

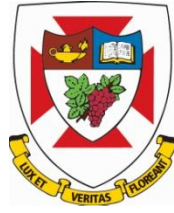
Evaluating Winnipeg's Unicity: Citizen Participation and Resident Advisory Groups, 1971-1984

Research and Working Paper No. 11

**By Philip H. Wichern
1984**

The Institute of Urban Studies





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EVALUATING WINNIPEG'S UNICITY: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND RESIDENT ADVISORY GROUPS, 1971-1984

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INTRODUCTION

Winnipeg's "Unicity" is recognized internationally as a metropolitan government reform which was designed to achieve political decentralization and increased citizen participation while centralizing area-wide administration, planning, and policymaking by amalgamating twelve municipalities and a Metropolitan Corporation into one urban government (Axworthy, 1980a; Magnusson, 1981: 79; Proudfoot, 1980: 178; Tindal and Tindal, 1984: 76; Wichern, forthcoming). The previous study in this series established the significance of re-evaluating Unicity's record in the context of the current Provincial Government review and serious inadequacies of previous evaluations (Wichern, 1984).

This study focuses on the participatory dimensions of Unicity, reviewing a variety of patterns and providing a comprehensive record of electoral and Resident Advisory Group participation from 1971 to the present. It also reviews and critiques published evaluations of the subject matter. Local and intellectual contexts are reviewed in the first major section following this introduction. The record of citizen participation under Unicity is examined in the second major section. The third and final section analyzes past evaluations and various options of response to the record in the context of the current Review and the future of citizen participation in Winnipeg civic affairs.

The central thesis of this study is that citizen participation in Unicity has been unfairly evaluated, by applying reform ideas and standards of participation elsewhere, without properly taking into account the local political culture(s) and patterns of past participation. The first major section juxtaposes these aspects of Winnipeg politics with the non-local experiences and ideas which led to inflated expectations for participation under Unicity. The second section examines the actual experience with information, officials' attitudes, and various patterns of citizen

participation under Unicity. The final section investigates the significance of the record in terms of previous evaluations, development of more realistic expectations, and the evaluation of various options as to "what should be done" (if anything) to relevant sections of the City of Winnipeg Act (Chapter 105, Manitoba Statutes).

1.0 CONTEXTS: LOCAL, PROVINCIAL, AND INTERNATIONAL

The following research questions are especially significant for making a fair evaluation of citizen participation before and after the introduction of Unicity: To what degree did the concepts underlying citizen participation sections of the legislation take into consideration local political realities? What were the probable sources of those seminal ideas about citizen participation, and what is the relevancy of those ideas to the Winnipeg context, especially in terms of standards and expectations about participation in the Unicity government?

1.1 Local Participation Patterns and Ideas

Winnipeg municipal elections from 1920 to 1970 attracted less than half the qualified voters in all yearly elections except 1937, 1939, 1952, 1954, and 1956. During the period 1920 to 1941, when full adult suffrage was introduced, the average turnout was 43.8%. The average declined after 1941 to 33.3% in the last fourteen years prior to the freezing of elections in 1970 (Wichern, 1976: 47). Turnout and other measures of electoral participation indicated slightly higher participation rates in some suburbs than in the central City, but other suburbs had much less participation -- as measured by voter turnout, acclamations, and contin-

uous office-holding by incumbants (Beaulieu, 1976). Almost all the municipalities appointed citizens to advisory, recreation, library, and planning committees, and the central City also appointed citizens to hospital, police, and seven other boards (City of Winnipeg, 1969: 53-72). Other forms of non-electoral participation, as well as this form, have not been the subject of systematic study by academic or government researchers, at least in so far as the materials cited here indicate. But unpublished surveys of local newspapers suggest a wide range of participation focused on neighbourhood issues, with little concern for "citizen participation" as a general phenomena to be stimulated and developed. In other words, patterns of participation existed; but participation does not appear to have been a strong value in the local political culture, nor was general citizen involvement expected or encouraged by municipal officials. In addition, there was at that time very little local concern for changing the local climate for participation, and what there was focused on citizen participation in planning and neighbourhood renewal (Axworthy, n.d.).

1.2 The Boundaries Commission Report of 1970

A Commission of fifteen citizens which had been examining Winnipeg's local government problems under the previous provincial government finished its work and presented a Provisional Plan just a few weeks before the White Paper, in early December 1970. The only aspect of citizen participation discussed as a problem was "...the apathy of the electorate in regard to local elections as opposed to provincial or federal elections," and that was attributed to the "very low level of visibility" of local government, "...due in large part to the nature of our present media of communications..."; "...that entire municipal councils and school boards do not stand for election at the same time (with the exception of the

Metropolitan Corporation), thus weakening the responsiveness and accountability of the elected representatives to the electorate...", and "...that local government has not been allocated adequate sources of revenue to look after its responsibilities..." (Local Government Boundaries Commission, 1970: 25).

The Commission argued that the 112 municipal councillors, aldermen, mayors and reeves was not "over-government" and "...not a serious problem..." (p.28); but rather that "...in determining boundaries and structures, priority must be given to the accessibility and accountability between the elected representatives and the electorate, and to the ability of the electorate to influence local government decisions, ahead of questionable economies that may flow from larger scale Administration..." (p.26).

To the Commission this meant "...that the Administrations of local government units be kept to manageable sizes, both from the point of view of the elected representatives to whom the Administrations are responsible, and from the point of view of the citizens who must deal with the Administrations in connection with various and sundry services..." (pp.25-26). The Commission therefore rejected total amalgamation and opted for a continued two-tier structure of a strengthened regional government and nine consolidated municipalities (pp.68-69). It rejected the idea of "neighbourhood, borough or ward councils" as "...a futuristic concept which is a trifle premature at this time...", noting that "...it has more relevance to total amalgamation..." (p.50). Similarly, it rejected "...controlling police forces by police commissions with citizen participation...", declaring that all services "...should be the responsibility of the council acting through its committees..." (p.76). The Commission even rejected the suggestion "...made to the Commission on more than one occasion..." that residents be given the opportunity to express their attitudes toward

municipal reorganization by referenda. The Commission characterized referenda on local government reorganization as "...a negation of democratic government by popularly elected representatives responsible to the citizens..." (Local Government Boundaries Commission, 1971: 85).

1.3 The 1970 Unicity White Paper

While the Boundaries Commission was completing its report, the newly elected New Democratic Party government was exploring quite different concepts with its consultant, Professor Meyer Brownstone (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983: 34-46). According to Meyer Brownstone, it was Saul Cherniack, the Minister of Finance, who first proposed "...the creation of regions within the amalgamated city where there will be opportunity to involve the community...recreation, library and other cultural matters should be more localized....I visualize the possibility of community centres within the amalgamated city which will supply services such as health, social, recreational, police, fire, and others...so that the public will have ready access without having to go through 'city hall'" (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983: 36). A subsequent paper prepared for the provincial cabinet by Earl Levin, former director of planning with the Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg, advocated "...an advisory or consultative council in each electoral division which would be identified by the name of the division...", each council made up of "...thirty to forty members, who would come from service clubs, boards of trade, and chambers of commerce in the area..." (*Ibid.*, 38).

These suggestions were made with the local context clearly in mind. In contrast, Brownstone wrote a memorandum outlining the three basic assumptions underlying the review process which led to the White Paper.

The second was "...that the political (participatory) aspects are highly unsatisfactory at present and that any reorganization will need to include a meaningful attack on this problem...it will be necessary to design an effective, acceptable, political decentralization providing for involvement of citizens on a scale and intensity which exceeds by far that which is in existence at present...What is assumed here has... to do with community organization, animation, control, and advocacy..." (*Ibid.*, 39). These ideas were elaborated in a paper for cabinet by Toronto citizen activist and former Winnipegger, James Lorimer, who advocated local community councils/corporations with four types of statutory powers: to develop and administer community plans and control land-use densities and development within the community, the ability to instruct elected representatives on the central council, the right to influence overall policies on other local functions, and the power to raise and expend limited amounts of money through a mill rate allotment (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983: 41-42).

The Cabinet, except Saul Cherniack, rejected the "community organization" approach, but finally accepted the inclusion of local councils, "Community Committees," made up of the elected "councillors" from wards within the Community boundaries (which corresponded to those of the existing municipalities). These Committees would be assisted by groups of elected citizens to be called "Resident Advisory Groups" who would "...provide a recognized vehicle for residents to express their concerns to the community committees, and through them to council" (*Ibid.*, 69-71, quotation at 70-71).

These ideas were developed in a White Paper released a short time after the Boundaries Commission's report in December, 1970. Although it did not endorse citizen participation in referenda, it did take quite a different stance on the nature and significance of citizen participation in contemporary Winnipeg municipal government. It declared that

one of the major problems of Winnipeg politics was citizen confusion over local authority, leading to alienation and non-participation -- a "lack of citizen involvement" (Manitoba Government, 1970: 5-6; Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983: 190-191). It stated that the basis of its proposals were "...two firm convictions: (1) that citizen participation and involvement with local government needs to be greatly increased and intensified; and (2) that, in a democracy, the elected representative must always be as responsible to, and as accountable to, the people he (*sic*) represents as is humanly possible" (*Ibid.* : 200). Therefore, it adopted the previous Commission's recommendation that local government representation should be based on a system of single-member wards, each having approximately 10,000 residents; and it castigated the Commission's dismissal of neighbourhood, borough, or ward councils as "futuristic." Instead, it concurred "heartily" with Lord Redcliffe-Maud, Chairman of the Royal Commission on Local Government in England (1966-1969), that "...any new pattern of democratic government must include elected 'local councils,' not to provide main services, but to promote and watch over the particular interests of communities in city, town and village..." (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983: 196). It noted that other metropolitan governments created in Canada were producing "...a significant loss of public responsiveness and citizen involvement..." and that such "unresponsive government" would be avoided "...through the use of wards and groupings of wards into Community Committees..." (*Ibid.* : 199). These concepts were developed in sections entitled "Creating a Climate for Citizen Involvement" and "The Citizen's Vital Link" (*Ibid.* : 205-211).

It should be noted carefully that this White Paper characterization of citizen participation in Winnipeg contained only statements and proposals; it did not contain supporting research or explanations of the sources for the ideas which it championed. Comparison with the previous sections' reviews of local patterns and views expressed by the Boundaries

Commission indicates that the White Paper's characterizations and promises were not drawn from local experience or views. The references to other metropolitan governments and to Lord Redcliffe-Maud suggest that the characterization was based on perceptions of citizen participation principles and practices in other Canadian cities, Britain, and the United States (Magnusson, 1981: 80). It is to these broader contexts that we now turn our attention.

1.4 Broader Contexts of Urban Citizen Participation

At the time Unicity was being conceived, the major text on Canadian municipal and metropolitan government scarcely mentioned citizen participation, although its criteria for evaluating municipal organization did include "external intelligibility" and "responsiveness" (Plunkett, 1968: 69-75). Citizen participation was not a major theme of the sole book of readings in Canadian urban government and politics (Feldman, 1969). At the time there clearly was a "...failure of political science to grapple with citizen politics" (Clarkson, 1980). Only a relatively unknown book (Draper, 1971) suggested the extent of the tide of grassroots involvement by citizens in local issues and politics which would later be called "the new politics of reform" (Magnusson, 1983).

Many of these citizens and citizens groups were opposing civic "old guard" officials, developers, freeways, and other visible irritants to neighbourhoods in Toronto, Vancouver, and various other Canadian cities in the late 1960s (Granatstein, 1971; Fraser, 1972; Leo, 1977; Lorimer, 1970 and 1972; Sewell, 1972; Stinson, 1975). In addition, there was an increase of interest in, and stimulation of, community development, community organizing, and animation sociale (Blondin, 1976; Draper, 1971; Keating, 1976).

This context was almost certainly the conceptual framework within which the White Paper's characterizations and prescriptions for Winnipeg were made, though the primary author of the White Paper does not make this fact clear or examine its significance, even in a later book-length description and evaluation (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983). These phenomena were no doubt quite familiar to Meyer Brownstone, University of Toronto political science professor, and Board member of Praxis, a Toronto-based national research Institute for social change, which was hired by the Manitoba government to prepare an in-house paper on the re-organization of Winnipeg municipal government. As well as citizen participation patterns in other Canadian cities, it referred to the experience of neighbourhood councils in Bologna, Italy, suggesting decentralization of service delivery and strong Resident Advisory Groups to be in charge of that process, with staffing and financial resources (evidence from author's interviews).

The reference to Redcliffe-Maud in the White Paper seems to suggest some connection with British ideas and institutions, a position supported to some degree by a footnote in Brownstone and Plunkett (1983: 158). But the Maud statement was not developed into British legislation and only a few local councils in Britain proceeded with their own schemes for community councils (Magnusson, 1981: 79). Furthermore, Brownstone and Plunkett in their footnote indicate that the British social democratic movement's "participatory democracy" ideas "...never gained prominence within the Canadian social democratic movement, and remained a minority view in the Winnipeg unification process" (1983: 158).

The more relevant European models for Winnipeg would have been the "corporate district councils" in Dutch cities and the "neighbourhood councils" which began in Bologna in 1963-65, spreading to eighty-two Italian cities including Rome and Milan by the early 1970s (Kjellberg, 1980; Dente and Regonini, 1980). The latter was apparently mentioned in

the in-house document cited above, but is not mentioned in any of the published studies of how the Unicity concepts were developed.

In addition, there was the nearby American context which included not only community action groups (Steggert, 1975) and neighbourhood councils or governments (Hallman, 1977), but "street level governments" and "little city halls" (Yin and Yates, 1974). An excellent review of these American "decentralization experiments" by Yates (1976) contained ominous conclusions for those optimistic observers who predicted a new era of citizen participation in Winnipeg: "...neighbourhood structures will be effective only if their resources are commensurate with their tasks and costs. Only then will plans for decentralization be converted into successful innovations" (Yates: 1976: 158). Yates concludes that the only effective pattern of citizen involvement in decentralization is "...for neighbourhood organizations...to gain political competence and experience by solving local problems" (*Ibid.*: 165). It should be noted that these American decentralization and neighbourhood government experiments occurred in a political culture which emphasized "participatory" local democracy, in contrast to the "leadership" or "representative" orientation of Canadian local political cultures (Smallwood, 1965; Kaplan, 1982). The classic themes of the latter are those expressed by the Local Boundaries Commission in the quotations cited previously, whereas the White Paper statements incorporate the more "participatory" language and assumptions of the American context. If the above cited problems were evident there, was not successful participation of a similar type even less likely in the Winnipeg context?

Despite these differences in local political culture, White Paper language and concepts are quite similar to those which are characteristic of the participatory movements in other North American cities at the time Unicity was being conceived. The Cabinet-caucus opposition to the Lorimer-Brownstone-Praxis recommendations on citizen participation (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983: 41-44), appear to be a refusal to transfer into

legislation the more "radical" ideas from these contexts. However, practical political merit was seen in legislating Community Committees and Resident Advisory Groups which could be cited as carrying on the patterns and traditions of municipal politics which were clearly threatened by the amalgamation of the municipalities and the probable centralization of services under the new City.

As a consequence, the Community Committees and Resident Advisory Groups were placed in the City of Winnipeg Act (Sections 20 to 28). Community Committees were given the responsibility to "...develop and maintain the closest possible communication between the city and the residents of the community..." (Section 23: 1), and citizens were provided with a right to various types of information (Section 78) as well as the right to appear at public hearings on land-use planning and development approvals (Part XX: for example, re-zonings), which were to be held by the Community Committees at their local meetings. Through these and other provisions, a new dimension of citizen participation and decentralization was introduced into the local political culture. How this dimension worked out in experience is the subject of the following section.

2.0 THE RECORD: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN UNICITY, 1971-1984

This section reviews the record of various types of citizen participation from the creation of Unicity up to the date of this study. The types of participation are those identified by Mishler (1979) in his more general treatment of political participation in Canada: voting, campaign activity, holding political office, contacting public officials for individual goals, communal (group) activity, and political protest. Prior to examining these forms of local participation, however, we focus on several critical prerequisites: access to information, attitudes of public officials, and

public knowledge of the institutions through which participation was supposed to take place.

2.1 Citizen Access to Information

It has been written that the Unicity Act "...provided greater citizen access to information as a matter of right..." (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983: 159, footnote). Section 23 directs the Community Committees to "...develop and implement techniques to provide the residents of the community with information concerning existing and potential policies, programs, and budgets so as to facilitate residents in discussing and developing views concerning these matters...." The author's participant observation and research during the period under study has not identified any more significant "techniques" than advertising the date, time, and place of Committee meetings and the annual Community Conference in local newspapers. At these meetings invited speakers and Councillors may provide oral information and answer questions, but specific information of the type demanded by the Act (cited above) is usually not available.

Some of the Community Committees have gone a bit further. In a 1981 report to the St. James-Assiniboia Community Committee, its Clerk indicated that "...[a]s the need arises, the Councillors of the Community hold General Public Information meetings as well as Ward meetings, where citizens are invited to attend and discuss important community programs or projects...[i]n many instances [with the invited presence of] senior management staff of the City...for the purpose of providing the citizens with technical information regarding these programs or projects " (Files GK-1.2 and GM-26, dated May 12, 1981). But so far as this author can determine, this is as far as any Committee has gone in seeking to fulfill

the Act's mandate listed above.

Article 78 of the City of Winnipeg Act provides for disclosure of centralized information such as monthly financial statements, minutes of any council or open committee meeting, all attachments to those minutes, the agenda of those meetings, and other documents such as the auditor's report, bylaws, list of electors, tax rolls, and monthly financial statements. Unfortunately, there is virtually no systematic research on the actual experience of citizens attempting to claim their rights under this or other relevant portions of the Act. However, there are the experiences of numerous citizens, including the author, who were denied access to one or more of such documents when they were requested. Brownstone and Plunkett nicely summarize this situation when they write that: "...The flow of information necessary for the development of participation was not enhanced " (1983: 158).

This situation, however, did not go unnoticed by some members of the 1980 City Council. They organized a special Committee to examine problems of public access to information, and produced a policy statement which was adopted by Council in 1981 (Council Minutes, June 17, 1981: 1373-4). As this is being written, a special Council committee reviewing this policy is recommending a bylaw that would formalize the rights of citizens to have access to City files and other information (McKinley, 1984).

Reliable witnesses report similar problems of access to French-language services, guaranteed under Sections 79 and 80 of the Act. But the author has no systematic evidence of the nature, extent, and results of such non-compliance with these explicit provisions of the Act or their obvious intent, which was to maintain "Historic St. Boniface" as a centre of French municipal administration. The provincial government's approach to guaranteeing French language rights (especially bilingual translations of statutes and such documents as parking tickets given under the

Highway Safety Act) became the focus of the October 1983 municipal elections when the Mayor's proposal for a plebescite won Council approval (Winnipeg Free Press, September 15-16, 1984). At the time, some commented that the City "should get its own house in order." But the nature of the current situation remains to be established by systematic research.

2.2 Attitudes of Public Officials Toward Participation

Another constraint or positive influence on public participation is the attitudinal stance or stances of public officials toward that participation. We have noted that the rhetoric of the White Paper was foreign to the local political culture and most Cabinet members. It was also foreign to local officials, most notably to the Councillors who were supposed to implement the participation aspects of the Act. An Institute of Urban Studies survey of Councillors in 1973 found that of the "slightly over half of Councillors (who) believe that citizen participation is necessary..., most feel that participation means attending Community Committee meetings and turning out on election day "(Axworthy and Cassidy, 1974: 103).

These attitudes were translated into practice in the ways that councillors, sitting as Community Committees, treated their Resident Advisory Groups and citizens who came before them on various matters. The author has seen extensive work by Resident Advisors dismissed as irrelevant. The author has seen citizens interrogated and challenged until they were close to tears, and one who was threatened with the police being called if he did not stop asking a particularly pointed (but not rude) question. Extensive unpublished student research documented disrespectful treatment as a hallmark of the way many of the original Unicity councillors treated average citizens and Resident Advisors (Wichern, 1974: 41). Sometimes

councillors attack each other. Such behaviour does not encourage participation. And it is also clear that most councillors have no training in encouraging and developing public participation, are not interested in developing those skills, and have little or no concern about fulfilling their responsibilities under the Act in this regard. Therefore, "let's get on with civic business" rather than "the closest possible communication between the City and the residents of the community" (Section 23[a]), soon became the prevailing norm at most Community and central meetings.

This same negative attitude was expressed by a majority of City Council when they repeatedly blocked numerous attempts by some of their number to provide resources to RAGs from the City budget. They also significantly weakened (though finally approved) an effort by RAGs to apply for \$230,000 of federal government assistance (Axworthy and Cassidy, 1974: 116, 131-133). In other words, the record appears to be one of systematic non-compliance with this provision of the Act.

There is little or no systematic documentation of the attitudes of non-elected public officials and employees of Unicity regarding citizen participation. But the evidence from case studies, informal discussions, and participant observation suggests that there was at least skepticism, and sometimes open hostility, exhibited by many administrators and civic employees toward citizen participation -- especially toward Resident Advisory Group participation. According to an Institute study, one of the original Commissioners (top administrators) referred to citizen involvement as "...pious god-damn theory in the extreme" (Axworthy and Cassidy, 1974: 112). Such sentiments often surfaced in day-to-day interactions between Advisors and the central administration as various services were amalgamated and re-organized under central administration in the period 1972 to 1975 (Wichern, 1975: 9). What changes, if any, have taken place in these attitudes is another very significant research question for the future of effective citizen participation in Unicity.

In the case of some Communities, such as the St. Boniface (after 1977, -St. Vital) Community, the actions of City personnel (along with those of councillors) have been cited as major reasons for the decline of viable Resident Advisory Group participation. This should not be interpreted as a blanket denunciation of civic personnel or administrators, because notable exceptions have often been key factors in enabling the system to work as well as it has. But repeated surveys of community clerks indicate a general attitude of suspicion toward, and lack of understanding of, Resident Advisory Group participation ideas and practices (unpublished data base).

2.3 Citizen Awareness and Interest

Although there have been several surveys of public attitudes toward Unicity institutions, the only comprehensive public opinion survey which has attempted to measure citizen awareness of, and involvement in, Unicity was one that the author organized in 1973. Students in several classes were trained and supervised in calling 501 Winnipeg residents selected at random from the most recent local directory of residences. The results were checked, analyzed, and later were reported in a 1974 evaluation of Unicity (Wichern, 1974: 43-44). The results indicated mass public ignorance of Unicity institutions: 80% had no idea about what Resident Advisory Groups might be, 74% could not identify any of the responsibilities given by the City of Winnipeg Act to Community Committees (82% did not know when or where they met), 70% could not name their Councillor, 62% could not name any ward (not necessarily their own), 54% admitted they understood Unicity very little, or "not at all." However, the same percentage could name at least one civic issue from the last year, and over two-thirds said they had heard of four major issues, including amalgamation of local public services. In other words, the public appeared

to be much more "tuned in" to local issues than to the participative institutions through which they were supposed to be involved in Unicity governing.

The author has suggested to the current Committee of Review that another survey of the general public be undertaken to examine to what degree the public knowledge has changed, as well as current public understanding. Without digressing into the nature of public participation, a minimal question can be identified: how can people who do not know about, or care about, a set of institutions be expected to participate intelligently in them?

2.4 Candidacies, Campaign Activity, and Voting

Participation in municipal electoral activities is an important component of local democracy, particularly in those local political cultures like Winnipeg's, which emphasize "representative" local decision-making rather than more "participatory" citizen involvement. It should be remembered that those who are elected are "citizen participants" themselves, carrying on their private lives and work as well as acting as Councillors, rather than becoming "full time" Councillors. Only a very few Councillors in Unicity's first thirteen years identified themselves as "full time," and of those few, most continued to carry on activities other than civic business. Nor was the pay for Councillors, in contrast to the Mayor, set at full-time work levels. Whether this should be changed is another important question confronting the current Review Committee.

The original Unicity legislation incorporated Boundary Commission suggestions, creating 50 single member wards which replaced 26 single

and multi-member wards, five whole municipalities (which had held at-large elections), and ten larger Metro election districts which cut across the municipal boundaries (Local Government Boundaries Commission, 1970: 13). At the same time the number of elective local positions were reduced from 100 Councillors and 12 Mayors, to 50 Councillors and one Mayor. The old City of Winnipeg had held rotating aldermanic elections every year until 1969 when the provincial government froze the representation in anticipation of Unicity, while practices in other municipalities varied. The Act set the new City's elections at three year intervals for all Councillors and the Mayor.

The original Unicity elections were held October 6, 1971, and regular elections have been held every three years thereafter. Table 1 provides basic data on turnouts, candidates, election groups, and office holders in those elections.

2.4.1 Voting Turnouts

Excluding the first election which is rightly considered a special case, voting turnouts have averaged 41.6%. This is 8.6% higher than the average for the four elections held by the former municipalities prior to the election freeze in 1969, and 3.8% higher than the average of the old City's previous four Mayor and aldermanic elections (Wichern, 1976: 47). Review of the patterns of turnout suggest a continuation of previous trends in most areas of the new City, despite ward boundary adjustments in 1974 and the complete revision in 1977. In passing, it is interesting to note the impact of referenda on turnout. The old City (as well as some of the other municipalities) had periodic plebescites, some of which occurred with Mayor and aldermanic contests. Those tended to add to the turnout by several percentage points (Wichern, 1976: 49). The same effect can be

TABLE I. UNICITY ELECTION STATISTICS, 1971-1983

Characteristic:	1971	1974	1977	1980	1983	Comments/Notes
1. Voter Turnout, Total	199,713	122,918	146,949	144,208	205,573	
2. % of Eligible Voters	60.7%	34.9%	40.1%	38.8%	52.6% ¹	
3. Mayoralty Winner	Juba	Juba	Steen	Norrie	Norrie	¹ 2 Referenda in 1983: "Nuclear Weapon ban" and French "Language plebiscite"
4. % of Total Vote	69.7%	88.9%	47%	71%	75%	
5. # of cand. for Mayor (Women)	4	5(1) ²	5	4 ²	5 ²	² Only 1 woman candidate (Brenda Dineen, 1974); Independent Al Golden received 26% of the vote in 1980, N.D.P. challenger Brian Corrin received 19.5% in 1983.
6. # of Council Seats	50	50	29	29	29	
7. # of Acclamations (%)	1(2%)	10(20%)	2(7%)	5(17%)	2(7%)	Average = 9.6 acclamations per election
8. Total # of Candidates Average # per ward	165 3.3	117 2.3	84 2.9	72 2.3	79 3.0	Overall average = 2.76 cand./ward
9. Women candidates (winners/councillors) number Percent	10(4) 6%(8%)	12(6) 10%(10%)	9(3) 11%(10%)	11(5) 15%(17%)	12(4) 18%(14%)	³ This is a rough classification based on <u>Winnipeg Free Press</u> listings of candidates for each election, with corrections for misinformation made where possible. Categories do not add up to total candidates because of missing or inadequate information.
10. Occupations of Council Candidates (Winners/councillors) ³						
a. Lawyers	9(9)	10(8)	7(4)	9(4)	3(2)	
b. Managers, Executives	6(4)	10(5)	4(3)	3(1)	4(1)	
c. Realtors, Insurance Agents	6(4)	12(9)	9(7)	6(4)	6(5)	
d. Sales Representatives	13(5)	16(11)	12(6)	6(5)	10(3)	
e. Other professionals	5(3)	14(4)	6(3)	9(4)	11(9)	
f. All other identified occs.	11(9)	52(13)	32(10)	20(4)	42(9) ⁴	⁴ Includes 5 incumbants listing "full time councillor" as occupation, 4 of whom won.
11. Election Group Affiliations of Candidates for Council Seats (Winners/Councillors):						
a. Independent Citizens Election Committee	49(37)	45(29)	22(15)	23(12)	0	
b. Labor Election Committee	8(1)	3(1)	1(1)	1(1)	1(0)	
c. New Democratic Party	39(7)	22(9)	15(4)	18(7)	26(6)	
d. Other groups		9(1) Civic Reform Coalition			1(0)	
e. "Independents": number	69(5)	38(10)	46(9)	30(9)	52(23) ⁵	⁵ In August, 1983 the I.C.E.C. formally disbanded itself, and former I.C.E.C. candidates ran as "Independents" in 16 wards. If this number is deducted from the total number of non-affiliated, an average of 45% is obtained.
f. "Independents" % of total cand. (winners)	42%(7%)	33%(26%)	55%(19%)	41%(30%)	66%(80%) ⁵	⁶ Includes former school trustees
12. Incumbants(winners)	50(35) ⁶	41(36)	30(19)	22(19)	26(24)	

Sources: City of Winnipeg Computer Printouts of Election Results; 1974, 1977, 1980; The Winnipeg Free Press: October of election week; The Winnipeg Tribune: October, 1971, 1974, 1977; authors election files and students compilations of primary data.

seen in the 1983 Unicity election which featured not only the French-language question cited above, but also a vote on the banning of nuclear weapons (Winnipeg Free Press, October 26, 1984: 3).

2.4.2 Contests For Mayor

The same pattern of mayoralty success that can be observed in the old City's elections is seen in the Unicity elections. Long-term incumbants were challenged by several candidates, mostly unsuccessfully; but the suburban pattern of acclaiming incumbant mayors election after election is missing (cf. Beaulieu, 1976: 40-41). The only non-mayoralty contests under Unicity have been byelections of Councillors. These have attracted consistently lower turnouts, but have only been for single seats. It is unlikely that Unicity elections without a contest for Mayor (for example, if the Mayor were selected by Council) would attract the same level of turnout, even if referenda were part of every election, if past voting patterns are a suitable basis for extrapolation (Beaulieu, 1976: 46).

2.4.3 Acclamations and Numbers of Candidates

Another measure of electoral participation is the amount of competition for Council seats. The lack of competition is indicated by the number (or percentage) of acclamations -- seats won because only one candidate filed. In the four election years for Winnipeg municipalities prior to Unicity, the average percentage of acclamations was 26.5 (Beaulieu, 1976: 40). In seven cases during that period there were acclamations for all municipal positions in seven cases (all suburban municipalities). Table 1 indicates that such levels of acclamation have not characterized

Unicity elections. The Unicity average is 10.6% of the seats, with a range of seven to twenty per cent, excluding the first election. The only elections in which acclamations approached the levels common before Unicity were the 1974 elections, in which 20% of the seats (ten out of fifty) were acclaimed. Most of the acclamations under Unicity were in suburban wards, notably in Grants Mill and other St. James-Assiniboia wards and in the Tuxedo Heights ward in which Bill Norrie and Bill Neville were routinely acclaimed. But overall, acclamations clearly diminished under Unicity.

Table 1 also indicates the total number of candidates and the average number per ward. Comparable statistics have not been calculated for the pre-Unicity period, but impressionistic analysis suggests that while fewer candidates contested the reduced number of municipal seats (112 to 51), the average competition has been higher under Unicity. As with acclamations, it appears that in many wards the past patterns (and personalities) continued to dominate the local electoral processes under Unicity. It should be noted that the total number of candidates again dropped considerably when the number of wards were reduced from 50 to 29 in 1977, and only rose in 1983 because of the concerted effort on the part of the municipal New Democratic Party to field candidates in as many wards as possible (26 of the 29). In other words, analysis of the relationship between number of wards and candidacies suggests that less will participate with less wards, with a fairly consistent average of 2 to 3 candidates per ward.

A further analysis of levels of turnout and candidacy in various Unicity wards is possible, but will not be pursued here. The interested reader may consult the sources for Table 1, and the author, whose files contain additional materials and unpublished studies of each Unicity election by ward.

2.4.4 Characteristics of Candidates

Table 1 also indicates some of the more interesting information about candidacy participation in Unicity elections. Line 10 indicates that the number of women has remained relatively constant as the total number of wards and candidates has been reduced, producing a slightly increasing percentage of women participants in Council contests. The percentage of female Councillors has risen, though the total numbers have remained relatively static. At the same time, it should be noted that men totally dominate the mayoralty contests, the only female candidate being Brenda Dineen, the 1974 League for Socialist Action Candidate (for a profile, see The Winnipeg Tribune, 19 October 1974, p. 13).

Table 1 also indicates some of the known and classified occupations of candidates and those who were elected to be Councillors. However, as noted in the Table's Notes, these are only "rough" indicators, and should only be interpreted as suggestive. They do indicate that candidates of certain occupations are more successful than those of other occupations, and that the number of identifiable candidates in some of the major occupational groupings previously represented on Council is dropping.

2.4.5 Parties and Election Groups

Table 1 also identifies the major election groups supporting candidates in Unicity elections, indicating the number of candidates affiliated with them and the number of successful candidates/councillors identified with each group. Further information about these groups can be found in Axworthy and Cassidy, 1974: 29-31; Wichern, 1974: 11-13; Wichern, 1978; City Magazine, vol. 6, no. 4 (1984), 11ff. Particularly interesting is the

ostensible demise of the Independent Citizens Election Committee which was dominant in the early years of Unicity. It declined as the enthusiasm of some of its key participants waned, and as its composition and operations were made public (Wichern, 1978; The Winnipeg Tribune, 15-17 August 1980). The key election for the ICEC came in 1980 when its majority of 15 was reduced to 12 (and this included an inside "rump" group), at least partially because of anti-ICEC attitudes (Fayerman, 1980). In 1982 the ICEC councillors lost their control of City committee appointments to a coalition of Independent and New Democratic Party Councillors (The Winnipeg Free Press, 3 November 1982). After a false start at re-organization, the formal disbanding of the ICEC was announced in July, 1983 (The Winnipeg Free Press, 22 July 1983). In the 1983 elections the former ICEC-backed incumbents and several former ICEC incumbents and candidates all ran as Independents. After the election they caucused with other "Independents" to retake key committee and Deputy Mayor posts (The Winnipeg Free Press, 31 October and 1 November 1983). Whether the ICEC is "really dead" remains a matter of opinion (The Winnipeg Free Press, 6 February 1984), and a subject for further research and interpretation.

The municipal wing of the New Democratic Party attempted to develop itself as a force in Winnipeg civic politics in the 1980 and 1983 elections. Unfortunately, its most extensive effort -- which included, for the first time, selecting and supporting a mayoralty candidate, and spending \$17,000 -- was bedeviled at least partially by the French Language referendum politics, which linked provincial policies to local campaigns and overshadowed other issues which the party attempted to raise (Hall, 1984: 14). However, party disunity was also an important contributing factor (Drabble, 1984: 11). As this paper is written, the future importance of this municipal caucus remains as much a question for speculation as the demise of the ICEC.

2.4.6 Incumbancy and a Summary

Initially Unicity elections attracted large numbers of new candidates and voters. The second election attracted more of the traditional pattern of acclamations and limited participation. The 1977 changes in wards pitted some incumbants against each other, and allowed some newcomers to defeat incumbants. Table 1 indicates that incumbancy has been a significant factor throughout Unicity's five elections. Though many contest, few of the non-incumbants win; and when they do win it is usually against each other, rather than against an incumbant. Most of the exceptions to this rule are found in the 1977 elections.

Although civic party or election group campaigning was extended to what were previously non-partisan suburban municipalities, it is not clear that the quality or the quantity of electoral participation has significantly improved under Unicity, as the White Paper suggested it would. However, there are lower rates of acclamations and more competition in the wards which were formerly suburban municipalities. Furthermore, it is clear that the number of candidates will decrease as the number of wards is decreased. It may be worthwhile considering whether more wards, rather than less, might stimulate further participation.

2.5 General Accessibility and Personal Contacting of Officials

Though the Taraska Committee's Report hailed "the fact of the citizens' greatly enhanced accessibility to their local government" as one of the new City's major achievements, a "quite remarkable accomplishment," no evidence was cited except the comments of a senior Councillor (and former suburban mayor) that the "...Act established a new procedure for zoning and development which for the first time involved citizen

participation to a very marked degree, and this has been one of the major achievements of the "...Act" (Committee of Review, 1976: 12-13). The reference made by the Councillor is to the requirements of Part XX, the planning and development control section of the Act, which included public notices published in community as well as city newspapers, postings, mailings to addresses surrounding proposed development changes; open hearings by the Community Committee within whose Community boundaries the change was proposed, acceptance of any representations from citizens at those local hearings, open decision-making by the Community Committee at the conclusion of the hearings, and the right of anyone making a representation to be informed of subsequent hearings or decision-making meetings (of central committees, City Council, etc.). Unfortunately, virtually all of the systematic research (including that by this author), has focused on general operations of Community Committees and the participation in Resident Advisory Groups (which are not specifically mentioned in regard to this type of participation in the Act). Therefore, there is little evidence known to this researcher which can confirm or deny the opinion expressed above, and this is a subject about which research should be undertaken during the current review and evaluation.

There is little more "hard" evidence regarding citizens contacting their local (ward) Councillor. The evidence that is available, based on only 191 households surveyed in both 1971 and 1973, suggests that there was somewhat reduced contact (12%) under the 50 ward Unicity system than (17%) under the previous municipal-Metro system (Axworthy and Cassidy, 1974: 109). The 1973 survey by the author's students (cited above) supported that observation, also indicating that 40% of the 15% who contacted their Councillor did so only once, and that 42% did so only two or three times. In 1977 the wards were reduced to 29, the number which now exists. What is the current level of contacts with Councillors? What is the nature of those contacts? These are important research questions which could be answered by including relevant questions in the public opinion survey suggested previously.

2.6 Participation in Resident Advisory Groups

The electoral participation and contacting of local officials are patterns of local participation common to most cities. The unique participatory mechanism of Unicity which was to attract the additional participation was the Community Committee -- Resident Advisory Group arrangements. This subsection examines that participation in detail.

2.6.1 Amounts of Participation

Table 2 summarizes research data regarding the amount of participation in Resident Advisory Groups from 1971 to 1984. The basic data allows the reader to study actual tallies, and the comparisons indicate the magnitude of the trends clearly observable in the raw data. Though some recent stabilization is suggested by the data, both sets of figures indicate a massive decline in participation throughout the years studied, consistently averaging seventy per cent of the initial levels of participation. The data also indicate that the decline is not primarily a product of the reduction of communities and wards in 1977.

The reasons for the decline are documented by the numerous initial studies of RAGs (Axworthy and Cassidy, 1974: 107ff; Community Planning Association, 1973; Wichern, 1974, 1975). The findings of those studies will be integrated with the results of subsequent unpublished surveys and studies which this research will summarize, including a 1978 survey of RAGs conducted by the author, in-depth studies of RAGs in the years 1978-81, a recent thesis (Orr, 1984), and a survey of RAGs conducted for this study in late 1983 and early 1984. The first cause of decline was a "natural" drop after the initial enthusiasm and novelty wore off.

TABLE 2. Estimates of Participation in Resident Advisory Groups, 1971 - 1983.

	A. Basic Data						B. Comparisons			
	1972	1975	1978	1979	1982	1983	'72-'75	'75-'78	'79-'82	'72-'82
1. Wards	50	50	29	29	29	29	0	- 21(42%)	+ 0	- 21(42%)
2. Communities	13	12	6	6	6	6	- 1	- 6(50%)	+ 0	- 7
3. Community Conference Total	2245*	731	430	300	195	226	-1541(67%)	-301(41%)	-105(35%)	-536(73%) ^X
Attendance Average/cc	173	60	72	50	33	38	- 113	+ 12	- 17	-140 ^X
4. RAG members	481	348	222	150	156	152	- 133(28%)	-126(36%)	+ 6(4%)	-325(70%)
5. "Active" members	320	200	120	108	82 ⁺	77 ⁺	- 120(38%)	- 80(40%)	- 26(24%)	-238(74%)
6. Largest RAG	146	54	55	55	34	27	- 88	+ 1	- 21	-112
7. Average Size	40	29	36	36	25	25	- 11(28%)	+ 7(24%)	- 11(30%)	- 15(38%)

NOTES:

*This includes Community Conferences held in late 1971, as well as early 1972.

⁺Average Attendance at RAG meetings is used here as an index of "active" membership.

^XBecause of the obviously unique initial turnout at Community Conferences, in this case the 1975 figure has been used as a basis for comparisons.

Sources: City Clerks RAG Minutes, RAG Chairpersons' estimates, community clerks estimates; Wichern 1975; Orr, 1984.

For example, St. Boniface's RAG Community Committee began operations with a dinner-dance attracting over 450 persons. Attendance at other Community Conferences was estimated at two to three hundred persons (Wichern, 1975). Attendance at the next round of Community Conferences was much less, dropping off to 731 (67%) by 1975, as Table 2 indicates.

The second reason for declining participation was the suspicious and/or hostile attitudes of many Councillors and civic employees previously discussed. A third, and related reason was the lack of resources, power, and ability to act meaningfully in the making of City decisions. The RAGs were refused separate budgets or even access to the per capita grants available to other groups in many of the Communities. Their staff work had to be done by Community clerks who also handled all the business of the Community Committees. Often adequate information and time for considering it was unavailable. Much of the business referred to the RAGs was trivial administration or city-wide issues beyond the competence of the local Advisors. Recent surveys (by Orr, 1984 and by a graduate student for the author) indicate that these conditions and problems are still cited by Resident Advisory Group chairpersons and members as the key reasons for declining participation levels.

A final reason for declining participation levels is the resulting nature of the RAG operations. One RAG has not formally met for a number of years. Others have difficulty with members coming late to meetings, if at all. Only two or three RAGs appear to generate creative meetings: some of the ward RAGs in the St. James-Assiniboia Community and the Assiniboine Park-Fort Garry RAG. Not surprisingly, these are the larger and more active RAGs. A survey of RAG Meeting Minutes from 1978 to 1982 indicates that approximately one-quarter of the meeting time was spent considering problems and possible ways to improve local RAGs (Orr, 1984: 34). Over half the Resident Advisors surveyed in the same study could not name any major accomplishment by their RAG (Orr, 1984: 35). Lest this be taken as a criticism of the RAG members, it should be recalled that

the Act assigns the RAGs to "advise and assist the members of the community committee...as to the performance of their functions under this Act" (Section 21[4]). It is the Councillors, not the RAGs, who are to "...develop and implement techniques to maintain the closest possible communication between the City and the residents of the community..." (etc.). As noted, there is little evidence of general compliance with the letter or the spirit of this Section (23) of the Act. RAGs are left to their own devices as to how to maintain themselves, not to mention how to fulfill responsibilities actually given to the Councillors acting as community committees.

2.6.2 Quality and Patterns of RAG Participation

In the early years there were a variety of patterns of RAG organization and interaction with the Community Committees (Axworthy and Cassidy, 1974: 121ff; Wichern, 1975: 4-9). A similar analysis in recent years indicates all but one RAG meeting as a whole a few days before the Community Committee meetings, reviewing the agenda of those meetings and any items referred from the last such meeting, and communicating to the Councillors at those meetings through the RAG chairperson (Orr, 1984: 31). All the RAGs are found to have between one to six subcommittees; but they meet rarely, and are often poorly attended. In other words, there appears to be a reduction of variety similar to patterns of limited participation.

Another measure of the quality of participation might be the substance of RAG discussions. As discussed, the Orr survey of the Minutes of RAG meetings between 1978 and 1984 found that one quarter of the time was taken up with "navel gazing." The majority of the time was given to considering local administrative issues of more or less consequence,

depending on one's point of view: "...the placement of road signs, traffic lights and pedestrian corridors...zoning variances, conditional uses...and allocation of the Per Capita grants" (Orr, 1984: 33). The other quarter of time was spent on what Orr terms "city-wide" matters. There are notable exceptions to this litany, but they are few and often tainted by subsequent developments (for a classic example, consult "Resident Group Believes It was Duped," The Winnipeg Free Press, 11 September 1982, p. 7; for a summary of previous attainments by the same Group, consult "Citizen Forum" letter to the editor, same newspaper, 23 January 1980).

There also may be a qualitative difference in those who originally participated and those who are participating now. Orr cites several other studies as well as his own survey and interview research in arguing that most recent Advisors are "...not of the same calibre of participant as were their predecessors " (Orr, 1984: 30). He states that many Advisors responding to his questionnaire and follow-up interviews, "...stated that the only reason they were involved in the Resident Advisory Group is to act as a 'watchdog' on their Councillor" (Orr, p. 31). It should be noted that Orr also found "...a core group of today's advisors who are long standing members...and who are dedicated and hard-working community workers..." (*Ibid.*). It should also be noted that RAGs vary from community to community (and within the St. James-Assiniboia community, from ward to ward), and from year to year in participants and in level and type of participation.

The quality of the RAG contribution to community Committee operations may be evaluated in terms of Councillors' and Community clerks' opinions, in terms of RAG chairpersons' evaluations, and in terms of observation or records of Community Committee and RAG meetings. A 1983 survey was done for this study using the first and second of these indices. It suggests that the quality is not what the participants would like it to be, that RAG inputs to the Committees and Committee referral of items are relatively

infrequent in terms of total items considered, and that often the Councilors and clerks judge the RAG contributions to be less informed and important than the other inputs into the Community Committee decision-making on most matters. Again, however, it should be noted that the survey revealed wide ranges of opinion from community to community as to the RAG contributions. It should also be recalled that the Act assigns the primary responsibility to the Community Committee to stimulate a creative and positive communication process, rather than the RAGs. The RAGs are to only "advise and assist" the Councilors. It does not appear that many Councilors actually perform their "communication" responsibilities through the RAG, so that the RAG is left to simply react to referrals or items which may interest them. This means that the RAG contributions are structurally reduced to gratuitous comments, rather than being part of an on-going positive exchange of information.

2.6.3 Other Major Contributions of RAG Participation

Beyond the record listed above are several dimensions of RAG participation which have gone virtually unnoticed in the consistently dismal evaluations by previous studies. First, the RAGs from the beginning provided opportunities for creative involvement by citizens genuinely interested in the development of their areas of the City -- their communities, as distinct from those other residents who became involved because of a particular problem or issue. The author, as Chairman of the Fort Rouge RAG from 1973 to 1975, observed a flowering of local activity that resulted in corrections to misapprehensions of Councilors about local places, conditions, and attitudes; development of neighbourhood improvement associations, action area plans, and the "City Plans And What Do You Think Shop;" writing of a centennial souvenir handbook on the history of the community, and the development of a community

network to co-ordinate and enhance the operations of community clubs, neighbourhood associations, and other voluntary groups with civic departments and the schools in the community. (Unfortunately, much of this "community building" was interrupted by the 1977 re-structuring of communities and re-drawing of ward boundaries; part of the community was placed in the new Assiniboine-Fort Garry Community, the rest became part of the new City Centre-Fort Rouge Community. The latter's offices and staff were moved out of the previous centrally-located premises, and many of those working to develop the community, including the author, "retired" from the RAG.) However, despite such problems in most of the other RAGs' history, Orr (1984: 31) notes that there remained in the 1978-1982 period, "...a core group of...advisors who are long standing members...and who are dedicated and hard-working community workers...." There are also still creative information and community-building activities being undertaken, as exemplified by the role of Assiniboine Park-Fort Garry RAG in the newspaper articles mentioned above, and indicated in the survey done especially for this study.

Another major unrecognized contribution of RAG participation has been the opportunities it has provided for potential future Councillors to learn about and experience the nature of City operations. At least a third of the present Councillors have some background as RAG participants, and several of the senior positions -- Deputy Mayor, Committee Chairmen -- are RAG alumni. Many of the unsuccessful candidates also have RAG experience. In other words, the RAG participation provides a "spawning ground" and a valuable learning experience for other significant forms of participation. In this manner RAG participation enriches the whole system of Unicity government.

2.7 Other Forms of Participation in Civic Operations

Preoccupation with the RAG participation has meant that several other forms of structured participation have gone virtually unnoticed. Appointments to civic boards, commissions, and other bodies continued under Unicity. For this study the author counted 180 such appointments in 1973 and 137 in 1983 (listed in the City Municipal Manuals for those years). The RAGs have some role in this, recommending or serving as a major source of names for such local bodies as library boards. But the appointment of previous Councillors and prominent citizens to the various central boards and commissions does not appear to be linked to RAG participation, and remains a mostly unreported and unresearched dimension of Unicity operations.

The City of Winnipeg Act created another form of participation which deserves more attention. The Act requires Community Committees to hold open public hearings on various land use and license permits, including subdivision approvals, rezonings, zoning variances, special development applications, action area plans, community (formerly entitled "district") plans, and applications for conditional uses (Sections 569-622). Although statistical evidence has not been analyzed, the author's reading of years of Council Minutes suggests that hundreds of interested persons and groups have participated through the opportunities which these legal requirements provide. The significance of these provisions was supported in testimony reported by the 1976 Committee of Review Report (Part II, Chapter 3, and Part IV, Chapter 4). The Courts have also recognized the significance of these provisions in a number of important judgments (Newman, 1975: 11-14). In addition, various licensing decisions have also been assigned to the Community Committees, or their recommendations given priority in central decision-making. On these matters as well, citizens may be heard at Community

Committee meetings -- if they are aware of them, and overcome their understandable concerns about the above-noted attitudes of some public officials toward their participation.

2.8 Other Forms of Participation: Communal and Protest

There are several other important forms of citizen participation which should be included here as part of the Unicity record. These are the patterns of participation by organized groups. These forms may be geographical or functional, issue-based or longer-term goal-based. They include neighbourhood (residents') associations, community centres, groups of residents protesting or supporting particular City actions, and the growing number of associations of particular groups in the City -- ethnic, gay, senior citizens, handicapped, abused, etc. Some of the more established include those representing various groups of businesses in the City: the Downtown Merchants, Chamber of Commerce, etc. Throughout the Minutes of Unicity are found numerous appearances by, or references to, these forms of participation, though the author has no statistical summary to offer the reader. But beyond those Minutes and the references in the local newspapers, there is clearly a whole universe of local group activity which is scarcely recognized, and apparently not clearly documented (apart from listings of The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg). For example, the 82 volunteer boards of Community Centres in the Winnipeg area yearly administer several millions of dollars, involve thousands of residents, and supplement the more formal programs and the facilities of the City Parks and Recreation Department (General Council of Winnipeg Community Centres information sheet, 1984). Residents associations such as that in the Wolseley area focus on improving their neighbourhood, rather than simply blocking undesired uses of properties (Wolseley Residents Association Newsletter, Vol. 2, May, 1984).

Residents groups have been critical components in the nationally recognized success of Winnipeg's Neighbourhood/Community Improvement Program.

Even a cursory review of this voluntary participation through groups suggests extensive potential for either protest and confrontation or co-operative development of a better quality of life in Winnipeg. The potential for protest is seen in the record of groups "fighting City Hall" during the period under study. Unfortunately, the author does not have the type of systematic documentation which has been presented for electoral and Resident Advisory Group participation. However, mention must be made of the concerted group effort opposing the McGregor-Sherbrook bridge, especially the McKenzie Residents Group (The Winnipeg Tribune, 17 July 1973, p. 3); as well as the successful appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada by the Windsor Park group, Concerned Citizens of Winnipeg, of a decision to allow a major firm to operate an asphalt plant in violation of a City zoning bylaw (The Winnipeg Tribune, 21 August 1980, p. 4). Probably the best examples of the potential for co-operation are the residents' groups involved in administration of the Neighbourhood Community Development Program, the Community Centres, and the Homeowners or Residents Associations. Much more attention should be given to the positive contributions of various groups to civic policy-making and quality of life.

3.0 ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, RECOMMENDATIONS

The preceding sections have reviewed the context within which expectations for participation under Unicity were formed, and the actual record of that participation. This section examines what a proper and fair evaluation of that record is, and what implications such an evaluation has for the current Review and the future of Unicity's citizen participation mechanisms.

3.1 Past Evaluations: A Critique

3.1.1 Resident Advisory Group Participation

The published evaluations of citizen participation under Unicity focus on the record of the Resident Advisory Groups and Community Committees, usually comparing the record with the expectations created by the White Paper and optimistic projections such as that by Lloyd Axworthy, who wrote: "Now that the citizen's nose is inside the tent, he may move right in" (1972: 33). Not surprisingly, from this perspective "...the great expectations for increased citizen participation in civic decision making were not realized..." (Axworthy, 1980b: 209); and, "...the Unicity act made only rather weak contributions to a participatory political relationship in Winnipeg" (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983: 158).

It should be noted that the latter authors present no independent evidence supporting their evaluation, but instead cite Axworthy's comments that the Resident Advisory Groups and Community Committees became "...the preserve of the local Councillors, small groups of activist-minded citizens, and developers and builders...", a "moribund" system in the suburbs (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983: 175, quoting Axworthy, 198b: 117-118). While it may have been a fair characterization of one or several RAGs at some time in the 1970s, the extensive research summarized in the previous section does not provide any evidence that such a characterization is fair when applied to all the RAGs for the whole period under study. Instead, this study's review of the record suggests a declining level of RAG activity, but continued (and in several cases, increased) participation in individual RAGs by various types of citizens -- not just those groups cited as dominating RAGs in the above

quotation. These evaluations therefore appear to be unfair in terms of their framework of expectations.

This is not to say that all of these evaluators' observations are incorrect. The preceding research supports Brownstone and Plunkett's statement that "...the community committee-RAG arrangement has not worked out as anticipated..." (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983: 175). The research reported in the previous section also supports Axworthy's claim that the influence of the Resident Advisory Groups "has further diminished" since the 1977 Amendments, which "did little to clarify" their role or to supply them with adequate resources (Axworthy, 1980c: 213). But the more sweeping evaluations cited above are based upon expectations which the first section of this study showed to be external to the local context and therefore quite unrealistic. In addition, the previous section indicates a much broader range of participation than that associated with the Resident Advisory Groups. The record also suggests that despite the difficulties and the lack of support, the RAGs have been a significant dimension of citizen participation under Unicity. Also, the provisions for local hearings and decisions on land-uses and planning have provided significant new opportunities for citizens to gain information and take part in civic decision-making on various types of zoning, land-use, and planning matters.

Of special interest to such a study as this is the evaluation by the provincially appointed Committee of Review, published in 1976. It characterized the White Paper's low opinion of participation in Winnipeg before Unicity as "curiously inappropriate...in terms of familiar practical reality..." and the mechanisms written into the Act as "...rather a case of overreaction..." to the perceived problem (Committee of Review, 1976: 56). However, the Committee cited as one the "...new city's achievements...and quite remarkable, accomplishments..." "the fact of the citizens' greatly enhanced accessibility to their local

government" (*Ibid.*, 32-33). In this observation the Committee's observation and the findings of this current study contradict those evaluations which focus solely on the failure of Unicity's officials to properly perform their duties in nurturing communication flows and citizen participation. As the Committee noted, "[t]he system of Community Committees and Residents' Advisory Groups may not so far have worked out to everyone's complete satisfaction, but the system is in place and the opportunities for greater citizen participation do exist " (*Ibid.*, 33).

The Committee went on to report that of the many briefs presented to it on the Resident Advisory Groups and Community Committees, "...the majority felt that neither...was working as the Act had intended...[y]et very few people advocated their abolition. The general consensus was that the Community Committees should be retained but that their role should be strengthened and their relationship with the Residents' Advisory Groups should be improved so that there could, in fact, be effective citizen participation..." (Committee of Review, 1976: 57-58).

On the other hand, the Committee found a "...consensus which seemed to emerge from the evidence that citizens will participate when issues affect their interests, and that it does not require a Residents' Advisory Group to stimulate participation under those conditions...it is very doubtful whether the residents' advisory groups represent for them any fresh opportunity to participate in the system" (*Ibid.*, 248). While the Committee provided no evidence for this "consensus," the record reviewed in the previous section does support the observation that most citizens participate only in issues directly affecting their immediate interests. Whether the RAGs have presented "any fresh opportunity" for participation is a question of definition and practice. Certainly, by definition the RAGs do present new opportunities for groups to represent themselves -- and many of them have done so through the RAGs. On the other hand, because of the obvious problems and limited role

of the RAGs, most groups have tended to develop their political activity apart from them.

The Committee rejected the idea that the Act was attempting "...to impose citizen participation; it merely provides the conditions under which people, if they choose, may participate through Residents' Advisory Groups...a means by which local Councillors and local citizens might communicate with each other and exchange views on a formal basis..." (*Ibid.*, 250). The Committee concluded that the Act had not succeeded in this "intent," but that the Community Committees and Resident Advisory Groups could effectively fulfill their roles if "...the Community Committees were to be given a definite role in the preparation of district plans and action area plans, and an involvement in the establishment of the development plan for the City..." which the Committee recommended as changes to the Act (*Ibid.*). It therefore recommended retention of the RAGs, but that their composition and role should be modified: that they "...should...specifically...assist and advise the community committees in the preparation of district plans and action area plans and in the recommendation of amendments to the Greater Winnipeg Development Plan, and to advise the community committees on zoning matters...;" and that the RAGs' composition "...should be enlarged from their present membership to include representatives from any organization in the community which wishes to participate in the planning process..." (Committee of Review, 1976: 371-372, Recommendations 48-50). The Committee recommended that the non-planning roles of the Community Committees were to be reduced to "...budgeting, programming and implementing of cultural and recreational activities...(but)...no responsibility for supervision of employees even in these activities...(Recommendation 42). It also recommended the reduction of the number of wards to 39 and of Communities to 6 (Recommendations 44-47).

The provincial government in its 1977 Amendments to the Act adopted

a number of these recommendations. The number of wards was reduced to 29 (rather than 39, which the Committee had chosen because an average of 9,000 electors would have been represented), and the Communities were reduced to six, roughly corresponding to the City's works and operations districts (City of Winnipeg Act, Section 20[1]). The Province also adopted the recommendation regarding reduction of the Community Committees' authority in supervision of services, leaving to the Committees only the authority to "...prepare and submit annual capital and current estimates of the costs of operating the Community Committee and the expenditures budgeted for libraries, parks and recreation, the recreation commission, the St. Boniface Museum Board, or community centres..." during a particular year (Act, Section 22.3).

Following the recommendations regarding planning functions to be assigned to the Community Committees and the RAGs, the Province added a subsection making the Community Committees responsible for developing and implementing "...techniques to make the fullest and best use of the Resident Advisory Group...in the committee's consideration of the Greater Winnipeg development plan, the community plan, the action area plan, zoning changes or proposed plans of subdivision or any amendment, alteration, repeal or replacement or any one or more of them" (Act, Section 23[c1]). The research for this study identified no significant techniques developed under this assignment of responsibility. In fact, no evidence was found of a change in the form or pattern of RAG participation. Furthermore, the record discussed in the previous section suggests a continued decline in participation and disillusionment within this framework for participation (Orr, 1984).

On the other hand, the Province did not adopt the recommendation for explicitly adding representatives of local citizen groups to the RAGs, nor did it provide for guaranteed allocations for RAG operations as many evaluators had suggested since the RAG's creation. Despite continued

requests for various types of assistance (for example, the Brief to The Law Amendment Committee For The City of Winnipeg Act by The Residents' Advisory Groups of the City of Winnipeg; City Council Minutes of November 8, 1978: Section III), no such changes have been made to Section 21 of the Act. The RAGs continue to be almost totally dependent on the assistance of the Community Clerks' offices, and the relatively small allocations that are made are earmarked for secretarial services, according to the 1983 RAG survey (discussed in the previous section on the record of participation).

3.1.2 Electoral Participation and Party Politics

As noted above, the major evaluations under review here focus on Resident Advisory Group participation. None systematically examine electoral participation or the other forms of participation reviewed in section 2. Even the 1976 Committee of Review, which recommended a "modified parliamentary form of urban government" based on local party politics, did not present or make use in its Report of such data as may be found in Table 1. Rather than using local electoral data, the Committee based its case for party politics on its interpretation of developments in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal, as well as research on Winnipeg politics which argued that it was a party system since the 1919 Strike (for a critique of these bases and references, consult Wichern, 1984). The Committee argued that problems of municipal government in larger urban centres in Canada could only be solved by "clearly articulated and systematic policies," and that "...such definitive policies require political groups to formulate them and carry them out..." (Committee of Review, 1976: 16 [Part II, Chapter i]). "In spite of the weaknesses of the parties now functioning in Winnipeg city politics," the Committee believed that "...a sound foundation exists for the maturing

of a system of party politics at City Hall..." (*Ibid.*: 160 [Part III, Chapter 2]). Unfortunately, neither a proper reading of Winnipeg's political history nor the data reviewed in the preceding sections suggest adequate "foundations" in Winnipeg's electoral participation record. Furthermore, the author's 1973 survey of public attitudes found that 55% of the respondents reported they did not cast their vote on the basis of party labels, and 52% of those giving their opinion did not think there should be party politics at the local level (Wichern, 1974: 44).

Whether Winnipeg's local electors today view local party politics favourably and vote on that basis are questions which a public opinion survey might answer. The electoral record reviewed in the preceding section does not provide encouraging evidence for the development of electoral foundations for a local party system (see section 2.4.5.). The Province did not accept the recommendations of the 1976 Committee for Council election of the Mayor, a "chief critic" (leader of the opposition), and a Council "chairman" (Speaker); the structuring and strengthening of the Council's "executive" to become "...the municipal equivalent of a cabinet"; and similar reforms of the standing committee system (Committee of Review, 1976: 362-366, Recommendations 4-23). In passing, it should be noted that the Committee did not recommend changing the single-member ward election of Councillors, specifically reaffirming the importance of "...a ward or constituency system which clearly related the Councillor to constituents whose number is small enough to ensure ready access and encourage easy communication..." (*Ibid.*: 173 [Part IV, Chapter 1]). Therefore, the Committee rejected multi-member wards or at-large elections involving slates of candidates.

Since these ideas were not translated into legislation, it is impossible to be sure what the results might have been. However, the record does make clear the historical trend in Winnipeg electoral

participation away from party identification in the years being studied here (see Table 1, line 11). Furthermore, the recent dismal record of attempts to develop local parties and election groups provides little empirical ground for optimism, in contrast to the developments in other Canadian and prairie cities. In other words, the Winnipeg local political culture does not appear as supportive of partisan local politics as either academic evaluations or contemporary political cultures in other Canadian cities. "Can -- should -- this be changed?" is a question which will be addressed in the following section which examines various options.

3.1.3 Summary of the Record and Past Evaluations

It is a much fairer summary of the record to say that although participation is not what some of the evaluators have thought it would be, it has been impressive in both the numbers of citizens involved and the quality of that participation. Though both appear to have been declining since the advent of Unicity, a strong core of that participation remains.

3.2 "Where Do We Go From Here?": Evaluation of Options

This part of the study takes us from the past record to possible futures. In between is, of course, the present state of citizen participation under Unicity and identification of the basic principles which should guide the evaluation of options for the future. These tasks are part of the explicit responsibilities and published agenda of the City of Winnipeg Act Review Committee (point #5, pamphlet distributed

by the Committee in September, 1985). However, the Committee's efforts may be assisted by consideration of principles and evaluation of consequences which may be projected for the adoption of various options, on the basis of what has been discussed in this paper.

3.2.1 Community Committees and Resident Advisory Groups

3.2.1.1 Abolish Community Committees and RAGs?

The principle on which this option may be based is that mechanisms that have not produced the desired results should be abandoned. Since the record of these mechanisms of structured participation have not worked in either their pre-1977 or post-1977 forms, why not abandon the effort altogether? A variation on this theme is pursued by Orr (1984: Chapters 5-6), and that is that unless the whole structure of the City government and provincial-local relations is reformed, these participatory mechanisms might as well be abandoned.

The answer to this option lies in both the principle and the practice of citizen participation in Winnipeg. First, any opportunity for participation (that is not injurious) should not be abandoned. (This principle is in turn based on the widely established principle that local governments should provide maximum access and opportunities for participation -- see Tindal and Tindal, 1984: Chapter 7). The record nowhere indicates that the Community Committees or Resident Advisory Groups have been injurious to either participation or City decision-making; they simply have not lived up to various evaluators' expectations. On the other hand, Table 2 indicates several thousand people were initially involved through these mechanisms, and that several hundred are still participating through them. Furthermore, the record

indicates that despite the lack of a "nurturing environment," the RAG participation idea took deep root in the Winnipeg local political culture and it has not died, in spite of highly unfavourable conditions for its growth and development. A sensitive observer can detect in this record a core of genuine interest and a willingness to contribute to the development of a local community which is quite apart from specific local and regional interests represented by other citizens' organizations.

It is further likely that abolition of these mechanisms would finally truncate the decentralization dimension of Unicity, further increasing pressures on the central institutions by local groups who will no longer be able to channel their participation into local institutions. It is further likely that local interests will lose whatever institutional footholds they now have in terms of the remaining functions of the Community Committees. It is possible, in addition, that strong local protests may result from attempts to abolish these mechanisms of local participation. In other words, there are potential political problems with the abolition option, even if it were desirable.

3.2.1.2 "Leave Them As They Are": The Status Quo Option

This option is the one that has for the most part been followed during the period under study. The record indicates that this approach has the consequence of allowing the participatory mechanisms to "wither on the vine," as the RAGs have done. This option cannot be justified from any but the political principle of avoiding the consequences of either abolition or further improvement by innovation. So far it has worked; but this study suggests that both evaluations and practical expressions of concern have been increasingly in agreement that something must be done one way or another: either abolish the Community Committees and RAGs, or better guarantee their roles and

significance along with strengthening the other channels of participation. Furthermore, it can be appropriately argued that to stick to the status quo is to act contrary to the whole idea of innovation in urban government which Unicity embodies. What is required is innovative adaptation to the Winnipeg context, not continuance of clearly flawed performance. But how?

There are several advantages to retaining the present number and geographical boundaries of Communities (perhaps modified for population growth or movement). First, the current Communities (or "Districts," as proposed above) do correspond to administrative service divisions, and have now developed a seven-year record of operations within that framework. That record and how the present arrangement is working should also be the subjects of serious research. The same principle and need for research may be to the Communities as units which residents recognize and to which they have learned to relate. This research could be undertaken as part of the public opinion survey recommended in section 2.3. If the Communities have not taken "root" in the awareness of citizens, then changes in their boundaries and functions would be more reasonable.

3.2.1.3 "Further Innovation and Reform" Options

The basic principle guiding consideration of this series of options is that Unicity is not just a structure, but a process of urban government innovation and reform which should be continued. This principle suggests that we should learn from, and build on, the past record, rather than discarding such participatory mechanisms as Community Committees and Resident Advisory Groups. This approach would carefully evaluate current citizens' and officials' attitudes toward these institutions, and examine how to modify the decision-making environment

as well as the mechanisms themselves in such a manner that local and City-wide participation might be improved and further innovative adaptation encouraged. Some ideas occur to the author from this study, and the reader will hopefully be able to identify others from this study and other sources, including his or her personal experiences.

Councillors sitting as Community Committees do not appear to have been able to fulfill their responsibilities under Section 23 of the Act -- that is to develop and implement various techniques of communicating with citizens and making "best use" of the Resident Advisory Group in their Community. Instead of abolishing this Section, the following alternatives might be evaluated:

- 1) adding a subsection to this or the previous section, directing the allocation of funds for hiring consultants to suggest practical "techniques" which would fulfill those responsibilities;
- 2) requiring a yearly "reportcard" to be circulated to all residents on which they might evaluate to what degree their Community Committee has fulfilled its responsibility;
- 3) provide for Community referenda and neighbourhood plebiscites on Committee decisions;
- 4) require the Committees to develop "Neighbourhood Development" programs for the neighbourhoods and communities within their boundaries.

This latter suggestion could be part of a broader improvement of Community operations: as they generally correspond to the City's six works and operations districts, why not call them "Districts" and allow the words "communities" and "neighbourhoods" to apply to the various areas with those titles that currently exist within the broader districts? Why not assign the responsibilities for community and neighbourhood development to the District Committee, working with residents in those areas, who would elect representatives to a District co-ordinating group

(the former Resident Advisory Group)? These efforts would require the mandated assistance of various City employees -- but especially an expanded Housing and Community Improvement Branch staff in the Department of Environmental Planning. (In this manner hundreds of thousands of dollars of Tri-level funds, necessary for dealing with "derelict" areas, might be saved.) Though the present planning focus for Community Committees cannot be judged acceptable, the more tangible and relevant role of neighbourhood development, or what the Environmental Planning Department has termed "neighbourhood management" (Orr, 1984: 75), appears to be a much better framework for local citizen involvement. In many areas there are already Community Centres, residents' associations, and groups of citizens participating in Neighbourhood Watch and other community-based programs. This voluntary "grass roots" participation is indigenous to Winnipeg, and it should be a recognized part of urban government problem-solving and policy-making.

A further innovation would be provision for creation of City-wide Advisory Groups on such City-wide concerns as Downtown Development, the downtown versus the suburbs, transit and traffic, natural ecology conservation, and placement of group homes. Members of these Groups should include members of RAGs, specialists in the fields, and members of already organized groups promoting improvements in the various areas of services and policy-making. A City-wide association of Resident Advisors should also be designated, and at least once a year a City Community Conference should be required by the Act. Such a Conference would serve as an annual focus of media and citizen attention on City business and problem-solving. The various advisory groups would report and hold open panel sessions with Councillors and City administrators. A banquet session should recognize superior contributions of Councillors and Resident Advisors in fulfilling the requirements of the Act that are now mostly ignored. Citizen participation would be recognized as other volunteer participation is now recognized, and citizens would have

an annual City-wide participation focus to supplement the elections held every three years, and the every-day activities of the Councillors and Resident Advisory Groups. In this manner citizen awareness and officials' attitudes toward participation might be changed toward a more "nurturing" environment for participation.

3.2.2 Electoral Participation Options Evaluated

3.2.2.1 "Leave As Is": The Status Quo

The record clearly indicates that voting participation, though higher than levels before Unicity, involves only about a third of the eligible electorate in "normal" years (in other words, excluding the first Unicity election and the most recent one which featured the highly controversial French Language referendum). The voting record of the old City's residents suggests that removal of the Mayor would result in lower turnouts and less interest (see Sections 1.1 and 2.4.2). This provides some basis for arguing for the status quo on direct election of the Mayor from a principle that maximum citizen participation should be encouraged in the elections.

3.2.2.2 Options For Change: Wards

The record is less clear about the impact of reducing or increasing the number of wards, or whether to leave their number at 29. The above principle may be supplemented with that used by the 1976 Review Committee: "...strong (central) government needs to be counterbalanced by a ward or constituency system which clearly relates the Councillor to constituents whose number is small enough to ensure ready access and encourage easy communication..." (Committee of Review, 1976: 173 [Part IV,

Chapter 1, "Elections"])). This principle would suggest, at a minimum, not decreasing the number of wards, since some approximate or are larger than provincial constituencies. Whether the existing number adequately approximate the goals set in this principle, is something that the current Review Committee should carefully examine -- or the Province may do as it has done previously, and delegate this question to a special Boundaries Commission.

As noted above, it was also under the above-cited principle that the Committee did not recommend multi-member wards or at-large elections to foster party politics (in the author's opinion a critical ingredient in the development of party politics in Vancouver, Edmonton, and Montreal). However, there is no adequate study of the current state of the Councillor-citizen relationship, on which a fair evaluation can be based. Clearly, such research should be a priority on the agenda of the current Committee of Review. Further examination of the multi-ward systems in other Canadian cities, as compared to single-member systems, should also be undertaken.

3.2.2.3 Options for Change: Party Politics

As noted above, the primary focus in encouraging local party politics has not been on electoral arrangements, but on legislated changes to central institutions -- the Mayor, the Council, and its committee structure. The next study in this series will evaluate those ideas, institutions, and issues relating to them. Here the focus is on the participative dimension, and there are some options which should be considered. The first option for encouraging party politics is discussed above: multi-member wards (unless the decentralized component is discarded, in which at-large election might be considered). Another option is a number of changes in the local elections laws to allow party labels on local ballots, matching (Provincial) funds for local election groups fielding an adequate

slate of candidates (as the Province of Quebec does), or perhaps even require Mayoralty candidates to indicate which election group or Councillors they will be caucusing with, if they are elected. In the author's opinion, such electoral changes as these would promote local party politics without abolishing either the single-member ward system or direct election of the Mayor, both of which stimulate participation.

Comment on this subject would be incomplete without acknowledging the difficulties inherent in attempts to "legislate" local party politics, but at the same time recognizing the need for policy leadership in Unicity decision-making. However, such a discussion would take us into the subject of the next study in this series, evaluation of central institutions, and therefore will not be pursued further here.

CONCLUSION

The past record and selected options for the future have been reviewed and evaluated in this study. It has discovered that Winnipeg has a history of public involvement in local affairs which has been enhanced and developed within the Unicity framework. Though the record is not what the most prominent past evaluations have thought it should be, there is evidence of greater participation under Unicity, despite unfavourable attitudes of public officials and a lack of basic resources such as adequate information, encouragement, and tangible rewards (for Resident Advisors, for example). There are various options for what should now be done with the Unicity framework, and some of those options have been evaluated in this study. What remains to be decided is the actual future of citizen participation in Winnipeg civic affairs. Hopefully, this study will assist those who wish to understand the past and create a better future for that participation.

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