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A REPORTER'S GUIDE TO MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IN ONTARIO

by

ROB DOLAN

**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Journalism

School of Journalism and Communication

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

August 30, 1993

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"A REPORTER'S GUIDE TO MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IN ONTARIO"

submitted by Rob Dolan

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Journalism

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "P.W. Graham", is written over a horizontal line.

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Director, School of Journalism and Communication

Carleton University

22 September 1993

Abstract

A Reporters's Guide to Municipal Government is intended for journalism students and reporters as an introduction to the municipal beat. The guide provides examples of the many and varied functions, terms and personalities which are found in local government. The chapter structure covers four main areas: an overview of the municipal beat; structures and jurisdictions in municipalities; cultivation of sources and preparation for meetings; and examples of news stories on municipal budgets, property, social issues and elections. The guide is based on documents and interviews with reporters from across Ontario. In addition, actual stories have been inserted to clarify points and provide assistance to those who are new to this complex level of government.

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Introduction

Today's municipal government intervenes in almost every aspect of daily life. Services as diverse as garbage disposal, public transit, water supply, and shelters for the homeless may be provided by the local municipality. Despite this broad mandate, land-use management continues to be the paramount responsibility of municipalities in the 1990s.

The concern for property rights and their place in modern land-use management dates back to the European colonizers of North America, who escaped a variety of limits on freedom and upward mobility in search of a better life in a new land. Their work ethic and rugged individualism have defined the North American culture of the 20th century, a prime component of which is the right of any individual to own and protect one's property. In the early days, a deed of ownership to a cleared plot of land with a log or sod house might have represented an individual's life accomplishment. Today, one might identify one's sense of accomplishment in terms of a condominium, single-family dwelling or business property.

This tradition that property defines one's place in society has influenced the way in which we have chosen to develop our communities. However, a competing vision of the role of civic government also had an impact on the modern municipality. In the latter part of the 1800s, a civic reform movement appeared in England which offered a broader definition of the role of municipal government. Rather than simply servicing the needs of property owners and the business community, the municipality would assess its role in terms of the

health and welfare of the community at large.

A direct result of this reform movement was the development of the public utility. Reformers believed that necessary services such as water and gas should be managed in a manner which profits the city rather than a private interest. Furthermore this broader vision of local government opened the doors to the concept of municipal museums, community centres and various other facilities in the community.

Canada was slow to adopt these reforms. The majority of municipalities at the turn of the century were too small to contemplate expansion of their roles. As well, the pro-business attitude of American municipalities at that time tended to influence Canadian acceptance of the approaches which were evolving in Britain.

Over the last 50 years, however, these influences have had a tangible impact on municipalities. Following the second world war, a social welfare system began to take shape across Canada, and by the 1960s, Saskatchewan's medicare system was adopted as a model for health care across Canada. Since provincial governments had the constitutional responsibility for the administration of these programs, municipalities became the agents of the provinces to provide locally many of the services associated with these programs. Today, local municipal governments have moved far beyond the humble beginnings discussed above into protection of the environment, mass transportation, social services, care of the elderly, public health and a host of other "necessary" services.

Many journalism students and new reporters see themselves as future parliamentary reporters, foreign correspondents, or specialists in the fields of business and economics. The challenge of covering the "big story" is not usually associated with the municipal beat. Perhaps for this reason, journalism schools have difficulty in attracting substantial numbers of students to courses dealing with local government. Ironically, it is in our own backyards that such current major issues as environmental hazards, gridlock, family violence and urban poverty are most accessible.

Jim Kelly, city hall reporter for The Chronicle Journal of Thunder Bay, worked for eight years as court reporter and says he turned down every opportunity to try the municipal beat. Then last year he finally took the plunge and says he has never looked back.

"There was so much down time on the court beat. At city hall there are so many issues to get your teeth into and personalities to deal with. In retrospect, I regret not having taken the opportunity to move to city hall earlier," he said. (1)

With the steady shift of the Canadian population towards urban centres, local government has by necessity become more costly and complex. Metro Toronto's operating budget in 1992, for example, was \$3.2 billion, (2) while the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton's operating budget approached \$1 billion the same year. (3)

Mega-projects worth hundreds of millions of dollars are now often financed at

the local level with reserve funds built up over decades and through loans secured from the major money centres of Tokyo, New York and London. Such communities may have a regional government to oversee trans-municipal services and utilities; a local level of municipal government, such as a town or city, to look after recreational programs and local zoning; and a variety of commissions and boards to administer such diverse services as education and policing.

Although some large municipalities are becoming as complex as smaller provincial governments, a significant degree of similarity remains between the issues one confronts in the small municipality and in the large. The common factor is the interplay between the needs of the community at large and their impact on the individual and private property. As well they share a wide range of legislated powers and duties which will be discussed later in this guide.

Concern for lowered property values, perceived threats to the safety of one's family -- in fact, any perceived change to the status quo -- can result in a barrage of anger and rhetoric directed towards the source of the problem. Very often the target of this emotion is the local municipal government. Prominence is often given by the news media to the loudest or most authoritative voice without adequate consideration of the quality or logic of the argument being presented. This can work to the advantage of the spokesperson for either government or an opposing interest. A working knowledge of the system, however, provides a context into which a reporter can place the various views in a balanced manner.

Whether a reporter's first introduction to a municipal beat is covering an issue of significance to a small neighbourhood or to the community at large, it is likely that contact with municipal politicians and staff will be required. Often this contact comes in the context of a municipal meeting.

The range of issues on any municipal meeting agenda can represent an impossible challenge for a reporter who has come to decipher "the story" amidst all the paper and talk. Jane Armstrong, the city hall reporter for The Toronto Star, remembers her first introduction to a municipal meeting. "I couldn't understand what was being said and the agendas seemed to be written in a foreign language. Sometimes the meetings would go on for hours and I had trouble judging where the news story was."

David Brazeau of The Sudbury Times had a similar experience. "You have to learn to see the story amidst the jargon and if you don't learn how to do it, you probably aren't going to be reporter for too long. This isn't unique to the city hall beat; you find just as much jargon when you cover police and the courts as well."

Understanding the significance of a proposed zoning change is difficult if one has never heard of an Official Plan. A municipal budget meeting can be utterly mystifying if one does not have a grasp of the significance of mill rates, assessment and reserve funds. Lacking awareness of the functions of and relationships among various staff, politicians, developers and community groups can promote even greater confusion. Of great importance as well, is the

need to understand the relationship of the municipality to such other government bodies as provincial ministries and the Ontario Municipal Board. Without such basic information, the significance of events is easily lost and the public's right to know is not properly served.

A Guide to Local Government

After working in the municipal field for more than a decade, I have seen municipal reporters come and go. Having been trained as a journalist, I found the role of media relations manager in a large municipality to be surprisingly compatible with the needs of contemporary municipal journalism. Facing tight deadlines and the need to gain access to legitimate sources, reporters discover that an individual such as me can enhance rather than restrict access to information; the latter has sometimes been the perception of such positions in the past.

With the exception of the largest municipalities in the province, which can afford to have full-time communication staff to provide assistance to reporters, most reporters simply have to learn the ropes by trial and error. A veteran of 10 years covering city and county issues, Rob Hornberger of The Windsor Star agrees. "I started off doing part time work in Burlington and then went to The Chatham News and spent two and half years there - - and I'm sure I made lots of mistakes in terms of understanding about zoning amendments, official plans and by-laws," Hornberger said.

After several years working on weekly newspapers, Jim Day recently took over the city hall beat at The Pembroke Observer. He agrees with Rob Hornberger. "Anything dealing with government funding, budgets, and tax levies takes a bit of time to understand. These things can be confusing for any reporter to deal with, let alone putting them down in the story in a manner which is clear and makes sense to the reader. It would be good to have a reference of some sort to help at the beginning."

This is meant to be that reference. To accelerate the learning curve for municipal beat reporters, this guide offers brief explanations of terms, defines municipal functions, and provides an introduction to a complex and sometimes mystifying array of people and issues. Its purpose is not to explain every facet of municipal operations, but rather to offer a thumbnail sketch of those aspects which are most likely to confront reporters in day-to-day coverage of local issues. Aside from promoting the broader objectives of journalism, such as balance and fairness, a thumbnail sketch of the workings, roles and personalities of local government will hopefully make the initial entrance to the municipal beat easier for the reporter.

The reporter must be adept at getting answers quickly and efficiently from appropriate spokespeople among municipal staff, local politicians and various community interest groups. Not only is it helpful to know who does what, but I have also found it helpful to be aware of some of the attitudes and misunderstandings regarding the news-gathering business which are held by many local government staff. A number of these are discussed in Section III of the guide.

In addition to providing a basic understanding of the municipal level of government with the assistance of academic and government sources, I have incorporated contributions from a variety of municipal reporters working across Ontario. As reporters, whose job it is to communicate complicated bureaucratic and legal issues into everyday language, their stories and personal experiences will hopefully offer the new municipal beat reporter a sense of direction as to how stories may be approached.

As indicated above, the objective of the guide is to offer a resource which may be used from time to time as a reference regarding a term or as a source for media relations contacts within provincial ministries or relevant associations. In addition, the guide offers an opportunity for the new reporter to reflect on the manner in which others have handled issues on the municipal beat.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my thanks to the reporters who offered their insights and experience in preparation of this guide.

SECTION I

The Municipal Beat

The Municipal Beat

I. The Municipal Media Scene

Today in most urban centres, one can wake up to local news on the radio, read about the latest local scandal in the tabloid on the bus to work, and scan more detailed coverage in the daily broadsheet later in the day. That evening, the six o'clock television news often runs local news as the lead stories, and for the night owl, some television stations will again offer local news after the late evening national news.

Added to this steady daily local news diet, one can read about issues of significance to the neighbourhood in the community press composed of weekly, bi-weekly and monthly newspapers. Though once a lowly adjunct to the local media scene, in recent years this medium is giving other local news outlets a run for their money. As indicated in a story by Stan Cunningham in The Windsor Star, the community newspaper is no longer the poor sister of the local news media that it was a decade ago. Often group-owned, these newspapers are now major money makers which provide the workplace for many journalists.

Community and weekly newspapers are an important alternative source of regional information as well as an important vehicle for local advertising. There are about 1,050 of these in Canada. The good news is that in the last decade they have doubled their circulation. The bad news is that during the same time more and more of them were being bought up by the media barons.

Torstar, for instance, the mother company of The Toronto Star, owns Metroland which, in turn, owns more than 25 papers in an area encircling Toronto. A short while back, Southam bought heavily into the community and weekly trade in B.C.

Four years ago, most of the 700 papers that belong to the Canadian Community Newspaper Association were independently owned. Today, the majority are group owned.

It's unlikely that the corporate heavyweights are motivated by journalistic ideals or by an altruistic urge to protect the little guy. The truth of the matter is that in the mid-1980s, the weeklies had the highest growth rate in advertising revenues of any medium. That was enough to ensure their commercial attractiveness.... (4)

With the reduction in the number of broadsheet dailies in the 1980s, and the impact of the recession on the media business during the 1990s, there are fewer opportunities for mobility within the journalistic profession. At the same time, the growing governmental responsibility and complexity of towns, cities and regions means longer learning curves for the reporters assigned to the municipal beat.

Although there will always likely be a role for the generalist reporter, most observers see an increasing level of specialization across the board. Students are now entering post-graduate journalism programs with degrees as diverse as medicine, political science, economics and business administration. They are entering journalism at a time when the public are demanding more accountability from the press. The tags of sensationalism, over-simplification,

and promotion of conflict have given reporters a level of public trust only just above that of politicians. There is a demand for reporters not just to report on events, but also to offer the audience some understanding of the context in which these events have occurred.

This trend has begun to express itself in newsrooms across Ontario as editors are demanding a more issue-oriented approach to the municipal scene. As Chip Martin of The London Free Press explains, "Although I have been covering city hall for the last three years, I am no longer called a city hall reporter, but rather a community issues reporter." He goes on to say that recently reporters covering city hall were told that they were covering too many meetings. "The objective now is that we appropriate issues before they get to city hall, run with them, ventilate them, so that when people get to city hall, it is the end of the process rather than the beginning," he said.

David Brazeau of The Sudbury Times says that this approach to municipal reporting is being sold as the new way of doing things at his newspaper as well. Brazeau believes that it responds to what the public want today. As well, by selecting agenda items and getting reaction to possible outcomes in advance of decisions being made, he suggests the newspaper is able to compete with the immediacy of radio and television.

Jim Day of The Pembroke Observer cautions that even if you have been covering municipal government for years, it is sometimes not enough to just read the agenda and decide it is not worth attending. "Unexpected things

happen in municipal meetings and it is not always good enough to ask staff or councillors later," he says.

As Canada continues to shift towards an urban society, the role of the municipality and the municipal reporter will become more prominent. Furthermore, with the pressure on newsrooms to "do more with less," while at the same time ensuring that they get the story, there will be even greater emphasis placed on the judicious use of the reporter's time and energy.

II. Putting The Municipal Beat Into Perspective

Whether you find yourself working for a community newspaper in Hawkesbury, a radio station in Windsor or a TV station in Thunder Bay, you will find a surprising lack of public awareness about the services of the local municipality. The confusion can be even greater for the 85 per cent of Ontario people who live in two-tier systems with county or regional structures as well as village, town or city governments.

This lack of public awareness about the services and policies of local government is a constant frustration for municipal politicians and staff alike. Government workers do not expect to be loved by the public, but at the very least they would like the people to understand what they do. A local reporter can use this as a starting point in establishing a positive and constructive rapport with local staff and politicians.

A common complaint of municipal staff is that reporters do not take the time to understand the municipality's role. Lack of accuracy in explaining the municipal position due to an unwillingness on the part of the reporter to take the time to become informed is the best way to find doors closed when covering future stories.

In contrast, a reporter who demonstrates a basic knowledge of municipal jurisdiction in the formulation of his questions, an interest in understanding the municipal position, and a willingness to present this information in a fair and balanced manner, will find that doors open and calls are returned more quickly -- whether or not favourable stories result.

Antonella Artuso, city hall reporter for The Toronto Sun, reinforces the need to remain very neutral and apply a similar standard for all sources whether they are politicians, staff or an average citizen. "I need people to talk to me, all kinds of people, because it is not just this person, that politician or a particular bureaucrat who is going to know the whole story. Sources are everything in this business so it is important to be fair and even-handed."

The following section is designed to help give municipal reporters fundamental knowledge. It outlines the basic structural make-up of municipalities across Ontario. With this information, a reporter can then move on to the more detailed consideration of current municipal issues that are outlined in succeeding sections.

Section II

Structures and Jurisdictions of Municipalities

Structures and Jurisdictions of Municipalities

I. Introduction

The following section provides basic information on the diverse nature of municipal organizations in Ontario, as well as the characteristics which are common to all. This section should be used as a map allowing the municipal reporter to situate the various players and structures that will arise in most stories he or she covers.

II. The Role of the Province

The first critical fact to understand is that all municipalities in Ontario are the creatures of the provincial government. No town exists but that it was incorporated by Queen's Park. No city council can exist without Ontario's approval. Practically every municipal program and service has its genesis in some provincial legislation. (5) In some cases, the municipality may simply be an administrative vehicle to provide a service which is 100 per cent funded by the province, such as programs to prevent sexually transmitted diseases. In other cases, the local property taxpayer may contribute between 20 to 100 per cent of the cost of services. For example, local taxpayers currently fund 20 per cent of the cost of local welfare. However, the local council may decide to provide "supple-mentary" services which may include the provision of stoves and fridges to social service clients in need. These services will be funded 100

per cent by local taxpayers. The higher the contribution at the local level, the greater the discretion and independence granted the municipality by the province.

Although this section addresses the legal and jurisdictional power base of the province and the municipalities, the municipal reporter should be aware that power and influence are also related to the personalities of local political leaders, as well as the alliances to achieve common goals which may build up among various members of council. This aspect is addressed later in this section. (see pages 26 to 28).

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs

Although it is a comparatively small provincial department, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs is the department with the greatest influence on the activities of municipal governments, and the Ontario Municipal Act is the most significant piece of legislation regarding municipal government activities.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs authorizes the activities of the municipalities of Ontario. Very little if any action can be legally taken by a town or city without some form of authorization by the Municipal Act, RSO 1990, M.45. The act confers on the municipalities the power to pass by-laws for the "health and welfare of their inhabitants"; however, these become void if they are in any way "repugnant to or inconsistent with general provincial law." (6) Furthermore, even though this legal authority has been ceded to local bodies by the Ministry of

Municipal Affairs, final approval for many actions, such as official plans and by-laws, is still required.

Much of the funding for local programs takes the form of conditional grants which, as the name suggests, are provided on condition that certain criteria are met. Rather than a town council being able to decide on the direction required locally, the money is always focussed in the direction identified by Queen's Park. In addition, the province directs the manner in which municipal records are maintained and regulates such other administrative matters as bookkeeping, accounting, auditing, and the disposal and destruction of records.

Today, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs is composed of two parts, the Municipal Policy Development Division and the Municipal Operations Division. The policy division is concerned with issues which relate to the ongoing business of municipalities. These issues include the way in which municipalities are organized, the extent of their authority, and the management of their budgets. As well, this division oversees the way in which municipalities apply provincial policies on land use planning and ensures that the planning approvals are properly managed. For example, if a local municipality wishes to relinquish a particular responsibility and transfer it to a county or regional government, the policy division would provide advice and facilitate these changes through the necessary legislative processes at Queen's Park. Similarly, the policy branch will review the way in which municipal budgets are prepared to ensure that they meet provincial legislation.

The operations division, through its regional offices, is the local service delivery arm of the ministry. Staff from the ministry's 10 offices across Ontario may assist in local planning issues or provide a provincial perspective when municipalities consider changes to their structure or boundaries. During the period leading up to and including the amalgamation of the communities which now make up the one-tier structure which comprises London, Ontario, the operations division (through its regional office) provided coordination of the process. Similarly, the regional office of Municipal Affairs is coordinating the implementation of boundary changes which will occur as part of the Regional Government reforms which are occurring in Ottawa-Carleton.

Many of the positions which are necessary to the smooth operation of a municipality require qualifications defined by the province. (7) For example, the treasurer must be a chartered accountant and property inspectors must have provincial registration. For some jobs, such as the Medical Officer of Health, the province must be consulted before a community can remove these individuals from office.

Queen's Park also ensures that its influence is felt at the local level by ensuring that provincial appointments represent the majority on various boards and commissions. Bodies such as police boards and hydro commissions are to varying degrees independent of the municipal council.

Other provincial departments, such as the ministries of Environment, Transportation and Health, provide funding for specific services. Although the

amount a particular municipality receives from these other ministries can vary depending on its population size, geographic location and economic circumstances, the overall amounts transferred to the municipal level are substantial. In 1993/94, for example, the province was forecasting transfer payments to municipalities to subsidize capital programs for local roads and transit of close to a billion dollars. (8) Meanwhile, the Ministry of Environment and Energy will transfer over 26 million dollars to municipalities to promote waste reduction programs for the residential and commercial sectors. (9) On the health front, the majority of public health services and clinical services provided to people in their homes through home care programs are administered on behalf of the province by municipalities. These programs add up to several billion dollars in subsidies. (10) As the service provider of many provincial programs, however, the municipality must wait for word from the province each year to find out what level of subsidy will be available.

III. Municipal Structures in Ontario

Across Ontario, one finds a range of municipal structures designed to respond to the particular population and needs of a community. Except for seven improvement districts in the north and a few remaining police villages in the traditional county structure, each municipality has a defined municipal organization composed of a council whose members remain in office for a three-year term. (11) Each member of council represents a constituency which may include all or part of that municipality, depending on size. Although some

policy work can be handled by committees, only the council with a stipulated minimum of members in attendance (quorum) can transact municipal business.

Section 56 of the Ontario Municipal Act defines a quorum as a simple majority of the full council membership including the head of council. If a seat becomes vacant because of death or resignation, quorum is still calculated on the basis of the full membership which was elected. A member of council who declares a conflict of interest is also not allowed to be counted as part of quorum. In situations where a municipal council is unable to make quorum for two months or more, the Minister of Municipal Affairs may require that an election be held for all the seats on council. In the meantime, if a quorum cannot be reached a court order must be obtained to conduct corporate business. (12)

All municipalities in Ontario have some paid staff and the council is responsible for directing the work of these staff. The day-to-day operation of the municipality is generally delegated to one or more senior staff on behalf of the council.

One can identify five general forms of municipal government:

a) The Council-Committee System

The council-committee system is the oldest form of municipal organization in Ontario. With the assistance of a number of policy committees designated by

the council, business is transacted and orders given to paid staff in charge of specific municipal functions. For example, a policy committee whose concern is roads may request a staff report on intersections which are in greatest need of traffic signals or a social services committee may request a report on welfare caseload growth. The committee will consider the staff report and make its recommendations to the full council. The council will then decide in the light of the policy committee recommendations and the availability of money whether to proceed with all or part of those activities.

b) The Council-Chief Administrative Officer System

Rather than delegating policy work to sub-committees as in the above model, the council does most of its business as a unified body. The council directs the activities of the municipality through a chief administrative officer (CAO).

A chief administrative officer may come from a variety of backgrounds such as accounting, engineering or public administration. The CAO is placed in his or her position by council, holds the highest bureaucratic position in the organization, is ultimately responsible to council rather than the head of council, and can only be removed by a decision of council.

c) Council-Committee - CAO System

Under this system, municipal business is first processed through policy committees and then passed on to the full council. The council then directs the chief administrative officer to ensure that the decision of council is implemented.

d) Council - Executive Committee - Committee - CAO System

This system is most commonly found in the largest municipalities and involves the delegation of powers to manage financial matters to a powerful executive committee or board of control. Although the actions of this committee must be reviewed by full council, something greater than a simple majority often is required to overturn its decisions.

e) The Board of Trustees

In northern Ontario one finds a number of improvement districts which are managed in a unique manner. Their municipal business is administered by trustees appointed by the province. These trustees manage the municipality in the same manner as councillors; however, they can be removed from office only by the province. Meanwhile, in some parts of the province where the traditional county structure remains, small communities with populations under 500 people may be designated as police villages and may elect their trustees. In this case, unlike improvement districts, new elections may remove these trustees. (13)

IV. Single-Tier and Two-Tier Municipal Governments

In a single-tier system there is no level of government between the village, town or city and the provincial government. In practice this system works smoothly in those areas where boundaries between communities have not become too

closely linked or where economic reliance among communities has not yet become a necessity. In other cases, the one-tier system is possible when a number of communities amalgamate into one municipality as recently occurred in London and its surrounding communities.

Approximately 85 per cent of the population of Ontario live in communities governed by a two-tier municipal system. The principle of the system is that as communities become economically and socially linked, the economies of scale make joining together for some services advantageous. Local services such as libraries, parks, recreation, local zoning, etc. may be more appropriately handled by the lower-tier village, town or city. However, expensive, trans-municipal boundary services such as water and sewers, major arterial road systems, public health, welfare and police are often best provided by a county or regional level of government.

Counties are usually found in rural parts of Ontario. Cities are rarely part of this upper-tier municipal structure. Representatives on county councils are not directly elected for this purpose. Instead, members of the local municipalities sit on the county council and elect the head of council, called a "warden", from among themselves. Regional governments, on the other hand, are found most often in the most highly populated parts of the province. There are a variety of models for election of Regional Council. Some are similar to the county structure in which no one is directly elected, while others may have a directly elected head of council and/or a combination of directly elected regional

councillors and local councillors who sit on Regional Council. The head of Regional Council is called a "chair".

V. How the Municipal Council Operates

a) Responsibilities of the Municipal Council

Although the local reporter will find that full-time staff are often spokespeople on a range of issues and areas requiring technical expertise, it is the council which is responsible for establishing policies, making decisions related to financial and program issues, overseeing the operation of municipal services, and ultimately maintaining the quality of work provided by the paid staff.

Unlike the provincial legislature and the federal parliament, the municipal government exercises legislative, executive and administrative functions. Legislatively, it establishes policies which benefit and ensure the safety of the local residents. Then in accordance with provincial statutes, the council enacts by-laws which put these policies into effect. And finally, the council ensures that these policies are properly carried out by the staff of the municipality. (14)

For example, a municipality may respond to public complaints about dogs running loose. Having been given the legislative authority by the province for this jurisdiction, the municipal may enact a by-law requiring dogs to be kept on leashes in public places. Finally, the council will ensure that municipal staff or some designated agency will enforce this by-law.

New municipal reporters commonly misunderstand the extent of the powers of the head of council, be it a mayor, chair, reeve, etc. Section 9 of the Municipal Act states that "the power of a municipal corporation shall be exercised by its council." In other words, the province has not granted the power to delegate any such powers to the mayor, officers or any committee of the corporation. Although the mayor cannot make decisions independently of the council, however, the prestige of the office does provide the incumbent a degree of influence over the actions of council. Similarly individual members of council may have influence over the direction of certain decisions if the focus of attention is their ward or because of their length of tenure or experience in policy committees.

b) Role of the Head of Council

The top local municipal politician is a reeve or mayor in towns and cities, a warden in counties, and a chair in regions. Each of these individuals is mandated to be the head of a municipal council as well as the chief executive officer of a municipal corporation. Reeves, mayors and the chairs of some regional municipalities are elected at large, while the warden and some regional chairs are appointed from amongst the councillors of the municipality. The Municipal Act (section 69-70) identifies the mayor, reeve or warden as being responsible for ensuring that the laws enacted by the municipality are obeyed; for appropriately punishing any negligence, carelessness or violation

of duty by staff; and for demonstrating leadership in seeking ways to improve the finances, health, security, etc. of the municipality. (15) The regional chairs of the metropolitan and regional governments are accorded similar responsibilities under legislation that establishes their particular jurisdiction (Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton Act, etc.).

As the head of council, the mayor, warden, reeve or chair is an ex-officio member of all council committees. He or she may in many cases sit on boards which have powers delegated by council, such as police and hydro boards. (16) Although from the reporter's perspective the mayor or regional chair is the politician sought most often to comment on the significance of council action or decision, the head of council is not granted more legal powers than any other member of council.

Acknowledging that the mayor has only one vote, Chip Martin, a veteran city reporter with The London Free Press, says the mayor can exercise influence far beyond these legislated limits. "The mayor of London is a very big man, a former football player, who with his chain of office and his presence, exerts an influence far beyond one vote. He has a number of supporters, long-time councillors that basically agree with him, and he can usually rely on their support," he said.

The editor and city hall reporter for The Perth Courier, Emma Pegg, says that a strong-minded mayor with a lot of experience can also apply pressure outside

of council meetings: "There's a lot of behind-the-scenes maneuvering in small town politics - - little get togethers out of the public eye in which a lot of background things happen that as a reporter I am not privy to. Usually when you go to a county or town council there's not a lot of discussion that goes on in front of you - - a lot of times, things are pretty well set before they come to council."

The head of council can also open doors to sources in the municipal bureaucracy. Rob Gertsbeck of The Oshawa Times covers Durham Regional Council and says that if the regional chair comments on an issue, doors often open more easily for detailed information from staff once they know which direction the chair has taken on a particular issue.

c) Committee Structures in Municipal Government

There are several committees structures in which proposed policies can be reviewed and recommendations on financial, legal, and property issues considered in advance of submission to the full council.

1. Standing Committee System

Standing committees are appointed by the council, from which their membership is drawn. They accept responsibility for a particular function such as municipal planning, recreation and environment, and they present reports and bring to the full council recommendations on proposed policies and actions. While the municipal council always retains ultimate control of the

various functions of a municipality, a standing committee provides ongoing supervision of the staff who administer the functions which fall within its jurisdiction.

Although committees are always accountable to council, the new reporter soon learns that these committees make policy decisions that often represent significant news for the local population. It is most often during standing committee meetings that representations are made by the public and opposing views are aired relating to a particular issue.

Chip Martin of The London Free Press says he finds that the committee stage is often the "hotspot" for municipal coverage in Windsor: "The more spontaneous part of the process tends to be the committee nights with delegations. There's the chance for controversy, whereas the following week, when it's a council meeting, generally speaking the decisions have already been made. The exceptions are those occasions when there is the possibility of the majority of council voting against a committee recommendation, and the gallery is full of people carrying signs and shouting their opposition to a recommendation."

The reporter will find that members of the standing committee become well-informed about those subject areas in which they have invested their time. However, it is not uncommon to discover that when the committee brings its recommendations to the full council for ratification or amendment, many of the arguments first heard at the committee level must be rehashed for the benefit of those not sitting on that committee.

2. Committee of the Whole System

This system has no standing committees. Rather, the full council meets as a committee of the whole or general committee. Another member of council may replace the mayor as chairman of the committee. When constituted as a committee of the whole or general committee, deliberations can be held in private (in camera) and deal solely with specific topics such as roads or garbage disposal. (17) If the committee wishes to make a decision involving a by-law, it must return again to full council and rise and report on its decisions in public. In this kind of system, which works well in smaller communities where the range of issues is not so complex as the larger urban centres of the province, there tends to be more informality and greater flexibility to make decisions without the need for numerous meetings.

In Pembroke, reporter Jim Day has found that council becomes somewhat redundant because the same individuals sit on the committee as vote as a full council. Therefore it is very rare to have disagreement between the recommendations of committee and the council. "Council really becomes a rubber-stamping exercise," he says.

3. Executive Committee

The executive committee is unique to regional governments such as Metro Toronto and Ottawa-Carleton. Unlike standing committees, which zero in on one area of government, these powerful groups make recommendations to the

council relating to the full range of legal, financial and property issues affecting every aspect of the operation of the municipality. In addition to recommendations which are brought forward by staff relating to corporate issues such as staff relations, all policy decisions made at the standing committee level which have legal, financial and property implications must be reviewed by the executive committee. Any decision of this nature made by a standing committee can be overturned by the executive committee and require more than a simple majority vote on the part of the full council to be overturned.

d) Types of Municipal Council Meetings

Broadly speaking, council meetings can be divided into two types.

1. Regular Meetings of Council

Regular municipal meetings, whether in small or large communities share common characteristics. For example, they are open to the public. Regular meetings are defined as those which are held at "stated" intervals and designated locations. Often these times have been established by by-law. Every member of council must be notified for each meeting. In fact, the failure to notify a member of council regarding a meeting could invalidate by-laws which are passed at the meeting. The provincial law says that no decisions at the municipal level can be taken outside of the council meeting. That means that neither a mayor nor small group of councillors has the power to enact by-laws themselves. At any time during a meeting the council may choose to go

in camera (exclude the public) if confidential discussions related to property, legal or personnel issues are necessary. The council is required, however, to come out of camera to "rise and report" any decision. Whether you are assigned to cover a council meeting for a small town or in a large metropolitan area, the procedures which are followed are basically the same. For information on meeting agendas and how to prepare for municipal meetings see Section III, Cultivating Sources and Preparing for Meetings.

2. Special Meetings of Council

In contrast to regular or "stated" meetings, special meetings may be called from time to time to address emergencies. These meetings may be called by the head of council or by a majority of council who may petition the clerk to hold a meeting. There is not a requirement for these meetings to be held in public.

Although the provincial government says it plans to implement more restrictive regulations for in camera meetings at the municipal level in 1994, the current practice across Ontario is that as long as the council has indicated that it is shifting to a "committee of the whole", most issues can be discussed and recommendations voted on behind closed doors. However, as indicated above in the section on "Committee of the Whole," approval to act on recommendations must be dealt with in public as a council.

e) Local Boards

In addition to the various committees that a municipal reporter will be required to cover, there is also a variety of local boards such as boards of education, planning boards, boards of health, community centre boards, conservation authorities and others. These organizations are public bodies which may, as in the case of school boards, have locally elected members. More commonly, however, such as with police boards, the majority of the members are appointed by the provincial cabinet. All of these operate at the local level, but are considered to be beyond the jurisdiction of the locally elected municipal council. Unlike the municipal council, they are responsible for a single function or a limited number of functions. Although they are beyond the control of the municipal council, a significant component of their funding commonly comes from municipal coffers.

1. Police Boards

As suggested above, there is a broad range of boards which play significant roles in the day-to-day operations of Ontario communities. Depending on the size and nature of the community, the municipal beat reporter may wish to investigate the structures and jurisdictions of the various boards in his/her community. As indicated, many of these boards seem to have municipal functions, yet are often controlled by provincial appointees rather than locally elected officials. Part of the answer is that police boards, like boards of education, Children's Aid Societies and others have a long history often

pre-dating today's municipal structures.

Although the first policeman in what is now Canada is said to have walked the streets of Quebec City in 1651, (18) it was not until 1858 that the first police commission was established in what is now Ontario with the enactment of the Municipal Institutions of Upper Canada Act. (19)

Under this legislation, only cities (at that time there were five) were required to have police boards, and in this act were the beginnings of an ongoing story which even today remains a source of controversy at the municipal level.

Although the reasons are not fully evident, towns were not required to have a board and therefore the police in these jurisdictions reported directly to the municipal council. One possible reason for this is that in most towns of that time there may have been only one or two constables and therefore a board would have implied undue supervision. With legislative changes in 1965, towns over 15,000 are now required to have a police board as well.

As stated in the act of 1858, the police in cities were required under this legislation to "obey all the lawful directions and be subject to the government of the Board", (20) whereas the salaries and all other aspects of the police operations were to be paid by the municipal council.

Since the majority of any police commission would always be appointed by the province, it was clearly indicated then, as it is today under the Police Act, that the province wished the police board to remain more within its grasp than within

that of the municipality. Yet, it is still the case today that it is the local taxpayer who pays the bills, while the locally-elected representatives cannot demand changes to any part of a police budget put forward to the municipal council for funding. Rather, the municipality can only accept or reject the budget in total. Since a rejection of a police budget may imply the cessation of police services, few if any municipalities contemplate this alternative and simply acquiesce to the demands irrespective of the fiscal constraints that budget imposes on every other municipal service.

Disputes between police boards and municipalities sometimes become newsworthy. In early 1993, the city of Ottawa attempted to exact a greater degree of control over how its police department managed its budget and was met by stiff opposition, as is described in a story by The Ottawa Citizen's Charles Rusnell.

The union representing Ottawa police is suing Ottawa Mayor Jacquelin Holzman and Coun. Diane Holmes over their roles in a fight to control the police budget.

In a lawsuit filed earlier this week, the Ottawa Police Association claimed the politicians abused their public office by not asking city council to provide money for the police budget.

Holzman and Holmes represent city council on the five-member Ottawa Police Services Board and led a much-publicized and often acrimonious fight to transfer some control over the police budget to city council.

The city has long felt that if it must legally pay the bill for

policing, it should have control over the budget. The budget is currently controlled by the police services board.

The lawsuit claims Holzman and Holmes should have known their actions would injure the (police) association and its members.

The association is also seeking damages from the city for breach of contract. The union's legal challenge is part of a battle between the police department, the association and the city of Ottawa. (21)

During the course of the four-month disagreement, which was covered extensively in the Ottawa news media, the chief of police would claim that the department could not absorb any more budget cuts without affecting public safety. For her part, the mayor of Ottawa made counter claims that the city could not absorb the police budget increases nor impose added tax burden on the local property taxpayer. In the end, both sides avoided a long court battle as a result of a compromise agreement; however, it was an indication that municipalities are increasingly going to demand the province to enhance the level of accountability of such boards to the municipal council. The then Minister of Municipal Affairs David Cooke confirmed his commitment to respond to this demand following the confrontation between the Ottawa city council and its police services committee.

2. Powers and Composition of the Police Board

The police board is responsible for supervising of the police department budgeting process, overseeing the collective bargaining process, supervising the human resources practices of the department (i.e., recruitment, hiring,

promotions, etc.), as well as responding to internal discipline matters and public complaints. (22)

The composition of the police board has changed over the years. Until enactment of the Police Amendment Act in 1979, judges were a required component of the commission. Today, whether in small or large communities, police boards are composed of between three and five members with the majority always being appointed by the province. (23)

VI. Municipal Structures In Other Provinces

There may be occasions when it is necessary to contact municipalities in other parts of the country. A brief review of some of the other municipal structures may be of assistance.

In western Canada, the single-tier municipal structure predominates except in the case of Vancouver which operates in conjunction with an upper-tier Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD). A few smaller communities have direct election to the GVRD, while the majority are drawn from the lower-tier councils. The head of the GVRD is elected from among the membership of the board.

A number of communities in the west such as Edmonton and Vancouver have adopted a city manager model for the administration of their municipalities. The city manager has a similar function to the chief administrative officer in many

Ontario municipalities.

Calgary has a unique administrative feature called a board of commissioners. The chief commissioner resembles a chief administrative officer, however, the board of commissioners of which he is the head is situated organizationally between the Council and the various municipal department heads. Its role is to review and endorse all proposed policy documents before they proceed to Council.

Montreal is unique in that it promotes the participation in municipal political parties. In fact, the mayor is the leader of the party which has the most members elected to city council. Another feature of Montreal's system is that its executive committee has powers, such as the ability to supervise chief officers of the administration of the city departments, which are not granted to council. Montreal operates within a two-tier system. The upper-tier Montreal Urban Community (MUC) is composed of elected members of the Montreal council as well as the mayors of the member municipalities.

Halifax is similar to some of the municipalities in western Canada in that it operates within a city manager structure. Halifax and its neighbouring communities also operate in association with an upper-tier structure called the Metropolitan Authority. Each of the member municipalities designates three members to represent their interests and the head of the Metropolitan Authority is elected from among these representatives.

VII. The One Who Pays the Piper Calls the Tune

a) Introduction

With the exception of those issues which threaten the individual's day-to-day life, such as a road planned for a nearby field or a proposed half-way house for paroled felons next door, the general public mood towards local government could best be described as apathetic.(24) The taxation system helps compound public confusion. Often apathy is replaced by outrage as the local municipality becomes a lightning rod for anger against escalating taxes of all kinds. Unlike provincial and federal taxes, which are deducted from one's paycheque, municipal taxes are paid in lump sums at various times of the year.

An individual grossing \$50,000 might normally pay approximately \$15,000 (30 per cent of gross salary) to federal and provincial governments. Yet, at the local level, depending on where one lives in the province and whether one receives urban services such as water, sewer and mass transit, local municipal taxes vary from \$1,000 to \$4,000 for that same individual. In most cases, these taxes are composed of the local municipal costs, education taxes, and regional or county services. (25)

When a local municipality providing such necessary services as water, sewer, road maintenance, recreation, welfare and public health increases its taxes from \$2,500 to \$2,600 there are howls of protest. Yet, rarely does one hear the same protest accorded more sizable increases deducted from paycheques.

It is very easy for a local charitable organization or interest group to blame all their funding problems on poor municipal budgeting. By the same token, spokespeople for various levels of government not uncommonly blame their problems on other levels of government. A classic example during the early 1990s has been the cut-backs in funding for infrastructure at the local level. In isolation, it may be fair to say that the province is not keeping up its end of the bargain with regard to roads and sewers. However, when one reflects on the galloping demand for social assistance and health care one has to recognize that something has to give. A reporter interested in providing the context behind the rhetoric must grasp the way in which local services are funded.

b) Where The Money Comes From

In addition to property taxes, municipalities receive several kinds of grants from the province to help them meet provincial and local objectives. As well, the municipality may also have several other local funding sources such as development charges, user charges, license and permit fees, rents, concessions and fines to assist in covering costs of its services.

c) Property Taxes - A Regressive Form of Taxation

Property taxes are by definition a regressive form of taxation. That means that the municipality requires payment of the same level of taxes from the person making \$60,000 as from the unemployed person, if they both happen to live in a house valued at \$150,000. In contrast, federal and provincial income tax

systems are tied to incomes. The theory in those systems is that the more one earns, the more one pays.

This complaint regarding the regressive nature of the municipal system is shared by politicians and municipal bureaucrats as well. It is not politically popular to require senior citizens on fixed incomes to pay ever-increasing municipal taxes each year as the assessment of their home increases and property taxes rise to meet municipal needs. It is not a good way to win votes or be loved by one's municipal customers. But municipalities continue with that system because the province does not support giving them access to alternative sources of income other than those which are described below.

d) Tax Base x Mill Rate = Property Tax

1. The Tax Base (Assessment)

The tax base can best be understood as an educated guess at the value of the real estate in the community. The provincial assessment office evaluates each building and property in the community and, using a variety of formulas, tells the taxpayer and the municipality what value has been assessed for that property. The value of the property may be assessed differently depending on whether it is residential or commercial and depending on what year has been defined as the base year for the assessment. The base year is the year in which all the community's properties were assessed based on the market value at that time.

2. Market Value Assessment (MVA)

Across Ontario, neighbourhoods have become pitted against each other as municipalities consider a shift to a common market value assessment system based on one common base year.

Assessment not only tells the local homeowner what value the province places on his or her property. It is also the basis on which the province determines the share of the provincial kitty which is due each municipality. Over the years, what can only be described as a mess has evolved across the province with neighbouring communities - - and even neighbourhoods in the same community - - having different assessment practices and base years.

Where there is no common base for assessment, owners of residential and commercial properties in some parts of the community may be paying more tax than their counterparts in other parts, even though they could get similar prices for their property on the real estate market.

Although the province took over the responsibility for assessment in 1969 in hopes that all municipalities would move to a common market value system, the progress has been slow and painful. (27) The transition from the current system in some communities to a market value assessment has resulted in major local battles pitting one neighbourhood against another.

A variety of arguments may be presented to reporters during the period when a

community struggles with whether or not to shift to a common market value system. The fundamental issue, however, is straightforward: no matter whether the existing system is equitable or not, few people are prepared to accept a change in the rules if it will have a negative impact on them, particularly one which must be implemented over a three- to five-year period. The system may be inequitable, but everyone has adjusted their personal finances to that system. For example, the individual who buys a home in the suburbs may find that taxes are substantially higher than for a home valued at the same level in the downtown core; however, she makes her choice supposedly with her eyes open. Meanwhile, the pensioner who bought his home 30 years ago has discovered that over the years - - through no action on his part - - his house is now situated in a popular and therefore valuable location. The house hasn't changed over the years and his income has not increased.

When market value assessment comes along, and these two homes are compared through a variety of means, the result may be a dramatic increase in the assessed value of the downtown home and a decrease for the suburban home. The consequence will be a tax increase for the person in the inner core and a potential cut in taxes for the suburban homeowner. In the case of the pensioner, no argument about equity or suggestions that the homeowner in the suburbs has been unfairly taxed will satisfy. The lines become drawn and it ultimately becomes a situation in which the local politicians feel pressured either to delay the inevitable until better economic times, or to bite the bullet in hopes that by the time the next election comes along, people will have adjusted to the changes.

The circumstances described above were demonstrated in Toronto, as reported by Royson James and Stan Josey of The Toronto Star in September, 1992:

More than 200 voices want to be heard as debate goes to Metro Council today.

The tax debate that could turn into a showdown between the City of Toronto and the suburbs goes before Metro Council today.

By late yesterday, the Metro clerk reported 206 people or groups had requested to speak to the management committee of council on the controversial property tax scheme based on the market value of a property. The committee is to make a recommendation to council before the end of the year so that the new tax plan can be in place for 1993.

Employees in the clerk's office said they could recall only one other time in Metro's 39-year history that attracted 200 deputations, although they could not remember the issue involved.

"But we will top that. We could go all day and all evening," clerk Dave Thomas said.

Both sides in the debate are rallying their forces to speak on the plan. Toronto residents oppose it because they would pay higher taxes. For example, one home on Scollard St. would have its property tax increase from \$744 to \$5,986 while those on one Mansfield Ave. residence would go from \$837 to \$1,751.

Meanwhile, taxes on one home on Eldorado Ct. in North York would fall from \$7,143 to \$3,207 while those on one house on Bridlewood Blvd. in Scarborough would dip from \$3,056 to \$2,625.

Suburban ratepayers don't want the plan delayed because they have been expecting major tax decreases for several years.

North York homeowners who have been overtaxed for years said yesterday they will march on city hall and tear up their tax bills if politicians reject the market value assessment plan being considered for all of Metro.

"Working-class people have been subsidizing the rich through property taxes for 40 years," says Gilbert Parrota, president of the Humberlea Residents' Association in North York's west end.

He said the 1,200 residents of his community are upset some politicians, including North York Mayor Mel Lastman, appear to be wavering on the reassessment scheme.

Five North York councillors say they have formed a coalition to press for approval of the plan both at North York and Metro councils.

Councillor Mario Sergio said the group is upset public sympathy seems to be shifting toward the commercial sector, which faces huge tax increases in some areas under the reform plan.

"If this tax plan fails, then we will have more than a tax revolt on our hands - - we will have a riot," Sergio told a news conference yesterday.

Also scheduled to speak are members of a Scarborough group that has been fighting for the plan for years. They will be up against a huge contingent of businesspeople, politicians and citizens in Toronto that city councillors are organizing to "load up the meeting" and oppose the

plan.

Property taxes in Metro are based loosely on the market value of a home. But the assessment on some homes has not been updated since 1953. Meanwhile, newer homes are assessed on the current value. The result is that taxes on similarly priced houses and other properties can vary by thousands of dollars.

Metro is planning to update the system through a general reassessment of all properties, using 1988 market values. Metro staff released the impact of such a reassessment last week and it showed that roughly half of small businesses would be hard-hit.

The rest would get decreases, but much of the focus and screaming has come from those facing tax hikes that amount to tens of thousands of dollars for some. (28)

Despite all efforts to find a compromise approach and to meet deadlines established for resolution of the issue in 1993, a uniform market value assessment continues to remain in limbo in Metro Toronto.

3. The Mill Rate (Tax Rate)

The mill rate can best be understood as the amount of tax which is required from each dollar of the assessed value of a property. For example, one mill might raise one dollar of tax for every \$1,000 of assessment. (29)

Emma Pegg, editor and town hall reporter for The Perth Courier, reports that the Town of Perth budgeted to spend \$7,359,192 in 1993. Provincial grants will

amount to \$4,841,385, leaving \$2,517,807 to be raised by taxpayers. In 1992 the mill rate was 181.70 for residential properties. In order to achieve this objective, the town council would have to approve a .725 per cent increase in Perth's mill rate, which would bring the residential mill rate to 183.01 for 1993. This would translate into a \$1.31 increase for each \$1,000 of residential assessment. (30)

A variety of municipal bodies, not just cities but school boards, counties, and regional governments, establish their mill rates and apply these rates to the assessments which have been prepared by the province.

It should be noted that there is generally a "differential" between the residential and commercial mill rate which favours the residential homeowner. Drawing business to a community is considered advantageous not only in terms of employment but also because businesses are often required to pay as much as 15 per cent more than the homeowner for every \$1,000 of assessed property value. Although commercial property owners pay a differential, they also have a tax advantage since unlike their residential neighbours, they are able to deduct their property taxes as a business expense.

e) Other Sources of Municipal Income

1. Conditional and Unconditional Grants

As the name suggests, conditional grants are provided by Queen's Park for only

those purposes designated by the province; they relate to specific programs and services. Even within one service area such as welfare, for example, one finds a number of conditional grants. One grant may relate to the assistance clients might receive, while others may relate to administration of programs. In each case, the province indicates clearly how the money is to be spent. With unconditional grants, the municipality has discretion over spending the money. These grants may be dedicated to a range of services which are selected by the municipality.

As has been indicated above, the province views the municipalities as the vehicle for implementation of some of its programs; it is not surprising, therefore, that almost 80 per cent of the grants provided to villages, towns and cities are in the form of conditional grants.

2. Payments in Lieu of Taxes

In some communities where there is heavy ownership of real estate by the provincial or federal government, the municipality receives a payment in lieu of the taxes that would have otherwise been received if there had been private ownership. Other examples of properties that might receive payments in lieu are property held in trust for an Indian band, church property, schools, hospitals, etc. These circumstances have evolved over time as a result of provincial and federal constitutional arrangements which exempt certain groups and types of property from taxation. (31)

3. Development Charges

Over the last few years, Ontario has limited the percentage of funding it directs toward infrastructure-related projects (eg. sewers, water pipes, roads, etc.) as it attempts to keep pace with social and health demands. The consequence has been that increasing pressure has been placed on municipalities to find other sources of funding to respond to road, water and sewer requirements. A source of funding which has taken on more significance in recent years is the development charge or lot levy.

The allocation of development charges is based on the premise that real estate developers and new homeowners should accept more responsibility for the delivery of the new infrastructure-related services than all other property taxpayers who must contribute as well through their municipal taxes.

Development charges have not arisen without some level of controversy in communities across Ontario. In the past, all residents would contribute through their property and provincial taxes to new infrastructure. Today, municipalities are strapped for cash both in terms of access to property taxes and declining transfer payments from the province. Therefore, it is assumed that since the individual who acquired the unserviced land stands to make a substantial profit once necessary infrastructure has been installed, he or she has a responsibility to contribute. In practice, however, the developer simply adds the costs associated with the development charge to the price of the new home rather than allowing it to bite into his or her profit margin. As a result, some claim that

the person who buys a home in a new development is being discriminated against as compared to the person who buys a house in an older section of the community in which infrastructure has long since been paid for by all taxpayers. Despite this, development charges continue to be applied by municipalities across the province.

4. User Fees

Another approach to municipal funding that has become fashionable in the last decade is the concept of "user pay". Water and sewer services, for example, have lent themselves naturally to a pay-for-service approach. At one time, water was seen in many Canadian communities as an almost valueless commodity. This attitude promoted waste and increased costs to the municipality. Today in the U.S. and in parts of southern Ontario, water has become a limited and therefore increasingly costly resource with an increasing cost attached to it. Thus, in communities such as Ottawa-Carleton, citizens are now required to pay a user fee which is calculated on the basis of the cost of delivery, the estimated requirements of maintaining the system, and development of reserve funds which will partially cover the costs of future expansions to the system.

Similarly, the treatment of sewage was considered by many to be best kept out of sight and out of mind. With greater public concern for the environment, the provincial government has implemented legislation which requires strenuous pollution control regarding the treatment and release of waste water back into

our waterways. At one time communities could release their sewage back into waterways with limited treatment, but today provincial environmental controls necessitate construction and maintenance of state-of-the-art facilities worth millions of dollars. As a consequence, municipalities have implemented sewer surcharge fees that in some communities are very close to the amount charged for their water supply. The logic applied to the sewer surcharge is that the user should be just as responsible for the cost of returning waste water safely back into the environment as for the cost of delivering the water to his or her home in the first place.

5. Licenses, Fines, Interest, etc.

In addition to the sizeable sources of funding which are received from the province and service charges, there are a variety of other sources which singly do not represent large amounts but together contribute in a significant way to the operation of the municipality. These charges and fees may be related to acquisition of licenses, parking fines, interest on unpaid taxes, rents, concessions and investment incomes arising from surpluses which are invested at various times of the year.

VIII. A Man's Zone Is His Castle

The seven councillors who filed into the township hall looked distinctly unhappy.

The place was packed. People in bulky sweaters and jeans,

beards and braided hair, leaned against the plywood-panelled walls, perched on the upright piano, sat cross-legged on the floor. They were anti-pit.

They were outnumbered by the ones in the chairs -- mostly big men in jackets with crests on them that spoke of fire departments and hockey teams. They sat silently, impassively, staring at the councillors. They were pro-pit.

That it should come to this. . . . (32)

Whether the issue is the rezoning of a sand pit in a rural community as described by The Ottawa Citizen's John Ibbitson, or a zoning change application for an undeveloped lot in the urban core, a reporter often finds that community interests quickly become polarized and community tensions rise to the surface when zoning issues arise.

A municipality is only as good as its ability to generate income through property taxes to provide the services its residents need. In order for such a tax base to be available, there must be individuals prepared to develop land and invest in businesses, thereby providing employment and a tax base for municipal coffers. Before any such investment is possible, however, the municipality must be prepared to invest in infrastructure (roads, sewers, etc.). This often takes tens of millions of dollars, which must be borrowed from banks or collected in taxes. In addition to the sizable cost associated with these services, the municipality must address the public response to proposed changes to their community. A new development may promote economic development but destroy a local stand of trees or create more population density than neighbours want. Meanwhile, the

municipality must also provide necessary social services such as shelters for homeless people or victims of family violence and deal with the opposition of prospective neighbours to this perceived intrusion into their community. The ability of each village, town, city and region to manage this process is the basis for much of the journalism which finds its way into the local sections of newspapers and newscasts.

Greg Crone, city reporter with The Kitchener-Waterloo Record, sees a critical role for the municipal reporter in responding to what he considers to be inequities in the way the zoning process operates: "It's very easy for reporters to write off local residents as being motivated by the NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) syndrome. Personally I'm more sympathetic and open to them, even if I don't personally agree with them. As a reporter I try to get their point of view into the paper as much as possible. What is available for the ordinary citizen to go against the entire resources of the developer, his lawyer and the planning staff who are paid by the taxpayer? All they've got is the sense that it's not good and they don't want it in their neighbourhood. They don't have any resources to oppose a planning application and present a cogent argument against it. Although I can't really adjust the balance, I try to at least get it into the paper and offer some redress to all the resources that are provided to the other side."

But Antonella Artuso of The Toronto Sun is one reporter who is not comfortable with the idea of correcting an imbalance. From her perspective it is more the role of the political columnist to place emphasis on who he or she feels is right. "I honestly believe that you should have both viewpoints in the story. Obviously

you are going to lead with something and hopefully that something represents the most interesting and newsworthy angle. I don't have an interest in weighing on one side or the other."

a) The Evolution of Municipal Zoning

Although concern for control of one's territory can be seen as far back as the Dark Ages, control of land use by the community at large is comparatively recent. During the latter part of the 19th century, communities in Germany were enacting laws which regulated land use as a means of protecting the public health and maintaining the attractiveness of their cities. These regulations established height restrictions and minimum distances from the roads where a building could be constructed. In order to understand how Canada's approach to zoning has evolved, one must be aware of both American and British influences.

The predominant feature of the American approach to land use is the primacy of individual land ownership. In the U.S., land use controls evolved from the concept that the individual has a right to develop his own property in whatever manner he/she may choose and be protected from harmful development of other property owners. Although this right has become somewhat tempered by community and economic pressures, it still remains a cornerstone of the American approach to zoning.

In contrast to the Americans, the British evolved an approach to zoning which

held that development rights reside with local governments. In fact, the British tradition claimed that "there was no inherent right to develop land in whatever fashion the owner might wish, and each application for permission to develop land or change its use is regarded on its own merits." (33)

In 1909, we began to see in Britain the development of what are today called official plans; however, at this time the precursor of the official plan, called the "Town Plan," could only regulate land which was yet to be developed. Meanwhile on this side of the Atlantic Ocean, New York City's booming economy found that without some level of land use control, the uncontrolled growth of one economic activity such as clothing manufacturing, for example, could strangle those situated nearby. In 1913, the New York Advisory Commission on the Height of Buildings was established and its first report is considered to be the birth of zoning in its modern sense in North America. (34) By 1916, there were rules and regulations in place which would define the character and use of specific areas of the city through height area and use controls. This approach became so popular that by 1922, cities and towns across the U.S. were adopting city-wide zoning plans.

b) Zoning in Canada

Although Canada's approach to zoning has superficial similarities to the American system, below the surface are some fundamental differences. In contrast to the American system, which maintains the primacy of private ownership, the Canadian approach shares the British concept that land use is

first and foremost in the hands of the municipal level of government. Our individual rights of land use are at the pleasure of the Crown.

At the beginning of this century, Canada saw its first land controls in the form of rules governing the distance of a building from the road and the width of building lots facing the road. (35) In the early 1920s, communities in Ontario and British Columbia adopted the first zoning by-laws. Over the next 25 years, zoning by-laws and early forms of official plans were enacted across the country.

Today, the starting point for all zoning is the protection of "health, safety, convenience and welfare of the public." (36) Over the years, regulations regarding land use have evolved into a number of categories; however, the basic designations are residential, commercial, agricultural and industrial. One might visualize these various designations as a pyramid, in which the single-family unit is at the peak of a hierarchy and represents the most ideal type of land use.

c) The Official Plan

Over the years, municipalities have developed guidelines for growth called official plans. These plans provide a blueprint for future development and may identify protected environmental areas, as well as the projected locations of new arterials, employment nodes, and commercial developments. (37) These official plans can take many years to reach the light of day, yet they will always remain

unfinished documents. These plans remain in a constant state of revision as a result of changing circumstances and demands. Although there are those who would like to pretend that official plans are written in stone, they are no more than guidelines which can be adjusted as long as certain procedures are followed. This is because official plans are developed by urban planners and passed by municipal politicians at a particular point in time. They hopefully provide a rational plan for growth, but municipal councils are perfectly within their legal right to propose changes to an official plan if they decide it is in the best interests of the community at large. In the opinion of the council a change to the official plan may allow for development which will increase the municipality's tax base or promote employment for that community. Those who oppose the proposed change can appeal to the Minister of Municipal Affairs for an Ontario Municipal Board hearing before a change is approved by Queen's Park.

The development of an official plan can be a long and arduous task for a municipality since it requires a comprehensive review of all possible areas of development, assessments of necessary infrastructure to service these areas, and an evaluation of areas to be protected. These judgment calls on the part of the municipality can represent potential windfalls for some and threats to perceived quality of life and environment for others. Before an official plan can be adopted by a municipality, its proposals generally pass through a series of public meetings. The provincial legislation requires at least one such meeting at the municipal level. Once adopted by the municipality, the official plan is submitted to the Minister of Municipal Affairs (or to the regional municipality if the community is in a two-tier jurisdiction). The minister has full authority to

approve or change any part of the official plan. However, where concerns cannot be resolved between the ministerial and community level, the practice is to submit the issue to the Ontario Municipal Board for review (see Ontario Municipal Board, p.59). The OMB holds public meetings and once it has heard the various cases presented, it makes a decision which is final. At that stage, the official plan can be considered to be approved.

Communities which have not taken the time to develop official plans can face severe criticism, as reported by Brian Dexter of The Toronto Star:

In a ruling last week, dealing with 295 hectares (730 acres) in the Buttonville area of Markham, (members of the OMB) charge that "no effective regional planning has been done on or for York Region" since its formation 20 years ago....

This means "exploding growth" in the northern Greater Toronto Area occurred through the 1980s without "regional and supra-regional planning" contemplated by the Region of York Act and provincial planning laws.

They say the end result in York is:

No relating of jobs to residential growth and efficient use of existing services as part of the larger area and its development pressures;

No sense of regional structure and the place of Markham and its other eight municipalities (Markham, itself, approved changes to its official plan several years ago);

The appearance of a "lack of even-handedness" in regional decision-making which can affect the credibility of the entire planning process. (38)

d) Zoning By-laws

There are two major elements relating to zoning by-laws. The first element designates certain parts or zones of the community for certain kinds of land use such as residential, commercial, or agricultural. Within these broad categories are a spectrum of variations which begin with single family residential and are signified with codes such as "R-1". The second element sets forth the conditions under which the land in these zones can be used. For example, these conditions may identify the amount of space which is required around a building, or place restrictions relating to height, floor space or parking. In general, proposed zoning changes must be consistent with the municipality's official plan. If council wishes to accept a zoning change which seriously compromises the official plan, then a change to the plan would be required by the province. The municipality does have a degree of latitude, however, to make changes in height restrictions or the ratio of the size of the building to the size of the lot in return for benefits to the community, such as plazas and recreational areas. These tradeoffs are called bonusing and premiums, and they can become the source of controversy and therefore news coverage within a community. (39)

One of the key functions of a municipal council is to manage the development of a community through zoning by-laws. In advance of approving a zoning by-

law, the council must give notice to all affected landowners and hold a public meeting. Within 15 days of passing the by-law, these same landowners must again be notified by the municipal clerk. Having been approved during a regular council meeting, the zoning by-law comes into effect 33 days after that meeting. During this 33-day period, however, any individual, affected by the by-law or not, may appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board. The provincial government may also decide that the by-law contravenes provincial interest and may rescind or require alteration of parts of the by-law.

e) The Ontario Municipal Board

For both opponents and proponents of development, the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) is most often the court of last resort. Local municipalities can hold public meetings, and spend tens of thousands of dollars on studies, all to no avail if even one person's complaint against the project is upheld by the OMB. Of course, it is the very same OMB which can also support a developer's rights and a municipality's plans against significant public opposition. Its deliberations can take one day or last as much as a year, costing all parties considerable time and money.

The OMB was first set up in the late 1800s and was primarily concerned with issues such as railway rights of way. It was not until 1923 that it took its current form as an independent tribunal attached to the Ministry of the Attorney General of Ontario. The board hears all appeals involving municipal decisions on land use, planning and environment and its decisions have the force of law.

The OMB is composed of 30 members as well as a chairman. The majority of the members are lawyers, but there are also architects, municipal planners and accountants. These members are paid approximately \$85,000 a year, while the chairman is treated as though he were a deputy minister of the provincial government with a salary as high as \$140,000. The members of the OMB are appointed by cabinet for three-year terms, which are renewable at the pleasure of the government.

Though the OMB has a long history it is only within the last two decades that it has taken on the high-profile role it has today. In a story on how people have learned to fight city hall through the OMB, Carrie Buchanan of The Ottawa Citizen says it was only with opposition to the Spadina Expressway in Toronto in the mid-1970s that the public began to look to the OMB for assistance. Since then, the OMB has dealt with issues as diverse as roadways, the environment and shopping centres. As a veteran of the OMB told Buchanan: "That's what we're here for -- not just a rubber-stamp for the municipality. It's an avenue (where) people can fight city hall." (40)

Going the OMB route is not cheap. Both the proponents and opponents will most often require the services of lawyers and planning consultants although, as Buchanan suggests, one is not required to have a lawyer present one's case. The going rate for such legal help in Ottawa is between \$200 and \$1,500 per day.

Once a case comes before the board, it can be expensive for all parties;

however, the developer often faces a double whammy because he or she must also manage the carrying costs of property which may remain in limbo for up to a year while awaiting the hearing. These costs, Buchanan indicates, can reach up to \$1 million. She told of a developer who wanted to build a shopping centre in a community near Ottawa and found his project challenged before the OMB by a single neighbour. After months of fruitless negotiating with neighbours, the company gave up because of the costs associated with the OMB appeal.

OMB chairman Paul Kruger agrees that the threat of the OMB can be "used as a political weapon. A residents' association can put the fear of God into a developer that isn't a major developer, because each month that goes by they've got carrying charges," he said. (41)

Kruger describes the coercive nature of a threat to go to the OMB. "We had one case that was just terrible," he said, "where a residents association said to a developer, 'We will hold you up. What we want is \$750,000 from you to build a community centre. And we're going to hold you up until you agree to it.' "The community centre was built," Kruger adds. (42)

As will be highlighted later in Section IV, which among other things deals with stories on garbage, OMB decisions can have considerable impact on communities across the province. For example, in February 1991, an OMB panel approved the Region of Halton's choice for a landfill site. However, in its judgement it roundly criticized what it considered a flawed waste master plan process. The Board claimed that Halton's planning process

had not included a rigorous application of site selection criteria, nor had it demonstrated that all waste reduction and disposal alternatives had been researched before proceeding with the landfill option. In its conclusion, the board stated in no uncertain terms that all future submissions from other communities would be rejected if similar circumstances occurred. The ruling forced communities all over the province to scuttle multi-million dollar waste plans. (43)

f) A Layman's Introduction to the OMB

An excellent explanation of the role and workings of the OMB has been presented by Greg Monforton, a lawyer who writes for The Windsor Star.

The Ontario Municipal Board acts as an appeal tribunal when someone does not agree with local decision making. Here are some of the matters that can be taken before it: municipal decisions on zoning by-laws and official plans, Committee of Adjustment decisions, decisions of severances and subdivision plans, expropriations and property assessments.

On by-law appeals, the board can only consider the specific matters in the by-law that are under appeal. In most other cases, it will start at the beginning and consider anything relevant. It has the authority to make any decision or order the earlier tribunal could have made, and it can order what it thinks is fair, just, or proper from a planning point of view, regardless of what the earlier tribunal decided.

If you want to appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board, how do you

proceed? It will depend on the type of decision you are appealing. Your best bet is to contact the municipal clerk's office or the office of the earlier tribunal. One thing to beware of is that there will always be a time limit in which your appeal must be launched (usually 30 or 60 days). So, don't delay.

Once you begin your appeal, it usually will be three or four months before a hearing is convened. You can represent yourself or have an agent represent you. You can bring a lawyer, but you do not have to. Whether you decide to hire a lawyer probably depends on how much you have at stake in the hearing.

The board usually sits in one- or two-person panels. One person will be the chairperson for the purposes of your hearing. The board will hear evidence from witnesses and experts under oath on the issues in question. The hearing will remind you of a court proceeding. The main difference is that the board hearing will be less formal. For instance, when the evidence is being presented the board will usually allow witnesses to express opinions and observations that would not be relevant in court.

The board will either make an oral decision at the conclusion of the hearing, or it will mail out a written decision at a later date. Points of law can be appealed to a court. Some decisions on the merits not involving points of law cannot be appealed. Some can be appealed to the provincial cabinet.

For the most part, the Ontario Municipal Board works as an effective and efficient review of local decisions. (44)

g) "Your New House Stands At the End Of A Long Paper Trail"

The preceding information has provided brief explanations of the various components of municipal government, particularly as they relate to the relationship of the local government to private property. The following feature story written by Warren Potter of The Toronto Star demonstrates the complexity of today's municipal system:

What's the biggest single component of the new home you've bought or are contemplating buying? Brick? Woodwork? Concrete? Shingles?

Well, it's none of these. It's paper. You don't see it in the house. It was used up before the house was built.

Many people don't realize the amount of paperwork that goes into house building before the furniture van pulls up to the door.

We've all heard about zoning, land registration, draft plans and lot levies. These buzzwords are an integral part of home building and without them there'd be no new homes.

A theory popular with some people is that a builder purchases a piece of land, builds a few houses as quickly as he can and walks away with a tidy profit to spend the winter in Florida.

Nothing is further from the truth. Here's what actually happens, says Robert Hume, president of The Toronto Home Builders' Association and a working builder, as chief executive officer of Glenway Homes.

There are builders and developers. These are often interchangeable terms in the public's perception but their roles are

quite different. Some builders are also developers but many keep their functions separate.

A developer buys and services the land before selling lots to the builder, who then constructs the homes. If a developer is interested in buying a piece of raw land for homes, he must first find out its designation under the official plan. Part of the land could be designated commercial/industrial, another part residential and maybe a third for new roads.

After purchasing the land, he must put a plan together and seek draft plan approval.

Now here's a shocker. This plan has to pass through the hands of between 60 and 80 agencies, Hume says. They could be the Ministry of the Environment, conservation authority, municipal planning and engineering departments, the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, soil reports, etc., etc.

By the time they've finished, there could be between 20 and 150 conditions placed on the draft plan which must be cleared before it's registered. This seems to be an unnecessary amount of bureaucracy, but most conditions are for the protection of consumers.

For instance, a developer has to prove that land intended for housing is capable of handling a "100-year storm" - - that is, the worst storm that can reasonably be predicted to occur in 100 years.

The amount of paperwork is dictated by the size of the proposed development. A developer who wants to service a piece of land for

100 lots would have less involvement in external development than one with 400 lots.

Once the draft plan is approved, the developer applies for zoning. The public in the vicinity must be informed the developer has applied for zoning approval and a meeting will be held to discuss it.

With the zoning in place, the developer must work out subdivision agreements with the municipality, including financial implications of the project - - items such as lot levies, approval engineering and planning fees.

A developer usually has to give 5 per cent of his land to the municipality for parkland - - or, as is more often the case these days, the equivalent of 5 per cent in cash because most municipalities have all the parks they need.

Once this has been done, the developer waits for his letter of release from the municipality and submits his plan for registration to the land titles office.

Are you all still with me?

Finally, after getting the land registered, the developer sells the serviced lots to the builder, takes his profit on the deal and bows out.

The builder now has to apply for a building permit. This process alone can take anywhere from three to eight weeks.

Hume is candid on this point. Municipalities are tending to be more cautious when issuing building permits, he said. They have memories of the "horror stories" of badly built homes during the

recent housing boom.

Then, at last, the builder starts constructing the home. "The days when a builder could turn out a home in 16 to 20 weeks are over," Hume says. "Today, we are running between six months (26 weeks) and 12 months, depending on the project."

Right now, builders are still constructing homes sold during last year's boom. When things return to normal, probably by the middle of next year, he hopes to see houses constructed in the 16-to-20-week timeframe of the past.

Now the house is up and you are anxious to move into it. But before you can do so the builder must have an occupancy certificate saying it is habitable and conforms to the Ontario Building Code.

This doesn't mean that everything has to be complete.

The grading doesn't have to be finished or the driveway paved before you take possession. Nor does the house have to have the 2 1/2 bathrooms advertised by the builder when you purchased your home. As long as it has one working bathroom you can move in.

Hume has a sound piece of advice for anyone buying a home.

"Don't buy until the lots are serviced or registered."

This applies to freehold homes. It doesn't apply to condominiums, he said. They often have to be pre-sold before servicing or registration. (45)

SECTION III

Cultivating Sources and Preparing for Meetings

Cultivating Sources and Preparing for Meetings

I. Introduction

The previous section of this handbook attempted to explain the various structures, jurisdictions and procedures which characterize the municipal milieu. One should never forget, however, that these form the backdrop for the actions and opinions of people. With that in mind, the following chapter will attempt to offer some understanding of the perceptions of those working in the municipal field regarding the media, as well as the dynamics of the milieu in which the municipal reporter works.

II. Developing Sources at City Hall

The reporter, on behalf of the public, is demanding accountability of the municipal politicians or staff. From the perspective of the municipal source, that demand for accountability implies a degree of reciprocity. The reporter is expected not only to ensure accuracy in what is submitted to the editor, but also to accept responsibility for what appears under his or her byline. After all, would the reporter offer much sympathy if the roles were reversed and the staff person was indicating that, although her name is on the report, the misplaced attribution or misleading interpretation of the data is somebody else's fault?

Municipal staff, in particular, are not paid to bring negative publicity upon the municipality, so they are often distrustful of reporters. Many are increasingly conscious, however, of the need for the public to be informed about the activities and policies of the municipality. A reporter who wishes to establish an ongoing constructive working relationship with municipal staff should apply a thorough, balanced and professional approach to dealing with them.

Rob Gerisbeck of The Oshawa Times has experienced wariness on the part of municipal staff towards reporters. "You try not to burn the staff unless you really have to. Once in a while you may have to be critical of staff, but I have found that the best approach is to treat them fairly and professionally by just letting them answer the questions and getting their side into the story. The most important thing is to be accurate. If there is any question in your mind about some part of the story, a reporter should never hesitate to make a second call," he said.

The reporter should be aware that municipal staff, community associations and local politicians generally keep close tabs on the way in which they are being presented in the media. Most, however, are as unaware of the inner workings and complexity of a newsroom as reporters are about the subtleties of sewer construction. Some have difficulty in accepting that a reporter is not responsible for an inaccurate or misleading headline or that comments the source felt were very important were deleted by the editor because of space limitations rather than some bias on the part of the reporter or newspaper.

The frustration felt by the source is also shared by the reporter who is stuck with having to make explanations when the story appears the next day. "The thing that really irks me," says Pembroke Observer reporter Jim Day, "is when an editor attaches a more active tense to a headline such as 'Council Will Fund Project', when my story says they are considering funding a project. Although the headline may make the story more interesting and controversial, it doesn't accurately reflect the story."

"Stories get changed every day," says The Toronto Star's Jane Armstrong. "Some person who I thought had an extremely important point to make the story balanced gets taken out and then I have to apologize. But it is also the case that reporters think every word that they write is precious and shouldn't be taken out. Invariably things will be taken out and feathers get ruffled," she said.

Antonella Artuso of The Toronto Sun applies her own strategy to ensure the key elements of her story appear. "I make sure that the stuff I absolutely want to be in print is up at the top. Both points of view are up at the top to guarantee there is balance even if they decide to lop off six inches for space."

One's byline at the top of the story confers a significant level of responsibility for the story, and therefore concerns about accuracy expressed by the source should be taken seriously. One can respond to these concerns in a number of

ways. One can discuss with the source whether his or her concern relates to accuracy in terms of facts or in terms of a difference of interpretation of the facts. It may be that a headline appears misleading, yet in the body of the the story the facts are clearly stated.

Very often a simple explanation of the journalistic process - - the reason for deadlines, the role of the reporter and the editor, the relationship of the reporter to other bodies such as the editorial board or the copy desk - - can be a constructive exercise. The staff person is seeking assurance that his comments are presented accurately and in context, and therefore it is up to the reporter to assure the source that she does not intend to wash her hands of the story once it is submitted to the editor. The reporter should also indicate that the source is welcome to present his concerns to the editor if he feels it is necessary. In the vast majority of cases, the reporter can develop a relaxed working relationship with municipal staff as long as the issues highlighted above are addressed at some point.

III. Sources at City Hall

a) Municipal Politicians

A helpful source on the municipal beat is the local politician who, like the reporter, has had to learn to interpret the jargon and the procedures associated with city hall in a manner which is understandable to the average person. In addition to providing background for the reporter, the politician may also offer

useful background on the politics associated with an issue. Reporters should expect that the information presented will reflect a particular slant, and that opinions and facts should be sought from others to ensure a fair and balanced perspective.

b) Municipal Public Relations/Media Relations

In larger communities, one may find a public relations officer whose job, among other things, is to provide assistance to reporters. The relationship between reporters and public relations people could generally be considered a marriage of convenience. In an article in the Canadian Journal of Communication, Jean Charron of Laval University calls this relationship a "mutual interest collaboration." (46) He goes on to say that the dependence of each on the other varies to a great extent by the number of alternative channels available. The public relations person may elect to communicate municipal messages to the public directly through distribution of brochures and paid advertising, while the reporter may simply choose to interview another news source.

The alternatives for the public relations person come at a cost, such as paid advertising or the production and distribution of print material, while for the reporter, attempting to cut through the bureaucracy on his or her own may prove to be excessively time consuming. There is a natural fear on the part of bureaucrats in dealing with reporters, and an effective media relations person

can be a major asset to a reporter. The best advice for new reporters is to rely on the municipality's communication people as well as other key spokespeople, and let experience be the judge regarding the results.

c) Chief Administrative Officer

Although the position of chief administrative officer (CAO) is found most often in larger communities, even smaller ones are adapting to the CAO model of administration. Essentially, the individual is the overall administrative boss for the municipality and reports directly to the municipal council. As the top staff person for a municipality, the CAO may become a key source who can provide comments on issues of a corporate nature such as budget goals, staff relations, and policy development.

In some cities, the chief administrative officer becomes a major factor in municipal decision-making and develops a significant public profile. The Kitchener-Waterloo Record's Greg Crone says Kitchener's CAO "is like a twelfth member of city council - - in totally an unofficial sense. This is due in large part to the reliance which is placed on him by the mayor."

d) The Municipal Clerk

The municipal clerk is an ideal starting point in establishing sources at the municipal offices. The clerk is responsible for agendas of meetings on behalf of the municipal council. In small- to medium-sized communities, the clerk is a

good source to find out what's going on in terms of major issues and upcoming meetings at city hall. As well, the clerk keeps records of all decisions and minutes of previous meetings.

The motions and decisions of a meeting often are produced soon after and come in the form of a "disposition". The disposition is a public document which a reporter can request to get the exact wording of what was decided at the meeting and who voted for and against the motions. These are often useful resources for a reporter to track voting patterns of politicians. The minutes of the meeting generally take longer to produce and present a summary of the various points which arose during debate. The municipal clerk is also a source for voters lists and school support lists.

e) The Treasurer/Finance Commissioner

Particularly during budget time, the municipal treasurer is an excellent source on such topics as mill rates, assessments, reserve funds, debt, etc. In advance of any budgetary deliberations, it is often wise to have an informal meeting with the treasurer to review these terms and to gain an overview of the past year's performance. Finance staff will often be reluctant to speak in advance of the budget meeting, for fear that their comments might be misinterpreted as attempts to influence a decision of council. If the reporter's request is restricted to "technical information" such as details regarding the budget process and

other information already on the public record, the response should generally be positive.

The treasurer can also provide assistance in understanding the procedures associated with property assessment. Although property assessment is the responsibility of the province, tax assessment rolls are stored at city hall. These rolls identify the owner, size of the property and its assessment.

f) Legal Staff

As indicated, all actions, policies and programs initiated by a municipality must be consistent with the appropriate provincial legislation. Legal staff can therefore often be helpful in guiding the reporter to specific acts and providing explanations regarding the impact of the legislation on the municipality. These solicitors can also offer useful information regarding the various steps that are necessary for a development proposal to pass before a house or other structure can be built.

g) Planners

As we have seen, much of the conflict that arises between a municipality and its taxpayers relates to proposed changes to zoning and the official plan. Smaller communities rarely have full-time planners and generally rely on external consultants or their senior staff to provide technical support. However, in larger communities planners are generally those who are best situated to provide

background on zoning issues. In fact, it is most often the planners who prepare the studies and reports which are the stimulus to these changes.

Acknowledging that it is rare for smaller communities to have planners, Emma Pegg, editor of The Perth Courier, says she feels fortunate to have access to one at the Perth town hall and uses that person regularly to interpret zoning jargon into everyday language and to provide greater understanding of zoning changes and development proposals.

h) Other Municipal Staff

The above municipal staff tend to provide information of a corporate nature. That is to say, they may provide information which is relevant to many aspects of municipal government. There are a variety of other people in municipal government who are equally useful but on a more specific basis. For example, in the case of infrastructure-related issues related to roads, public transit, water supply, and sewers, there are often staff who can provide useful technical information. Information on local recreation, culture and library services may also be available from municipal staff.

IV. Sources in the Community

It is important that the reporter gains a knowledge of a variety of sources in the community beyond those staff spokespeople who are conveniently available at each meeting or event. Depending on the size of the community there is a

variety of ways to gain access to the names and telephone numbers of community leaders and activists.

One of the best and most underused sources for such information is the town or city clerk; there is great demand for local municipalities to promote public participation and therefore it is incumbent on the clerk to keep track of those groups who have an interest in various issues. Other sources for such information are central community information bureaus which exist in some large centres, as well as collections of community groups which have banded together to speak with a unified voice on community issues.

Today in Ottawa-Carleton a computer billboard established by Carleton University called the FreeNet also is a useful resource for reporters since it offers up-to-date information about a wide range of municipal groups and activities. It is likely that over the next few years, these kinds of resources will become more prevalent elsewhere. Finally, it is likely that the newsroom will have a list of sources which has been collected by predecessors on the municipal beat.

a) Community Associations

Community associations are major players on the municipal news scene. In most cases these groups have come into existence as a result of one event which has served to unite a number of individuals in a common cause. The town may wish to construct a road nearby, cut down a stand of trees, or agree to

a more dense form of housing in what has traditionally been a single-housing neighbourhood. Whatever the cause, several committed individuals will often become as knowledgeable about their specific area of concern as any municipal public servant.

The challenge for the reporter is to verify the legitimacy of their claims to be spokespeople for a larger group. In some cases, these individuals have been elected to office for community associations representing neighbourhoods. In other cases, they may represent the interests solely of those who may be potentially impacted by the actions of a municipality. In some cases, they may claim office for long since defunct organizations. Indeed, they may simply speak for themselves and as such may be interpreted as useful sources on that basis only.

As Paul Pross indicated in his book Group Politics and Public Policy, in their early stages community groups are often ill-equipped, underfinanced and generally focused on only one or two issues. His observations of these groups suggest that they are more likely to seek publicity or media attention than to seek out political decision-makers. He goes on to suggest that their involvement in the political process is sporadic at best and designed primarily to achieve short-term goals. Once firmly established, these groups may go on to expand their memberships and become more intimately involved in the political process. At that stage, Pross says, their emphasis on organizational growth and survival begins to take precedence over any one single objective.(47)

b) Community Interest Groups

In addition to community associations, whose primary focus is the planning associated with their neighbourhoods, there are a range of special interest groups in the community who can provide authoritative points of view on everything from indigenous birds to local history. These groups will often be listed with the local municipality.

c) Universities and Colleges

Occasionally the rhetoric of opposing parties becomes so emotionally charged that it is helpful to gain the perspective of a third party. Local colleges and universities are often excellent sources of individuals who have developed expertise in a wide range of disciplines which may be relevant to the municipal beat. Although academic sources can demonstrate biases as obvious as the most ardent activist, they can also offer knowledge of specialized areas of interest which assist the reader in gaining a better understanding of the implications associated with one position as opposed to another.

The use of academic sources was helpful in covering contentious issues such as the annexation of neighbouring communities by the city of London, says Chip Martin. "It was a good way to deal with the issues. We had two very well-respected geography professors who were diametrically opposed on the question of annexation who we would go back to on a regular basis. One had a pro-agricultural perspective and the other a pro-intensification of urban areas

perspective," Martin said.

Reporters may wish to seek assistance from public relations staff at local colleges and universities to locate experts in various fields of interest. On request, they might also be persuaded to prepare a media guide to expertise available in various faculties.

V. Freedom of Information

On January 1, 1991 the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) came into effect in Ontario. The legislation attempts to provide a balance between, on the one hand, the individual's right to know what has been written about him or her in the form of personal records on file with a municipality or board and, on the other hand, that same individual's right to have personal information kept private.

MFIPPA applies to a range of local government bodies including municipalities, school boards, police commissions, conservation authorities, etc., and establishes the procedures for obtaining information from them. Access to personal information is restricted solely to the individual concerned and detail relating to police information is limited as well.

As a result of the demand on municipal bodies to apply this Act, many have had to create offices through which requests are funnelled. As a result of difficulties in interpreting the act in a consistent and fair manner, many

municipalities have simply chosen to apply a more restrictive approach and go by what they believe to be the letter of the law. (48)

a) Seeking Information Under MFIPPA

1) Where to go.

In most cases, Freedom of Information related requests are handled by the municipal clerk's office.

2) Making a request

A reporter can request forms which are provided by the clerk's office which are designed to clarify the specific information being requested. Having these forms completed assists the clerk's office to process a request more easily; however, a simple letter in which reference is made to the Act and information is requested is to be treated as an acceptable request. If there is not enough information made available in this correspondence, the municipality is required to assist the reporter in clarifying the request.

3) Processing time limits

In general, the municipality deals with a request within the 30 days following submission of a sufficiently detailed request to the municipal clerk. The 30-day time period can be extended if the request requires such a detailed range of information that it could be demonstrated that the request would interfere with the operations of the municipal department. As well, if people must be contacted outside of the municipal corporation who may not be

available within the designated period, an extension may be demonstrated necessary.

4) How much does it cost?

A reporter who requests access to municipal files will be charged a fee of \$7.50 for every 15 minutes beyond an initial two-hour search, which is free of charge. If the fee is more than \$25, the reporter will be notified. In some cases, an applicant may find that his or her request has been rejected on legal or privacy grounds. In general, there is discretion to refuse access to information related to law enforcement, relations between governments, third party information, confidential economic information, solicitor-client privilege, danger to safety or health, and personal privacy. (49)

5) What to do if information access is denied

If you feel that the rejection is not appropriate you can appeal the decision to the Privacy Commissioner in Toronto. In general, though, a reporter should expect that most information that has traditionally been available - - such as planning documents, agendas and minutes of public meetings - - will remain accessible without application under MFIPPA.

b) Media Opposition to MFIPPA

Within days of its approval at Queen's Park, headlines shouted out the news media's displeasure with the freedom of information and privacy legislation:

"Police Can Withhold Crime Victims' Names; Elements of privacy act termed Orwellian" (The Globe & Mail, Jan. 3); "Zip-Lipped Police Over-Reacting Critics Charge; New information law goes too far" (The Windsor Star , Jan. 4); "Is Privacy Law A Cloak For Secrecy?" (The Toronto Star, Feb. 9).

The Ottawa Citizen questioned what it perceived to be an immediate consequence of the legislation. "The minute the legislation was passed, for example, some police departments that routinely released information about crime - - in particular, the names of victims - - started delaying or denying access to it." (50)

Even today, there is a lack of consistency in the way in which the legislation is applied. After a couple of years of application, it is more likely that municipalities take great care about what kinds of information they leave on file, rather than placing access barriers in front of the reporter. In general, the overall openness of a particular municipality has more impact than the act in determining the range of difficulties a reporter will face in gaining access to necessary information.

VI. The Municipal Meeting

In advance of attending any municipal meeting, the reporter should do some research to determine the agenda items which warrant attention. In many communities, the agendas are published in the major dailies on a regular basis. If not, the municipal clerk can give a brief overview of the items to be covered at

the meeting. As indicated above, these individuals are able to offer some background on the various issues, which will assist in deciding which topics to pursue.

If a full agenda is available, the reporter will have access to the minutes of the previous meeting, staff recommendations related to issues under consideration at the current meeting, and related background reports supporting these recommendations.

It may also be possible to gain a better understanding of the issue by reviewing minutes of other meetings at which the topic was discussed. As well, some calls to prospective spokespeople at the staff and community level may provide some understanding of the various positions which will be presented at the meeting. From the standpoint of broadcast media, this advance work will offer an opportunity to get some shots or interviews which can be edited into the story once council has made its decisions.

It should be remembered that all meetings of the municipal council must be open to the public. The council can decide to become a committee of the whole and shift in camera, but if decisions are taken they must be reported when the committee again becomes the municipal council.

a) Establishing Quorum

Although the formality of municipal meetings may vary depending on the size

and complexity of issues being addressed, most municipal council meetings follow a similar format. The first requirement in every municipality before proceeding with a meeting, however, is to assure that there is a quorum. This means that there are enough members of the council attending the meeting to assure that their decisions can be considered valid. Section 56 of the Municipal Act defines a quorum as the majority of the council (including the head of council). In the case where there is a bare quorum or exactly a majority, and a member of the committee indicates that he or she has a conflict of interest, the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act allows the vote to continue. If at any time the council loses quorum, no further decisions can be taken. In this situation, the head of council can allow the meeting to continue on the basis that no decisions will be taken or the meeting is ended.

Occasionally, so much dissension occurs among the council that a period of weeks or months can pass without the council making a quorum. In such cases, the Minister of Municipal Affairs may call a new election for that community.

b) Minutes of the Meeting

Following a prayer or other formal opening, the council will review the minutes of the last meeting to ensure that the municipal clerk has accurately reflected the comments and decisions taken at the last meeting. All minutes of council meetings are available to the public and offer a useful resource for the reporter to review past voting and attendance records (roll calls are a legislated requirement of municipal council meetings) of particular council members. As

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well, the minutes will offer a valid report of the history of municipal actions on specific issues.

c) Petitions, Delegations and Correspondence

This part of the meeting is dedicated to input from the public. In some smaller municipalities, the involvement of interest groups, concerned individuals, etc. is allowed on an informal basis, while in larger municipalities advance notification of a wish to speak before council may be required. Delegations can appear for a variety of reasons. In some cases, a group of individuals may wish to communicate their opposition to a proposed municipal or private sector project. In other cases, groups may be opposing cuts to programs or be requesting additional or new funding. The range of issues can be as broad as the responsibilities of the municipal council.

d) Reports

Information presented in staff reports to council and the public response to these reports form the basis for much municipal journalism. Most reports from staff are composed of the following elements, which do not necessarily appear in this order:

Background Information: Often, issues have a long history which must be restated or presented in the form of appendices of previous reports to council.

Legal and Policy Issues: In order for council to make valid and balanced decisions, they must be aware of relevant provincial legislation, existing by-laws and other legal obligations and policies which may apply.

Analysis of the Issue: The staff report often provides a review of the various factors which arise from the above information and presents an overall analysis of the situation as a basis for discussion by council. In situations where the analysis is extremely detailed, the staff may also provide an executive summary which is particularly useful to the reporter as a first look at the issue being discussed.

Financial Considerations: Whether the topic of discussion is the acceptance of a tender related to municipal work, a proposed by-law, or a new policy, the financial implications are key to council discussions. The cost of any proposed activity is one of the first things a politician and reporter will look for in a staff report.

Recommendations: In order for the council to focus their discussion, staff will provide recommendations for a proposed action or policy. Reporters commonly review the agendas for meetings in advance and check with council members regarding their opinions of staff recommendations. Similarly affected stakeholders are contacted to get reaction. Opposition at this early stage will likely signal potential newsworthy discussion at the meeting.

VII. Procedural By-Laws

These by-laws should not be mistaken for by-laws which carry the rule of law in a municipality. Rather, they assist the council to establish a modus operandi for their meetings to ensure that issues are fully heard, discussed and resolved in a manner which is understood and accepted by all members. When a member does not believe that he has had ample opportunity to press a point and the head of council has indicated that he will no longer be heard, he may draw attention to a "point of procedure" which may call into question whether an action or decision by the head of council is consistent with procedural by-laws.

VIII. Roberts Rules of Order

Reporters will find that in most municipal meetings, the Roberts Rules of Order apply. These rules have been applied as a basic guide to fair and orderly procedures for meetings for over 100 years. Roberts provides detailed explanations regarding the preparation and presentation of motions during a meeting, definitions for various kinds of meetings, protocol for questions, etc.

The most noticeable aspect of the Roberts approach is that all comments and answers are directed to the chairman of the meeting rather than to other members of the meeting. When members of the public present their views to the council, the Roberts approach will require that they direct their remarks to the chairman or head of council. Following the presentation, the chair will ask if there are any questions to be directed to the delegation. These are then posed

after which the delegation may respond. The chair will then proceed around the council table until all questions and answers are completed. Having dealt with the delegation, the chair will then focus attention towards staff who may be requested to respond to the concerns expressed by the delegation in the form of questions again from the members of the committee. In this way, the meeting proceeds in a business-like and efficient manner, while emotions are hopefully kept to controlled levels. Reporters may wish to review the Robert's Rules of Order at some point during their sojourn on the municipal beat to better understand the rationale for procedures which are common to most public meetings. A copy is generally available in the municipal clerk's office, the legal department and at public libraries. (See the bibliography for specific publishing information.)

Section IV

Common Municipal Beat Stories

Common Municipal Beat Stories

I. Introduction

The local municipal government often faces an uphill battle in adequately communicating its role and services to the community it serves. Traditionally, the news media have viewed their main function on the municipal scene as reporting on events. The most common ingredients in the municipal story are the reporting of conflicting points of view expressed at a meeting or other event. This means that the public may hear positions for and against a proposed project, but one does not generally receive the detailed information necessary to weigh the validity of the claims made by either side.

This lack of context also affects public understanding of tax expenditures. If the public does not understand the demands on the municipality, then a story which simply compares tax increases with cost of living serves only to enrage rather than enlighten. Moreover, if taxes are kept down, the naive taxpayer can merely assume all is well -- unless the reporter has done his homework and demonstrated that this is indeed the case.

The extent to which the reporter can shed light on the context surrounding any event-based confrontation will indicate the degree to which the audience or reader can be expected to make a fair judgment of the situation.

The following section presents a number of common municipal stories. In addition to offering some background information which may be of assistance, examples of actual stories by municipal reporters have been presented to demonstrate how issues might be interpreted for the benefit of the public.

II. The Municipal Budget Story

Each fall, municipalities across Ontario begin the formal budgeting process. At the same time, reporters follow this story until its expected conclusion, which is often a tax increase. On the way to that simple conclusion, however, the budget process offers the reporter a number of opportunities to inform the public about the way in which their tax dollars are being spent, as well as to provide an assessment of the fiscal health of the municipality.

The most common way to cover the budget story is simply to focus on proposed tax increases, compare them to the cost of living, and then seek reaction from politicians and the public. By assuming that low or no tax increases are "good", and higher increases are "bad" -- as both journalists and voters often do -- the reporter may be doing a disservice to the public. If a reporter is not well informed about municipal budgeting, he or she may not notice or understand the significance of cuts to reserve funds and increases in debt to meet the short-term objective of keeping the tax increase down.

The key to better and more responsible reporting on the budget is to have a basic understanding of the way in which municipalities manage their finances.

Although the fundamental responsibility of the reporter is to explain what's going on in an easily understood manner, this process of simplification for the benefit of the lay person should not create a situation where the real story is missed.

a) Before the Municipal Budget is Finalized

Historically, municipal councils prepared a draft budget and then made judgements regarding the necessary cuts and additions to be made. But many councils now look to the cost of living as a percentage target for tax increases. This approach tends to reflect a political sensitivity to the ability of the taxpayers to pay, but it may bear little resemblance to the actual pressures placed on a municipality to provide service.

The "cost of living comparison" applies only if there is a constant commercial tax base, a normal quantity of snowfall to plow, a constant employment picture, no unexpected changes in provincial policies or transfer payments -- in short, no changes which result in cost increases at the local level. The fact is that all of these factors are in constant flux. The reporter must remain aware of these pressures.

Like any person in the street, the local municipality has to add up all its

forecasted sources of income, balance these against forecasted costs for the coming year, and then decide how much it will need to pay its bills. If more money is required than is forecasted as income, then the municipality has to decide whether to raise taxes, borrow from the bank, or cut services. Generally the approach will be some mixture of these.

Again, similar to circumstances faced by average people, the municipality may wish to go to the bank to help pay for some program or project. First, it is necessary to have the province review the municipality's financial circumstances to assess the maximum level of debt which will be allowed. The province looks at the revenue that the municipality will receive through taxation and then will indicate that debt charges cannot be allowed to exceed 20% of that revenue level in any given year. If its debt is too high in the opinion of the province, the municipality has to decide whether it will increase taxes or cut back on services.

The Treasurer for the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, Jack LeBelle, has prepared many municipal budgets and says his experience is that reporters place too much emphasis on tax increases rather than looking behind the numbers to see where they come from. In his view it is just as important to help the public understand how the municipality proposes to meet the targets it has set.

It is rare, he says, that reporters are interested enough to take the time to understand such things as debenturing and reserve funds. Yet, the key from his

perspective is to watch over time the extent to which the municipality pays for immediate requirements through borrowing. The journalist ought also to keep an eye on the amounts taken from reserve funds which are set aside for specific purposes. The important point to keep in mind is that a reserve fund represents an option which is only really designed to respond to one-time requirements. For example, if a municipality knows that a bridge or road will be under construction in a future year, then building a reserve fund to help pay for that infrastructure will limit the need to raise taxes substantially on that one occasion when construction commences. If on the other hand, the municipal council chooses to draw on the reserves to fund ongoing programs, then they are to some degree postponing an eventual circumstance when the reserve well is dry. If a council has chosen to keep taxes down by consistently drawing on reserves and borrowing money to cover ongoing programs, sooner or later the municipality will face a serious cash crunch. Inevitably, taxpayers will suddenly find themselves faced with substantial tax increases to maintain the services which had been subsidized by borrowing and reserves, or these services will have to be cut.

Assumptions that low tax increases reflect responsible political decision-making and effective municipal management, or the suggestion that borrowing today is acceptable on the basis that an economic upturn is just around the corner, must be carefully evaluated by the reporter only after having looked for these trends. Just as an individual cannot indefinitely present a prosperous facade with the help of second and third mortgages on his or her home and up-to-limit credit cards, hard times will eventually catch up with the municipality. The

consequence for a community may not be bankruptcy, but it will undoubtedly mean dramatic cuts in services and escalating taxes.

Depending on the type of municipal structure which has been established in the reporter's municipality, there may be a series of budgets relating to the specific functions of the municipality, such as roads, transit, environment, municipal welfare, etc. If there are standing committees or a committee of the whole structure, these budgets will be reviewed separately and then presented in a consolidated form to the full council.

b) Operating and Capital Budgets

A budget can be divided into two broad categories. The operating budget involves all those costs associated with the provision of services. These costs include such things as staff salaries, maintenance of existing facilities, office supplies, etc. These are often the most sizable costs for any given year. In practice, money identified in operating budgets is not carried over from year to year except when contracts have been signed and work has commenced which will soon be completed in the next fiscal year.

The capital budget includes those costs associated with the acquisition of land, as well as expenditures related to buildings, structures, and equipment such as trucks, cars, computers, etc. These budgets are usually prepared based on five-year projections of needs and can involve tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars for the construction of bridges and roads, sewage and water treatment

facilities, or municipal buildings. Capital budgets are carried over from year to year until the project has been completed.

c) Pay As You Go

The "pay as you go" approach to municipal financing has recently become popular. This approach recognizes that from time to time the municipality will have to cover major costs for the construction of necessary facilities. If reliance is totally on the tax base during the specific year for payment, there will be sizable swings in the demands on taxpayers. The other alternative is to go into debt with the consequence that in future years, the taxes will have to rise to service the debt as well as to pay down the principal.

In response to the above alternatives, municipalities have increasingly shifted to a "pay as you go" approach based on the development of reserve funds. Realizing that in five years, a new bridge or road is going to be required, the municipality begins to apply a segment of the taxes collected towards a reserve fund which can be used to soften the blow of demands to the municipality during the most costly period of construction. The net effect is that during less costly years the taxes are higher than they otherwise would be, but during the construction years tax increases and debt acquisition are kept to reasonable levels. As indicated above, however, some politicians view reserve funds as pots of money which should be drawn from to keep taxes down. Although this may not significantly threaten the financial stability of a municipality if it is done once, this trend can have serious consequences for future years. Without

media which are aware of these financing techniques, a story that looks merely at the annual tax increase will mislead voters about local financial health.

d) Stages In the Budget Story

- 1. Summer, Early Fall** - Municipal staff submit draft budget forecasts for the upcoming year to council.

Questions the Reporter Should Ask:

1. Are the proposed budget targets realistic from a fiscal and political perspective?
2. Who will be positively and negatively affected by the proposals?
3. Are there groups which will begin to organize in opposition to the proposals?
4. How are other municipalities of similar size and circumstances responding to their fiscal situations?

- 2. Late Fall/Early Winter** - Standing committees or committee of the whole review departmental budgets (e.g, culture and recreation, roads, administration, etc.)

Questions:

1. What do the recommendations mean to the average taxpayer in terms of changes to service or cost?
2. Are there specific groups who will be impacted more than others and why?

3. What is the impact of committee recommendations on the larger budget forecasts?

3.Late Winter - Municipal council adopts budget and identifies tax impact.

Questions:

- 1. How much debt, cuts to reserve funds, increases/decreases in service, and increases/decreases in municipal taxes were necessary to achieve the proposed tax situation?**
- 2. What are the immediate and long-term impacts of this budget on an average homeowner?**
- 3. What percentage of the municipal tax bill is composed of city taxes, regional/county taxes and educational taxes?**

Sources of Information:

Municipal treasurer, ratepayer associations, public interest groups (e.g. day care advocates, environmentalists), Chamber of Commerce, academics.

e) Approaches to the Budget Story

One of the difficulties in covering the budget story is to find ways to make the issues and the costs relevant to the reader. In the following story by Philip Jalsevac of The Kitchener-Waterloo Record, it is apparent that both the municipal staff and the reporter had a role to play in making the possible impacts of one upcoming budget more understandable to the public.

Tax Increase will cost less than 3-item pizza

Waterloo council may be looking for ways to trim a projected tax increase of 2 1/2 per cent for 1993, but the average homeowner will still pay considerably less than taxpayers in Kitchener and Cambridge.

An exact comparison can't be made until the three cities finalize their budget plans. But a Waterloo report notes that the average tax bill for a house with a market value of \$150,000 was \$446 this year.

In Kitchener the bill for a house of the same value came in at \$560 and, in Cambridge it was \$532.

Gina Luciantonio, acting city treasurer, said in an interview that Waterloo homeowners have traditionally paid the lowest taxes of Waterloo Region's three cities.

With a 2.5-per-cent increase next year, the city portion of the Waterloo tax bill will go up by \$11.60 to \$455.60, still far less than this year's tab in Kitchener.

The differences among the three municipalities are reduced when the total property tax bill is studied. In Waterloo the city portion accounted for only about one-quarter of total taxes this year. Education taxes accounted for 55 per cent and regional taxes for about 20 per cent.

Luciantonio said she doesn't expect much of a change in the percentages next year. "It'll be really close."

Although the proposed 1993 levy could change before the city budget is finalized Dec. 14, Waterloo officials illustrated the impact of an \$11.60 increase by noting it costs more to buy a large, three-item pizza at \$16.15, a 12-pack of beer at \$14.40 or two tickets to the movies at \$15.

To further highlight the point, the staff took an earlier projection of an increase of 3.05 per cent in the city's share of property taxes and said it works out to \$1.13 a month, less than renting a video at \$2.50 or buying a large coffee at \$1.25.

The bottom line, the report said, is that a 3.05-per cent increase would cost the average taxpayer four cents a day.

Meanwhile, Luciantonio said earlier concerns have been alleviated about the city's funding of the public library. There was some fear council would freeze the library's budget at its 1992 level.

But Luciantonio said council has given tentative approval to increase its grant to the library by 2.6 per cent, or \$38,568. That brings the grant to about \$1.53 million for 1993. (51)

As indicated above, another important function of the reporter is to determine the methods by which the municipality has met its budget objectives and to demonstrate the impact of the approach on the taxpayer. Greg Crone of The Kitchener-Waterloo Record describes how the 1992 budget in Kitchener was achieved.

Kitchener tax boost held to 2.65 per cent

Kitchener city council is handing taxpayers a 1992 tax increase of less than three per cent -- the lowest tax hike in almost 20 years -- but it's dipping into a "rainy day" fund to do it.

The Kitchener portion of the city's property tax bill will rise 2.65 per cent. According to Statistics Canada, the inflation rate last month was 3.8 per cent, although economists are now predicting inflation will continue its slide to an average of 2.4 per cent this year.

Council raised taxes last year by 6.8 per cent. The average inflation rate in 1991 was 5.7 per cent.

"Times are bad and people are still angry at governments at all levels," Mayor Dom Cardillo said Friday. "The fact is, we took the initiative."

If you own a home worth \$150,000, the city portion of your taxes will rise \$14 to \$550 in 1992.

But the biggest portion of property taxes goes to the region and school boards. Kitchener finance commissioner John Gazzola estimates they are both looking at increases close to the 10-per-cent level.

A 10-per-cent increase would send an extra \$32 to the region and \$93 more in education taxes. With the city portion, that would be a total increase of \$139, or eight per cent. Your total tax bill would be \$1,924.

Gazzola said Kitchener's increase is the lowest since he began work

at the city in 1973, when council raised taxes by two per cent.

He also noted taxpayers were handed a 10 per cent increase the very next year.

Gazzola said he's worried the city is headed for the same kind of tax hangover in 1993.

Council did not cut services or staff, and actually added 17 firefighters to the city's payroll. But this year's modest tax increase was not achieved by any "magic," Gazzola said. Mostly it was done by dipping into the city's reserve accounts.

The budget process for 1993 will start almost immediately, he said. The city must trim \$2.7 million next year just to arrive at the point where it is right now.

"Where do we reduce?" he asked. "You have to cut somewhere. It's not going to come out of the sky. You can only take so much out of reserves."

But Cardillo said it is for times such as these that reserve accounts are created.

"It's for a rainy day. Once the economy improves and the cycle continues, you replenish that."

Chicopee Ward Ald. Carl Zehr, who heads the city's finance committee, said the 1992 budget puts the city well on the way to council's goal of a "net zero increase" by 1994. "I still have that goal. I think we can achieve it."

Gazzola is projecting tax increases of 4.5 or five per cent in each of the next two years. But Zehr said those projections are based on no savings from the city's "continuous improvement" program and only modest growth in assessment.

"I'm not an economist, but I hope the economy will improve by late summer or early fall of 1992," said Zehr.

Premier Bob Rae's announcement last Tuesday that transfer payments to municipalities would rise by only one per cent this year had only a marginal impact on the city's budget.

"His reduction did not significantly affect the tax increase," said Zehr.

Last year the province gave the city about \$6 million in unconditional grants. The city had been budgeting for a 2.5-per-cent increase this year, which amounts to an extra \$150,000. The announced one-per-cent increase means the city lost about \$90,000 of that money. That loss was passed on to taxpayers, which boosted the overall tax increase by two-tenths of one per cent.

To push the tax increase beneath the three-per-cent level, council did a financial dippy-doodle, transferring chunks of money from reserves -- a sick leave and an insurance account -- plus \$1.6 million that was surplus from the previous year. That money was dumped into a tax stabilization fund, allowing the city to drain \$1.75 million out and apply it against the general tax levy.

The city also took \$4.9 million from its cash-generating enterprises -- parking, golf courses, and gas and water utilities -- and applied it against the general tax levy.

That allowed the city to reduce the levy -- the money it needs to raise in taxes -- from \$61 million to about \$55.5 million. Last year the city raised \$53.3 million in property taxes. A tax increase of 2.65 per cent makes up the difference. (52)

III. Municipal Stories Related to Property Issues

Introduction

As already noted, battles between the opponents and proponents of projects which impact on the status quo of neighbourhoods occur in communities of all sizes. These confrontations often become emotional. Each side may characterize itself in a stereotypical manner in hopes that it will be positively portrayed in the news media. For example, those in opposition may characterize themselves as the underdog fighting to save a community, while the developer may characterize himself as being a good corporate citizen whose plans for development offer employment and services to the community. It is up to the reporter to present a fair portrayal of each side's aims.

In addition to gathering comments from the various spokespeople, the reporter may talk to colleagues who have covered the beat in the past, review previous copy on the story and review the minutes and dispositions resulting from municipal meetings where the issue was discussed. Although this kind of research may be difficult for a general assignment reporter who has been assigned to cover just one meeting, a beat reporter will find this information particularly helpful in assessing the consistency of the people offering their

comments. The reporter might also request any or all previous reports relating to the issue.

In all communities, the municipal clerk will keep a file of all dispositions which identify the motions and decisions taken at each council meeting. In large municipalities such as Metro Toronto and Ottawa-Carleton, detailed minutes of the discussions at standing committees are also available to the public.

Whether or not one has the time and opportunity to gather the above information in advance, consideration should be given to obligations of the developer and the role of the municipality reviewing the proposal. Some questions for consideration:

- * What are the various steps which must be taken by the developer, contractor, municipality, etc. before the proposed change can be implemented?
- * Does the proposed change conflict with the community's official plan and contravene any provincial regulations and local by-laws?
- * What are the public participation requirements for proposed zoning changes of this nature and have they been appropriately implemented?
- * How much confidence should be placed in the forecasted costs of the project and to what extent will the taxpayer be involved?

*** Who stands to benefit from this project and does the developer have a track record which has relevance to this issue under consideration?**

*** Have there been attempts to address the concerns of the opponents?**

The claims of those expressing opposition to the proposal to council should also be scrutinized. Some questions to consider in evaluating the position of the opponents:

*** Do they speak for a legitimate community association or a neighbourhood and what is the nature of the mandate they have to negotiate with the municipality?**

*** Are there legal or academic authorities available who can offer a perspective on the issue?**

*** Is this an issue that just came "out of the blue," or has it been a source of conflict between these individuals and the municipality for many years?**

And, if this has been a long-term conflict, has the position of the group remained consistent or changed over time?

a) The Development vs. Quality of Life

The ability of a municipality to provide fundamental services is dependent on its ability to generate income from the residential and commercial sectors of the community. As the public have become more informed about the impact of humans on the environment, municipalities are finding increasing resistance to any projects which may impact on natural green spaces and waterways.

Similarly, with the perceived escalation in violence in urban areas, city dwellers are increasingly less willing to accept greater density in their neighbourhoods.

The net result for municipalities and developers is that they must be prepared to spend a great deal of time and money addressing the concerns of the public before a project can shift from the drawing board to reality.

1. Stages of the Development Story

Developer acquires property and prepares a plan for consideration by a local planning or zoning committee.

Questions:

1. What are the positive and negative effects as interpreted by proponents and opponents?
2. Does this plan contravene existing zoning by-laws?
3. What requirements must be met in terms of public participation (i.e.: public meetings, notification of neighbours, etc.)?
4. Would there be any obligation by the property taxpayer on any aspect of the proposed development, such as infrastructure requirements or tax relief to

the developer, which must be compensated for by the municipality?

5. What are the next stages in the process?

If a zoning change is required, a public meeting or meetings are held to provide information and input from those attending.

Questions:

1. What was the size and nature of the meeting (i.e.: courteous, angry, loud)?
2. To what extent is the developer obligated legally and morally to take into consideration the concerns expressed by those attending?
3. Did any new information arise from the meeting which offers new insight into the impact of the project on the average person in the community as well as the neighbours?
4. Will the developer or municipal staff report on the results of the public meeting to a municipal committee and when?

The developer's plan is submitted to council.

Questions:

1. If approved, what if any conditions have been placed on the developer to meet obligations to the municipality and affected groups and individuals?
2. Are there any costs associated with this project to the municipality, if it proceeds?
3. If approved or rejected, what recourse is there for opponents and proponents?
4. Is appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board an option and, if so, how long would such an appeal take?

Sources: Municipal planning staff, municipal environmental staff, community associations, municipal clerk, minutes of past meetings.

Legislation: Ontario Planning Act, Site Plan - Section 4

2. Approaches to the Development Story

Rarely does one find a situation in which a council is unanimously in favour of or opposed to a project. Rather, there will be those who support the project because of the employment, tax base and recreational services that will result, and those who oppose it because of concerns about safety, increased density, and threats to property values. Opponents can push supporters' patience to the breaking point as demonstrated in a story by Stan Josey of The Toronto Star.

In 1991, Imperial Oil and Ontario Hydro wanted to build a number of office towers in North York, which were estimated to create 5,000 jobs with a further 7,000 permanent jobs forecasted to be situated in the buildings once completed. For the municipality this represented a major economic development initiative and would result in much needed tax revenue.

In the opinion of a frustrated councillor, "...thousands of construction and office jobs are being held up by 'frivolous' objections to five major downtown building projects."

In the end, the North York Council decided that the only route to take was the court of last resort, the Ontario Municipal Board. As Councillor Paul Sutherland

said, "The objections are all pretty minor. If this gets to the OMB, I believe cooler heads will prevail and the objections will be overruled." (53)

In other situations, reporters may focus their attention on the opposition to a particular project. Among the approaches reporters use to characterize the conflict between various protagonists is to draw on cultural and historical images and metaphors to add colour to a story. John Roe of The Kitchener-Waterloo Record leaves the reader no illusions as to which side of the fence he sits as he compares the commitment of the local community to that of their pioneer forebears:

Development Battle: Villagers rebel against growth in Rockwood

When Richard Lay's great-great-grandfather rebelled against the province's rulers over a century ago, villagers here took up arms to join him.

Today the fiery spirit of William Lyon Mackenzie and the 1837 Rebellion lives on in his descendent and Eramosa Township where people are trying to stop developers from paving over the countryside.

Lay and his neighbors are today's incarnation of the old Rockwood Rebels.

For three weeks they've been at an Ontario Municipal Board hearing battling developer Ronald Oelbaum who wants to put houses - - not corn - - on his farmland.

Oelbaum's bid to build 53 homes just outside the village might seem modest enough. But opponents argue the board is actually deciding their future - - and whether it will be decided by township council and residents or a developer.

If they lose, opponents see other developers sharpening their blades, ready to carve out a slice of pastoral countryside threaded by the Eramosa River and dominated by a lush, deep valley of sun-bleached limestone cliffs and caverns.

In a community transformed by a decade of profound growth, they fear the final charge of bulldozers, the final stretch of pavement and slabs of concrete that will turn the village, with its gorgeous conservation area, into a mini-Mississauga seven miles east of Guelph.

"It's important for the community to control change rather than have change control the community," Lay says, repeating one of the residents' central tenets. "Any development has to be in line with what the community's vision is of its future."

Across Ontario, people in government and groups active in preserving heritage have their eyes on Eramosa. It's not merely the hearing that interests them, it's the way the community has rallied in recent years.

"They're a pioneer in Ontario," says John Harrison, president of Community Heritage Ontario. "What's significant about Eramosa is it has a new municipal administration here in part because there has been a process that involved much of the community celebrating heritage."

Passion comes easy to the residents. Like Old Testament prophets

some thunder warnings that the land will exact its own revenge if it is plundered any more and warn of homes literally sinking into the earth. Others, such as Lay, who lives in tiny Eden Mills, worry subdivisions will one day overwhelm them and link their community to Rockwood.

Sitting in judgment is the Ontario Municipal Board. It must decide if Oelbaum can develop a 53-lot subdivision on 45 acres of land now classed rural and if 197 acres owned by him will be redesignated a "special policy area" for future houses. The board must also decide if Rockwood must stretch its boundaries to include the developer's land.

Overnight that silent bit of country - - snowcovered fields bordered by rail fences, cedar forests and deep river valley - - has become the nub of the noisiest squabble in Wellington County.

Begin with the land and what's happening here slowly makes sense. The land drew the first farmers here and with them came millers to harness the power of the streams and rivers. Later came city dwellers, beguiled by the beauty of land so close to Toronto, Mississauga, Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo. And with them came developers finding yet another way to make a living from the soil.(54)

b) Roads: Put them anywhere but here!

For decades development was considered "good for progress". However, it has increasingly become a source of conflict in the 1990s. In a capitalist-based

culture such as Canada's, the attraction of investment and efficient movement of goods and services is critical to the economic health of any community. Yet, the suggestion of constructing a road on a piece of land (right of way) which has been designated for such a purpose for decades can bring about a major public outcry. There are those who claim communities can become captive as a result of such public opposition. The London Free Press's Chip Martin says, "London's road system is absolutely atrocious because of the power and influence over local council of people opposing plans to run roads through in a logical manner. In the long run the NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) people will be blamed for the fact that London is going to eventually choke on itself."

Homeowners who bought houses knowing that they were in proximity to a right of way may nevertheless fight proposed construction 20 years later on the basis that it will impact negatively on their family's safety and the local environment, and stifle the need to promote alternatives to the automobile such as mass transit, cycling and walking. Local interest groups and community associations may take similar public stands. This confrontation presents the ingredients for news coverage. However, it does not always present an opportunity for a sober analysis of the issues which are the basis for the projects in the first place.

From a journalistic standpoint, there is a need to sift fact from fallacy and separate the shouting from the coherent arguments. Those most closely impacted by these projects will present convincing and emotive arguments against the issue, while the staff and consultants from the municipalities will present their case with scale drawings and slide shows.

The job of the reporter is to get behind the rhetoric on both sides and verify whether the need -- which may have been identified by the municipality a decade ago -- is still a need today and not simply a rationalization for proceeding with something long since unnecessary. Meanwhile, from the perspective of the opposition, one must attempt to balance the often very real concerns of the individual with the impact on the community at large. As well, one must establish whether from the perspective of the average person, the municipality is being fair, given the various issues to be addressed.

1. Stages to the Roads Story

The stages of the transportation story are very similar to those of the development story (refer to previous section). However, as with any large scale development today, an environmental assessment is required before any project can proceed. The requirements of such assessments vary; therefore, the reporter can seek further information from the municipal planners or the Ministry of the Environment.

Sources: Municipal transportation staff, university urban planning specialists, community associations.

Legislation: Environmental Assessment Act - Class Environmental Assessments; Municipal Act: Part XVIII; Regional Municipalities Act

c) Social Needs Vs. Neighbours

1. Introduction

Another common municipal story relates to the battle which arises when the attempt of a community to find appropriate locations for non-profit housing, welfare offices, halfway houses for young offenders and shelters for homeless people comes in conflict with those who oppose situating these facilities anywhere near their neighbourhood.

When reporting on these conflicts, reporters may find that supporters of such facilities may characterize the opponents as mean-spirited and concerned only for their own property values, while the municipality may be characterized by opponents as devious and non-communicative in the way it handles the acquisition of property for these purposes. Although there may be a grain of truth in these characterizations, there is often more to the story.

In most urban centres, the core of the city is the most common location for such facilities. The reasons for this relate to cost, proximity to services, and the ability to provide the necessary facilities within a reasonable amount of time.

In the majority of cases, the municipality is responsible for finding locations which are capable of housing a number of families or individuals. The ideal circumstance from the standpoint of the municipality is to find property in a location which offers access to services, is zoned appropriately, and is situated in a neighbourhood which, although not ready to throw out the welcome mat,

will at least be open to the possibility of a facility. In the 1990s, this combination is almost non-existent.

If the property is properly zoned, discrete negotiations with the owner can proceed in order to get the best price possible on behalf of taxpayers. Once the property has been acquired, the municipality may implement some form of public consultation regarding its plans for the property. Much of the time, however, the desired property is not zoned properly and therefore requires a zoning change. As a result, the municipality must implement a public participation process in advance of acquiring the property. This process extends the period of time required to meet the need, may create great dissension within the community, and almost inevitably will end in an Ontario Municipal Board hearing at great cost to proponents and opponents alike.

The reporter must recognize that many inner city residents feel increasingly under siege from commercial development and increasing crime rates. Social facilities are thought to exacerbate such problems. Moreover, because urban areas generally get the lion's share of these projects, residents feel they are shouldering an unfair burden in comparison to suburbanites.

2. Stages of the Social Needs Story

Municipality and/or community group propose the acquisition of a piece of property to build, adapt or use a facility to meet a social need.

Questions:

1. Is rezoning required and, if so, what degree of public participation is required?
2. What is the level of need for the facility, and why is it proposed to situate it in the specified location?
3. Who are the various groups impacted and what is their response to the proposal?

Public meeting or meetings are held.

Questions:

1. Who and how many attend?
2. What is needed to accommodate the concerns of the various parties?
3. What are the obligations of the municipality to address these concerns?

Council decides on proposal.

Questions:

1. How has the council responded to the various concerns expressed at the public level?
2. What is the cost to the taxpayer as a result of the decision by council?
3. If council has approved the proposal, will the opponents appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board?
4. What would the impact be on the project if an OMB appeal results in a delay?

Sources: neighbours, social activist/interest groups, academics in relevant fields, municipal planners, social service workers.

Legislation: General Welfare Act: Regulation 537

3. Approaches to the Social Needs Story

As suggested in a story by Rob Hornberger and Brad Honywill of The Windsor Star, the reaction to social housing can be immediate and hysterical. When a perceived threat to one's property is combined with a threat to the safety of one's family, individuals who would otherwise consider themselves open-minded will demonstrate a level of anger that surprises even the most hardened municipal bureaucrat:

Not In My Backyard

Stormy public meetings, fist-waving, name-calling - - even death threats - - have been part of the local citizens' reaction to non-profit housing.

City Council was accused of being "in league with the devil" last summer when it bucked neighborhood opposition and approved 34 units of non-profit housing on Jos. Janisse Avenue.

Marcel Lefebvre, executive director of Windsor-Essex Community Homes, a resource group dedicated to co-ordinating co-operative, subsidized housing efforts, was told by an anonymous caller he would be killed before he completed a 70-unit co-operative on Pillette Road.

Angry homeowners, worried about increased traffic and noise, have invariably said the developments will lower the value of their

single-family homes.

Then there is the highly-charged question of who will live in the proposed housing developments. Despite the frequent disclaimers and lengthy explanations about what non-profit housing involves, some homeowners still equate it with fully-subsidized public housing. (55)

A story by Sherri Davis-Barron of The Ottawa Citizen demonstrates this increasing sense of frustration and resentment arising from demands on the inner city dweller to shoulder the responsibility for welcoming such facilities. The stresses placed on the municipality and support groups to provide these services are also well presented:

NOT IN OUR BACKYARD; Ottawa Council approves regional plans for a shelter to house homeless women

People generally don't like to admit the reason they don't want a group home in their backyard is that they don't want a group home in their backyard.

But the Sandy Hill residents who are leading a vigorous battle to keep a shelter for homeless women from opening in their neighborhood are unusually candid.

"Everyone realizes they (shelters) have to go in someone's backyard," says Duncan Campbell, one of 13 Sandy Hill residents who comprise the Group of Concerned Sandy Hill Citizens. "Well our backyard is full. We have more than our share. Enough is enough."

Judging by the strength of their showing at a public hearing this

week, the group, and Sandy Hill residents who support it, aren't about to give up. Dozens of them packed a planning committee meeting Tuesday to protest zoning changes that would allow the shelter to open in a heritage building on Chapel Street. Ottawa Council approved the changes Wednesday with no debate; only Jacquelin Holzman dissented. Mayoral candidate Nancy Smith, whose council ward includes Sandy Hill, has supported it from the beginning.

Some of her constituents explained Tuesday in often emotional appeals why they don't.

Sandy Hill is a residential area and it already has more than its share of shelters and services for the homeless, they say. The new shelter, which will cost about \$1.2 million once renovations are complete, is too expensive. And they weren't even told that Sandy Hill was the preferred site until the region had already decided to buy the property a year ago, they complained.

Campbell plans to appeal the council decision to the Ontario Municipal Board. That means it could be at least another six months before the region is able to go ahead with plans to renovate the building and open the 20-bed shelter -- provided the municipal board supports the region.

Meanwhile, there has been room for 14 homeless women at a temporary shelter in Gloucester since July 1990 -- miles away from support services. They are shuttled daily to downtown Ottawa.

There are another 12 beds for homeless women at a Besserer Street shelter and seven beds at Hope Outreach on St. Patrick Street. "We have a growing number of homeless people in this region. It's imperative that a facility (for women) be situated in the core

area of the city," says Dick Stewart, regional deputy commissioner of social services. "We had to find space near other services . . . day programs and health services."

Most Ottawa communities have about the same number of special-needs homes, say city and regional officials. It's just that homes and services for the homeless tend to be in the central area because that's where homeless people congregate.

Arguments and counter-arguments aside, the prospect of further delay of the permanent shelter is frustrating for regional officials, shelter workers and others who work with the homeless.

The region has already spent the past year ensuring the building is structurally sound and meets all fire and safety regulations, and negotiating the \$700,000 purchase price.

The region finally took out an option-to-purchase in May. The zoning application was filed in June.

But officials and community workers can sense a protracted fight in the voices of disgruntled residents.

An elderly woman talked of being afraid to walk the streets. Another woman said her husband had once been assaulted by a transient, and that she has seen homeless women bothering children in a nearby park. Others talked of transients urinating on the street, yelling obscenities, stealing silverware, aggressively pan-handling. "Putting all the poor in one area, that's how you create ghettos," says Campbell.

On the other side, shelter supporters told committee members

they're just as likely to see football fans urinating in the Glebe after a game at Lansdowne Park. Others spoke of the rights of homeless women to have a secure home. Mary King, of the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa, told the committee there is no known case of children being harmed by homeless women.

"In fact no one is more vulnerable to crime than homeless women."

A 28-year-old woman, who now lives on her own, told the committee she lived at the Besserer Street shelter for eight months.

"These shelters don't fit the middle-class definition of the white picket fence . . . the point is, it is a home."

Sandy Hill resident Yvonne Jukes, 71, challenged every woman in the room who opposed the shelter proposal to examine their conscience.

"Homeless women deserve a break," she said. "I'm not against it and the shelter will be right across the street from me."

As she left, another elderly woman, who had spoken against the shelter, approached her. Catherine Curfoot Mollington told Jukes she resented the inference that any woman who opposes the shelter is against homeless women.

Like many other residents, Mollington isn't against a shelter for homeless women, she said.

She simply believes there's a better place for it than on Chapel Street, just doors away from her home. (56)

d) Garbage: Where are we going to put it?

The headlines tell it all:

Dump list creates turmoil, tears...Chance of losing cherished homes upsets residents...Stop sending waste to Durham, Grier told Pickering-Ajax group 'fed up' with Metro's garbage...Region, province face off on garbage...York vows bitter fight over Maple dump...Metro's Garbage: IS DOOMSDAY NEAR? Government ban on exporting waste raises a stink...Garbage site test attracts protest; BOLTON AREA...Dumps list spurs outrage; ROUGE THREAT CLAIMED...Garbage crisis now hitting home: Province shoulders blame for moving painfully slow.

Nothing gets a community more up in arms than talk of garbage dumps. Just when the average person has become concerned about the environment, many communities across Ontario are finding that their community landfill sites are filling up faster than recycling and reduction campaigns can provide alternative solutions. In 1992, for example, provincial targets were for 25 per cent of solid waste to be diverted by reduction methods such as recycling and reuse. By the turn of the century these targets will be increased to 50 per cent diversion. Despite this progress, we still have to find holes in the ground (albeit high tech and carefully monitored) in which to put those things which have yet to find alternative means of disposal or reuse.

Most politicians and municipal bureaucrats will tell you that a decade ago, finding a suitable landfill site was an uphill battle. Today, many communities are facing virtual garbage gridlock. The issue is so emotionally charged that it is a

test of any reporter to stay above the rhetoric and attempt to provide a balanced perspective.

1. An Outline of Ontario Waste Management Master Planning

By the early 1980s, many communities were aware that their landfill sites were filling up and would require replacement within the next decade or so. In response, municipal waste management master plan exercises were initiated across Ontario. Landfill sites would be selected on the basis of what were considered to be fair criteria such as the avoidance of good farmland, sandy soils, or significant natural areas. Rather than selecting a small shortlist, a range of prospective sites would be selected and from those the least ideal would be weeded out. But the moment any prospective site was identified, residents in proximity would immediately organize in opposition. Sometimes those who screamed loudest found their site deleted from the list.

In addition to countless public meetings, hydrogeological testing and social impact studies were carried out on the final short-list sites. These studies often took years to complete. Throughout the last decade, municipalities tried to follow provincial rules, but discovered to their dismay that the rules kept changing. Finally in the late 1980s, several of these waste plans reached the stage where they could be reviewed by the province's Environmental Assessment (EA) process. This was to be the final step before the municipality could proceed with its new site. The Region of Halton's EA became a cause celebre in 1990. What had originally been treated as a combination of

engineering and local politics was being reviewed by a rigorous legal process. As Halton's plan faced EA scrutiny, other municipalities started taking second looks at their own plans. At that stage waste plans across the province came to a grinding stop.

The experience in Windsor demonstrates the circumstances faced by municipalities across Ontario. Gary Rennie of The Windsor Star attempts, in fair and balanced manner, to offer the reader a better understanding of the personalities and dynamics which characterize the search for landfill sites.

Taxpayers Bear Cost of Bickering

Garbage from Windsor and Essex County could be rolling down Michigan and Ontario highways early next year. And taxpayers will be left to count the dollar signs flashing by.

Even though waste management officials have spent some \$35 million over the past 10 years - - more than \$6 million on consultants and lawyers alone - - the city and county won't have new landfill space by Dec. 31.

That's when one of the area's three dumps is scheduled to close, and a second may be filled a few months later. The city and county may then have to start trucking garbage to Michigan or other sites in Ontario. Even 1993 or 1994 aren't sure bets for new landfill space. Some warn it could be 1995 or 1996.

With environmental hearings fast approaching in mid-1993, it's not even clear what the city and county's final plan will be to handle future waste.

Expanding both the Maidstone Township and Colchester North Township dumps has been pushed the past year as the solution.

But recently, Colchester North council proposed its dump as the sole site for city-county garbage - - if the financial compensation is piled high enough. It's not certain if that 11th-hour proposal will go forward.

If local politicians knew 10 years ago this day was coming, why don't we have new landfill space?

Asked to explain the delays, politicians like to scold the bureaucrats at the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, and bemoan the complexities of the environmental assessment process.

But city-county bickering, and the failure to make decisions on a firm timetable over the past decade, contributed as much, or more, to the mess.

"It's just a failure of will," says former city councillor Ron Wagenberg, a political science professor at the University of Windsor.

"Too much time and money has been wasted trying to appease people who won't be appeased. It's an excess of democracy." As a result, "all the taxpayers of this city and county are going to pay a lot more money for disposal of their garbage," he says.

Wagenberg was on the public advisory committee that reviews waste management decisions, but left last year, partly in frustration. "I saw all kinds of money being spent and no decisions being made."

He was also a member of City Council in the late 1970s and early

1980s when planning began for new landfills. From the start, he says, not enough urgency was given to the problem.

"Ten years ago we had a problem, and now we have a crisis," says Wagenberg. "And nothing much has happened in the last 10 years, except a lot of consultants and lawyers have made a lot of money."

Few important political decisions fail to create conflict, says Wagenberg. "Talking about it for 10 years doesn't make it any better."

Wagenberg agrees the barriers thrown up by the province's Environmental Assessment Act are a major cause of the delays. Some of the money spent on lawyers and consultants to meet the requirements of the act, he says, could have been used to compensate those who live near expanding landfills. Those people could probably have been paid five times the value of their properties, and that would only be a fraction of what's been spent, he says.

Land fills will be necessary, says Wagenberg, even with recycling expanded to the limit. "In the final analysis, those in government must do what's right in the interests of the community. People who live near landfills don't see the benefit."

Asked to respond to those criticisms, Bill Chaplin, Leamington's deputy reeve and the new chairman of the Essex-Windsor Waste Management Committee, refuses to blame past political leaders.

"I am loath to assign blame," he said. "It never does much good."

Chaplin says his predecessors, like Malden Reeve Carl Gibb and former Anderdon reeve Greg Stewart, tackled the landfill quagmire with "interest and commitment far beyond the rights of ratepayers to expect."

Says Chaplin bluntly: "I'm damned if I'm going to say the politicians erred."

Nor does Chaplin blame the fierce opposition from affected townships and their leaders, or citizens' groups like Maidstone Against Dumping.

No matter where a landfill is located, opposition can be expected, says Chaplin. Selection of a site is inevitably seen by neighbours as the same as posting a "condemned" sign on all their properties. Chaplin said it's the responsibility of the waste management committee to prove to them the selection has been done as fairly and thoroughly as possible. "If it takes time, it takes time."

It may be difficult for the average taxpayer to understand, but the selection process recommended by the province and accepted locally doesn't permit a quick tour around the county to find a large, vacant piece of land with good highway access, says Chaplin.

Criteria were established - - such as avoiding good farmland, sandy soils, or significant natural areas - - and then every site in the city and county that fit the criteria was examined, explains Chaplin.

Expensive hydrogeological testing and other scientific and social research requiring years was also done on the leading sites, he adds. And when the research was done, the public and government ministries have the right to comment on it, he says.

Consultants have advised the city and county they can't go into environmental hearings just claiming to have a good site. It's a process of "excluding" poor, adequate or even good sites until you're left with the best.

And Chaplin warns: "If you are the slightest bit careless, you run the risk of spending an enormous amount of money only to be rejected."

A decade may seem ridiculous to the public, but Chaplin says: "It's the time it takes to do this work thoroughly and get public response to it."

He is one of the few politicians reluctant to blame the province for the delays built into the process. "It's easy to point fingers. . . I don't know of anyone who's purposely dragging their feet."

As for Chaplin's best guess as to when new landfill space will be available? "Let's make it a Christmas present for 1995. I can't be out by more than two years (either way)." That puts him about in the middle of the optimists and pessimists in waste planning circles.

Despite Chaplin's reluctance to blame past decision-making, a review of the last decade in waste management shows local political infighting probably wasted three years of planning time. And that's about the amount of time needed to get more landfill space approved.

Five years ago, when the city and county were wrestling each other to a standstill, they thought they'd have time to catch up. They were wrong.

The mind-numbing and money-gobbling slowness of environmental assessment procedures made sure of that.

Were the fights worth it? Some, mostly from the county, say yes. Skeptics like Wagenberg, looking at escalating disposal fees, question the delays.

The city and county first fought over the introduction of the blue-box program, and later whether Windsor had space within its boundaries for a new landfill.

The city thought recycling didn't make economic sense, and wanted to rely mainly on landfills for cheap garbage disposal.

But pushed by landfill opponents, the county grasped sooner that the 3Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle) had to be emphasized in waste management.

The landfill selection process was halted for 17 months - - from August 1986 to January 1988 - - until the city and county finally worked out a "60-40" agreement. Over a 25-year period, a maximum of 60 per cent of city-county wastes would be landfilled, and the rest recycled, composted, or otherwise disposed of.

Decisions of the Environmental Assessment Board and provincial policies made it clear that municipalities without aggressive 3R programs were not going to get approval to use dumps or garbage burners as wholesale solutions.

The province later announced even tougher targets of recycling and reducing at least 25 per cent of Ontario's waste by 1992, and 50 per cent by the year 2000.

Ray Robinet, former county warden and a key figure in waste management when the city and county were doing most of their arguing, says the county felt vindicated by the emphasis the province later put on recycling and waste reduction targets.

It's easy, with hindsight, to criticize, he says. But the city and county were so entrenched, recalls Robinet, that "we came very, very close at that time to a parting of the ways."

Time had to be allowed between contentious meetings for tempers to cool to prevent hasty decisions from being made, Robinet said.

Those closely involved don't see a city-county split at this late stage in the environmental approval process.

"I haven't heard that (talk of a split) in the last little while," says Gibb, a key figure the past four years in city-county waste planning.

Public and behind-closed-doors tussles over landfill site selection criteria - - the factors to be considered in picking a new landfill - - also led to lengthy delays.

As quickly as landfill sites were suggested, not-in-my-backyard groups sprang up. To the city, it appeared county politicians were rewriting the criteria to keep their particular groups happy.

City politicians appeared to the county to be only interested in getting a quick expansion of the Maidstone landfill, where its garbage now goes.

As many of the key meetings were closed, it's almost impossible now to tell what kind of political trade-offs were made.

Some of those involved in changing criteria say they responded only to such public concerns as preserving prime agricultural land in the county and lessening the human impacts of landfilling.

Others say the criteria changes were sleight-of-hand manoeuvres to get landfill sites moved from one community to another.

Perhaps the most pointed example of city-county bickering on site criteria can be found in the battle led in 1986 and 1987 by Tilbury West Reeve Jack Morris.

Morris, a past chairman of the waste management committee, argued a better effort should be made to find a landfill site within Windsor's boundaries - - an option already ruled out by the primary consultant, Proctor and Redfern Ltd. of St. Catharines.

The flood-prone nature of the only large, vacant parcel of land, and the nearness to Windsor Airport (seagulls attracted by garbage would be a hazard to aircraft), were among the reasons cited by the consultants to rule out an east-end Windsor site.

The numbers of homes and businesses that would face disruption within the city also weighed against that location.

But, facing political pressure from county residents, Morris took a busload of county politicians on a personal search for landfill sites amid Windsor streets. City politicians declined to participate.

The search eventually evaporated, but Morris says he still believes the disadvantages of a Windsor site could be overcome by improvements in engineering and design. If Windsor had to fend for itself, Morris says, it would quickly establish a new east-end landfill.

"The reality is the county has better landfill sites, and Windsor benefits by co-operating with its neighbors," Morris says.

Another criteria battle arose during the first attempt to narrow the number of potential sites in the county.

The waste management committee announced four "preferred options" in May 1988: Expand the existing Maidstone and Colchester dumps, or use the McGregor or Amherst quarries near Amherstburg.

There was a predictable backlash. And after one of its infamous closed-to-the-public "scoping sessions," the waste management committee agreed on Sept. 8, 1988, to change the criteria. It would look for the lowest class of agricultural land and closely assess the social impact of landfill sites that made a short list.

The "social equity" arguments raised by those living near landfills would also be studied. Residents near landfills claimed "social equity" required others to share the pain by shifting the burden of landfills - - the smell, noise, litter, and traffic - - every 25 years or so to another group. Wagenberg argues there's no social gain in imposing a landfill on a new group every 25 years. A better approach, he says, is good landfill management and proper compensation.

The consultants used the newly approved criteria to produce another set of seven landfill sites - - later expanded to eight - - in August 1989. The list ended up with the previous sites - - the existing Maidstone and Colchester North landfills, McGregor and Amherst quarries - plus other "greenfield" sites in Colchester North and South townships.

After public meetings, the new list was approved by city and county councils in April 1990, 20 months after the previous list had been rejected.

The consultants' final choices were announced the next month:
Expand the Maidstone and Colchester North landfills.

That's 21 months expended to reach the same starting point.

That left less than three years to carry out detailed environmental investigations. And about five months of that was quickly wasted as landowners withheld permission to do tests on their property.

Hydrogeological testing for landfills requires at least a year of drilling and sampling of groundwater around a dump site and numerous reports. If the three years lost to bickering and infighting had been saved, the city and county might well have had a chance to get new landfill space approved before the 1992 deadline.

The consultants hired to assess the human impact of the landfill sites said they could not resolve the debate about "social equity." Politicians would have to make the decision, they said.

And politicians later came to the conclusion that regardless of "social equity," the selected sites would not be changed.

To the people who have lived near the Maidstone and Colchester North landfills over much of their 20-year history, the failure of social equity arguments convinced them that local waste planners aren't interested in finding new sites for garbage.

John Martin, the Toronto environmental lawyer who's guided local waste efforts since 1988, said the city and county had the misfortune to start their landfill search soon after new environmental laws had emerged.

Few, including Environment Ministry officials, knew what the new laws meant or required, says Martin, a former ministry lawyer.

Ministry guidelines changed as the search progressed. And as decisions of the Environmental Assessment Board were handed down, new requirements were established.

Other municipalities that started about the same time as Essex-Windsor have had the same frustrating experience with the process, Martin says.

Municipalities starting today should be able to complete a landfill search in about five years, he says, but that's only because the procedure has become clearer. (57)

Today, fortunately, the rules are much clearer, and having been stung once, municipalities now keep a careful eye on changes to the province's

environment policies. A decade later, most communities are not much closer to “commissioning” their landfill sites; however, it is clear that the current approach is far more accountable, consistent and environmentally sensitive.

2. Stages to the Garbage Story

Municipal staff submit a waste management proposal to council.

Questions:

1. What are the procedures in the search for alternatives to landfill, extent of public consultation and development of a final master plan for submission to the province?
2. How long will this process take and how much will it cost?
3. What is the extent of need when compared against the availability of current landfill space?

Public consultation.

Questions:

1. How is public input to be incorporated into the final strategy for waste management?
2. How extensive is the public consultation process and how long will it take?

Approval by council and submission to the province.

Questions:

1. Will and where will landfilling occur if the province approves the plan?

2. What strategies will be implemented to ensure minimum solid waste is disposed in the landfill site?
3. What is the proposed compensation or accommodation for those negatively impacted by the plan?
4. What is the time and cost associated with implementing the plan?

Sources: neighbours, municipal planners, Ministry of Environment regional staff, local environmental interest groups.

Legislation: Environmental Assessment Act; Municipal Act; Regional Municipalities Act.

3. Approaches to the Garbage Story

It seems virtually impossible to approach the garbage story without being caught up in the emotion of those who are most directly affected by the decisions of the municipal council. In this time of environmental information overload, the concept that we are still putting garbage in the ground seems unacceptable to many. Brian Dexter of the Toronto Star focusses his attention on those who feel threatened by the proposed landfill site in their backyard.

Dump List creates turmoil, tears

Lisa Kraehling is close to tears as she contemplates having her century-old Vaughan farmhouse devoured by a mega garbage dump.

It's a brisk November day with snow on the ground and Kraehling has

just learned that what she's owned and improved with loving care has been chosen one of 16 potential dump sites by the Ontario interim waste authority.

Since 1983, she reckons about \$300,000 has gone into making the fieldstone farmhouse into a comfortable rural home on the east side of Jane St., just south of King-Vaughan Rd.

"The property was vacant and in disrepair before I moved in," says Kraehling, 31, who has two children, Christina, 7 and Ryan, 6. Now she runs Maple Ridge Nursery, a landscaping and contracting business, with Robert Maciag, 37. They also grow crops and want to develop a tree farm on the 21 hectares (52 acres) of farmland.

A sign at the driveway entrance reads: It's our home, not a dump site and across the road other signs outside a huge rural mansion read: Equity and Fairness. No Second Mega Dump.

Kraehling says that it will be very upsetting if her home is taken away for a trash burial ground.

"This is where we have settled and where I'd like to raise my children and give them a good life."

Maciag says he's highly angered "at a mentality that promotes landfill waste disposal over other methods, and of course we are going to fight."

He laments the almost certain destruction of the trees, natural habitat and ecological systems by a dump and as long as things like this can happen we are just devouring the earth." (58)

The problem and challenge for the reporter is to balance the rhetoric of the various parties involved with the fact that the readers themselves are at the root of the problem. Whether as consumers buying overpackaged goods, or employees and employers not making use of office recycling programs, we are all making daily choices which contribute to the garbage problem.

The story may focus on the claims of the municipality that local people are delaying a necessary community service, while neighbours of a proposed site may claim that they were not provided with adequate time and information to present their case. In the end, all that can be expected from the reporter is to attempt to provide a dispassionate review of the actions of the various parties, as well as some useful background and context so that the rhetoric and anguish can be balanced with the practical circumstances in which municipalities find themselves today.

Municipalities, as has been highlighted on a number of occasions, are the creatures of the province and as such do not have powers to require industries to cease over-packaging materials. Similarly, municipalities cannot stop consumers from acquiring these products. Blue-box programs provide a supply of re-usable and recyclable products, but they cannot impose upon the private sector the requirement to buy these products. In the 1990s, most municipalities will attempt to find every possible alternative to selection of a landfill site. But, at the end of the day, the garbage has to go somewhere.

IV. The Election Story

Municipal elections occur simultaneously across Ontario every three years on the second Monday in November. These elections are an opportunity to choose the members of municipal councils, school boards and some public utility commissions. Upcoming elections will be in 1994 and 1997. Anyone who is 18 years or older, lives in the municipality or owns or rents property, or is the spouse of an owner or tenant, and has been registered on a voters list can vote on voting day. In addition to municipal elections, by-elections for specific seats on council can be called at any time by the Minister of Municipal Affairs when a seat becomes open as a result of resignation, death, or removal because of wrong-doing.

It is common knowledge that politicians rate near the bottom in surveys of public trust. Despite that image, one might imagine that the high public profile and perks associated with federal and provincial politics might be attractive to some. By contrast, the municipal political environment for the most part is neither lucrative nor high profile. Rather, it is a job demanding long hours attending meetings both day and evening and responding to the never-ending concerns and complaints of constituents.

In many smaller communities municipal politicians are paid only a part-time salary, so it is necessary to juggle municipal responsibilities with another job. In larger urban areas, municipal politicians generally receive salaries between \$35,000 and \$65,000, a level which many could improve if they were working at

their original careers.

Kevin Crowley of The Kitchener-Waterloo Record presents an overview of the kinds of positions which come up for municipal election every three years.

Although this story was prepared in advance of the 1991 municipal election in the Kitchener-Waterloo area, the salaries presented have changed little and are comparable with those in many medium sized centres in Ontario.

Politics offers recession-proof jobs

Looking for a part-time job to get through the recession? One that offers free munchies and three years' employment? Well friend, read on.

This is a municipal election year and dozens of political jobs are up for grabs Nov. 12.

There's plenty of choice, from the mayor of Kitchener to membership on the Waterloo North Hydro commission. All you have to do is run.

Qualifications are minimal. You must be a Canadian citizen, 18 years of age and a resident, tenant or property owner (or spouse of a tenant or property owner) in the municipality you want to represent.

If you can find 10 eligible voters to sign your nomination papers, you're off to the races.

But take heed, veterans of municipal politics say the hours are long and the schedule is rough on your family life.

A good alderman spends at least 20 to 30 hours a week on what is supposed to be a part-time job, says Kitchener MPP Will Ferguson, who spent 12 years on Kitchener council before moving on to provincial politics.

Any councillor worth his or her salt sits through hours of meetings and reads mountains of council reports every week.

But you do get paid for your trouble, and one-third of a municipal politician's income is tax free.

There are other perks as well, including free sandwiches when meetings run into mealtime, which is almost always.

Sound attractive? If you want to run, you must register with your local municipality before you collect or spend any campaign money. And your nomination papers must be submitted by Oct. 11.

Here's a list of what jobs are up for election and how much they pay:

Kitchener council has 10 ward aldermen and one mayor.

Aldermen will earn a base salary of \$22,767 starting Dec. 1. Eight of the aldermen earn another \$12,579 for their work on regional council, which boosts their total income to \$35,346.

The mayor will earn a total income of \$71,451 by Dec. 1, which includes a base salary of \$54,488, plus the \$12,579 regional

salary, and \$4,384 for sitting on the Kitchener-Wilmot Hydro commission. The mayor also has use of a leased car.

Waterloo council will increase by two members when it changes to a ward system for the November election. The new council will have one mayor, seven ward councillors and three at-large councillors.

Councillors earned a base salary of \$11,902 and the mayor earned a base \$38,796 in 1990. Those salaries may increase by five per cent for 1991.

Three councillors also earn the \$12,579 regional salary, for a total income of \$24,481. The mayor's total income is \$53,885, which includes the \$12,579 regional salary and \$2,510 for sitting on the Waterloo North Hydro commission.

The chairman of Waterloo Region has the only full-time regional political position. It pays \$71,471 and comes with a leased car.

The chairman is elected by the 25 members of regional council, who are first elected to their local councils. In theory, any eligible voter can run for regional chairman. But the past two chairmen were previous council members.

The Waterloo County board of education has 20 trustees: eight from Kitchener, four each from Waterloo and Cambridge and one from each of the four townships.

Trustees earned \$13,800 and the chairman earned \$20,700 in 1990.

In addition to the standard qualifications, candidates running for the public board must be public school tax supporters.

The Waterloo Region separate school board has 19 trustees: eight from Kitchener, three from Waterloo, four from Cambridge, one for all four townships and three francophones from across the region.

Trustees earn \$10,000 and the chairman earns \$15,000. Candidates running for the separate board must be separate school tax supporters.

The Kitchener-Wilmot Hydro commission has seven members, four of whom are elected from Kitchener. The other three positions include the mayors of Kitchener and Wilmot Township, and one person appointed by Wilmot council.

Commission members earn \$4,384 and the chairman earns \$5,699. (60)

Often, municipal politicians begin as activists in community associations or have involved themselves in parent-school associations. Having developed experience and a support base, they will sometimes move into school board politics and then into the municipal arena. Municipal politicians will say they are motivated to make a contribution to their communities. Some may have a business background and wish to promote economic development and fiscal responsibility, while others may want to improve the circumstances of the less advantaged members of the community. Environmental and heritage issues might be yet another stimulus.

Harry Allen spent 13 years in municipal politics; first as an alderman of the city of Gloucester (a community of 100,000 situated next to Ottawa), and later as its mayor. His experience offers an example of the challenges and pressures

faced by those who decide to take the plunge into local politics. Allen says his move into local politics evolved from his early commitment to sport and recreation "As a volunteer I just seemed to find myself being drawn in deeper and deeper until people who had worked with me encouraged me to run for a seat on council."

Once elected, his position as alderman in Gloucester included a part-time position on the local council as well as a seat on the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Council "I found myself burning the candle at both ends between my job and my responsibilities at the local and regional level. I had to make a decision to involve myself in politics on a full-time basis or get out of it altogether".

Allen won election as mayor and served for two three-year terms. An accountant by profession, he viewed his primary responsibility as getting the municipality to apply a more business-like approach to its operations and financial management. His positions on issues often placed him in the line of fire from his political opponents, media and the public at large. "The experience cost me and my family heavily in strain as a result of the stands I felt I had to take. People would ask me as a chartered accountant why I would put my family through this, but I felt you do what you feel is right and fair, and you just hang tough".

A natural tendency on the municipal beat is to peg a politician as being on the left or the right, and some may have personal connections to a particular provincial or federal party. Party affiliations, however, have little to do with the

day-to-day life of a municipal councillor. Rather, it is issues and geographic location which tend more often to motivate alliances between politicians of various persuasions. A politician wishing to protect a particular heritage property in her ward may convince a number of her colleagues to support her position on the understanding that she will come to their aid on other issues. In other cases, politicians may find common cause because of their proximity to either the urban core or suburban single-family neighbourhoods. Much of the municipal reporter's role, in addition to covering meetings, is therefore to watch these advance signals which indicate in which direction a councillor will vote. "It was my experience that a municipal election was a great time to start the city hall beat," says The Toronto Sun city hall reporter Antonella Artuso. "It's an opportunity to observe politics in action - - who is jostling for what - - who is going to make a play and who is going to drop out."

However, an observant municipal reporter will begin to see the signals of those wishing to unseat an incumbent or take on the mayor as much as a year before the actual election takes place. A community association president may begin to develop a media image which goes beyond the normal parochial interests of his group, or a councillor may choose to call press conferences on issues of broader consequence than purely the interests of her ward. In council meetings, one may observe a councillor building blocks of votes in opposition to pet priorities of the mayor.

Antonella Artuso's experience at The Toronto Sun is that a reporter has to be on guard during the period in advance of an election. "People will start calling with

stories for us which make one particular political figure look bad. You have to be careful that you are not being used. Whenever people come up to me who I don't know, are too darn friendly and want something, I start sniffing around and invariably you find out it's someone who ran against someone, or wants to run against them again."

a) Electioneering at the Municipal Level

As the actual election date draws closer, one will begin to notice a heightened intensity to council deliberations and the municipal councillors will be vying for greater media profile. Most understand that the prime component of today's journalism is conflict. Therefore, the reporter will not have to look hard to find people opposing each other with more ferocity than would have been expected several months earlier.

A recent development in municipal politics has been the increased prominence of pressure groups which, for one reason or another, wish to influence the priorities and composition of the next council. As the county reporter for the Windsor Star, Ray Ford reported before the 1991 municipal election that examples of pressure tactics were emerging from increasingly sophisticated local lobbies. He said candidates were receiving "surveys and questionnaires...all kinds of 'em. Falling like snow on the desk and kitchen tables of candidates throughout the county." One deputy reeve told Ford, "One from the Ontario Tax Payers' Coalition was 14 legal-size pages. It took me just under five hours to fill it out in three sittings."

That coalition asked “for biographical details, and (probed) candidates on their commitment to the coalition’s policies -- including public votes on budgets, the recall of sitting councillors and tax cuts.” (61) A spokesman for that group indicated that the survey would be used as a lever to hold politicians to their word.

b) Financial Backing during Elections

Unlike politicians at the federal and provincial levels of government, municipal politicians cannot rely on party machinery to organize and fund-raise on their behalf. That is not to say that many local politicians do not hold party affiliations. But campaign support generally presents itself in a more informal fashion at the municipal level. Rather, it often is based on help from family, friends of a similar political persuasion, and supporters from previous volunteer activities. As well, the politician may receive financial support from groups and businesses who believe the candidate may be responsive in the future to their interests and concerns.

In 1988, the province required municipal politicians for the first time to reveal the names of donors who contributed more than \$100 to their campaign. And as Doug Lefaive of The Hamilton Spectator indicated in a story on campaign spending, “their disclosure forms confirmed what has long been suspected...that those with vested interests provide the vast majority of municipal campaign funds.” (62)

Lefaive's research into these funding sources in advance of the last municipal election in Hamilton indicated that real estate developers and contractors were the heaviest contributors. These groups would stand to benefit from advantageous zoning decisions. Following this group were such industries as waste disposal companies that stood to win lucrative municipal contracts. In a community with heavy blue-collar employment, unions were also heavy contributors towards candidates who would oppose giving contracts to non-union businesses.

Ontario has tightened the legislation regarding donations to candidates. At one point it was possible for corporations to contribute more than their allotted \$750 by offering additional donations through their associated companies. Today, the province limits the total contribution to all candidates to \$5,000. Finally, the province has also prohibited candidates from using their campaign surpluses for personal purposes; funds not spent can only be used to pay back past campaign debts or held in trust for future campaigns.

c) Stages in the Election Story

Six months before municipal election.

Questions:

1. Are certain individuals beginning to position themselves to run for mayor or to unseat an incumbent on council?
2. Are issues beginning to present themselves which will become the focus for the upcoming election?

3. Are there apparent personal and political conflicts between councillors that will have an influence on the election?

Three months before the election.

Questions:

1. What are the voting records, accomplishments and election platforms of councillors seeking re-election as well as those running for the mayor's seat?
2. What are the background, accomplishments, and platforms of those who are seeking a seat on council who are not incumbents?
3. Do some races have unique characteristics such as a history of tight elections, combativeness, etc.?
4. What is the public mood in advance of the election?

The municipal election.

Questions:

1. Who wins and why?
2. How much did it cost each candidate?
3. What does the election mean for property taxpayers if election promises of those elected are kept?

Sources: community groups, selection of "average" people in various wards, municipal staff for voting procedures, former municipal politicians, political scientists specializing in local politics, the candidates and members of their election team.

d) Approaches to the Election Story

In a chapter of a new journalism text, The Canadian Reporter, co-author Catherine McKercher of the Carleton University School of Journalism and Communication highlights three basic types of stories which appear during a municipal election: stories that focus on candidates, on the contest and on the issues.

As noted, some politicians may begin to position themselves for an election months before the actual campaign begins. Stories about candidates should therefore highlight some of their past voting patterns, political pronouncements and actions, etc. Rob Ferguson of The Canadian Press recounted the various factors which seemed to influence the choices of electors in a 1991 story. In Toronto's mayoralty election, there were "fears that (Jack) Layton's party ties (NDP) would scare a business community already skittish about the province's NDP government," (63) whereas Sault Ste. Marie voters took into account Mayor Joe Fatesi's support for a 1990 bylaw declaring the city English-only.

As McKercher indicates, the municipal reporter will find that much of the coverage can focus on the race between several individuals in one ward. In the 1988 municipal election, for example, a fight for the Dalhousie ward seat in Ottawa was so tight between two candidates that a spoiled ballot marked with a "happy face" represented the difference between winning and losing. That particular contest was not only the source of numerous stories during the election; it carried on almost to the next election as court cases, and appeals

determined who had indeed won the aldermanic seat.

Although the personal history and competition between candidates may generate a range of stories, it is most often the positions politicians take on issues which become the focus of greatest attention. A candidate's public ability to convince the electorate that he or she would keep taxes down or block a development in a particular neighbourhood is often the difference between election and failure. As Ferguson indicated in his story on the 1991 election, "voters in Thunder Bay, Timmins, Sudbury, Kapuskasing, Brantford, Belleville and Niagara-on-the-Lake also fired their mayors over a wide range of issues including taxes, development and Sunday shopping". In the case of Belleville, "an environmentalist who moved to the city proposed council outlaw idling vehicles to cut pollution (and) ousted 11-year mayor George Zegouras." In Peterborough, user-pay garbage collection was a key issue, and in other communities such as Toronto, market value assessment "sparked tax revolts." Municipal elections present a multitude of opportunities for the reporter to inform the public about the past, present and future of their community.

The Hamilton Spectator's Jim Poling provides an example of an election story which reflects the variety of personalities, competition and issues which come to the fore during a municipal election.

Rousing battle pits old guard aldermen against activists

Take two political war-horses and a resident with a lengthy list of community service work. Throw in two labor activists and an aldermanic candidate who quit his job in the spring to campaign for a city council seat. It's a sure-fire recipe for one of the most rousing aldermanic campaigns in Hamilton.

Incumbents Vince Agro, 53, and Bill McCulloch, 64, are no strangers to elections. Between the pair, they've chalked up more than 50 years of civic political duty.

Issues include keeping industry out of residential neighborhoods, paying more attention to the environment and re-routing truck traffic.

But it's the incumbents' length of service that's become the real target during the Ward 2 campaign.

"We need an infusion of new ideas and faces," says 54-year-old candidate Peter Hill. "I think Bill and Vince have really contributed to this city and council. But is it healthy for two people from the ward to be in office so long?"

Mr. Hill is executive director of the Electrical and Mechanical Contractors Association. Previously, he held the public relations post at Hamilton Civic Hospitals. In June, he was inducted into the McMaster Alumni Gallery of Distinction for outstanding community service. He's offering job creation strategies, alternatives to housing intensification, and concern for the disabled, elderly and children.

Former securities clerk Brian Morris, 35, attacked the incumbents for their apparent low profile.

"I think they've been here so long, they are too comfortable," he said. "I've been criss-crossing the ward knocking on doors and I keep hearing from people that they are not getting the service out of their aldermen that they expect."

Mr. Morris is running on a 10-point platform with planks ranging from more community policing, a better recycling program, leadership at city hall and preservation of historical buildings and sites.

Candidate Bob Mann, 53, says jobs are the main issue facing residents. Mr. Mann, has served in the labor movement in Hamilton for 35 years. In 1978, he ran unsuccessfully as a Ward 2 aldermanic candidate. He tried again in 1982 for a council spot representing Ward 4, and again in 1988 in Ward 7.

"I don't see this council doing anything to encourage jobs or increase social services," he said. "There's a tremendous need for affordable housing and this council has only paid lip-service to it."

Also running on a labor platform is 32-year-old William Laidlaw. He says jobs and taxes are the dominant concerns. Mr. Laidlaw is endorsed by The Hamilton and District Labour Council. But he may lose their blessing after coming out in favor of building the Red Hill Creek Expressway through the valley. The stance is opposite the labor council's position, staunchly opposing the route being constructed through the green space.

If elected, Mr. Laidlaw says he'll work to reduce business and residential taxes by lobbying the province to pick up the full

cost of education and welfare costs. He also favors the James Street CN station as the GO train terminal. "I'm tired of having aldermen who represent their interests and not the interests of the majority."

This is Mr. Laidlaw's fourth shot at running for a Ward 2 seat. "This shows the people I have determination and am not afraid to keep coming back. I'll fight for their interests to the same degree."

Mr. Laidlaw, in what some people say was blatant politicking, has targetted Mr. McCulloch as the source of the recently disbanded Jamesville BIA. He and other BIA dissenters were instrumental in conducting a high-profile ward campaign discrediting Mr. McCulloch for resisting scrapping the five-year-old merchants' association. Mr. McCulloch says he's troubled the BIA was disbanded, saying he believes it's a move merchants will regret.

"They are losing out on some valuable programs," he said. "It's a case of cutting off your nose to spite your face."

Mr. McCulloch rebuts criticism that he and Mr. Agro have become complacent. "I'm not surprised to hear the fresh-blood line," he said. "That's the same line Vince and I used when we ran 26 years ago. What else are newcomers going to say? They don't have a record to run on so of course they are going to say we need new faces at city hall."

Mr. McCulloch says the most important issue facing ward residents is the construction of the Perimeter Road. As a member of the police board, he's pushing for increased community policing. The senior alderman also wants to curb the amount of traffic passing through the ward to keep residential neighborhoods as safe as possible.

Mr. Agro, who supported the BIA disbanding, says he and Mr. McCulloch have worked well as a team. He also denies candidates' claims they have been inactive. "I've also fought hard for this ward and will continue to do so," he said.

Mr. Agro is advocating more environmental awareness and better planning which includes relocating industry to industrial parks.

He's also a tireless supporter of arts organizations - - bodies which "shape the spirit of the city." (64)

Epilogue

Over the last decade, there have been a number of shifts in emphasis among the various local media covering city hall. Not so long ago, large cities often had two dailies in competition to unearth the latest municipal scandal. Today, competition with the broadsheet may come from tabloids as is the case in Toronto and Ottawa, or from a multitude of community newspapers which may appear on a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly basis.

Meanwhile, local television news programming at suppertime and again following the late-night network newscasts has been cut back on many CBC stations across the province. The post-national newscast for the whole of Ontario, for example, now originates from Toronto.

Changes are underway on the radio front as well. Just as recent CRTC decisions were sounding the death knell for "foreground format" programming which promoted public affairs and news on FM stations, there is a resurgence of talk radio on AM stations. This is seen by AM station owners as a way to rebuild audiences as many of their previous listeners have turned their dials to the cleaner stereo signals of FM.

Finally, as highlighted at the beginning of the guide, there is a trend across the province for newspapers to place greater emphasis on issues impacting on their audiences rather than covering meetings for their own sake.

Reflecting on the results of a Queen's University research project which assessed the impact of newspaper reporting on public awareness of municipal issues in three Ontario communities, Edwin Black acknowledges that the newspaper plays a significant role in selecting issues to bring to the attention of the public. However, based on the Queen's study, it is uncommon that the newspaper's influence is the paramount factor in directing public opinion or the decisions made by municipal politicians. (65) Rather it depends more on the forces brought to bear at the community and political levels combined with the ability of the newspaper to articulate the various points of view. Although available research does not demonstrate that the media's influence is as direct as some might believe, it is evident that there is a public demand for more emphasis on issues and contextual information which allows the individual to make an informed judgement.

Given the increasing demands placed on reporters, it seems even more appropriate today that there be more information resources available to the novice municipal beat reporter. No longer is there the luxury to learn by trial and error. Rather it is now required that reporters identify local issues before they make their appearance in public meetings in order that the public can be prepared to respond and participate more effectively in municipal activities. It is hoped that the Reporters' Guide to Municipal Government in Ontario meets a need among reporters as an introduction to a most complex and relevant level of government.

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Appendix I

Ontario Ministries Related to the Municipal Beat

**Community and Social Services, Ontario Ministry of
Communications and Marketing Branch
7th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor Street, Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1E9**

The Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) is responsible for programs, services and support for:

- adults and children with developmental and physical disabilities; group homes;**
- children - - child care (day care), child welfare, children's aid societies, adoption and foster care policy;**
- carrying out federally-legislated Young Offenders Act (YOA), dealing with young offenders 12-15 years of age; probation and other community court orders, open and secure custody for young offenders;**
- General Welfare Assistance and Family Benefits Assistance for people in need of income support;**
- family violence issues, women's shelters, counsel, support training.**

Communications and Marketing Branch:

Phone: (416) 325-5151 FAX: (416) 325-5172

Ministry Contacts:

Mike Kurts, Director, Communications and Marketing

Phone: (416) 325-5203

Peter Taylor, Manager, Media and Editorial Services

Phone: (416) 325-5161

Jane Greer, Senior Media Relations Officer

Phone: (416) 325-5156

Environment, Ontario Ministry of

135 St. Clair Avenue West

Toronto, Ontario M4V 1P5

The Ministry is responsible for achieving and maintaining a quality of the environment, including our water and land, that will protect human health and the ecosystem and will contribute to the well being of the people of Ontario.

Marylee O'Neill, Director, Public Affairs and Communications Services

Phone: (416) 323-4324

Gerry Merchant, Senior Media Relations Officer

Phone: (416) 323-4333

Christian Bode, Bilingual Media Relations Officer

Phone: (416) 323-4613

FAX: (416) 323-4643

Public Information Centre:

Phone: (416) 323-4321

Toll free: 1-800-565-4923

FAX: (416) 323-4564

Health, Ministry of

9th Floor Block 80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1R3

The Ministry of Health has a broad mandate involving all aspects of the provision of health services within the province of Ontario. Of particular concern to municipal reporters are public health and health promotion programs which are most often administered on behalf of the province by a public health department within a regional government or a public health unit reporting to a local board of health.

Richard Schabas, Chief Medical Officer of Health

Phone: (416) 327-7392

FAX: (416) 327-7438

Rhea Cohen, Director of Communications

Phone: (416) 327-4352

FAX: (416) 327-8791

Anastasia Erland, Deputy Director of Communications

Phone: (416) 327-8501

FAX: (416) 327-8791

Layne Verbeek, Media Liaison Officer

Phone: (416) 327-4365

FAX: (416) 327-8791

Housing, Ontario Ministry of

777 Bay Street, 17th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2E5

The Ministry develops policy and programs for non-profit and assisted rental

housing and operates six field offices which deliver social and market housing programs. The ministry oversees the operation of the Ontario Housing Corporation which owns 84,400 public housing units managed by over 50 local housing authorities. As part of its mandate, the Ministry attempts to stimulate the production of affordable housing and helps ensure all structures are built safely and efficiently. A major objective is to work with other levels of government and community groups to help provide affordable housing across Ontario. The Ministry administers rent control through 20 local offices and also administers the Rental Housing Protection Act which regulates the demolition or conversion of residential rental buildings.

Communications Branch:

Enquiries: (416) 585-7041

FAX: (416) 585-6227

Jocelyne Soulodre, Executive Co-ordinator

Phone: (416) 585-6900

Grant Maxwell, Senior Co-ordinator

Phone: (416) 585-7024

Social Housing

Warren Harding

Phone: (416) 585-6218

Housing Advocacy/Building Code:

Ed Yudin

Phone: (416) 585-7033

Rent Control:

Al Bell

Phone: (416) 585-7022

Labour, Ontario Ministry of
400 University Avenue
Toronto Ontario M7A 1T7

The Ministry is responsible for the Ontario Labour Relations Board, labour-management relations including conciliation and mediation services, employment standards, and occupational health and safety.

Lyn Hamilton, Director, Communications Branch
Phone: (416) 326-7400

Manager, News & Information
Phone: (416) 326-7399

Bob McClelland, Co-ordinator, News
Phone: (416) 326-7405
Fax: (416) 326-7406

Municipal Affairs, Ontario Ministry of
777 Bay Street, 17th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2E5

The Ministry is responsible for local government and community planning in the province. It ensures municipalities have the legislative authority to respond to local needs and encourages sound land-use planning and community renewal. It offers management and administrative support along with technical and financial assistance to 832 municipalities across Ontario.

Communications Branch
Enquiries: (416) 585 7041
Fax: (416) 585-6227

Jocelyne Soulodre, Executive Co-ordinator
Communications and Information Services
Phone: (416) 585-6900

Communications Co-ordinator
Office: (416) 585-7023

Natural Resources, Ontario Ministry of
Whitney Block, Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1W3

The Ministry of Natural Resources provides opportunities for outdoor recreation and resource development for the continuous ecological, social and economic benefit of the people of Ontario and administers, protects and conserves public lands and waters.

John McHugh, Director, Communications Services Branch
Office: (416) 314-2119

Brian Bloome, Manager Information/Media
Office: (416) 314-2095
Home: (416) 489-6198

Anne White, Senior Communications Officer
Phone: (416) 314-2123

John Dadds, Senior Communications Officer
Phone: (416) 314-2096

Dennis Wilson, Information Officer,
Aviation, Flood & Fire Management (Sault Ste. Marie)
Phone: (705) 945-5776

Communications Services Branch**FAX: (416) 314-0102****The Ontario Municipal Board (OMB)**

The OMB was originally situated in the Attorney General of Ontario's Office, however, in 1993 it is being shifted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. It is an administrative tribunal which is responsible for hearing appeals and deciding on a variety of contentious municipal matters including land use planning proposals.

Information Office**Phone: (416) 598-2266****FAX: (416) 979-8808****Solicitor General, Ontario Ministry of the****25 Grosvenor Street****Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Y6**

The Ministry is responsible for related programmes of law enforcement and public safety. Activities and agencies include:

- Ontario Policing Services
- Ontario Provincial Police
- Ontario Police Arbitration Commission
- Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services
- Office of the Fire Marshall
- Office of the Chief Coroner
- Forensic Pathology
- Centre of Forensic Sciences
- Emergency Planning Ontario

Ministry Office

Kirk C. Smith, Director, Communications Branch

Phone: (416) 325-9680

FAX: (416) 325-9689

After hours: (416) 606-6928/1929

Office of the Fire Marshal

B. Moyle, Fire Marshal

Phone: (416) 325-3101

Emergency Planning Ontario

Jim Ellard, Co-ordinator

Phone: (416) 965-6932/965-6708

FAX: (416) 340-2298

Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services

Gordon Hampson, Policy Advisor

Phone: (416) 965-6071

Ontario Provincial Police

Supt. G.R. Guay, Director, Media Relations Branch

Phone: (416) 965-3900

24-hour Duty Officer

Phone: (416) 965-5751

Transportation, Ontario Ministry of

1201 Wilson Avenue

Downsview, Ontario M3M 1J8

The Ministry of Transportation plans, designs, constructs and maintains Ontario's Provincial highway system; provides subsidies for municipal roads

and transit; and is responsible for policy development for the province's air, rail and marine programs. It is also responsible for driver, vehicle and carrier licensing driver regulation, compliance enforcement of inter-city buses, for hire truck transportation vehicle weight, commodity type, vehicle safety and co-ordination of road safety for the province.

Marj Welch, Director of Communication and Public Education

Phone: (416) 235-3904

Barb Maher, Manager of Corporate Communication

Phone (416) 235-4864

Anne McLaughlin, Media Relations

Phone: (416) 235-4102

FAX: (416) 235-4841

Appendix II.

Selected Associations of Interest to the Municipal Beat Reporter

I. Municipal - General, Planning and Taxes

Association of Municipalities of Ontario

250 Bloor Street East, Suite 701

Toronto, Ontario M4W 1E6

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) is a non-profit organization representing approximately 700 of Ontario's 832 municipalities. Through its research, policy development and government consultation programs, AMO plays a significant role in the development of provincial and federal policies affecting municipalities, and is the recognized municipal voice on local government issues in Ontario. AMO's Resources Centre maintains an extensive collection of reference sources concerning contemporary municipal issues.

Joe Mavrinac, President

Office: (705) 567-9361

Fax: (705) 567-3535

Kathleen Hunter, Executive Director

Office: (416) 929-7573

Doug Raven, Director of Policy

Office: (416) 929-7573

After hours: answering machine

Resource Centre

Renata Kulpa, Information Manager

Phone: (416) 929-7573

Fax: (416) 929-7574

Ontario Taxpayers Coalition

Box 86, 70 St. Paul Street West

St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 6R4

The Ontario Taxpayers Coalition is an association of concerned taxpayers opposing increases in an already-overtaxed society. It is non-profit and not aligned with any political party. Formed in 1990, it had grown to 70,000 members in 72 chapters by the end of April 1992.

Main Office

Frank Sheehan,

Phone: (416) 688-3713

Fax: (416) 688-6454

Joe Peschissolido

Toronto, ON M6H 1A1

Office: (416) 535-2222

Fax: (416) 535-9369

Residence: (416) 247-3978

Canadian Institute of Planners

126 York St., Suite 404

Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 5T5

CIP is the professional organization of community planners in Canada.

Members' experience includes such areas as urban, rural and regional planning; community, economic, social, and environmental planning; and land use, resources, facilities and services planning.

David Sherwood, Executive Director

Phone: (613)233-2105

FAX: (613) 233-1984

Queen's University At Kingston

Kingston , Ontario K7L 3N6

As well as access to a range of research on municipal government, The Institute of Local Government at Queen's provides a range of academic sources which may assist in providing background information on local issues.

Richard J. Bowman, Queen's University

Director of Public Relations

Phone: (613) 384-3094

Ann Stevens, Assistant Director of P.R.

Phone: (613) 545-2035

II. Environment

Ontario Association of Landscape Architects

75 The Donway West, Suite 302

Don Mills, Ontario M3C 2E9

The Ontario Association of Landscape Architects is the professional organization representing accredited landscape architects. Only OALA full members can legally use the term 'Landscape Architect'. Members apply artistic and scientific principles to research, planning, design and management of both natural and built environments. The association promotes sustainable environments through land stewardship.

Arthur M. Timmis, Executive Director

Phone: (416) 443-1785

Fax: (416) 443-1418

Residence: (416) 239-2252

Recycling Council of Ontario

489 College Street, Suite 504

Toronto, Ontario M6G 1A5

The Recycling Council of Ontario (RCO) is a non-profit corporation representing over 700 recyclers, corporate, government, and public members. Promoting reduction, reuse and recycling of waste, the Council publishes the Ontario Recycling Update, sponsors Canada's largest recycling conference, Waste Reduction in Ontario, and a province-wide waste reduction information service.

John Hanson, Executive Director

Merle Young, General Manager

Pat McFarlane, Managing Editor, Ontario Recycling Update

Jill Dunkley, Information Services Director

Phone: (416) 960-1025 or

1-800-263-2849

Fax: (416) 960-8053

Canadian Water Quality Association

151 Frobisher Drive, Suite A 201

Waterloo, Ontario N2V 2C9

The industry served by CWQA and its members encompasses water quality improvement for homes, businesses, industry, and institutions. The purpose of the Canadian Water Quality Association is to promote the individual right to

quality water, the dissemination of water quality information, and the growth of the water quality improvement industry.

Lou J. Smith, Executive Director

Phone: (519) 885-3854

FAX: (519) 747-9124

Ontario Waste Management Corporation

2 Bloor Street West

Toronto, Ontario M4W 3E2

The Ontario Waste Management Corporation is the provincial crown agency responsible for implementing a waste management system for Ontario's liquid industrial and hazardous wastes. OWMC is not a regulatory agency, neither is it responsible for domestic garbage or nuclear waste. Among its current priorities is the submission of plans for a major treatment disposal facility in the Niagara Region. It also provides technical information and advice to plant operators on an ongoing basis.

Tom Coleman, Director of Communications and Public Affairs

Charles Ross, Manager, Media and Information Services

Brenda O'Connor, Co-ordinator, Public Affairs

Phone for all: (416) 923-2918

FAX: (416) 923-7521

3 of/de 3

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)

Canadian Environmental Network

251 Laurier Ave. W.

P.O. Box 1299 Stn B.

Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5 R3

Formally the Environmental Non-Governmental Organization Steering Committee, the Canadian Environmental Network is a non-profit network of over 1,800 environmental organizations, providing a cooperative forum for these groups to share knowledge and expertise; concerns include clean air, pesticides, energy waste, environmental assessment, wilderness, forests, education and international affairs.

Eva Schacherl, Executive Director

Phone: (613) 563-2078

FAX: (613) 563-7236

Ontario Environmental Network

2 Quebec Street, Suite 201-C

Guelph, Ontario N1H 2T3

Role: See Canadian Environmental Network

Tom Klein Beernick

Phone: (519) 837-2565

FAX: (519) 836-4191

III. Transportation

Canadian Urban Transit Association

55 York Street, Suite 901

Toronto, Ontario M5J 1R7

CUTA represents urban transit systems across Canada as well as manufacturers of transit equipment. It serves as a collection centre for statistical data which it categorizes and disseminates. CUTA acts as the voice of the transit industry in dealing with all levels of government.

Al Cormier, Executive Vice President

Office: (416) 365-9800

FAX: (416) 365-1295

After hours: (416) 858-8643

Transport 2000 Ontario

427 Bloor Street W.

Toronto, Ontario M5S 1X7

Transport 2000 - Ontario promotes transportation policies, planning and actions by government and operators that are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. It is part of the national Transport 2000 organization.

John Dunbar, President

Phone: (416) 960-0026

FAX: (416) 960-0026

Transport 2000 Canada

22 Metcalfe Street, suite 405

P.O Box 858 Stn B.

Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5P9

This national organization provides up-to-date consumer information on consumer transport issues; and researches topics affecting all modes of transport.

Dirk Partridge, Administrator

Phone: (613) 594-3290

FAX: (613) 594-3271

Transportation Association of Canada

2323 St. Laurent Blvd,

Ottawa, Ontario K1G 4K6

Formerly known as the Canadian Good Roads Association, the Transportation Association of Canada promotes the provision of safe, efficient, effective and environmentally sustainable transportation services.

Norm Brown, Executive Director

Phone: (613) 736-1350

FAX: (613) 736-1395

Ontario Good Roads Association

530 Otto Road,

Mississauga, Ontario L5T 2L5

Role: See Canadian Transportation Association

Sheila Richardson, Executive Director

Phone: (416) 795-2555

FAX: (416) 795-2660

Canadian Bus Association

155 Queen St., Suite 900

Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6L1

Formerly known as the Canadian Motor Coach Association, the Canadian Bus Association contributes to the welfare and development of the industry and to assist its members in providing modern, reliable, economical and safe transportation for Canadians in an appropriate regulatory and legislative environment.

David Long, Executive Director

Phone: Ottawa (613) 238-1800

Toronto (416) 513-1728

FAX: (613) 232-9173

Ontario Motor Coach Association

234 Eglinton Avenue, East, Suite 412

Toronto, Ontario M4P 1K5

OMCA represents the Ontario inter-city bus industry. Members account for 90% of scheduled services and 60% of tour services plus schools, contract, transit services. Members are from all provinces and most United States because of travel/tours to these areas.

Brian Crow, President

Phone: (416) 488-8855

IV. Social

Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies

75 Front Street East

Toronto, Ontario M5E 1V9

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies represents 49 Children's Aid Societies in Ontario and advocates for progressive legislation, enlightened policies and adequate funding. The united voice of societies provides support and strength to the Association when informing the public and persuading

government to act on child welfare issues.

Roy Wood, President

Mary McConville, Executive Director

Diane Cresswell, Manager of Communications

Phone for all (416) 366-8115

Fax (416) 366-8317

Ontario Human Rights Commission

400 University Avenue, 12th Floor

Toronto, Ontario M7A 2R9

The Ontario Human Rights Commission enforces the Human Rights Code, which provides the right to equal treatment in employment, accommodation, contracts, goods, services, facilities and vocational associations. The Commission implements programs of compliance/conciliation, consultations with employers, unions and community groups, public education, research and policy development.

Alan Shefman, Director, Communications and Education

Phone: (416) 314-4522

TTD: (416) 314-4535

FAX: (416) 314-4533

Ontario Municipal Social Services Association

5780 Timberlea Boulevard, Suite 107

Mississauga, Ontario L4W 4W8

OMSSA is a voluntary, non-profit organization representing the interests of municipal social services administrations in Ontario. Membership is drawn from some 65 municipalities and includes 1,000 members from municipal government, provincial ministries and private agencies. The Association provides a forum for training, policy development and information sharing in the social services field.

Pauline Carter, Executive Director

Phone: (416) 629-3115

FAX: (416) 629-1633

Canadian Council on Social Development

55 Parkdale Avenue

Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4G1

The Canadian Council on Social Development promotes, through research, advocacy and policy education, the participation of Canadians in the formulation of an enlightened progressive and just social policy.

Patrick Johnston, Executive Director

Phone: (613) 728-1865

FAX: (613) 728-9387

V. Health

Ontario Medical Association

325 University Avenue, Suite 300

Toronto, Ontario M5G 2K7

A voluntary organization representing 23,000 doctors across Ontario, the OMA speaks for physicians on political and economic issues pertinent to the profession and health care delivery. In addition, it has 30 clinical committees and 50 specialist sections.

Jean Chow, Media Relations Officer

Phone: (416) 599-2580

FAX: (416) 340-2966

Toll Free: 1-800-268-7215

Association of Local Official Health Agencies

277 Lakeshore Road East, Suite 402

Oakville, Ontario L6J 6J3

A.L.O.H.A. is the voice of Ontario's 42 public health units. It provides member services in labour relations, professional education, government liaison and public health advocacy. It publishes The Bulletin and Health Unit Bargaining

newsletters, and has sections representing the professional interests of health board trustees and medical officers of health.

Thomas McFadden, Executive Director

Office: (416) 849-4626

Fax: (416) 849-9725

After Hours: (416) 681-3221

Sandra Walkery, President

Phone: (807) 227-5464

Dr. Colin D'Cunha, Chairman

Medical Officer of Health Section

Phone: (416) 396-7445

Reeve Paul Eagleson, Chairman

Board of Health Section

Phone: (519) 934-2210

Appendix III

Glossary of Municipal Beat Terms

Adopted Budget. The budget as approved by a Municipal Council each year.

Assessment. The value of properties within a municipality determined by the Provincial assessment department. The values assigned to properties are computed as a percentage of market value at a given year, and the factors may vary between municipalities.

Assessment Roll. A record of the assessed value of each property in a municipality.

Authorities. Estimated amounts (eg. of gross, recoveries or net) established for capital projects and supported by documentation such as Council approvals, Treasurer's Certificates, Ontario Municipal Board orders, Ministry of Environment approvals and by-laws.

Basis Point. An increase or decrease in an interest rate of 1/100 of 1%. An increase from 9.00% to 9.01% would represent 1 basis point. A decrease from 10.00% to 9.00% would be a decrease of 100 basis points.

Building Permit. Formal, written permission to begin construction or renovation of all buildings.

Capital. Expenditure to create new infrastructure on a project basis, e.g. roads, sewers, watermains, homes for the aged, etc.

Capping. Occurs when the provincial government decides not to provide any additional funding for specific programs which had previously been funded on the basis of need, thereby setting a ceiling beyond which service will not be provided.

Cash Flow Forecast. An indication of the time frame during which actual cash expenditures are expected to take place.

Committee of Adjustment. A committee of citizens who are appointed by the local council to deal with requests for minor exemptions from the municipality's zoning by-law standards.

Debenture. A Long term loan which is borrowed by a municipality to pay for capital projects such as roads, sewers, water supply and other municipal facilities.

Debt.

1) Assumed Debt. The debt associated with assets which are transferred when one municipality assumes an operation or facility from another municipality. The municipality in receipt of the asset is required to reimburse the former municipality for the annual principal and interest payments on the outstanding debt until the debt is paid. The bondholder of course continues to

be paid by the municipality originally issuing the debt.

2) Debt Repayment. The annual principal repayment required to discharge long-term obligations incurred either by the issue of debentures or by agreements.

3) Debt Service. The cost of repaying long-term debt including principal and interest.

4) Funded Debt. Debentures issued and outstanding.

5) Unfunded Authority. Capital Works approved by the O.M.B requiring long-term financing for which debentures have not yet been issued.

6) Unfunded Debt. Debt which is temporary and short-term prior to being permanently financed by the issue of debentures.

7) Credit Rating. A credit rating is a judgement of the investment quality of long or short-term obligations of a corporation by a qualified rating agency based on evaluation and analysis of various financial, economic and other factors.

Deficit. An excess of expenditures over revenues for the year.

Downloading. A shift in financial responsibility from one government level to another, usually higher level to lower level. An example would be a case where the province agrees to cost-sharing arrangements and then reneges.

Encumbrance. A commitment of funds for a future expenditure.

Entanglement. Occurs when a municipality and the province are both involved in the delivery of a program. Normally the province proposes and legislates programs for municipal involvement with cost-sharing arrangements. Therefore financial entanglement results.

Financial Charges. Expenditures for principal and interest charges on long-term debt, interim financing costs and bank service charges. This contains the costs associated with the issuance of debentures and any foreign exchange costs.

Forecast. A projection of expenditures and revenues beyond the next operating year.

Gapping. The budgetary savings realized between the time a job position is vacated and subsequently filled.

General Welfare Assistance. An income support program that provides financial help to people who have no other financial support.

Grants.

Unconditional Grants. A grant which the province does not specify any particular use to which the monies are to be put.

Conditional Grants. Provincial grants with rules and regulations attached. Municipalities must spend the money on specific programs to obtain the subsidy.

Gross Expenditure. Total expenditures before applying any revenue.

Land Use Planning. Using official plans or zoning by-laws to manage the development and use of land so that the municipality can grow and provide services that are necessary and still protect the environment.

Land Severance. The authorized separation of a piece of land to form two new adjoining properties. This is commonly known as a consent, and is required if one wants to sell, mortgage or lease (for more than 21 years) a newly created parcel of land. If the two parts are already naturally split, by a road or railway for example, then consent is not needed.

Liability. A debt or other legal obligation arising out of past transactions and payable at some future date.

Mandatory Welfare. Welfare that must be provided to any applicant who meets certain criteria specified by provincial legislation.

Mill Rate. Calculated by dividing a municipality's total revenue requirement by its total assessment in thousands. The result is a rate per thousand dollars of assessment which is then applied to each property.

Official Plan. A policy document that sets out a municipality's views on how land should be used. It provides direction for future planning activities, and for public and private initiatives aimed at improving the existing physical environment. It is tailored to the size and complexity of each municipality and is based largely on input made by citizens through the public participation process.

Ontario Building Code. Standards for design and materials that must be met in all building construction and renovation.

Ontario Municipal Board. An administrative tribunal responsible for hearing appeals and deciding on a variety of contentious municipal matters, including land use planning proposals. Board members are not elected but are appointed by the Ontario Cabinet. They include lawyers, accountants, architects, planners and public administrators.

Operating. Expenditures required to support the ongoing day-to-day expenditures of a municipality e.g. payroll, welfare payments, debt charges etc.

Property Assessment. The value given to a property based on its sale value and used to calculate property taxes.

Property Standards By-law. A by-law that requires buildings to be kept safe and in good repair.

Provision for Unforeseen. Budget provisions set aside or reserved for contingency items. Council approval is required prior to the expenditures of funds budgeted in the provision for unforeseen.

Recovery. An amount received by a municipality for work performed on behalf of someone or some other municipality.

Reserve. An undivided or unidentified portion of the municipality's net assets held or retained for a specific requirement in the future.

Reserve Fund. A pool of designated assets, usually cash and investment securities, set aside by by-law for some specific future use.

Revenue. The gross proceeds from taxes, licences, duties and sources other than borrowing.

Sinking Fund. A fund which is set aside to cover annual costs associated with servicing debt in the form of debentures.

Subdivision. Division of a piece of land into two or more parcels in order to sell one or both. The provisions of the Planning Act come into play. To subdivide land in Ontario, one needs approval of a plan of subdivision from the

Minister of Municipal Affairs or a municipality that has been delegated the Minister's approval powers. Subdivision approval has now been delegated to all regional municipalities, and to a number of local municipalities.

Subsidy. A generic term for unconditional and conditional transfers from other governments. A municipality is required by statute to provide specific services and receives revenue in the form of provincial subsidies according to the provincial regulations for providing these services (conditional transfers) and also receives monies for unspecified purposes (unconditional transfers).

Surplus. An excess of revenues over expenditures for the year.

Town. A municipality that normally has more than 1,500 people.

Transfer Payments. Payments made where no service is received (e.g., payments for General Welfare Assistance to unemployables). These contain expenditures related to reserve fund appropriations, contributions to capital, grants-in-lieu of taxes, and sales taxes payable.

Unconditional Grants. Provincial funding with no strings attached normally used by municipalities to reduce taxes or rates.

Village. The smallest kind of municipality, usually with a population of 500 people or less.

Warden. The head of a county council.

Wards. Areas into which a municipality is divided for election of council members and school trustees.

Zoning By-law. A precise document used by a municipality to regulate the use of the land. It states exactly what land uses are currently permitted in the community and provides detailed information such as:

- where buildings or structures may be located;
- types of uses and dwellings permitted;
- standards for lot size, parking requirements, building height, side yard dimensions and setback from the street.

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