

The Maturing Metropolis



A DISCUSSION ABOUT GOVERNANCE
IN THE CITY OF TORONTO A DECADE
AFTER AMALGAMATION

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The Project Methodology



- My time at City Hall
- Extensive research
- 11 Interviews:
 - ❑ Phillip Abrahams, Intergovernmental Affairs, City Manager's Office
 - ❑ Lynda Taschereau, Corporate and Strategic Policy, City Manager's Office
 - ❑ Councillor Brian Ashton, Scarborough Southwest
 - ❑ Councillor Shelley Carroll, Don Valley East
 - ❑ Councillor Karen Stintz, Eglinton Lawrence
 - ❑ Councillor Adam Vaughan, Trinity-Spadina
 - ❑ Stuart Green, Deputy Director Communications, Mayor's Office
 - ❑ John Barber, Globe and Mail Newspaper
 - ❑ John Lorinc, Writer and Freelance Journalist
 - ❑ Paul Bedford, Board of Directors, Metrolinx, Former Chief City Planner
 - ❑ Alan Broadbent, Maytree Foundation and Avana Capital

The Agenda



1. The Story of the last Decade

- ❑ Amalgamation – why? did it address the challenges of the time?
- ❑ The Administrative difficulties, and Legislative/Governance Reforms
- ❑ The Narrative

2. The Flashpoints we see Today

- ❑ Is the balance of power at City Hall right for the Megacity?
- ❑ A larger City, but is it more distant from its communities?
- ❑ An open government, but participatory?
- ❑ Progress with Queen's Park, but has enough been done?

3. The Discussion

- ❑ Do you buy it? Broader discussion of the flashpoints

What is Governance?



Governance as “the process by which we collectively solve our problems and meet our society’s needs.”

- Osborne & Gaebler, 1992, *Reinventing Government*

My focus:

- *Internal workings rather than external structure*
- *Governance as not just about government...*
- *Balancing conflicting priorities*
- *Structures, but also actors, political culture, issues, etc.*

The Basics of Municipal Government...



...in two minutes or less

- Cities as ‘creatures of the provinces’ - no Constitutional powers
- Responsibilities are more local in nature, or closer to the people
- Councillors elected in wards (2 per ward in Toronto)
- Mayor elected at-large
- (Generally) no political parties at municipal level

- But it varies – an estimated 3,500 municipal gov’ts in Canada
- And the municipal model is changing...

Canadian City Government in Comparison



Traditional Canadian Municipal Model

- Strong Council – Both Legislative and Executive roles
- Weak Mayor – high political visibility and influence, but largely ceremonial powers, only one vote, no parties



Big American Cities (like NY or Chicago)

- Weak Council - Legislative and Executive authority divided
- Strong Mayor – political parties, powers over appointments, admin., budgets, can veto Council decisions



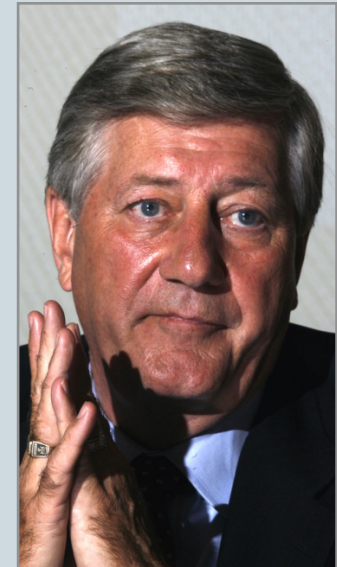
Parliamentary

- Weak House - Legislative and Executive authority divided
- Strong PM – centralized power, appoints Cabinet/senior officials, patronage, control of party machinery/discipline

Amalgamation



- **The challenges of the 1990s**
 - Effectiveness of two-tier Metro system on the wane
 - Larger population, interdependent regional economy
 - Overlapping policies/services, awkward municipal structures
 - Inefficiencies and inequities between municipalities
- **The rationale for amalgamation**
- **The outcome**
 - Unpopular decision
 - Didn't address the challenges
 - Didn't achieve its objectives
 - Created an enormous administrative challenge



The Decade – Creating the Megacity



An enormous task

- Creating new political and administrative structures
- Integrating services without interruption while incorporating newly downloaded responsibilities and undertaking property tax reform
- Consolidating 'back office' corporate services, information systems, real estate portfolios and other functions
- Harmonizing HR policies and classifications, renegotiating collective agreements, and a massive hiring process to replenish the ranks
- Other challenges at the time: acquisition of Toronto Hydro, preparing for Y2K

How did it go? Tough to tell, but...

- Public remained generally content
- Service levels remain relatively high

All in all, a major accomplishment

The Decade – Provincial Reforms

Under *Municipal Act* and
City of Toronto Act, 1997

- ❑ ‘one size fits all’
- ❑ *Prescriptive* environment

2003 *Mun. Act* Reform

- ❑ ‘natural person powers’
like business
- ❑ Specific municipal
powers in 10 areas

City of Toronto Act, 2006

- ❑ Broad *permissive* powers
- ❑ ‘Mature order of
government’
- ❑ Ability to negotiate with
Ottawa
- ❑ Authority to reorganize,
delegate authority
- ❑ New planning powers
- ❑ New fiscal tools (though
not the big ones)

The Decade – Council Governance Reforms



	At Amalgamation	Post-2006
Council Size	57 + Mayor	44 + Mayor
Council Term	3 years	4 years
Mayor's Powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely honorary powers • CEO • Chair of Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair of Executive Committee • Appointment powers • Speaker, 'Mayor's issues', etc.
Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 Standing Committees • Budget Advisory, Striking, Audit, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive (strategic, policy hub) • 7 Standing Policy Committees • Budget, Striking, Audit, etc.
Community Councils	6, reflecting old municipal boundaries	4, with delegated authority for local transactional issues
Accountability Mechanisms		4 accountability officers, internal audit, Council expense policy, etc.
Other		Improved Council calendar

The Narrative of the Past Decade



The narrative that took shape out of the interviews

- Amalgamation created an unprecedentedly large City
- Challenges of greater scope and complexity
 - Increasingly from local to city-wide, from services to policies
 - Greater provincial desire to delegate authority
 - Challenged core assumption about municipal government
- Required City to reorganize itself
- Created path dependency – ‘there’s no turning back’

The Flashpoints at City Hall Today



1. The Mayor-Council balance of power
2. City-wide priorities v. local needs
3. Citizen accessibility and participation
4. Intergovernmental issues



The Mayor-Council Balance of Power



- **New Powers without Accountability?**
 - ❑ Marginalized opposition and absence of accountability?
 - ❑ Or politics as usual, where ‘everybody needs to get the votes’?
- **Hiring/Firing the City Manager**
 - ❑ A ‘red herring’?
 - ❑ Or clearer lines of accountability?
- **Political parties**
 - ❑ Undermine messiness of local democracy?
 - ❑ Or practical requirement of larger city, and needed to organize the opposition?



City-Wide Priorities v. Local Needs



- More able to address city-wide issues
- But greater distance from communities
 - ❑ Product of larger structure of Megacity
 - ❑ But also harmonization of policies
 - ❑ Unwillingness to experiment, customize policies, involve citizens

Citizen Access and Participation

➤ Pretty good on access

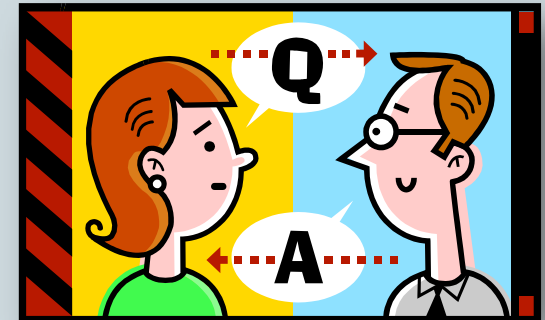
- ❑ Clearer institutional structure
- ❑ Relatively transparent policymaking processes
- ❑ New Accountability Officers and 311 service

➤ Not so good on fostering participation

- ❑ Low voter turnout
- ❑ Few Community Councils
- ❑ Adverse incentives for councillors

➤ Recommendations

- ❑ More community councils, with more powers
- ❑ Electoral reform to improve incentives for councillors



Intergovernmental Issues



- **Come a long way**
 - ❑ City of Toronto Act
 - ❑ Uploading
 - ❑ Federal Gas Tax

- **But the fiscal issue remains**
 - ❑ To align resources with responsibilities
 - ❑ New, more responsive, taxation powers



The Maturing Metropolis?



➤ Interviews – Yes, with some caveats

More maturity needed on:

- ❑ Fiscal issues
- ❑ Planning, service delivery and transit
- ❑ Engaging citizens

➤ And I say Yes – more powers, autonomy, and stronger voice

- ❑ Negotiation of *City of Toronto Act* represents a massive shift in relations with province from amalgamation days
- ❑ National leadership through Big Cities Mayor's Caucus
- ❑ Internationally – Mayor as Chair of C40 Climate Initiative
- ❑ And in Council in taking some tough decisions



Thanks! Questions?

Discussion Question #1



On the balance of power at City Hall...

1. Should the Mayor have more powers, or is the balance right?
2. Would the Mayor's hiring and firing of the City Manager improve accountability?
3. Are political parties needed, or coming?
4. Is it natural or desirable that the Toronto's model adopt more Parliamentary characteristics? (centralization of power, professional public service, parties, accountability officers, etc.)

Discussion Question #2



On city-wide priorities v. local issues...

1. Should policies and services be harmonized across the city, or customized to reflect unique community needs?
2. Would customization be less efficient?
3. How can communities be engaged in decision-making?
4. Should communities have more decision-making power? If so, how?

Discussion Question #3



On citizen access and participation...

1. Why do citizens care less about municipal government?
2. Do you buy the argument that municipal government scores well on accessibility, but less so as participatory?
3. Should citizens be more engaged, and if so what policies or practices would help? (More community councils? Electoral reform? Something more adventurous?)

Discussion Question #4



On intergovernmental issues...

1. If granted access to further taxing powers (i.e. income, sales, payroll, etc.), would the City have the maturity to impose them?
2. Do roles and responsibilities between the City and province need to be realigned further? (should cities be responsible for social services like welfare, housing and child care?)
3. Is Constitutional change needed to recognize Canada's big cities with the status and powers they need? Is it realistic?