent studies suggest that these patterns of development are, in the long run, unsustainable, or at least dangerously cost-ineffective, in any urban area (Blais, 1995; *CUPR Report*, 1996; Greater Toronto Area Task Force, 1996). Even the wealthiest and fastest-growing metropolitan areas have experienced inner-city deterioration in the face of uncontrolled suburban and exurban development. The South Bronx turned, first into a jungle and then into something resembling a post-war saturation bombing victim, as Queens and Long Island expanded. Most of downtown Detroit became an unoccupied wasteland ringed by older neighbourhoods and prosperous suburbs.

Such decay is a complex phenomenon, and some of its causes can be sought in such disparate phenomena as family break-down, crime, welfare dependency, inadequate education and de-industrialization. However, there is no doubt that untrammelled suburban expansion is a major cause. In the long run, therefore, the typical North American metropolitan development pattern seems likely to be sustainable only at the expense of inner-city deterioration, usually followed by deterioration of the first ring of suburbs.

That is bad enough, but the problem is even more acute for slow-growth cities. A fast-growing city can mask the costliness of sprawl development, at least for a while: A leap-frog subdivision approval may not incur an immediate financial penalty if growth potential is strong enough to assure, within the foreseeable future, that infill development will help to pay for the needed infrastructure. Downtown decay may not occasion immediate alarm when there are proposals for commercial developments to replace decaying downtown residential districts, though it is unlikely that, in the longer run, simply filling empty spaces with office towers will suffice as a strategy for the prevention of decay.

Whatever the situation in a fast-growing centre, the piper demands immediate payment when the city council of a slow-growth city calls the low-density tune. Here there are no heavy pressures for new development, and assurances of growing tax revenues, to cover up mistakes. Politicians in cities like Winnipeg, and provinces like Manitoba—in cities like Des Moines and Omaha and states like Iowa and Nebraska—need to understand that their mistakes will catch up with them, possibly within their current term of office.

For them, it is important, not only as a substantive matter, but also from the viewpoint of *Realpolitik*, to be conservative in their approvals of subdivisions and new roads, to support infill development and more compact forms of development, to seek out viable alternatives to private automobile trips, and to instruct their officials accordingly.⁶ In not doing so, many slow-growth cities have passed up their chance to remain viable and attractive places to live.

4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Like residents of many slow-growth centres, many Winnipeggers are torn between defensive self-assertion and dyspeptic self-castigation. Local boosterism reflects this mood, and conveys the suggestion that Winnipeg lacks some kind of legitimacy. An undercurrent of desperation is palpable, both in advertising campaigns on such themes as “Winnipeg: 100 reasons to love it” or “Love me, love my Winnipeg” and in the declaration that it is the Jets that kept Winnipeg “on the map.” What comes through most clearly are two contradictory messages, often asserted simultaneously, the first self-depreciatingly, the second defensively: (1) since Winnipeg is not Toronto, or Vancouver, there must be something wrong with it; and (2) there is absolutely nothing the matter with Winnipeg.

Economic development efforts in slow-growth cities often reflect that same mood of ambivalence with a hint of desperation. Predictions of economic changes tend to take the form either of pessimistic warnings of a clouded future or of declarations that “the big break” is just around the corner: If the Jets go, \$50 million a year will be lost to the economy; if the Canadian Wheat Board is abolished or relocated, 5000 jobs will be lost; Winnipeg is about to become a major North American transportation hub, thousands of jobs will be

created and millions added to the economy. These recent examples of speculations trumpeted in the local media are just samples of what amounts to a steady stream of journalistic manic-depression. Economic development efforts are undertaken in a mood akin to that of an addicted gambler, simultaneously desperate and hopeful.

Often, the primary focus of economic development efforts is the attempt to attract new businesses or to lure businesses to relocate. Such a strategy is more likely to yield fruit in a fast-growing centre. If a city such as Toronto, Boston, San Francisco or Vancouver can offer an attractive environment, good facilities, a favourable tax regime and predictable regulations, large companies will consider locating major facilities there, because they will find the things they need there: the best talent in corporate law, accounting, engineering and financial services, the most reputable universities, and so forth.

Slow-growth centres are not in a position to match such attractions. To be sure, Winnipeg has much to recommend it: a superior park system, a good education system, good recreational facilities in the wider region, reasonable commuting times, affordable housing, glorious summer weather, and a transit system that—despite excessive low-density development—still runs efficiently and economically. However, for most firms, these advantages do not add up to a unique set of attractions.

When it competes for major firms, Winnipeg generally finds itself having to offer free land, interest-free loans and a variety of other incentives—incentives that will reduce the net economic benefit gained. Nor are there very good reasons, especially in the economy of the 1990s, for them to spend more than modest amounts to attract large companies. The idea that a city has to build its economy on branch operations of major corporations is *passé*. In the economy of the 1990s, small firms can and do prosper, and this is where a slow-growth economy is likely to find its best opportunities.

We can see more clearly why this is the case if we consider some findings in the micro-economics literature. Large firms, capable of operating on a national or global scale, have some competitive advantages, while small, locally-based enterprises have others, but the balance of those advantages has varied over time (Brown, 1992, chap. 11). Some sixty years ago, Ronald Coase (1937) argued that the activities a firm engages in can be co-ordinated either internally, through the firm's own organization, or externally, through market mechanisms.

The large firm raises capital from around the world and provides it to a local facility, but so can the private financial market. The large firm provides sales outlets and market networks for the local facility, but markets are usually open enough that ownership links to a single large firm are not necessary. The large firm can co-ordinate production activities (e.g., preventing the engine from arriving before the chassis), distribution systems (ensuring that the goods are on the shelf when they are advertised) and process innovations (the winery does not open before the grapevines bear fruit), but, again, private arrangements between independent

firms can do the same.

Whether a particular function is better performed within a large, centralized organization, or by market-based co-ordination among independent firms depends on the costs involved. Coase and later economists have argued that *transaction costs* arise when firms make contracts (or informal arrangements) with one another. Contracts must specify responsibility and action under foreseeable circumstances, provide for enforcement, and still cannot eliminate the risks of having one's partner fail to fulfill the contract or having your own company forced into an unexpectedly costly fulfilment (Williamson, 1975).

Handling all aspects of production within a single firm, however, produces *administrative costs*. Management becomes more complex and the decision-makers become isolated from the operations of individual units, thereby producing higher management costs, delayed decision-making and increased errors. Often, individual units of a large organization are assigned costs to cover the upper management, sales force, research and development, and advertising that is disproportionate to what they gain from those activities.

In the three decades following World War II, many firms found administrative costs more manageable than transaction costs, and firms grew increasingly larger and more diverse. Managerial literature, as well as practice, made much of the synergies that could come from having complementary products, providing different goods to service the same markets, or having a common financial base. The development of new corporate structures and financial controls encouraged managers to believe, partially correctly, that they could control a highly diverse firm without having a great deal of experience in each of the component parts. Their shareholders for the most part were happy to have a firm that was diverse enough to provide a portfolio effect, with gains in one part of the organization balancing losses in another, in such a way as to reduce overall risk (Chandler, 1997; Lewellen, 1971; Mayd and Myers, 1987; Stultz, 1990; Weston, 1970; Williamson, 1986; Vernon, 1977).

However, a series of interrelated events in the world economy, that began to make themselves felt in the 1970s, have reduced transaction costs and increased the advantages of networks of co-ordination among smaller firms. Among these are events and changes in markets and technology that tend to favour small-batch production of relatively customized products rather than long runs of standardized goods. Also among these changes and events are vastly-improved, low-cost systems of communication that operate on a global scale, and global-scale market competition that has greatly increased in both intensity and scope (Piore and Sabel, 1984; Hirst and Zeitlin, 1989; Storper and Walker, 1989; Scott, 1990).

These developments have made it easier for firms located anywhere to target markets at home or anywhere else, secure support services nearby or at a distance, and compete effectively with often unwieldy, large-scale organizations. In the financial world, this transformation has been complemented by the growth of mutual funds, which provided the portfolio effects that had previously been an advantage of diversified

firms. Fund managers, in time, became increasingly convinced that more focused firms produced greater returns. Moreover, they found it difficult to assess the financial performance of highly diverse firms, and tended to steer away from purchasing their shares (Jensen, 1986; Denis, Denis and Sarin, 1997; Berger and Ofek, 1995; Lamont, 1997; Stein, 1997).

In short, small, flexible enterprises have, in recent years, been prospering, while the fortunes of large, centralized firms have been on the decline. One result has been a great deal of frantic down-sizing of large, diverse firms, through “spin-offs”—in which a division is transformed into a separate company—or by selling or closing down branches that are no longer an asset to the main organization. For example, in 1993, some \$17.5 billion (U.S.) worth of spin-offs occurred in Britain and the United States; by 1996 it was over \$100 billion.⁷ The impact of down-sizing has been felt in many communities in the form of branch plant closings or moves, with the accompanying loss of jobs.

However, the fact that a company is divesting itself of a branch is not necessarily a signal that the branch is not viable, even if it is being closed down. It may be an “innocent” victim of the parent company’s response to the fact that a large, diverse company is no longer as competitive as it once was. When the parent firm formulates a new, narrower business strategy, a particular local branch may simply not fit the strategy. It may be closed down, instead of being sold, because the parent firm lacks the time or opportunity to find a buyer, or—in a case where one or more branches manufacture the same product—because the parent wishes to limit the number of competitors it will face in future. Such branch plants can often be saved if local resources are mobilized.

For slow-growth cities, there are lessons here. Much of the literature on globalization and the expansion of world markets has stressed the disadvantages these changes bring, especially to communities that are neither corporate headquarters nor centres of high technology (Noyelle and Stanback, 1983; Smith and Feagin, 1987). These arguments are true: rapidly expanding world markets, and the relative decline of assembly-line manufacture, have devastated some communities and placed all under intense pressure. Large numbers of good blue-collar jobs have been lost; intense competition among communities for branch plants, offices and entertainment facilities has made life all too easy for businesses looking for subsidies from the public purse; the Hobson’s choice between low-wage jobs and welfare has reduced many families to penury, and unemployment has left others homeless.

But few things are all bad, and global markets offer advantages, as well as disadvantages, even to slow-growth communities. In many areas of endeavour, locational advantages are not what they once were. As we have seen, modern communications make it easier than it has ever been before to find something that can be done well locally and market it globally. In Winnipeg, the University of Manitoba, Health Sciences Centre, the Institute for Biodiagnostics and a newly-constructed federal virology lab represent concentrations

of research expertise in certain areas of medical science which, in turn, have a capacity to attract companies that will create jobs, including good ones. Hog production and processing, while raising serious environmental issues, also offers opportunities for the creation of good jobs. A 24-hour airport, if shrewdly-managed, can form the nexus for the creation of transportation industry jobs at modestly decent wage levels.

These and other advantages can be enhanced by local, regional or national government policies that make credit available to prospective entrepreneurs; offer assistance to employees who want to take over local branch plants that are being shut down and run them as independent businesses; and provide assistance and advice to co-operative ventures and local entrepreneurs. There is no need to limit these efforts to the political sphere. Leaders in the business community should be encouraged, or pressured, to contribute some of their skills and resources. From their perspective, it can be cheap advertising if they get some good publicity for it.

In Winnipeg, these lessons are beginning to penetrate, but it has taken awhile. Indeed, the strategies that were tried at first were badly flawed. In the late 1980s, it dawned on Winnipeg business and civic leaders that an era of government cut-backs and intensified global competition were presenting the city with a changed set of circumstances, and new challenges. In response, a report on the city's economic strengths and weaknesses was commissioned and an economic development agency, Winnipeg 2000, was created. The report, produced by Price Waterhouse (1990), recommended an economic development strategy typical of a slow-growth centre trying to pretend it has a potential for rapid growth. Repeatedly, a heavy stress was placed on the attraction of industry to relocate to Winnipeg, as in the following recommendations:

Attract health care therapy, services, equipment and products manufacturers, and research and development centres. . . . Start approaching firms [in data processing, credit card processing, information retrieval, telemarketing, mail order, market research, insurance claims and billing, reservation centres and banks] with a view to relocating or opening up new facilities. . . . Encourage the existing Manitoba Aerospace Group . . . to promote . . . the creation of new ventures and the attraction of suppliers. . . . Campaign to attract a prime contractor in the computer industry. . . . Encourage out-of-province suppliers [of high-technology support goods and services] to set up operations in Winnipeg. . . . Explore the opportunity of developing Winnipeg as a world grain centre (Price Waterhouse, 1990, pp. 93-97).

Initially, Winnipeg 2000 tried to follow the consultant's advice, and pursued a policy focusing primarily on smoke-stack and glass-tower chasing. But, except in the area of telemarketing—which is appropriate to Winnipeg, thanks to a modest cost of living and a relatively well-educated, bilingual population with a widely-understandable accent in English—these efforts bore little fruit. At the same time, the agency encountered opposition on City Council, which began to question its effectiveness. In response, it has gradually moved toward a more appropriate strategy, emphasizing the cultivation of local resources, including development of the health care, transportation, and aerospace industries; initiatives designed to tap the economic potential

of Francophone and Aboriginal communities; and contributions to the fostering of micro-enterprise (Winnipeg 2000, 1995, pp. 9-14). These ventures have proven more successful than the agency's early initiatives, and political opposition to it has waned.

Initiatives elsewhere in the community also suggest the gradual development of more appropriate strategies. For example, the Crocus Fund gets government support to generate local investment for the expansion and/or retention of local business. Provincial government "grow bonds" allow for local investment in local business ventures. SEED Winnipeg makes micro-credit available for small entrepreneurs and the Assiniboine Credit Union has a policy of offering loans to social agencies and businesses in the core area. A local branch of CIBC, a major commercial bank, allows Winnipeg Harvest, a food bank, to use its training facilities in off-hours to teach job and job-searching skills to its clients. A federal government programme provides incentives to banks to make loans to small businesses.

Such ventures as these are a starting-point in a viable economic development strategy for a slow-growth centre. A great deal more could be done to improve the level of education and job training—including education in the skills necessary for running small businesses—for lower-income people generally and the burgeoning population of lower-income Aboriginal people in particular. That allows the building of the local economy while addressing the problem of poverty, instead of building the economy, as is so often the case, to the accompaniment of the production of poverty.

The gradual development of more appropriate economic development strategies suggests a groping response to experience, rather than a consistent policy change. The recent failed attempt to retain major-league hockey, as well as public discussion that continues to emphasize the search for "the big break" shows that the effort to think through the policy implications of slow growth is, at best, in its infancy.

5. IMMIGRATION

Immigration is always a sensitive political issue in Canada, and it has been especially so in recent years, as immigration legislation has undergone a series of hotly-contested revisions. Throughout these changes, the government has been under pressure to limit immigration, on the basis of fears that immigrants will place undue burdens on the social safety net and that they will take jobs from Canadians. The evidence that such fears are justified is less than compelling. Indeed, much of the evidence seems to suggest, on the contrary, that immigration produces more benefits than costs.⁸

That said, it is also true that immigration is a complex issue, and it is not our intention to attempt a contribution to the extensive literature on this subject. Our point focuses on the observation that much of the controversy surrounding immigration is centred in major metropolitan areas, notably Toronto and Vancouver. In Toronto, much is made of fears that the city will become a magnet for large numbers of immigrants with

limited skills many of whom, it is feared, will end up a burden on the state, and perhaps become involved in criminal activity. In Vancouver, there is controversy over allegations that Asian immigrants are driving up the cost of housing.

If such arguments have any substance at all, they are not relevant for a city such as Winnipeg, which is not in danger of becoming a magnet for large numbers of any population. By the same token, the city is an ideal location for people—especially those with limited resources—who are looking for a stable community and a chance to make a future for themselves and their families: a large stock of affordable housing; some decent schooling at all levels, even in the poorer neighbourhoods; and—for people from any of dozens of countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Southern and Eastern Europe, and Asia—a supportive community environment.

Evidence suggests that even in major metropolitan centres, local authorities need not fear that immigration will produce adverse consequences. Loveless *et al.* (1996, chap. 5) provide a careful calculation of the hard-to-measure impacts of immigration on municipal revenues and expenditures in the City of Miami and conclude that, over an eight-year period, each immigrant incurs net costs of \$25 a year. The authors declare this an insignificant finding, considering the relatively small amounts of money involved, as well as the difficulties of estimating impacts accurately.

As insignificant as that cost is, the finding needs to be qualified, and the qualifications tend to strengthen the case for immigration in a slow-growth centre. The study wisely made no attempt to undertake the probably impossible task of calculating the effect on the economy as a whole of the influx of a new population: the jobs that are created, the houses that are renovated, the decaying neighbourhoods that become enlivened with commerce and street life imported from another country. In fast-growing Miami, where housing is already priced beyond the reach of many, and the existing street life presents a formidable challenge to police and social agencies, a fresh influx of immigrants may be seen primarily as a problem, and an expense.

But, in a slow-growth centre, with a large stock of affordable housing going begging, it is possible to see immigration in a very different light. In Winnipeg, immigrants could occupy houses that will otherwise decay, pay taxes, create jobs, and help to reinvigorate the inner-city. Undoubtedly they would also bring social problems with them and find conflicts waiting for them. Any responsible immigration policy needs to prepare for such problems, and have counter-measures in place (Loveless *et al.*, 1996). But it seems more than probable that the long-term benefits of encouraging such an influx would greatly outweigh the costs, especially in a slow-growing city.

To a limited extent, this is being recognized, although the case for recognizing it is based on provincial economic considerations, rather than concerns with urban development. In 1996, the Canadian federal

government permitted Manitoba to nominate a limited number of immigrants in order to increase the numbers of workers available for employment in the garment industry. For its part, Manitoba is promoting itself as a destination for immigrants, and has set the goal of increasing from about 3,500 in 1995 to 8,000 eventually (Barkman, 1997).

A web-site expounds Manitoba's advantages (<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/immsett1>)—and offers practical advice—but puts a great deal of emphasis on such things as recreation and leisure, with special attention to rural Manitoba. Affordable housing gets the barest of mentions. In short, the attraction of immigrants to help build Winnipeg's economy, and rebuild the inner-city, does not appear to have figured prominently in the design of the policy. If all concerned can be persuaded of the importance of making policy in slow-growth cities that suit their particular circumstances, it would seem that consultation with the city, and the city's involvement in developing provincial immigration policy, could produce some important benefits.

Here, as in the other policy areas we have considered, a glimmering that different policies need to be formulated for fast- and slow-growth cities may have dawned, but the idea has not truly penetrated.

6. CONCLUSION

It is not immediately obvious why the policies characteristically associated with fast growth exert such an extraordinary influence on so many people—a pull strong enough often to override what in other circumstances might well be seen as ordinary common sense. One does not have to be a genius to puzzle out the consequences of stringing infrastructure to the horizon at low densities or to see that different cost structures for housing yield different policy opportunities, but the attraction of fast-growth policies seems to be strong enough to block such ordinary ideas from entering the minds of many otherwise prudent people.

An obvious explanation is that all these apparent policy errors are not errors at all, but willful subservience to powerful interests—developers who profit from low-density suburban development, ordinary people reacting against immigrants out of a combination of xenophobia and fear of competition for jobs, and so forth. There is much truth in that explanation: Economically powerful groups and the fears of ordinary people always carry a great deal of weight in politics.

But an explanation resting exclusively on the power of interest groups is not quite good enough. It might help explain why an argument for uniform national immigration policies wins the day over advocacy of regionally differentiated policies, but it does not explain why the latter argument is not even a serious factor in the debate, nor does it explain the extraordinary psychological power—amounting virtually to intimidation—of the threat that departure of the Jets will rob Winnipeg of the status that comes with being on the map. The fact that the threat of being taken off the major league sport map has produced public subsidies in many cities confirms its power.

Undoubtedly, at least part of the explanation lies in the realm of psychology, well beyond the scope of this paper. What is important for us to notice is that the desire to be in the major leagues or, failing that, at least to act as if we are, has an important influence on city politics. At the same time, the analysis in these pages suggests that there is a great deal to be gained by overcoming that influence.

NOTES

1. The contributing author has been very helpful in developing this paper, but bears no responsibility for any excesses.
2. Exact figures are hard to find because economic statistics that are taken for granted by analysts of the national and provincial economies are often unavailable for census metropolitan areas. Jane Jacobs (1984) laments the lack of attention paid to urban economies.
3. This passage draws on Leo, 1996.
4. A figure in the range of \$28-30 million, which is often cited as the cost of the effort (Silver, 1996, pp. 164-67), is arrived at by deducting the proceeds to the public purse from the sale of the team, which was partly publicly-owned. However, the National Hockey League's refusal to agree to revenue sharing to benefit smaller teams made it clear that the league was not prepared to support a team in a market Winnipeg's size. If government had acted on the basis of a sober recognition of the difference between fast-growing and slow-growing cities, the team could have been sold before money was spent on trying to keep it in Winnipeg, and there would have been no need to write-off losses against that gain.
5. *Winnipeg Free Press*, 26 December 1995, p. A4.
6. Downs (1994) offers an extensive catalogue of alternatives to conventional, low-density development patterns. See also Blais 1995, *CUPR Report* 1996, Greater Toronto Area Task Force 1996.
7. Noted in *The Economist*, 5 April 1997, p. 59.
8. Beach and Green, 1989, Loveless et al., 1996, Reischauer, 1993, but see also Rao and Kapsalis, 1982.

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POST-MODERNIZING UNICITY—THE NEXT 25 YEARS: FRAGMENTATION OR TRANSFORMATION?

Ian Wight

INTRODUCTION

Unicity was 25 years old in 1997; if it survives another 25, it will be 50 years old in 2022. The “State of Unicity” conference mainly focused on the past 25 years; this commentary is pitched more as speculation on the next 25 years, trying to anticipate the changing contexts and the interplay of critical factors that might conjure up new Unicity manifestations and forms. Inevitably—in this rather personal offering—there will be some potentially “stretched” 2020 visions and, admittedly, a considerable measure of “wish-filled” thinking. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the commentary will prompt further reflection by others on the rich lode of conference proceedings, to inform the new work that needs to be undertaken, not so much to “modernize” Unicity but to effect what might best be described as its “post-modernization.”

The paper is structured in two main parts: a probing, question-based, review of four main contributing contexts as far as Winnipeg is concerned—the continental, if not global, perspective; the provincial/national jurisdictional mix; the regional setting encompassing Winnipeg’s municipal neighbours; and the natural setting or ecosystem context. The second part of the paper offers some 2020 visions, and implicit proposals for consideration, addressing a revamped Unicity, or more fundamental transformations.

PART 1: CHANGING CONTEXTS

1.1 WINNIPEG AND THE AMERICAS/NORTHERN HEMISPHERE

Will Winnipeg—in the next 25 years—become better positioned to achieve the “world-class” status that has exercised, but eluded, many of its seekers in the present century? Compared to its fragmented and parochial antecedents, there is little doubt that the Unicity structure has eased the development and pursuit of a comparatively grand-scale economic development strategy. Such strategising has come to the fore in recent years for all self-respecting city-regions. In Winnipeg’s case, the strategy seems to have two themes: (i) a North-South surface orientation on a continental (“Pan-Am”) scale—capitalizing on its North American continental centrality, and seeking better connections with Central and South America; and (ii) an East-West air transportation-based orientation on a Northern Hemisphere scale—rooted in the Winnport concept, and seeking better connections with Western Europe and the Asia Pacific region. Can such an ambitious strategy be realized within the current Unicity structure? Would the prospects for realization be enhanced by a “post-modernized” structure?

Unicity was formed to deal mainly with smaller scale considerations—metropolitan at the most. It did not greatly disturb the provincial scheme of things, and although it attracted national interest at the time, that was about the extent of it. The new continental and hemispheric strategising, while city-centred, ranges well beyond provincial and national boundaries and jurisdictions. Unicity—in its standard municipal form—seems a very inadequate institutional basis for pulling off much of such a grand strategy, especially in the current context of poor relations with the Province of Manitoba (see Diamant, 1997) and a retreating Canadian “state” (see following section). The new context for any new structural reform obviously involves a global reference point, to succeed the initial regional/metropolitan stance. In this respect, it is worth reflecting on some of Magnusson’s proposals, which hinge on his sense of an emerging single Global City, a highly networked system, with contemporary cities functioning as nodes—in a comparatively “flat” network (Magnusson, 1996, 1997b). This literally collapses the idea of a vertical hierarchical system of cities; there are no “world-class” nor “less-than-world class” cities. All cities—all urbanities—now have a global reach, regardless of size and complexity—normalized as global—“village” or “neighbourhood”—*nodes* in the Global City.

A successful, continental-contexted, economic development strategy for Winnipeg would seem to depend on provincial and federal involvement initially, but the relevance and necessity of such jurisdictions would recede as the strategy met with success. Indeed, to become a well-regarded, frequently-exercised nodality, Winnipeg may have to optimize its autonomy to operate swiftly and nimbly in the new global world-economy—it will need to be welcoming and convivial, very together and fully evolved, with no notable dysfunction. This positioning will need to begin with an overhaul of the existing institutional framework—which was designed with the needs of the previous century in mind. Much of this has to “give” if Winnipeg is to have a chance of “making it” in the coming century. In this way, continentalization and globalization will possibly drive a constitutional restructuring of Canada, and of provincial-municipal relationships.

1.2 WINNIPEG AND MANITOBA/CANADA

Will there still be a “Manitoba” and a “Canada” to “contain” Winnipeg in 2020? And if they are still around, will they mean the same as they do now? Will they mean more, or less, for Winnipeg and Winnipeggers? It is tempting to remain seduced by the *status quo*, inured to the inertia that has characterized the Canadian federation for most of this century. The arrival of Newfoundland and the carving out of Nunavut appear to be aberrations. Yet, by current European experience—unification and disintegration, new regional autonomies and old historic nation revivals—Canada, and the U.S., appear ridiculously rigid, inflexible and “out-of-synch” with the post-modern times. And it is not as if there are no templates for change in the political map of North America. In a provocative book that preceded his current “Edge City” fame, Joel Garreau advanced the idea of “The Nine Nations of North America,” replacing the current three nation-states (Garreau,

1981). As far as Canada is concerned, only Quebec remained intact—the other parts were reconstituted as parts of new nations, generally oriented North-South, with their capitals in what is now the U.S. For example, Winnipeg was located among the outer reaches of a nation labelled “The Breadbasket,” off-centred in Kansas City. Garreau reported this as an emerging reality almost two decades ago; if he revisited the subject now, there is little doubt that his case would be much stronger (following the various free trade agreements and mid-continent corridor initiatives). Given the current environment of hyper-change, where change itself is changing, it now seems not at all unreasonable to anticipate some such change by 2020.

But even this may amount to minor fragmentation in the overall scheme of things. Garreau may have identified the possibility for tripling the number of conventional nation-states in North America, but others see as many as “500 Nations” within the current continental frame (Josephy, 1994). This is the Aboriginal perspective, and an increasingly relevant reference point for post-modernization projects. It also naturally embraces the ecological perspective in the wider sense of the term, with the “500 nations” manifesting what might be defined as old “bio-regionalisms” in contemporary parlance. It is perhaps easier for Manitobans than for most other Canadians at the present time to begin to appreciate the working out of such potential reformulations, as the province provides the setting for the first comprehensive self-government scheme being negotiated between the First Nations and the senior governments. Once self-government is achieved, can self-determination be far behind? How should this “ascension of the Aboriginal” be factored into the future of Unicity, especially when Winnipeg is projected to have—among major census agglomerations—one of the highest proportions and largest concentrations of Aboriginals in its population make-up by 2020? It is difficult to escape the conclusion that this force cannot but fundamentally re-colour, if not transform, the Unicity structure and culture.

It is also difficult to expect the larger structures of “Canada” and “Manitoba” to hold steady under pressure from such forces; an anything but steady “state” for each must be contemplated by 2020, if not before. There will be the globalisation pressures from above alluded to in the previous section, and localization pressures from below—such as the Aboriginal influence. The latter is also likely to be amplified by a municipal push, at least among the country’s largest cities—including Winnipeg, for some form of constitutional recognition. If there is self-determination for First Nations, it will seem natural and just for the larger province-like municipal formations to seek the same arrangements. And if such enhanced status is not actively conferred, it may accrue by default, as existing federal nation-states decline in influence. In Canada’s case the provinces may continue to grow in influence for some time—in some respects we still seem to be in a “province-building” (as distinct from nation-building) phase. But how long can this last, especially in Manitoba where an unusually large majority of the population resides in one centre? And where Winnipeg currently tolerates the dubious status of a “have-not” city in a “have-not” province? Is it not possible that an

awakened and mobilized Winnipeg could help lead a new phase of “citistate-building,” that might turn the situation around for both the city and what would remain of the now province?

Little of this may make sense unless it is appreciated that the simultaneous operation of globalization and localization forces in today’s world (sometimes rendered as “glocalization”) powers a cascade of integrations, dis-integrations and re-integrations at inter-related scales. For every new integration, there is a necessary dis-integration, and a re-integration at another scale or in a new form; this has always been the pattern, only now it is all happening much faster, the sum total effect being manifested perhaps in what Richard Kaplan has termed “the coming anarchy” (Kaplan, 1994). Just as Canada and Manitoba might “break-down” or be re-constituted under such forces, so might Winnipeg—such as along traditional neighbourhood lines, or more modern shopping mall district lines. And internal fragmentation may be accompanied by a new external integration, on the way to a citistate formation. There is already much scope for Winnipeg to be better integrated with current social and economic times and spaces. For example, Unicity may be regarded as a modernist creation, in a pre-modernist construction of provinces and municipalities—now faced with the imperative to post-modernize. If it fails in the latter project the current “out-of-synch-ness” and level of dysfunction will only become more acute—a node to bypass in the new Global City.

As a counterpoint to all the globalisation, the prospects are favourable for a new importance for localities, if they can get their act together in terms of healthy internal differentiation. In Winnipeg’s case, this could mean a revival of the old “saintly” parochialities—strung out along the rivers, or, it could mean normalization of new convivialities (Theobald, 1997) that embrace—while transcending—the positives in these parochial roots. This could be a way out of the current impasse, where Winnipeg struggles to achieve the status of, but is anything but, “one great city—one with the strength of many”—its wishful thinking motto, invoked on the coat-tails of Unicity. The city is indeed badly “faulted” along class, language, ethnic, economic and political lines (Gerecke and Reid, 1992). It is perhaps expecting too much of “just” Unicity to effect a new Elysian fusion. Something will have to “give” at a higher—provincial—level. And here, some parallels emerge between the city and the province. Both eschew simplification—they are indeed unusual complexities, palpable pluralities, and fundamentally fragmented or “faulted”—almost post-modern before their time, it sometimes seems, without acknowledging all this entails. The inherent differences and distinctions in both cases also seem more conflicting than complementary—there may be an assumption that they all neatly “balance out,” but the denial of the differences simply flaws analyses and hobbles solutions in public policy contexts.

Manitoba breaks down too easily into three very distinct parts (albeit with overlapping “memberships”)—Metro-Manitoba, Agro-Manitoba and Abo(ri)ginal-Manitoba; it is a tough call for one legislature and any one piece of legislation, or the associated administrative machinery, to do justice to this

kind of diversity. No part ends up being well-served, or at best only one does at any particular time—but at the expense of the others. For the past decade or so, at least, it seems that Winnipeg—at the heart of Metro-Manitoba—has been a loser, and has become estranged from the province. And the estrangement can be expected to increase without targeted intervention (see Diamant, 1997; Selinger, 1997). Can Unicity be revamped with this in mind, around the notion of a “sub-province” of Metro-Manitoba? Can a restructuring of not just Unicity but Manitoba be contemplated? This becomes easier to contemplate as province-building peaks, as provinces move towards a form of “retirement,” after handing off the economic production and social construction responsibilities to their maturing progeny, including a Winnipeg-centred citistate. Levin, 1997 appears to have this in mind (near the end of his presentation), and Roger Gibbons, in a contribution to an Alberta futures seminar, has argued the declining importance of the entity “Alberta,” in relation to the entity “Calgary” in 2010 (in CBC Radio *Ideas*, 1997). Some form of fragmentation of what is now “Manitoba” may therefore be a natural as well as necessary part of the post-modernizing positioning of what is now Unicity for “citistate” status (Peirce *et al.*, 1993).

1.3 WINNIPEG AND ITS REGION

When Unicity was created, a formal legislated region (the Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg) was dissolved, and a new informal region, consisting of Unicity and its new municipal neighbours was effectively ushered into being. Unification of the “old” region of lower-tier municipalities was effected, but the new formation was so different from its new municipal neighbours that the prospects for a new functional region, happily encompassing all relevant entities in a new common regional purpose, became slim to none. This unfortunate, but almost inevitable, consequence of Unicity’s formation has bedevilled Unicity to this day, and increasingly so as metropolitan influences have intensified in importance and extended their spatial reach. Can Unicity ever be reconciled with its otherwise region? Is Winnipeg doomed to be a city alienated from its region, suffering a case of chronic “perimeteritis”? These are indeed scary prospects, especially in the context of global competitiveness where excellent city-region collaboration is increasingly a first-base “fundamental” (Dodge, 1996). It appears that Unicity has got itself into such a “state,” in terms of out-of-reach regional relationships, that the only way out entails a radical re-structuring of Unicity itself and its operating environment, to the extent of substantially reversing the old unification—while simultaneously effecting a new “Metro-Manitoba” provincialization.

For much of the first half of the twentieth century, Winnipeg’s region was fairly uncontentiously represented in terms of “Greater Winnipeg.” In the earliest decades, Winnipeg seems to have had an ability to annex at will, but soon new suburban growth spawned new municipalities, “freezing” the old central city for several decades. Single-purpose inter-municipal service agencies proliferated under the “Greater Winnipeg”

banner. This appellation could be tolerated by the “lessers” because it entailed no political subordination—of any real consequence—to the then City of Winnipeg. The shift from this essentially inter-municipal regionalism to a more metropolitan regionalism began around 1950, in a low-key advisory manner initially—until institutionalized in 1960 with the formation of the metropolitan tier of municipal government, over 13 lower-tier municipal governments, including the then City of Winnipeg. When Unicity was created, metropolitan regionalism was effectively killed off, and a distinct vacuum was created. There could be no going back to “Greater Winnipeg” labelling—this was now too impolitic, or—in keeping with the new times—too politically incorrect.

Yet regional issues by no means disappeared with the formation of Unicity—they simply shifted to a new level, literally and figuratively. The province began referencing the “Winnipeg Region” in an early 1970s initiative to address ex-urban sprawl concerns. This actually led to a revamped Planning Act and new Provincial Land Use Policies, but it also enabled small planning districts (of two or three rural or small urban municipalities) to be formed in Winnipeg’s “region,” but—perversely—without Unicity participation. The determining influence of the province—rather than Unicity—in establishing Winnipeg’s region became clearer in the late 1980s with its formation of the Winnipeg Region Committee, set up in part to deal with the consequences of having eliminated the last vestiges of the “additional zone”—a greenbelt-type planning measure, dating from the Metro Winnipeg days, conferring some city control over ex-urban development. This Committee, co-chaired by three provincial cabinet ministers and made up of municipal mayors and reeves, quickly evolved into the Capital Region Committee, which became jointly responsible, with the Provincial Round Table on the Economy and the Environment, for the preparation of the Capital Region Strategy. This “strategy” has now progressed to the stage of political and technical deliberations on how to implement the policies laid out in an “application” document. However, the whole strategy development process has been so suspect that it has garnered virtually no public recognition or credibility (it was not mentioned once during the Unicity conference presentations). Nevertheless, the initiative has underlined that the important reference has been to *Manitoba’s* Capital Region; it is not Winnipeg’s but the province’s region. Unicity does not have a functioning and functional regional context of its own.

Can Winnipeg work its way out of this “bind”? In some respects, it now finds itself in roughly the same position as the old centre city at the inception of Unicity (see Diamant, 1997), and it is tempting to consider another iteration on a larger geographical scale—Unicity Marque II or UniRegion/Metro Marque II. But political times as well as geographical spaces have changed in the past 25 years, and even greater changes must be anticipated in the next 25. There have already been signs of Unicity fraying at the edges—most notably in the secession of Headingley, and similar (but unsuccessful for now) efforts in St. Germaine-Vermette. If the Unicity structure is not up to satisfying the folks at Headingley, it is most certainly not up to smoothly

incorporating further rural or small town territory in the outer reaches of the Capital Region. It seems that you need to be on a par with a province to deal with this kind of diversity. And it is not easy to even begin to contemplate such movement until you reframe your problem analysis basis. There are signs, for example, that Unicity—as currently constituted—is still regarded by some commentators as “the regional authority” (see Selinger, 1997), or that it currently corresponds with a full, and fully-functional, “city-region” (see Artibise, 1997). The burden of the earlier argument in this section is that such assessments could not be further from present reality.

This regional context is one that Unicity will have to come to terms with, in a much more pro-active manner than has been the case in the recent past. Neither the city nor the rest of the province can afford any more complacency. The issue requires a fundamental re-strategising on the city’s part, to target the province as the least necessary level of government as far as Winnipeggers are concerned, but also to appreciate that Unicity itself is a very cumbersome structure, too narrowly attentive to business interests while being comparatively unfriendly to civic endeavours at the neighbourhood and “community of communities” level. New governance initiatives on a regional scale will only be successful in concert with new governance initiatives on a neighbourhood or community scale—but the future will require reference to new post-modern forms in place of modernist, or warped pre-modernist, interpretations of terms such as region, neighbourhood, community and municipality. The “region” replacement in Winnipeg’s case may well be something like a “collaborative” or “citistate” (Peirce *et al.*, 1993) on a “Metro-Manitoba” scale; the “neighbourhood” may be something like a “conviviality” (Theobald, 1997). In between, in place of “municipality” there may be something like an “urbanity” or a “rurality,” within an umbrella “eco-logicality” or “eco-syndicate.”

The post-modern reality is only now emerging. It will necessarily have a very different feel from what has gone before—such as, “governances” superseding governments, networks and webs replacing hierarchy and hegemony, “blurs” shading out borders or boundaries, “democratics” topping politics. There will be radically new “urbanisms,” such as extensions of the inherently contradictory “urban villages,” and a greater role for “virtual communities.” And new “regionalisms”—if they achieve conceptualization—might well make a mockery of the root term (region), especially if Magnusson’s analysis (“there is no ‘outside’ to the urban”) holds:

So: to think of the urban is not to think of particular regions, but rather of a mode of human life that extends everywhere on Earth and implicates everyone in it. In this “urban to which there is no beyond” there are processes of governance that we have scarcely begun to identify. The task of naming these processes, questioning those processes, and calling ourselves to account in relation to them is the most pressing political task of our time (Magnusson, 1997a).

New processes will be paramount in resolving Unicity’s regional conundrum. As Magnusson indicates,

they may still have to be invented, or perhaps it is more of a case that they have still to be designed, inventively—rather than trying to adapt past processes. This is clearly another important dimension of the post-modernization of Unicity. At the very least, it could mean making room for more sectors—private and non-profit for example, rather than the past public-sector preoccupation, and a truly more inclusive and collective initial visioning, then institutional capacity-building, approach. The latter would amount to more sensitive sequencing and staging, customized to the situation, rather than resorting too quickly to a “one-size-fits-all” structural solution (Wallis, 1994; Dodge, 1996; Paetkau, 1996). The process design would be an interesting challenge and focus for a follow-up conference.

1.4 WINNIPEG AND ITS ECOSYSTEM CONTEXT

How well has Unicity related to its natural setting? Has its region ever been accorded a bioregional dimension (Sale, 1991), or an ecological basis (Luccarelli, 1995)? Is Unicity sustainable—not just technologically but ecologically (Orr, 1992; Van der Ryn and Cowan, 1996)? Might Unicity aspire to “eco-city” status over the next 25 years (Roseland, 1997)? Or are such questions themselves questionable—out of place, unnatural, inadmissible—in any discussion of the future of Unicity? At the time of its formation “the environment” had nowhere near attained the public policy prominence that emerged later in the 1970s. It was not a major concern in its design. If Unicity was being formed now, the situation would possibly be very different—ecology has emerged as a competing reference point, but the physical environment—and overcoming it—seems to be the new limit of municipal frames of reference. The city’s relationship with nature is still just something to be engineered—to the city’s specifications; the city is perceived separate from, rather than integral with, nature. This is not unique to Winnipeg and Unicity—it is a function in part of the almost anti-ecological basis of municipal forms of government. It is questionable if these stances can be sustained in the next 25 years, without adversely impacting the sustainability of city life as we now know it.

Winnipeg—in terms of its main sphere of influence—is actually positioned quite favourably in terms of ecological diversity at the macro eco-zone level. Slices of the Prairie, Parkland and Boreal Forest eco-zones lie in its immediate vicinity—poised to deliver a wide range of what are apt to become increasingly valued ecological services if managed responsibly on an ecosystem basis (Tomalty *et al.*, 1994). Unicity is currently cut off from this wider ecosystem context—and in fact could be more accurately represented as being headed for an ecological dead-end. The dominant Prairie eco-zone has recently been assessed—somewhat dubiously—as being neither clearly unsustainable nor clearly sustainable (Manitoba Environment, 1997). Upon close review of the indicators referenced, and the construction of the measurement summary “barometer,” it seems clear that this highly equivocal outcome has been conveniently manufactured to avoid politically unpalatable consequences. Even so, it is apparent that its Winnipeg urban “eco-enclave” cannot be so

equivocally assessed; it is clearly not sustainable. And the city's own resulting "ecological footprint" (Wackernagel and Rees, 1996) may be conservatively estimated as many (15 to 20) times larger than the city's official jurisdiction. Unicity is an exploiter and a despoiler of other areas beyond its borders.

Will the situation be any different in 2020? Will Unicity's ecological footprint be larger or smaller? Will there have been "genuine progress" for a change (Cobb *et al.*, 1995), or simply more "gross" production? Will Unicity have simply "Floodway-ed" its way to a form of shaky technological sustainability, or will it be well on the way to a commendable ecological sustainability, noteworthy on a global scale and the basis of trade in ecologically-appropriate technology transfer? While the *status quo*—as in "more of the same"—does not bear thinking about, an alternative course may be worked out in terms of an eco-governance context for the transformation of Unicity (Birkeland, 1996). This would be another dimension of the post-modernization project—overturning the anti-ecological bias of existing municipal formations (Artibise and Hill, 1993).

PART 2: 2020 VISIONS

Based on the preceding review of changing contexts, Unicity is liable to be buffeted by considerable changes that will severely challenge the existing structure and force reconsideration of its adequacy in a post-modernization context. Much will hinge on an accurate analysis of the existing situation, an informed envisioning of alternative forms and a clear appreciation of the shifts in position they might entail. A beginning of such an exercise is offered below to round out these musings on the next 25 years of Unicity.

2.1 FROM CITY CORPORATION TO CIVIC CRUCIBLE

Unicity is now the (decreasingly public) Corporation of the City of Winnipeg, undergoing an accentuated phase of corporatisation (Selinger, 1997), making itself over more thoroughly in the image of any large private sector corporation. Sometimes it seems to be still caught in a pre-Panama Canal time-warp, with its "world-class city" boosterism and business-driven development agenda. There is a distinct "desperately-seeking-development"—and an associated "desperately-accommodating-of-any-development"—stance on the part of the city which seemingly leaves little room for, or interest in, much in the way of publicly planned intervention—visionary or regulatory. Private pursuits have captured or coloured much of the public domain. Unicity, it seems, is primarily a private business or land development service provider, driven by business models itself—under the foolish apprehension that a government can be run as a business (Jacobs, 1992; Saul, 1995; Mintzberg, 1996). Increasingly a slave to the market-god, "Winnipeg Inc." has missed the critical differences between markets and communities (Soros, 1997) and its own critical role in underwriting communities before companies. Under the influence of corporate culture, the city is commoditized

as a commercial profit-centre—but at the crucial cost of its civics. Unicity can no longer be easily perceived as “of” or “for” or “by” the ordinary people of Winnipeg; it is becoming more of a comparatively exclusive club.

If this analysis holds, Unicity—in the next 25 years—is liable to be fragmented and dissolved by market forces and commercial transactions. This is not a pleasant vision—a city/market of individual self-seeking consumers rather than citizens looking out for, and looking to serve, their community. The shift that needs to be contemplated is from positioning Unicity as a commercial profit-centre to positioning it instead as a great people-place, with a rich community life. The vision is one of city as civic citadel or crucible. In Winnipeg’s case at the present time, this will entail a distinct empowering of neighbourhoods and communities—reversing current trends. Steps along the way could include adapting the business improvement zone model to be of service to neighbourhoods in general (Selinger, 1997). A strong positive statement could also be made by copying the targeted effort represented by the Business Liaison and Inter-governmental Affairs Branch of the City of Winnipeg (the only new branch created in the 1994 civic restructuring), and establishing an equally focused and influential “Neighbourhoods Liaison and Inter-sectoral Affairs” Branch. Such overt “balancing” of the community and business “customer base” would go a long way in restoring civic credibility, and strengthening the “citizen base” that will be so important in future inter-city “quality of life” stakes.

2.2 FROM UNICITY MARQUE I TO MARQUE II—OR A “CLASSIC/CIVIC” MODEL?

Is the Unicity structure basically sound, making the future prescription basically a case of “staying the course”(Artibise, 1997)—with only some tinkering here and there to tune up the functioning? Or is there a case for more fundamental reform, if not outright transformation? The first position does not appear to have very many adherents—on the strength of the conference presentations sample. A few more might settle for some reform within the present basic structure (Thomas, 1997), or simply for a rolling back of the regressive “deforms” that have been introduced over the past 25 years, perverting the initial vision. Such changes might deliver nothing more than a Unicity Marque II—a new sleeker body perhaps, but with basically the same old engine and frame underneath. The main theme of the argument offered here is that such “new modelling” is unlikely to engage post-modernization imperatives; the structure will remain dysfunctional in such a context. The analysis here indicates the need for a more radical re-modelling.

Maintaining the metaphor somewhat, the alternative vision recommended for consideration is to pursue a Classic/Civic model—picking up on a theme from the previous section, while acknowledging some value in past formulations—potentially as far back as early Greek civilization. The (post-)modern version is much more inclusive however—essentially all-inclusive, and much less hierarchical—more of a network of comparative equals. The vision is one of an integrated network of community interests, and communities of

interest—forming a city of simultaneous communitarians and cosmopolitans, where Total Quality Politics (Thomas, 1997) rather than TQM would be the *modus operandi* (see also the burden of the arguments forwarded by Magnusson, 1997a and Levin, 1997).

2.3 FROM UNICITY TO UNIREGION—OR TO CITISTATE?

There can be little doubt that Unicity has an informal sphere of significant influence well beyond its legal boundaries. In some cases this mismatch of functional influence and official jurisdiction can be costly and frustrating for Unicity (Yauk, 1995). And it would be easy for such an analysis to lead to a proposal to spatially expand Unicity—such as was recently done in the Halifax metropolitan area—from a “compact” to a “pick-up truck,” from Unicity to a form of UniRegion. However, as was argued in Section 1.3, this would appear to be a non-starter—with the Headingley case providing the negative litmus test. A regional spatial expansion would also require a balancing “internal differentiation-cum-disintegration” of Unicity as now formulated, as well as reversing some of the regressive “deforms” perpetrated in the past 25 years in the service of greater administrative and political centralization—at the expense of democratic decentralization.

The alternative vision emerging from the analysis—as aligned with a post-modernization imperative—may be represented as a “citistate” for that part of Manitoba falling under the metropolitan influence of Winnipeg. A spatial rendition of this area of influence would be roughly the territory within the original Province of Manitoba—when it was known as the “postage stamp” province. A “citistate” is envisioned as corresponding more closely with a modern province than a modern municipality, although—when worked out under the post-modern paradigm—it could operate quite differently from either contemporary form of government (Peirce *et al.*, 1993). The proposed shift would also be in the direction of that alluded to by some conference presenters (Levin, 1997; Magnusson, 1996, 1997a). Steps towards its realization could be taken: by an initial reorganization of the present provincial Ministry of Urban Affairs as the Ministry of Capital Region Affairs; by progressively transferring more and more of the responsibility for provincial servicing of Capital Region residents and businesses to this particular provincial Ministry; by increasing the governance responsibilities of Capital Region MLAs for overseeing this streamlined servicing, including all regional-scale servicing involving existing municipalities; and by reorganizing the municipal level of government within the Capital Region—on the basis of neighbourhood/district collectivities or convivialities—both within and surrounding what is now Winnipeg. The end-result would be something like a “sub-province,” with companion sub-provinces for the other two components of Manitoba. There may also be a need for joint responsibility by the three sub-provinces for a distinct “Capitol District”—used and supported by each, in and around the current downtown/inner-city of Winnipeg.

The above may well qualify as one of the more “stretched” 2020 visions in this piece, but it should be

placed in the context of an anticipated very different post-modern reality, where Winnipeg and environs have become but one of many “nodes” in the Global City (Magnusson, 1996, 1997b), in a post-(conventional)-city age (Savitch and Vogel, 1996). This will be a world of simultaneous global/urban villagers/citizens. It outlines the kind of program we need to plan and design for—to reinvent Unicity.

2.4 FROM UNICITY TO ECO-SYSTEM-STATE?

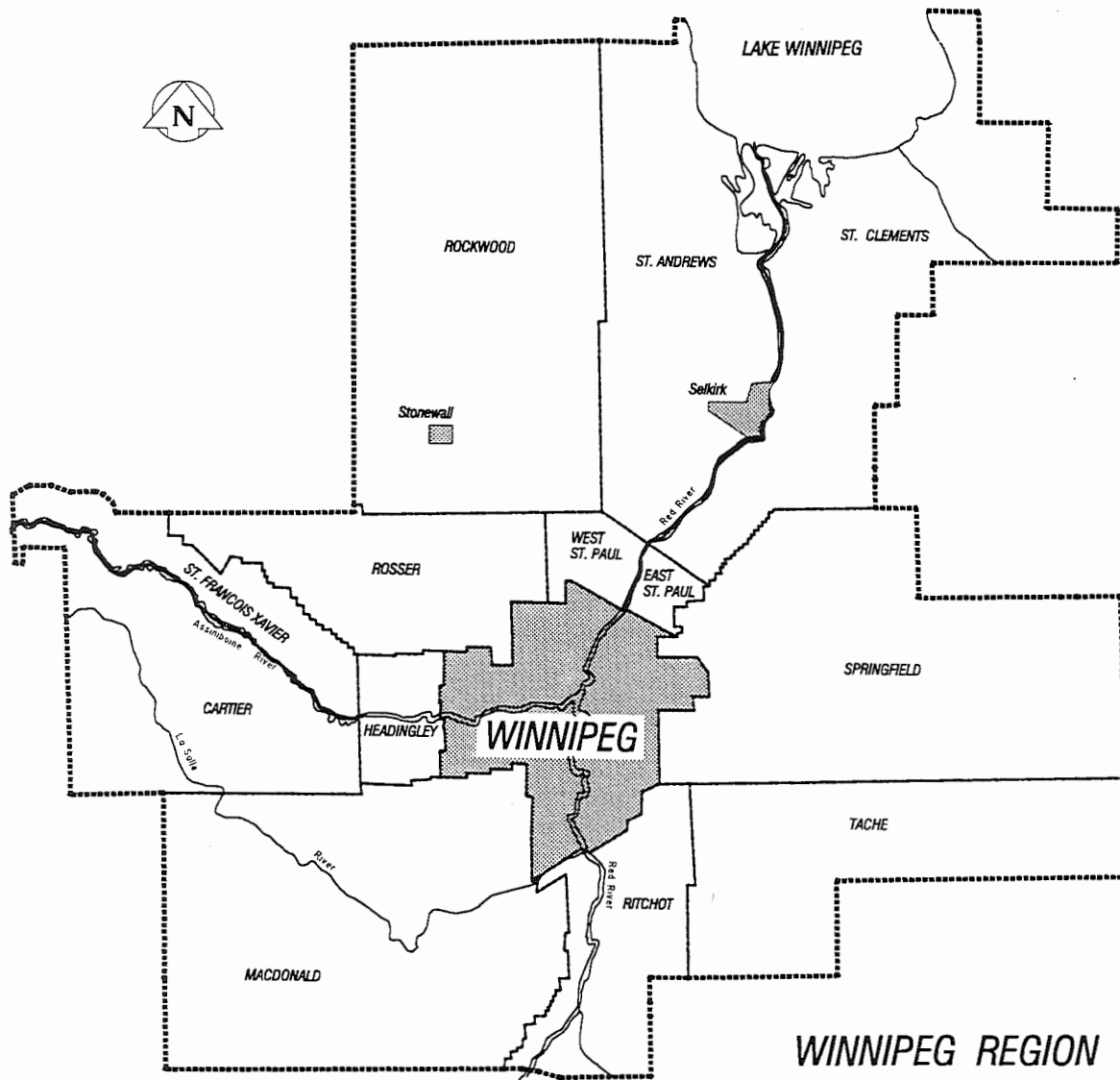
A final design parameter that has been singled out in this analysis—but which should really be seamlessly integrated throughout—revolves around the ecological dimension. An alternative “citistate” might indeed constitute some of the necessary progress, but without the ecological dimension being designed in, and throughout, it might simply function as the socio-political equivalent of a technological fix—another vehicle speeding us towards an ecological dead-end. The alternative vision is therefore one of an *eco-citistate* (Roseland, 1997), full of ecological citizens (*New City Magazine*, 1997). This “state” may be even broader—an *eco-system-state*, referencing what some call a *bio-region*—a collective “home-place,” for urbans and rurals, Aboriginals and others. Perhaps all can rally around a jointly-researched and consensually established new name for this place they can all call home and which they all count on to sustain them. This research may unearth some sense of the wider Buffalo Commons that used to characterise the prairies and plains (Callenbach, 1996) giving new life to Manitoba’s bison motif, while reaching further afield across provincial and state borders—keeping horizons appropriately broad and long.

CODA

Unlike some other cities—such as Toronto (the pre-megacity original) and Portland, Oregon—Winnipeg has never been dubbed as “a city that works,” despite all the structural innovation. Will this change in the next 25 years? Or is Winnipeg going to remain a living reminder of, and slave to, its parochial and boosterist past? Will Winnipeg continue to be seen primarily as—at best—a public corporation serving private business first and city folks second? Or, will it become clearer that Winnipeg, as a community of communities—rather than as a corporation—*has* indeed worked—seemingly *in spite of* its formal structure and its formal corporate representation.

Perhaps Winnipeg, and its associated environs, would “work” even better if it was constructively “re-fragmented”—not necessarily reverting to the pre-Metro single-tier municipal mosaic, but reconstituted as a network of new millennium municipalities, confederated in a provincial/municipal blended citistate of sorts—bringing together public authority, private enterprise, and community service in a new post-modern governance collaborative. The new form would encompass—while transcending—old “regional” formulations,

and would be underpinned by a common conviction to “govern,” and be “governed,” in accord with ecological principles. This could be a configuration that some backward glancers might pooh-pooh as simply re-heated modern-style regional government, but others might acknowledge and value as a post-modern eco-governance model, attempting to mesh with the emerging global and ecological realities. This is the model elaborated here to explore one possible future for Unicity—over the next 25 years. Time will tell if this has any merit; meantime, others are invited to join the debate—Unicity can only be the better for it.



Map 3: Winnipeg Region (Source: TransPlan 2010).

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