

# Revising the City of Winnipeg Act: A Discussion Paper

Research and Working Paper No. 28

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by Christopher Leo  
1987

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The Institute of Urban Studies





THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WINNIPEG

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**REVISING THE CITY OF WINNIPEG ACT: A DISCUSSION PAPER**

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REVISING THE CITY OF WINNIPEG ACT:  
A DISCUSSION PAPER

Research and Working Paper No. 28

by

Christopher Leo

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This discussion paper was written in April 1985 as the members of the Committee of Review, City of Winnipeg Act,<sup>1</sup> were busy establishing their individual positions on the various issues facing the committee. In preparation for committee discussions in May, each member had prepared an informal working paper setting out his "leanings" on these issues. The purpose of this paper was to sift through the "leanings," primarily in search of common ground, but also to identify issues where they were evident, and to contribute to a resolution of those issues. Its publication now, some two years later, serves three purposes, two of which can be set out succinctly. First, it offers a commentary on the state of Winnipeg's notable and controversial Unicity scheme in the mid-1980s, as that scheme was undergoing its second major re-evaluation in the decade and a half.<sup>2</sup> Second, for historians and students of the political process, it offers some insights into the thinking of committee members after they had been influenced by research and an extensive program of public hearings, as well as private discussions with community leaders, but before they had entered upon serious discussions to compromise their differences.

A third reason for the publication of this discussion paper is that it gives support to, and elucidates, another paper, also recently published by the Institute of Urban Studies. Titled Strong Government, Weak Government: Classifying Municipal Structural Change, the paper set out a framework for the evaluation of municipal institutions and argued part of the justification for the framework in the following words:

...in the municipal world of Canada, England and the United States, as well as elsewhere, the search for appropriate institutions remains a very real problem, and one which academics, with their perpetually unresolved disputes over untested theories are doing little or nothing to help solve.<sup>3</sup>

Strong Government, Weak Government sets out a theory which is intended to offer a firmer foundation for the design of municipal institutions than we have had in the past. The present paper constitutes the author's first attempt to put the theory into practice in developing proposals for structural change in a particular municipality. Since the proof of the pudding is in the eating, readers of Strong Government, Weak Government may find it profitable

to evaluate the theory set out there in light of the concrete proposals developed in these pages.

This paper draws on the academic literature and research. The main data are government documents, interviews with politicians and officials, and on-the-spot observation of the problems and successes of Unicity. Wherever applicable, the paper makes comparisons with other cities, primarily Canadian ones. American comparisons are useful as well, but they have to be treated with caution because the political, constitutional and ideological environment south of the border is more distinct from our own than a superficial examination might suggest.<sup>4</sup> The text of the paper as it was written in 1985, follows. No attempt has been made to "improve" it in light of subsequent events. However, where appropriate, brief comments or explanations have been inserted into the footnotes.

## 2.0 COMMON THEMES

It is appropriate to begin with some of the common themes of the "leanings" papers written by members of the Committee of Review. The first one that springs to the eye is gradualism. Alan Artibise makes it explicit: "I strongly support evolutionary change; I envision no radical shifts...." It is clear from the other statements as well that the committee is not moving in the direction of a major "revamp" of Unicity. Members are identifying specific problems and looking for solutions which will spare Winnipeg's politicians and officials yet another round of drastic reform. A similarly cautious mood was evident in my interviews--in January, February and March, with municipal leaders--as it was in the hearings. It is clear that there is a consensus among municipal elites that Winnipeg's local government has been buffeted by the changes of the past two decades and now needs a period of stability to restore its sense of balance. Needless to say, the committee will not necessarily accept the direction of municipal leaders, but their views--especially when they seem to be unanimous on a fundamental issue--do bear on the question of political feasibility.



A second theme which appears in the "leanings" is a reaction against what we might call democratic constitutionalism at the municipal level: the idea that municipal government is a kind of mini-provincial or -federal government with analogous claims to autonomy and a similarly pressing need for strict representation by population. At least some of the committee members seem to be leaning toward the view that local autonomy and representation by population--desireable as they may be in themselves--cannot always be achieved within municipal boundaries. Thus Lawrie Cherniak: "I thought I believed in representation by population; now I want to protect the inner city and the French language. I thought I believed in parliamentary democracy and home rule and masters of our own house; now I'm tending toward some kind of provincial takeover or at least a benevolent dictatorship." Such doubts are likely to afflict anyone who reviews the Unicity experience. Although the 1970 white paper which called for the creation of Unicity<sup>5</sup> did not use the term "democratic constitutionalism," its advocacy of parliamentary-style government, together with near-heroic provisions for citizen participation, made the same point. It is this aspect of Unicity which initially raised the highest hopes and which has since engendered the most acute disappointment. The committee members who are re-evaluating municipal democratic constitutionalism are registering their recognition of these realities.

The preoccupation with democratic processes which held sway in 1970 has been replaced with a new concern: a belief in the urgent need for action to restore Winnipeg's downtown core and its natural heritage, especially the riverbanks. This concern is most clearly manifested in D.I. MacDonald's paper, which gives top priority to the bolstering of the core's "capacity for renewal and revitalization by strengthening its political presence on city council." As the statement implies, Mr. MacDonald has built his proposals for structural reform upon this perception of the development needs of downtown Winnipeg and St. Boniface. In so doing, he has reversed the priorities which were evident in the 1970 white paper, a reversal which clearly reflects the views of many others who are concerned with the affairs of the city of Winnipeg.

One other theme--which appears fleetingly in the "leanings" papers, and has been heard often in the hearings--deserves comment: the idea of "simplifying" Winnipeg's municipal structures. The word "simplification" has a long and unhappy history in the annals of municipal reform. Next to the idea that we can solve a problem by "taking it out of politics," the notion of simplifying municipal structures is perhaps the oldest illusion in municipal politics. Its psychological roots are the universal penchant to picture the troubles we are experiencing right now as a terrible tangle while envisioning the solutions we have in mind as a vista of clarity and simplicity. This illusion has produced a rich harvest of municipal problems. Generation after generation of reformers have fancied themselves to be simplifying municipal structures by introducing new features: revamped council and executive structures, revised constituency and electoral systems, separate boards and commissions. The net result is a morass so impenetrable that the vast majority of citizens have long since given up even trying to understand municipal government.

The idea of simplification is particularly fraught with pitfalls in the current context because Unicity is one of those rare examples of a municipal reform which actually did simplify things. Winnipeg has a unitary government, a straightforward ward system, communities and wards which bear an understandable relationship to each other and are clearly subordinate to the city, and, most significantly, a system of boards and commissions which have, on paper--and to some extent in reality--been subsumed under the authority of council. The latter feature is the envy of "the 101 governments of Metro Toronto"<sup>6</sup> and many other municipal areas. There may well be a case for building on the genuine simplification already achieved in Winnipeg--for example by bringing boards and commissions more clearly under council authority. There may even be a case for introducing new complexities, such as a riverbanks authority. But it would be unrealistic to entertain the idea that new institutional features--say at-large elections of councilors or autonomous communities--would simplify municipal government in Winnipeg.

### 3.0 BALANCING POWERS: WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE AMERICANS?

In view of the fact that the Committee of Review is looking for an appropriate balance between the powers of the mayor and those of the council, a few general comments about municipal experiences in Canada are in order. The notion of trying to achieve such a balance--of apportioning powers between the legislative and executive branches--is fundamentally a separation-of-powers idea. In the British (and Canadian) responsible government tradition, the idea of a balance is not meaningful because the executive and legislative powers are not supposed to be separate in the first place. To be sure, traditional concepts of responsible government have not proven equal to the challenges of modern bureaucracy, and have therefore been revised. In Canada, municipal government has, for three-quarters of a century now, been more akin to separation-of-powers than to responsible government. Even in the British bastion of responsible government, separation-of-powers ideas have been incorporated.<sup>7</sup>

However, the evolution of a system--and incorporation of ideas from elsewhere--does not abolish it, and much depends on how judiciously the new ideas are incorporated, how harmonious they are with the existing system. In Canada, judicious incorporation has not been our forte. We have tended to oscillate between rigid adherence to old ideas, on the one hand, and frantic, holus-bolus transplanted of new ones on the other. There is no better example of this than the rush, at the turn of the century, to adopt American, separation-of-powers-oriented, municipal institutions, combined with unwillingness to take the necessary measures to make them work. Because of the critical way in which they were adopted, these institutions have never fit comfortably into our tradition. We have paid for that in various ways, but perhaps the most conspicuous way is immobility and deadlock: the inability of municipal governments to respond to the challenges they face.

An example or two will help to make this point clearer. Some hundreds of Canadian cities have adopted the American city manager system, but we have been reluctant to wean our public servants from their British-style subservience to politicians, and unwilling to give them the sweeping powers of

appointment which American city managers enjoy. Thus we have the spectacle of city managers having to rely on weak councils for advice on appointments to their staff, while putting on great airs of deference to mayors who themselves are mere figureheads. In such circumstances, immobility is no surprise. The wonder is that anything at all gets done!

Another set of problems stems from the fact that we have separated the executive from the legislative branch but have been loathe to give our mayors the powers of appointment and veto which are appropriate to a separate executive. In Winnipeg we have had much opportunity to observe the consequences of such a state of affairs. Mayors, charged with executive responsibility, but lacking the means to discharge them, have found themselves resorting to some bizarre stratagems. Former Mayor Stephen Juba, unable to command the support on council which was necessary to get things done, often chose to grandstand before the voters as their champion in an allegedly never-ending battle against the machinations of council. The result was deadlock.<sup>8</sup> Mayor Norrie, facing the same constraints, has adopted a different strategy, which we could call the "follow-me-I'm-right-behind-you" style of leadership. He carefully tests the wind to determine what council will be willing to accept, and then advocates that. If necessary, he executes 180-degree turns.<sup>9</sup> One could argue at length over who has been the better mayor, but the most germane point is that neither has been able to exercise the kind of constructive leadership of which they might have been capable. This is not their fault. They have been making the best of a bad situation.

The simple answer to this problem is to "go all the way": adopt the American system holus-bolus. But this is probably too simple. Our system, like that of the Americans, comprises a complex blend of our character and our institutions. Changing our institutions to imitate those of the Americans will not alter our character, or may alter it in unpredictable ways. We can give our city managers the powers of American city managers, but can we teach them to treat politicians with the disdain American city managers reserve for their politicians? And if we do, how will the politicians, and the voters, respond? Similarly, we can adopt the "strong-mayor system," but will our cities produce a Daly or an Arthur Shaeffer? Do we want them to? The better

answer is to learn from the Americans, and to build on the strengths of our own system.

Separation of powers is built on distrust of government. Its basic concept is that all government has the potential for tyranny, but that this potential can be held in check by dividing government up into factions--legislative, executive and judicial--and setting these factions against each other so that none can become tyrannical. In an age of mammoth bureaucracies, we can all sympathize with that attitude and learn from it. But that does not mean we are prepared to adopt it in its entirety. For all its strengths, the American system involves a litigious and disputatious approach to public affairs which makes many Canadians uncomfortable. Canada is the land of Medicare, Autopac, General Welfare Assistance and the UIC: we are not as distrustful of government as the Americans are, and few of us would be prepared to pay the price of making ourselves over in their image.

By the same token, our system has strengths of its own--strengths we should be able to build on, even as we learn what the Americans have to teach us. Responsible government, and with it the Canadian political system, stresses the arts of conciliation and compromise. The prime minister and the House of Commons do not have much power to punish each other for undesired behaviour, but they have the ability to reward each other, and they have forums--caucus, cabinet and the House of Commons itself--in which they can air their differences, bargain and negotiate. This system, like the American one, is far from perfect, but has desirable elements.

It is hoped that the foregoing general discussion will be some help to the committee in dealing with the specific questions facing it. We turn now to these, and begin with a look at the balance of power between the mayor and council.

#### 4.0      **MAYOR AND COUNCIL: DIVISION AND SHARING OF POWER**

In trying to decide how to strike an appropriate balance between the mayor and council, the committee will have to consider a number of interrelated

matters. We will look at these individually and then draw them together into a discussion of the overall issue.

#### 4.1 Powers of Appointment and Veto

These make a matched pair in the context of the introductory comments. Veto is a weapon the mayor can use against council, but it does not offer much help to a mayor who is seeking to encourage council to cooperate with him or her. The power of appointment, by contrast, offers either the mayor or council, or both, the means to reward loyalty and thereby to encourage cooperation. In considering powers of appointment, the committee have some significant differences to resolve. I found the following recommendations in the "leanings" papers:

- . That the mayor appoint the Executive Policy Committee (EPC).
- . That council appoint the EPC.
- . That the mayor chair the EPC.
- . That the deputy mayor (chosen by council, it appears) chair the EPC.
- . That the mayor be given a veto power which can only be overridden by a two-thirds vote of council.

I will return to this subject after looking at a number of other matters related to it.

#### 4.2 Budget Speech/State of the City Address

It has been suggested that one of the ways the mayor could be clearly placed in a leadership position, and at the same time be held accountable for his or her leadership, would be to require the submission of a budget and/or an annual state-of-the-city speech, followed by a council vote. This could be a useful element in a balance of power between the mayor and council, provided it were mated with provisions which gave the mayor some means to exert pressure on council. A problem with the proposal is posed by the following question: What happens if council rejects the budget, or votes non-confidence after a state-of-the-city speech? The two obvious possible answers are: 1) a requirement to resubmit the budget, or reconsider the priorities

set out in the speech or 2) dissolution of council and resignation of the mayor, followed by an election.

The first sanction seems mild and, in the case of entrenched opposition, could easily lead to a political tennis game of submission-rejection-resubmission which could drag on interminably while the city's business grinds to a halt. The second seems too strong. In normal circumstances it would probably constitute a sanction so damaging to its potential wielders as to deter them from using it, thereby placing council in the mayor's vest pocket. A combination of the two possibilities seems superior to either one by itself: resubmission the first time, dissolution and resignation the second. This would give both sides an opportunity to engage in some grandstanding and threatening behaviour, while placing a limit on how long that can continue at the public's expense. The dreaded sanction of dissolution and resignation at the end of the line would put some pressure on both sides to combine their grandstanding and threats with serious negotiations.

#### 4.3 Position of Board of Commissioners

The position of the board of commissioners is relevant to this discussion because it bears on the focus of leadership. As matters stand now, the board is a significant focus of municipal leadership. If the Committee of Review wishes to provide more effective political leadership, it seems sensible to relocate the focus accordingly, by abolishing the board as a formal decision-making body. It might well be argued that the need for a formal administrative decision-making body was stronger in the early 1970s, when the massive responsibility for the Unicity reorganization fell primarily to the commissioners, than it is today, with municipal business having once again settled into a routine. It needs to be added that I have not discussed this possibility with the municipal elite and heard their views. It might be prudent to do this before a final decision is made.

#### 4.4 Position of Standing Committees

The position of standing committees is also relevant to the balance of power between mayor and council, for the same reason that the board's position is: focus of leadership. Various members of the municipal elite have expressed the view that the standing committees (i.e. excluding the EPC) have the effect of diffusing the energies of the political leadership, and of council generally, with each committee "going its own way" and adding willy-nilly to the agenda of the EPC and council. It seems clear, therefore, that the effectiveness of political leadership could be enhanced by abolition of the standing committees. This would have to be made mandatory, because experience, both in Winnipeg and elsewhere in Canada, has shown that proliferation of committees is the path of least resistance--one almost invariably chosen by councils when they have the option.<sup>10</sup>

#### 4.5 Powers of Mayor and Council: Conclusions

Having looked at some of the considerations relevant to the achievement of a reasonable balance between mayor and council, we can now draw them together and try to gauge their effect on the Committee of Review's deliberations. In making that attempt, it is important to begin with the recognition that the committee has not achieved a consensus on the kind of balance for which they are looking. D.I. MacDonald, for example, makes it clear that he favours a relatively strong council and a weak mayor: "...the mayor would chair council meetings and attend to formalities--the real political power would be in the hands of the executive policy committee and its chairman." In making their final decision, committee members will wish to bear in mind that the current system features a relatively strong council, together with a comparatively weak mayor. Those who calculate that the existing balance of power is the best we are likely to get will favour D.I. MacDonald's idea of a strong executive policy committee headed by the deputy mayor, with the mayor largely restricted to ceremonial duties.

A workable strong mayor proposal would be one which would give the mayor incentive and opportunity to work cooperatively with council. The emphasis--



as I argued in my discussion of separation of powers and responsible government principles--should be on giving the mayor plums to pass out instead of clubs to wield, while giving council an opportunity to profit from the search for arrangements which balance the concerns of their own constituency against the city-wide concerns one hopes the mayor would be promoting. A sine qua non of a strong-mayor system--on the premises outlined in the introduction--is that the mayor have the power to appoint the EPC. This gives him or her the means to reward cooperative councilors and thereby stresses incentives for action rather than instruments of obstruction. Whether we like it or not, appointments grease the wheels of the political machine, and without grease it will not run. This power should be qualified by a requirement that the appointments be widely representative of the various areas of the city.

In pursuit of the strong-mayor logic, the executive power now focused on the mayor and the EPC should be concentrated by the abolition of standing committees. A further concentration of executive power could be achieved by abolition of the board of control. The substantial power thus placed in the hands of the mayor could be balanced by the provision, discussed above, that the mayor annually submit the city's budget through the EPC to council for its approval. Such a provision would make an annual state-of-the-city address superfluous--indeed, unnecessarily cumbersome and time-consuming.

It would be compatible with a strong-mayor system to have the mayor chair council or to have a deputy mayor--appointed either by the mayor or by council from within its ranks--sit as council chair. An advantage of a deputy mayor appointed by council is that council would control its own affairs and gain a sense of efficacy from that control. That sense of efficacy should give councilors some incentive to eschew the kind of obstructionist stance which is a hazard if council is weak.<sup>11</sup> A disadvantage is that such an arrangement should probably be combined with veto power for the mayor, lest he or she lose all control of the council chamber. The trouble with the veto is the fact, noted above, that it stresses obstruction rather than achievement. One can easily imagine a mayor who, having lost control of council, launches a veto

campaign to obstruct council, all the while portraying him or herself as the champion of the people.

However, the alternative--a mayor without veto power who appoints the deputy mayor or chairs council him or herself--is not altogether satisfactory either. The danger here is that council, lacking full control, either of its own affairs, or of those of its executive policy committee, would lapse into lethargy or strike out with obstructionist measures--delaying tactics, or refusal to pass bylaws or the budget. On balance it seems likely that the review committee--assuming it opts for a strong-mayor model--will be compelled by the separation of powers logic to include a veto power. Whatever the committee does, it will not achieve perfection.

#### 4.6 Political Parties

Before leaving the subject of the executive/legislative balance, a brief word about political parties is in order. This is necessitated by the suggestion that it would be desirable to encourage the formation of an opposition on council to balance a strong mayor. There is not much hope for this, desirable as it may be in theory. Once we have embraced the separation of powers logic, there is no realistic prospect for strong party organizations of any kind. Even the United States congress does not have it. In the absence of strong parties, the only alternative to a non-partisan council (the most utopian idea of them all!) is the weak, shifting coalitions we already have. We are not likely to be able to do anything about that unless we opt for a return to parliamentary, or responsible government, institutions.

#### 5.0 OTHER ISSUES

##### 5.1 Separate Boards, Commissions and Authorities

The question of creating bodies which wield authority more or less independently of council--as well as the possibility of depriving authorities now in existence of their independent status--has come up in various contexts. For one thing there is the proposal that a joint provincial-municipal

riverbanks authority be created to promote the preservation and renewal of Winnipeg's badly deteriorated riverbanks. A broadened variant of that proposal calls for the creation of a capital commission on the pattern of the authority which manages public lands in the national capital region. On the other hand, the review committee is considering complaints that various existing authorities--such as the Police Commission, the Winnipeg Enterprises Board and the Winnipeg Business Development Corporation--are too independent of council, along with suggestions that they be brought under control. Despite the apparent contradiction between these two impulses--to create one board while abolishing others--there is a case to be made for both. The case is most effectively made if the problem is placed in its historical context.

Separate boards and commissions are one of the sources of the municipal political weakness which made it necessary to write so pessimistically--in the previous section of this paper--about the prospects of vigorous leadership in the city of Winnipeg. During the urban reform movement at the turn of the century, such bodies were created in great numbers, partly in order to achieve more effective administration, but also as part of a calculated effort to undermine municipal politicians who were seen in business circles as being dangerously representative of the interests of immigrants, petty traders and working people.<sup>12</sup> Although the specific ideological impulses of the turn-of-the-century reform movement have been diluted somewhat, the idea that it is desirable to keep municipal politicians weak is still very much a part of current municipal conventional wisdom, and separate boards and commissions are still helping to deprive municipal politicians of their effectiveness and prestige by removing large slices of municipal authority from them.

Any attempts to reverse this state of affairs are seriously hampered, both by the conventional wisdom which sees municipal activities as being somehow sanitized when they are "removed from politics," and by pressures from specific groups (educators, librarians, lawyers and so forth) whose interests are served by the fact that the activities most important to them (schools, libraries and police forces, for example) are insulated from public scrutiny focusing upon and emanating from city hall. It is instructive to view the provisions of the City of Winnipeg Act in this context. The authors of the

1970 white paper and the Unicity legislation--Meyer Brownstone and Dennis Hefferon in particular--decided to restore the powers which municipal politicians had lost to the authorities and had the political shrewdness to find a way of doing it without directly confronting either the interest groups or the conventional wisdom.

There is no space here to go into the details of Winnipeg's many pre-Unicity boards, commissions and authorities, but in general terms, the Brownstone-Hefferon strategy<sup>13</sup> was to retain the appearance of the boards' independence while deftly removing its substance, simply by providing that the majority of board members be members of city council. The stratagem worked. Although initially there were sporadic complaints from interest groups that their favourite boards had lost their independence, the fact that the boards were still manifestly in existence made it difficult to mount a concerted attack on the new order of things. In the meantime, the new order has become the status quo, and the complaints seem to have died out.

We can now consider the current situation. If the Committee of Review approves of the initiatives of 1970-71, it can now recommend their consolidation, along with further initiatives in the same direction. In theory, the committee could recommend abolition of the bodies in question. A more judicious approach might be to recommend that council have the option of appointing either councilors or citizens to the bodies, depending on whether interest group participation appears to be desirable. The trouble with this approach is that council decisions might be motivated less by policy considerations than by a restless quest for per diems and tickets to Jets' games and policemen's balls. Possibly the most constructive approach would be to give council a choice between maintenance of the status quo and council takeover of each of the various boards' activities, to the accompaniment of each board's abolition. A takeover would be conspicuous enough to require justification on policy grounds, and the willingness to make such justifications would offer some indication of council's preparedness to discharge the obligations involved. In the most optimistic scenario, a series of successive takeovers would signify a gradual expansion of council's effectiveness and political responsibility. It might well be recommended that

the province monitor this process with a view to ensuring that it does indeed signify acceptance of responsibility.

A riverbanks authority or capital commission is a very different matter which--as the committee is no doubt aware--needs to be argued in different terms. The case for such a body is not removal of any activities from the political sphere, but the more effective coordination of the activities of two levels of government. In Winnipeg, it seems an idea whose time has come.

## 5.2 Community Committees' Responsibilities

The "leanings" papers contain various proposals which affect the responsibilities of community committees. Some call for boundary changes designed to ensure that the committees do a better job of representing natural communities or to promote the revitalization of the downtown core. Others involve changes in the committees' responsibilities. All of these proposals seem feasible. I would strike only one note of caution, reflecting a point already broached in the introduction of this paper. Any move to allow community committees to exercise their responsibilities independently--i.e. other than by the authority of council--is tantamount to an abandonment of the Unicity concept and a return to a two-tier system. It can be done, but it would involve major changes, it would not simplify things--on the contrary, it would complicate them substantially--and it is questionable whether there is political support for such a move.

## 5.3 "Parochialism" and At-large Elections

There is a widespread belief among members of the municipal elite--which seems at various times to have been reflected on the review committee--that municipal politics in Winnipeg is afflicted by parochialism, so that those who are pursuing the well-being of the city as a whole find themselves blocked by the advocates of narrow, ward-based interests. Intuitively, that proposition seems to make sense, but on examination it becomes clear that it is largely subjective. I asked each of the elites who complained about parochialism to give me an example of a decision that illustrated his or her view. For each

of the examples I heard, an argument could easily have been made that it was the alleged parochialists who were in fact the pursuers of the city's overall welfare. For example, a number of people cited the cancellation of the Sherbrook-McGregor overpass as an example of the triumph of downtown parochialism. If the decision had gone the other way, however, it could as easily have been portrayed as suburban north-end parochialism, saddling the city with a key link in an unwanted future expressway system.

Whether we are confronted with parochialism, therefore, or simply with an elite frustrated because they are not getting their way as easily as they would like, is a matter of opinion. There is no conceivable evidence that would settle the question conclusively. The proponents of the parochialism thesis generally argue in favour of at-large elections within each community to replace the current ward system. My opinion is that the wards are performing a valuable representative function and that any legitimate concerns about the failure of city-wide leadership can be more effectively addressed through the provisions--discussed above--for strengthening of the mayor and the EPC, than by abolition of the ward system.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

It will by now be obvious to the reader that I share the skepticism evident in the "leanings" papers about the prospects for greater municipal autonomy. The city has done much to promote the deterioration of the core, and it was only the intervention of senior governments which offered a ray of hope for a reversal. Likewise, if we wait for the city to halt the erosion of the riverbanks, we will probably wait in vain. Nevertheless, it seems appropriate to end on a very cautiously optimistic note. In a world increasingly growing disenchanted with large bureaucracies, there may be an important future for local authorities. We cannot now seriously build toward such a future, because presently our local institutions are so demoralized that even the people involved in them have largely lost faith in them. But we can lay a groundwork for which our children may someday be grateful, by strengthening local political institutions, by giving politicians some incentives for

responsible behaviour and by creating some sanctions against irresponsibility.  
It is not a glorious revolution, but it is nevertheless a job worth doing.

## NOTES

1. Including Lawrie Cherniack, chairperson, Winnipeg lawyer; Alan F.J. Artibise, director of the Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg; Donald Epstein, consultant; D.I. MacDonald, former Chief Commissioner, City of Winnipeg, and Paul Thomas, professor at the University of Manitoba.
2. The first was the report of the Committee of Review, City of Winnipeg Act (Manitoba Department of Urban Affairs, 1976), also known as the Taraska Commission report.
3. Christopher Leo, Strong Government, Weak Government: Classifying Municipal Structural Change, Research and Working Paper No. 23 (Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg, 1986), 2.
4. Among the visible signs of these distinctions are the differences between American and Canadian versions of the city manager system, the failure of the American commission system to take root here, differences in the acceptability of metro and amalgamation schemes in the two countries and the cool reception "public choice" ideas have encountered in Canada.
5. Manitoba Department of Urban Affairs, Proposals for Urban Reorganization in the Greater Winnipeg Area (Winnipeg: Queen's Printer, 1970).
6. The 101 Governments of Metro Toronto (Toronto: Bureau of Municipal Research, 1968).
7. Coincidentally, a text co-authored by Paul Thomas (a member of the Committee of Review) cites a growing penchant to hold permanent secretaries directly accountable to Parliament as an example of this trend. Robert F. Adie and Paul G. Thomas, Canadian Public Administration: Problematical Perspectives (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice Hall, 1982), 292.
8. Significantly, this state of affairs seems--on impressionistic evidence--to have been less typical of the Metro era, when the mayor enjoyed relatively more power than he did under Unicity.
9. Events of recent years have caused me to revise this judgement, though I stand behind it as a reasonable comment on Mayor Norrie's early years in office. He has learned to cope much more effectively with the limitations on his power, though it remains clear that he could be considerably more effective if he had more control over the city's affairs.
10. A recent source for this observation--which has been made repeatedly--is C.R. Tindal and S. Nobes Tindal, Local Government in Canada, 2nd ed. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1984), 118-21.



## NOTES (Continued)

11. This danger is illustrated by the formerly widespread board of control system in Ontario, in which weak aldermen thwarted strong boards of control by referring proposals back to them for reconsideration. The resulting delays were regarded as one of the principal weaknesses of that system. See for example T.J. Plunkett, Urban Canada and Its Government: A Study of Municipal Organization (Toronto: Macmillan, 1968), 57.
12. On this point, Alan Artibise (a member of the Committee of Review) is one of the acknowledged experts. See, inter alia, various articles in Alan F.J. Artibise and Gilbert A. Stelter, eds., The Usable Urban Past (Toronto: Carleton Library, 1979), and in Stelter and Artibise, eds., The Canadian City (Ottawa: Carleton Library, 1984). For a brief discussion of the impact of the reform movement from a political studies perspective, see relevant chapters of Christopher Leo, The Politics of Urban Development: Canadian Urban Expressway Disputes (Toronto: Institute of Public Administration of Canada, 1977).
13. This information can be garnered by a comparative reading of the white paper, referred to in note 5 above and Dennis C. Hefferon, "Notes on Bill 36, The City of Winnipeg Act," in Lionel D. Feldman and Michael D. Goldrick, ed., Politics and Government of Urban Canada: Selected Readings, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Methuen, 1976).