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REPORT
on the
PROCESS

DISCUSSION PAPER No. 1

HUMAN SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEMS

AND

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

REPORT ON THE PROCESS OF DISCUSSION PAPER NO. I

HUMAN SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEMS

AND

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The Edmonton Social Planning Council was commissioned by the Office of the Commissioner of Public Affairs, City of Edmonton, to be responsible for the public participation programme with regards to Discussion Paper No. 1 - Human Service Delivery Systems and Citizen Involvement. Agreement was reached April 7, 1976, as to the format, structure and responsibilities of the Edmonton Social Planning Council and the City of Edmonton.

The actual process got underway in the last week of April with Ms. Cherry Bowhay of the Edmonton Social Planning Council as Project Co-ordinator. The original deadline for submissions had been planned for May 21st, 1976, and this was printed in the Discussion Papers. At a meeting of the Community Services Co-ordinating Committee held in April, however, some of the members requested an extension of that deadline for one month so that their departments could have sufficient time to respond. The date was therefore moved to June 21, 1976.

The Edmonton Social Planning Council enlisted the assistance of the Edmonton Social Services community workers in seven separate geographical sectors of the City. They were requested to distribute the Discussion Paper to all community groups, agencies or individuals in their area who they thought might be interested in its contents. The community workers as well as staff members from the Social Planning Council were also available to meet with persons who requested further discussion and explanation.

The Edmonton Social Planning Council contacted the major media sources, including the community newspapers, about the contents of the Discussion Paper. The budget allowed for two paid advertisements, which were subsequently placed in The Edmonton Journal and The Ukrainian News. A series of eight public workshops was organized, one for each sector of the City. These meetings took place between May 25th and June 21st, 1976. Members of the Task Force who wrote the original report entitled "Task Force on Public Affairs Department's Delivery Systems and Citizen Involvement" were invited to attend and explain the concepts outlined.

Mr. Don Milne, of Edmonton Social Services, S. Sgt. Robert Claney, of the Edmonton City Police, and Ms. Moira Walker and Mr. Larry Hendricks from the Edmonton Public Library attended. Discussion was encouraged following the introductory explanations and the commentary was recorded. A representative of the Edmonton Social Planning Council attended to explain the Council's role in the process and to ensure that recording was done.

As well as the formal public meetings, many informal meetings were held with different community groups, community leagues, and others who were concerned. Briefs and letters were received from a diversity of persons and organizations.

As the project progressed, it became clear that the June 21st deadline was again much too soon for many organizations to formulate a response. The Edmonton Social Planning Council requested an extension of the deadline and the Commissioner's Office therefore agreed to accept submissions past that date, into the summer and fall of 1976. Letters of intent were requested from groups who intended to make a later reply, and where they indicated their main thoughts in such a letter, these were incorporated into the summary report.

The report consists of several different sections. It begins with an introduction to explain the steps that were taken to fulfill the requirements of the project. A separate breakdown of each of the nine proposals follows, as this seemed the simplest way to consolidate the many viewpoints received, into a coherent analysis. What is written here is a distillation of responses in the form of written briefs, letters and questionnaires (optional handouts at the meetings) as well as verbal responses recorded at public and informal meetings. Also included is our analysis of the actual participation process undergone with this Paper, and some feedback on that process from the Edmonton Social Services community workers as well. We feel that this analysis may be as significant for future policy as are the contents of the Paper itself.

Cherry Bowhay
Project Co-ordinator

EDMONTON SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL

PROPOSAL 1

> That the principle that "Human services be
> provided as close to the point of application
> or need as practical" be accepted as the basis
> for future planning.

The concept of decentralization of services was received favorably by almost all persons who responded. It was agreed that more accessible services would perhaps make them more used, because of greater convenience of transportation, and that if services were more identifiable, people would know more quickly where to find them when in need.

A number of questions arose as to the specifics of the proposal. Perhaps the greatest objection was that no cost factors are provided, so that it is not possible to judge if such a concept is justified. Taxpayers must be able to assess how much a project is going to cost, as compared to how much they are willing to spend, and whether or not they are willing to assign a priority to the particular proposal under discussion. It was pointed out that, at a time when even essential services are being cut back, are we realistic in discussing a proposal that will cost so much to implement? If a new City Hall is also being proposed, how much will that cost? And how will it affect the centralization of services?

The opposite side of the question was also raised. Hidden benefits from a decentralized service system are difficult to assess if they are providing a preventive function in terms of later social or health costs. Easier access may make these services more usable and therefore of greater benefit. Benefits from higher staff morale were also seen.

Many people favored the proposal strongly because of the information aspect of decentralization. They felt that what is needed is not necessarily local accessibility of services, but a convenient source of information to direct a person who is in need as to the appropriate office for a needed service or give him or her instructions as to how to go about contacting someone or obtaining an application or report, etc.

Of greater consequence than local accessibility is the quality of service and staff when they are called on, and their interrelationships with other services. They also believe effective community participation is only possible if information and personnel are locally accessible. The efficient channelling of information gives residents a sense of involvement in community matters that immediately affect their lives, and allows them to respond promptly. Area personnel are better able to promote volunteer work and self-help in an area, to assess particular needs and wants of dissimilar neighbourhoods, and adapt services to meet local needs and conditions.

Related to this is the fact that because each community has very different service needs, it may be detrimental for communities if the City seeks to apply a standard structure of decentralization equally in all areas. This could prove to be more inequitable if it was insensitive to variations in communities' different needs for different kinds of services. Citizens have queried if they will have any input in the kinds of services they are to receive.

A major concern was the question of where decision making powers would lie in such a system. Will staff in area offices have the authority to make decisions based on their more extensive knowledge of their own areas? The Paper does not specify those services which may be modified on a neighbourhood level, and those which will be delivered across the City uniformly, though through separate decentralized offices. The closer contact between residents and staff will be of little benefit if decisions are still to be made in a central office. The Task Force members felt that accountability and responsibility should be delegated downwards to field workers, but no mention was specifically made of this in the Paper.

Conversely, people also wondered if this would mean that they would be prevented from approaching City Hall directly. If the community offices were not able to make larger policy decisions, it was felt that this access was necessary. It was also feared that area offices, if not given autonomy, might become merely a further bureaucratic layer.

It was brought out that most departments already have area offices with the exception of the police and planning departments. What is therefore needed is co-ordination, and that should perhaps be the main focus of this analysis. This suggestion is further elaborated on under Proposal 3.

One social service organization before being able to fully judge the proposal, felt that they would like to have further information on how the social service department will relate to existing private agencies if decentralized.

It was suggested that school boards become more central to this proposal than is indicated in the Paper, and also that community agencies be consulted in each area to avoid duplication of services as well as to facilitate communication among workers from the many different organizations who are involved in the community.

The question was raised of how much research had been done on the experiences other cities have had with decentralization. It would have been helpful for people to have had some of this information to be able to judge. The experiences of Cleveland, Minneapolis, Vancouver and Winnipeg were cited as sources of relevant data.

Discussion often led to the West-10 project. It received no explanation in either the summary paper or the full report, and people were concerned that its experience had not been looked at when these proposals were drawn up. A lot of West-10's failings were seen as possibilities for this structure as well: West-10 was initiated by government administrations, so that the people it was to serve had no part in its evolution and were therefore not committed to it. Its citizen advisory board was to have policy making power, but in fact had little. Integration of services proved to be very difficult in West-10, and although that is not specifically proposed here, careful consideration must be given to defining jurisdictions for these agencies to be able to work closely with one another. To some extent, there may be a contradiction here, in attempting to distinguish clearly between "integration" and "co-ordination and co-operation". Integration would mean subsuming each separate department's efforts under a common

structure and approach (i.e., erasing departmental boundaries).
Co-ordination and co-operation mean maintaining the departmental
separation but forming effective and workable links so that an inter-
departmental approach can be taken. The actual mechanics of this
distinction in terms of reports, evaluations, referrals, and communication
links, would need to be carefully worked out well ahead of implementation.

PROPOSAL 2

> That the principle be adopted that "Human
> services be made accessible at any service
> outlet chosen by the resident "by pre-arrangement,
> if necessary".

This proposal was considered essential to the flexibility of this
system. It was seen as especially significant for those who may be
forced to move often and do not have an automobile for easy access to
services.

Possible drawbacks to this proposal were duplication of work,
unnecessary complication of administrative procedures and the possible
abuse of services. A monitoring system, to ensure that adequate service
was provided, was seen as beneficial although this would not warrant
an extensive record-exchange system. Social and health services seemed
appropriate to limit by pre-arrangement. Once a process is begun at an
office, it should, if possible, be carried through there to ensure
continuity of service and recording of treatment.

PROPOSAL 3

That the City establish service delivery boundaries
for Departments reporting to the Public Affairs
Division on the basis of six (6) sectors and eleven
(11) areas.

The establishment of coterminous boundaries could enhance the
responsiveness of the delivery system by creating more manageable
information units. It would also tend to eliminate duplication of
services among City departments. By enabling field workers to identify
their respective co-workers in other departments, coterminous boundaries
would help to improve on the present problem of communication among
them. At present, having different boundary areas between departments
means that each worker must try to stay in constant contact with
several workers from other departments whose boundary areas constitute
any part of his own work territory. Should this be simplified so
that all boundaries coincide, the magnitude of this task would be
much reduced, and it would enable each to keep abreast of the other's
programs, hours of operation, etc.

However, it was frequently expressed that the proposed sector and
area sizes are too large to be workable, and it was questioned at what
point service areas lose their effectiveness by becoming oversized.
Each different area in the Paper takes in several different communities,
each with separate needs and goals. The proposed areas were seen as not
being as close to the need as possible, and suggested sizes were that
of (a) present neighbourhoods, (b) community league units, or alternatively,
(c) populations of about 10,000. Auxiliary information centers at a
neighbourhood level were proposed to supplement the larger area centers.
Also, outreach programs using shopping centers, halls, etc., were
suggested to bring personnel into closer contact with neighbourhoods.
The financial constraints were recognized as being crucial.

A great number of the submissions received suggested giving more
consideration to co-ordinating the administrative boundaries with the
ward boundaries. It was felt that this would enhance the citizen
participation process by providing services, information, and access to

the political system all on the basis of coterminous boundaries.
The administrative and political units should not be separated, and the
arguments for decentralized, responsive, community-based administration
it has been said are equally applicable to political structures.

Specific criticisms of the boundary areas as outlined are listed
here:

1. The boundary in Area 1 around Groat Estate was considered
    inappropriate. It was felt that where it now goes down Groat
    Road on the west, it should go down 124th Street to Jasper and turn
    east, making Groat Estate part of Area 6. Groat Estate has
    recently been accepted as a part of the Westmount community and
    feels its stage of development and its needs are more similar to
    those of Area 6 than Area 1.

2. Stony Plain Road was felt to be badly chosen as a boundary between
    Areas 6 and 7. It is a focal point for the area rather than a
    dividing line between two communities, and 118th Avenue was
    proposed as being more appropriate. North of 118th Avenue belongs
    with Sector III, and south of 118th Avenue has been historically
    more closely related to the area designated as Sector IV. It was
    also suggested that Areas 4 and 5 be combined as a sector as they
    are closer in needs and patterns of growth, etc., than are the
    areas as they are aligned now.

3. The present boundary between Areas 10 and 11 at 82nd Avenue was
    disagreed with. Again, it splits up a community on both sides of
    Whyte Avenue. Also, a small triangle of communities (Ritchie,
    Avonmore, King Edward Park) northwest of Argyll Road whose needs
    seem more similar to those of Area 11 are designated in the same
    area (Area 10) as Mill Woods. Rather let them stay with Area 11.
    Mill Woods is growing rapidly and could soon leave these
    communities behind to stagnate as Mill Woods' needs become more
    pressing. It was recommended at a public meeting in the area that
    the boundary be drawn at 51st Avenue, which is a natural boundary
    through the industrial area, and divides no communities.

4. The grouping of the Sectors south of the river was questioned.
    It was felt that Areas 9 and 10 should be within a single sector,
    being newer areas, and Areas 8 and 11 should be another sector.
    People within these new divisions would have more in common, and it
    would be simpler for the City to serve communities within a sector
    that are more alike, and have similar demands.

5. Several different areas indicated that the population projections
    as shown on the map were significantly lower than seems now likely
    for 1986. Mill Woods, west Jasper Place, and the whole northeast
    of Edmonton are likely to have significantly larger populations
    than here projected. These boundaries should be re-evaluated
    based on updated data if available.

PROPOSAL 4

> That the City Administration move toward early
> implementation of common accommodation for field
> staff providing human services in each of the
> areas.

This proposal met with mixed reactions. It was pointed out that common accommodation would be advantageous to the disabled and was welcomed by them, providing that access from the street was also convenient. From the point of view of field staff, this seemed a very positive proposal, and several parks and recreation and social service staff felt it would increase their job effectiveness and enjoyment. As suggested in this report under Proposal 3, coterminous boundaries would solve many of the present communication problems, but common accommodation was seen as facilitating further the exchange and understanding between different services. It could well provide a mechanism for a more unified approach to communities.

On the other hand, it was also expressed that putting a number of services together in the same building would not necessarily improve the communication among their staff. Co-operation among staff may depend more on departmental infrastructures and personalities than on proximity to one another. The training and value orientations differ among disciplines, and it has been suggested that, rather than mutual physical accommodation, a more clearly defined human mechanism is needed to facilitate communication, if this is indeed a primary goal. Perhaps in-service training or human relations training would be more appropriate and more practical.

Careful planning is needed in order to determine which services are best located in a community center. It is essential that each agency take part in the initial planning in order that expectations can be set as to the method and degree of co-operation or integration that will be required of agency personnel who are to be located in the same building. One group suggested that to prevent lines of authority from becoming confused, an Area Manager might be appointed to head each area office, and be responsible for communication among agencies.

However, this was attempted both in the West-10 experiment and in the Boyle Street Co-op pilot project, and proved to be relatively unworkable because of a continuing difficulty in defining each worker's job functions in an integrative setting. The Area Manager or Facilitator is placed in the awkward position of having no departmental seniority in the eyes of the field workers so that each worker is faced with two separate lines of authority.

Also, housing services together might not necessarily increase their responsiveness in delivery, and might in fact prove detrimental. It may prove to be more intimidating to enter a large complex of services, thereby defeating an advantage of decentralization by again creating an impersonal facility, uninviting to those who may need assistance. Different service needs exist in different areas of the community, particularly within boundary areas as large as those being considered. The kinds of services under discussion may be best located at very different places, depending on mobility patterns and local usage, etc. As for convenience to users, accessibility with respect to transportation routes is perhaps more important than that services are in the same building. Common accommodation makes it more convenient only if a person uses more than one service on any given visit. This would more likely be the case if they were located in town centers. The location of the facilities must be such that local residents will support the services provided.

Those who supported the proposal suggested other services that would be appropriate to this kind of a complex. Community controlled health clinics, legal aid offices and day care centers were proposed. One organization suggested that community health centers would meet a need in many communities, especially the inner city. Ancillary services would vary according to the socio-economic characteristics of the surrounding community. The concept of community education also fits in very well here, and is further elaborated on under Proposal 6.

The Boyle Street Community Services Co-op suggested that the idea of a liaison component in a community center might be studied as to whether it would constitute a viable and economical alternative to multi-service. "Information regarding the social and economic characteristics

of the surrounding community, service needs, unmet service needs and
available service could be communicated through a liaison component
to planners and established agencies, resulting in both bridging the
service need/service delivery gap and providing a structure for monitoring
and evaluation of service outcomes."

The cost factors were considered to be especially important in this
proposal. It is foreseeable that providing common accommodation will
mean a good deal of moving and building, and these costs have to be
weighed against the benefits expected. The suggestion was put forward
several times that should such a concept be approved, it be instituted
on a pilot basis in newer suburbs and outlying areas where it would be
much simpler to plan and build, especially for inclusion of services
in town centers. The inner areas of the city have established
facilities and according to Task Force members some have long-term
leases. It will be much more difficult here to find appropriate
locations for large complexes. If such new buildings were to be
constructed, they could be built to be suitable for different purposes
once their utility for these particular services was past. Their
lifespan would be increased, making them less costly in the long run.

PROPOSAL 5

>That negotiations be entered into with the
>Department of Health and Social Development
>and/or other relevant Provincial or Federal
>Government Departments providing human services
>to the citizens of Edmonton with a view to their
>incorporation into the City's human services
>delivery plan; or the assumption of this
>responsibility by the municipality in order to
>assure co-ordination.

The inclusion of federal and provincial services was considered efficient and useful at this level. Improving communications and co-operation among all levels of government in such matters as housing, health, social services and planning is vital.

It would necessitate discussions at senior and field staff levels as to jurisdictions. Accountability for expenses would also have to be worked out. If it proves difficult to house different government levels in the same complex, proximate siting as in the case of West-10 is a possible solution.

It was difficult to fully evaluate the ramifications of this proposal as the map does not show locations or boundaries for existing provincial services.

PROPOSAL 6

That representations be made to the Edmonton
Public School Board and the Edmonton Catholic
Schools to organize supportive special services
on the basis of the human service delivery plan.

As had been stated previously in this report, inclusion of
educational services in this design was considered desirable.
Boundaries for the special service personnel could be modified to
conform to those of the sectors and areas proposed, and encouragement
given to improving communication and co-operation between school board
personnel and those in municipal services. The desirability however
of relocating school psychologists or remedial specialists in area
offices was questioned. Such a move would place these personnel in a
larger administrative structure remote from the population they serve.

The whole development of community education could be co-ordinated
within this system, with community facilities becoming more integrated,
and independent agencies beginning to work more closely with one another,
with the schools and with the agencies of the different levels of
government.

Teachers and principals are seen as valuable local resources, and
schools were considered by many to be the focal point of their
communities. The development of community education around these
complexes would strengthen that identification.

PROPOSAL 7

That the City Commissioners study the need
for continuous, comprehensive, co-ordinated
planning for human services in the City.

Continuous, comprehensive, co-ordinated planning for human services
is essential. This proposal was seen by some as perhaps one of the
most significant in the Paper. Its inclusion in the Discussion Paper
signifies the recognition on the part of the administration that the
City has grown beyond the point where separate planning can be effective.
It was noted that such planning will require a broad awareness of the
different departments and their functions, the needs to be satisfied,
and a good deal of forethought in terms of future development.

It also signifies that the planning process will never end, so
that the system will be revised until it meets the needs of the
residents. This proposal, depending on its interpretation, would seem
to allow for adoption of different mechanisms to suit separate
communities if the framework proposed in this paper does not prove
satisfactory for all communities in Edmonton.

This proposal allays some of the fears that this structure will
be imposed uniformly throughout the city, then become inflexible or
insensitive to change. The demographic qualities of different
metropolitan areas are constantly in flux and should be reassessed
continuously to keep services in line with needs. It was proposed
that a mechanism for comprehensive planning for an area should be
sought by working closely with its residents to determine their needs
and aspirations.

PROPOSAL 8

> That the City encourage and support the
> development of a mechanism for effective
> citizen participation in each of the eleven
> areas in order to facilitate an intelligent
> partnership between citizens and the civic
> enterprise.

People were very encouraged by the City's proposal to encourage
and support citizen participation. It is important to residents that
they be able to become involved with the civic process and that their
concerns be listened to.

The level of participation that would be sought by residents was
an issue in discussion of this proposal. Some people questioned to
what extent citizens would be able to be involved in determining and
implementing policy. That is to say, is the citizen's involvement to
be in an administrative or in a political structure? Is City Hall
willing to divest itself of some of its decision making power to give
citizen action a degree of legitimacy? What accountability or commitment
will the City make to community residents to convince them that their
time and energies spent in this involvement with public affairs concerns
will be recognized and heeded?

There must be some form of personal reward to the citizen who is
willing to dedicate his or her private time to involvement in public
affairs. Citizens will become involved if it gives them a greater
sense of efficacy in their lives as a whole, or a sense of contribution
to the "public good", or to a cause other than their own. Therefore,
such a commitment on the part of residents must be met with a return
in kind on the part of the City. This means a respect for decisions
reached, needs expressed and goals chosen by citizens within their
communities. It also means giving them more responsibility than to
become advisors to a bureaucratic structure. They want to be allowed
to formulate policy at least for their own areas, to make involvement
in a process of this scale worth their while.

Many people feel that real influence is only expressed through
control of economic matters. This has two effects: citizens are able
to become more familiar with budgetary processes, and gain more under-
standing of the problems involved; and they are able to help establish
their own area's spending priorities and share in the ramifications of
those decisions.

There must be a commitment to letting each citizen contribute to
discussions about decisions that will affect his or her life. The kinds
of concerns people presently rally around tend to be issue oriented
rather than long-range planning oriented. This may be for lack of
interest in matters not immediately applicable to people's personal
lives, but it may also be because citizens are unaccustomed to being
consulted on these kinds of questions, and need time and experience to
build up a decision making ability. Citizens need to become aware of
the right and responsibility they have in making civic decisions.

The problem of "inefficient democracy" is the major issue here -
how to involve interested persons at a level that is satisfying to
them, yet be able to come to an acceptable decision and follow through
with it.

In conclusion, we would like to point out that "democratic
planning", of which this Discussion Paper is an aspect, is a time and
energy consuming process because it relies on consensus building.
"Effective community participation slows down the decision making process,
highlights the effects of previous bad planning, and intensifies public
criticism of both politicians and public servants. For some people
this might be extremely threatening. However, the long-term advantages
are obvious. The quality of decisions can be improved, a greater
feeling of community could prevail, and the feeling of powerlessness
could also be reduced." (David Hannis) One further benefit is a
commitment on the part of large numbers of the public to decisions
reached because they have contributed to them.

PROPOSAL 9

That further detailed study be given to
(a) the validity of the Area Citizens'
Association concept, (b) method of
establishment, (c) relationship to City
Administration, (d) relationships to
existing community groups, (e) minimum
structure and operating requirements,
(f) funding; and that existing community
organizations be invited to submit proposals.

(An alternative proposal is:

That an Information Clerk/Facilitator be
appointed to each area office as it is
established. Some of the objectives of
this position would be to:

- provide a clearly identified person as
  an access point for citizen groups and
  individuals;
- to channel inquiries to the appropriate
  department;
- to provide City reports and other data
  as requested;
- to initiate applications for financial
  assistance to citizen groups.)

Two possible mechanisms to improve on citizen participation are
proposed in this section. Advantages and disadvantages were seen to
each, but there was also confusion as to the actual responsibilities
being proposed for the Area Citizens' Association and the Information
Facilitator. People tended to respond hypothetically to their own
interpretations of what these bodies or people would actually be doing.

The concept of the Area Citizens' Association (A.C.A.) was
received favorably as a means for people of all different ages and
backgrounds to have an input in the planning of their neighbourhoods.
This body was seen as a focus for information, which is considered
a major problem, and it was also considered a starting point for people
to come together, to "plug in" to their community's activities, and when
necessary, to organize around policies and issues. Issues tend to
arise on an ad hoc basis, but such a group would provide a constant
focus on a longer term basis.

The physical facility available to such a community group was considered significant. Resource centers are desired, with civic and community information available, access to duplication facilities, an information facilitator or community development worker to provide organizational skills, and space to assemble. One submission expressed the feeling that separate facilities for the A.C.A. would encourage greater spontaneity and commitment from citizens, and give staff greater freedom to respond to citizens' initiatives.

There was some reservation that it would not be a useful body if it was to become an "advisory" committee to the administration. This is seen as a "rubber stamp" body, and therefore ineffectual, and wasteful of time and effort. It was also cautioned that it should not become a "representative" committee, serving as an intermediary between the citizens and City Hall, nor as an interpretor of citizens' wants to civic officials. "The purpose of the A.C.A. should be to increase and improve direct communications between the citizen and the administrator or elected representative." (Groat Estate Residents' Association)

It was suggested several times that community leagues would be appropriate groups and boundary areas for this function. This suggestion was also widely opposed because community leagues were originated for a very different purpose, and although many have been moving toward a community action orientation, they are not structurally suited for this on a full-time basis.

People feel uneasy about the idea of any small group representing a whole community. Once more, it precludes citizen participation in the larger sense even at a neighbourhood level by legitimizing only one small body of people. This could give the A.C.A. the status of one more level of decision making for citizens to deal with, therefore becoming another addition to the bureaucracy or a "fourth level of government". Citizens' groups, it is said, tend to become a part of the establishment themselves.

The question of the Area Citizens' Associations' position within the political and administrative spectra is a contentious issue. What power in the decision making process will they have? There is widespread sentiment that citizens' associations cannot be effective without their becoming politically involved, and that "grass-roots" involvement will not occur unless people have some power in decision making. With this comes the necessity for accountability of A.C.A. members to community members, and the question of how representatives should be chosen.

The Information Facilitator concept was welcomed by many people who have experienced a great deal of frustration in trying to procure accurate information about the city administrative and political processes. At present, other community agencies are trying to fill that gap, but it is difficult to maintain continuity because of different service boundaries and separate clienteles. Citizens felt that such an information person would be very valuable in a community by increasing access to city information and by providing inter- and intra-community information as well. To facilitate this process, such a person should be located centrally in the community to make him or her equally accessible to all.

As mentioned under Proposal 3, it was also felt that there should be a greater breakdown of geographical areas for such a function, in the vicinity of 10,000 - 15,000 people.

There must be assurance that an Information Facilitator would have access to relevant information and would not be put in the role of a public relations person. It was mentioned that the job function of initiating financial assistance for citizens' groups should be eliminated, as being too time consuming to allow for adequate attention to other duties, and also because it posed the possibility of citizens having to meet the expectations of the Information Facilitator to obtain funding.

A number of people felt that both an Area Citizens' Association and an Information Facilitator could work effectively together. The Information Facilitator would act as a liaison with City Hall as well as providing staff support for A.C.A.'s and information for the public. In this position, he or she could assist community members in the organization of needed local services or facilities, help to interpret city by-laws and policies, and provide clerical skills or office facilities when needed.

All of these responses reveal that citizens are very unclear about what real functions Area Citizens' Associations or Information Facilitators would have. The question of citizens' involvement in the administrative or political arms of city government cannot be avoided here. A policy regarding community participation in city decision making needs to be clearly formulated, and then the specifics implemented afterward. Those areas in which citizens will have an opportunity to make policy decisions need to be specified. It also must be made very clear to citizens what channels they have open. If they are led to believe they have greater access to decision making than they in fact do, attempts to work within those beliefs lead to frustration and disillusionment.

People feel very strongly that communities must become involved in meeting their own needs in this very sensitive area of citizen participation. Each community has a very separate idea of what its goals and needs are, and the methods most suited to obtaining those for its members. A constant process of evolution takes place in each to find a satisfactory balance, and each community adjusts and adapts to changes with time, and with new residents.

It was also felt that the resources of existing groups and organizations could be more effectively used. These are groups that have sprung up of their own accord, or are perhaps part of an already stable structure. Why then impose a whole new layer of groups when so many resources are available to be tapped?

If what the City is proposing is an <u>alternative</u> for communities to look at in their development, with the choice of accepting or rejecting that model, people are willing to give it approval in principle. If, on the other hand, the City is proposing an Area Citizens' Association as the only vehicle for legitimate citizen input, the concept would be strongly opposed. This would amount to a "systematizing" of citizen involvement in public affairs, which violates its very principle -- that of individual contributions by members of the public depending on their own skills and energies. The kind of citizen involvement talked about in the paper is only a small segment of the range of possibilities implicit in that concept. Systematizing it would destroy the real basis of it.

One group has suggested that the City's role should be one of providing funds on some proportional basis, and guaranteeing citizens' right of access to information. The administration could establish the criteria which communities must meet to be eligible for financial assistance, and it would be the community's responsibility to make application for funds, and to establish the communication mechanisms and physical facilities they saw as being most appropriate in their area. One group suggested that the geographic area served be determined by the residents themselves. Using an overall formula such as a per capita grant or one based on local assessment rates, financial assistance could be provided without overlap and it would be the responsibility of the community to provide the balance of its operating funds. For areas of lower income populations, perhaps something such as an "equalization" grant could be made available. It was also proposed that it might be more beneficial to have a resource person in the community helping its residents to find much of their own funding than for residents to obtain it all from the City Administration.

DISCUSSION PAPER - GENERAL

There were a number of criticisms of the Discussion Paper as a whole, that are noted here for the benefit of such papers in the future.

Perhaps the most often raised objection was that too little specific information is offered in the Paper for the kind of response that is being asked for. People were given an opportunity to have a say in a major policy decision, but were not given the tools with which to work. Part of the problem was the very general wording of the Discussion Paper itself, part of it was due to the unavailability of the larger two volume reports. Lack of cost factors was a major point of objection -- these were not included in either the Discussion Paper or the original study. An assessment of this nature cannot easily be made without knowing what it is going to mean in tax dollars. Granted, it was to be given approval in principle before costs were assessed, but at least a rough estimation is needed to make that original judgement.

No summary of present services is made in the Discussion Paper, although this was available in the full report. The broader ramifications were not explored to any depth in the report and had to be continually elicited in discussion situations. As mentioned previously, the experiences of other cities for example were not reported or summarized for comparison purposes, and particularly the outcome of West-10, as a somewhat similar organization to that proposed, was not discussed so that people could make an analysis. People felt largely unqualified to judge a matter of which they have little intimate knowledge.

This kind of omission creates another kind of frustration -- it gives people a sense that only persons who are already involved in civic affairs are in a position to respond. It therefore precludes from the start a large segment of possible citizen involvement because people are unable to form any judgement without factual and substantially more detailed information. On the positive side, it can be said the demand for this kind of detail indicates that people are very willing to consider and discuss the many factors involved if in fact that information is accessible.

It was felt by many that this Paper was directed toward administrators. It proposed a system for service delivery and citizen involvement that arises from administrative needs rather than from the needs of citizens and communities. Because of its emphasis on structure, it ignores many of the social dynamics with which it is attempting to deal. Such systems cannot be successfully implemented by administrators without the citizens who will be using the system's services having taken part in their evolution. The proposals in the Paper appear to have arisen from an administrative desire for streamlining. People question why the two very separate concepts of service delivery and citizen involvement are dealt with in one paper, and fear that the systemizing approach used for the first is also being proposed for the second. Improving administrative efficiency is not to be objected to, but the Paper also raises the expectation of social benefits that are unlikely to occur, because of the system's origins. The kinds of participatory and community involvement envisioned usually tend to arise organically, which is to say that they begin of their own accord and develop at their own rate. Many people have suggested that, prior to any planning, it would be more beneficial to ask people and communities what they see as needs, and what they see as appropriate solutions. Planning could proceed in light of this, and satisfaction on the part of taxpayers would be much increased.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSE TO DISCUSSION PAPER

Generally, the proposal to decentralize City human services was favorably received. People felt that more accessible and identifiable services would be beneficial, and that personnel working more closely with communities would promote better communication. Choice of outlet for services is desirable, although perhaps a limitation on this for social and health services would be reasonable. The proposed boundary areas were considered too large to contribute to the kind of communication seen as desirable, though they may be more feasible for service areas. Common accommodation for services needs further examination as to costs, and needs to be supplemented by or perhaps replaced by more specific communication mechanisms to result in the kinds of benefits foreseen. Other levels of government should be invited to participate as it can only be advantageous to co-ordinate in the fields that are of shared concern. Specialized personnel from the school boards are perhaps more suitably located in the schools than in these multi-disciplinary complexes. Continuous co-ordinated planning was seen as essential, and welcomed as a possible element of flexibility in application of this system.

The proposal for citizen involvement was praised, and seen as very significant in terms of the city's evolution. There was a good deal of discussion as to what powers citizens would be given, or what priority their concerns would be given. Democratic decision making is a slow and difficult process -- are administrators prepared to accept the disadvantages its presupposes?

Both of the proposed alternatives to facilitate involvement were recognized as having advantages and disadvantages. They were acceptable as two of many possibilities that could be considered by communities in their individual searches for a suitable means of communication with the city's political and administrative structures.

The details of the public input into this Discussion Paper were perhaps some of the most significant elements of the procedure that was undertaken. It was a first time for all concerned, and those who initiated it were unaware of many of the variables that would come into play. The Edmonton Social Planning Council and the City of Edmonton Social Services community workers felt that an assessment of these variables was necessary and very relevant for future discussion papers.

During the process, a large proportion of time was needed at each stage and it was soon found that there was not nearly enough time to do an effective job. The stages that were followed, and the efforts required to complete each stage are listed below.

1. Pre-Planning with Involved Personnel
   - Establishing the goals of the process.
   - Seeking the most effective strategy given the time constraints, contents of the paper, other givens.
   - Establishing a working relationship among people involved.

2. Publicity
   - Preparation and mailing of press releases.
   - Separate contacts with individuals in each medium, and/or a press conference, to explain the document.
   - Separate interviews, appearances on radio or television, telephone confirmations and follow-ups.
   - Trying to reach all smaller publications -- community newspapers, community league newsletters, labour newsletters, etc.
   - Notices were put in the free "notice boards" of the major media.

3. Word-of-Mouth News, Small Meetings
   - A process was set in motion whereby the community workers contacted individuals and organizations in their communities who they considered would be interested in this Discussion Paper and would be able to pass the word along to others.

This item appeared on agendas of regular meetings, new people
continued to hear about it and take it to other organizations
with whom they were associated. Small meetings of different
kinds of groups were organized, and a resource person from
either the Social Planning Council or a community worker, was
on hand to explain the issues and the process involved.
This chain of communication is a very effective and unique
occurrence, but needs to be given sufficient time to run its
course.

4. Analysis Period

- Groups and individuals, once the issue has been presented and
  interest aroused, must be given a period of time to synthesize
  their thoughts and articulate them. Intelligent comment takes
  time as it arises from extensive discussion and consideration.
- Time constraints were such that many people felt rushed into
  a reaction they were unsure was well founded, or else they
  declined to respond because they felt they could not competently
  judge so quickly. This is especially the case with a major
  policy issue of this nature.

5. Public Input

- Whatever mechanism is chosen to facilitate formal public input,
  it must be selected with a view to inviting participation and
  making it rewarding to those who express an interest.
- A series of eight public meetings was undertaken over a period
  of a month. They were attended by relatively few persons
  (3 - 40). Wherever possible, a chairperson was invited from
  the community where the meeting was taking place. Discussion
  was encouraged following the introductory explanations and the
  commentary was recorded. A representative of the Edmonton
  Social Planning Council attended to explain the Council's role
  in the process and to ensure that recording was done. Members
  of the original Task Force were asked to be present to go
  through the Paper explaining the proposals and some of the
  process that had been undertaken in formulating them. The
  meetings then broke into discussion and if there were sufficient
  numbers of people attending, discussion groups were formed, so
  that each person had an opportunity to express his or her views.
  All recorded commentary was incorporated into the summary report.

- We question the effectiveness of this format in retrospect, and suggest that thought be given to seeking more effective and dynamic means of involving people in future. Smaller informal meetings or an open house format are possibilities. Time constraints have a determining effect on this choice, and such limits as are set must be valid.

6. Briefs and Letters
- These must be written as a group in many cases and approved by the group at large in final form. The element of time plays a part.

7. Summary Report
- The consolidation of the very great amount of information obtained from all of the above avenues is once again time consuming.

In the case of this first Discussion Paper, not enough time was allotted for all of these separate stages to take place to the fullest extent desirable. Two months was the time frame to complete all aspects except the final report. Experience proved this to be very inadequate, and this was protested more by all involved than any other aspect of the process. Consonant with this time constraint was that the two months that were selected were at the worst time of year for such involvement (i.e., May and June). People were seeking time away from duties they had had all year, including voluntary community commitments. Many organizations were in the process of changing executives and members, and perhaps shutting down for the summer. This was very disadvantageous to the facilitation of a continuous process.

Many people requested that this Discussion Paper be publicized further in the fall of this year and that discussion be allowed to continue, so as to give those persons who have had no previous chance to become involved an opportunity to participate. We would recommend, therefore, that a further opportunity be provided for those persons to participate and that greater publicity be given to this Paper before any decisions are made.

We would also recommend for future discussion papers that at <u>least</u> six months be allotted for the public participation programme and that the appropriate time allotment be decided on the basis of the kind of issue concerned. Some kinds of decisions will require more time. We also recommend that such future discussions take place during the period between September and April.

There was a definite lack of broad participation in this first Discussion Paper. This may be attributed in part to the above factors of timing, but other factors offer a partial explanation as well. A major expenditure of time and energy was necessary to explain many things about the Paper: its background and implications, the participatory process it involved, and the relevance of both the contents and the participatory process. As pointed out before, the wording of the document itself was obscure and the implications therefore uncertain.

The lack of detailed publicity was another major factor, and we suggest that in future, a sizable budget be recognized as a necessity for advertising. This action may well prove to be one of the most important steps in stimulating participation by the public. Detailed information needs to be made widely known so that discussion may be stimulated on a broad basis. The most direct approach to this is through generous utilization of the different forms of media. Detailed and repeated advertisements appear to be needed to reach different audiences and to fill the gaps left by ad hoc coverage by other media forms. In this case, the Discussion Paper was not "news" so it received poor coverage, and people were left uninformed.

The participation/discussion invitation on the part of the civic administration took people by surprise. They were unaware of why it had come about, or that it was to become a regular part of the administrative process. They were unsure of its implications or the implications of their part in it. And perhaps, most of all, they did not know of any commitment made on the part of the City administration.

It was felt by many that an educational campaign is needed for citizens to learn about the participation process and their part in it. People are unaware of the opportunity they are being given to be part of the decision making process. They will want to know why their input is being asked for, which is a new undertaking for the civic administration; how and by whom their input is to be interpreted, or what weight it will be given; and what action on the part of the civic administration is to follow (i.e., what steps will be involved in taking the Paper from the discussion stage to its final implementation?).

Civic administrators and politicians must also come to terms with their part in the process. Citizens will ask where and with whom a document or report originates; whether or not what is being presented to them is an issue that will go forward for decision making at either a political or an administrative level; and if a result will be forth-coming. If they have committed time and energy to communicating from their point of view, they are going to ask that some response be made to them as participants. A commitment must be made to respond in some form to the many citizens who become involved in the process along the way. A major public announcement of the progress of the decision in administrative and political channels is necessary. As well, copies of the summary report with reference to the participation process should be made available to members of the public so they can see the composite of information from which a decision will be made. One of the reports should be mailed to each of those persons who sent in a written response or attended a public meeting. This would give people some sense of return communication from the administration with whom they have tried to come in contact through their participation. There should also be an opportunity for citizens to meet and respond further when the municipal decision has been made, so that in some sense a dialogue is carried on.

Many people hoped for an opportunity to take part in a similar discussion process on what they felt were more pressing issues such as housing, land costs, etc. It was suggested that the city compile a mailing list for future reference to mail publications to people with specific areas of interest. It should be understood however such a list is only a tool in trying to reach as many persons as possible.

A great advantage we found throughout this process was that the more persons who were involved in a discussion, the more facets of the proposal were brought to light. It was felt that the quality of responses was superior, and that taken as a whole, the responses received in writing and in meetings comprised a very complete analysis of the Paper. It should give decision makers assurance that extensive thought has been given to a matter before their decision is required.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPATION PROCESS

For future attempts to include large numbers of the public in a
discussion or planning process, several factors should be given careful
consideration. The element of timing is very important. At least six
months to a year should be allowed for any single project, and this
should not include summer months when communication with groups and
individual citizens is very difficult. Time must be allowed for each
of the many aspects of such a process to be completed with maximum
possible return.

A good deal of advance publicity should be planned, and media
coverage should be maintained throughout if possible. Alternatives to
the public meeting format should be sought to increase interest.

The discussion paper participation process should be explained to
Edmonton residents in light of City Council's formal acceptance of it
as a permanent method of citizen involvement. Citizens were unaware of
the reasons for the process, or what it would mean if they did in fact
contribute. They are seeking that City administrators and politicians
indicate the procedure that will be followed to take such a paper from
discussion and analysis through decision making to implementation, and
whose responsibility each of these steps becomes. People are requesting
an indication of what significance will be attached to their responses
when a decision is made, and they want to know how further information
will be conveyed to them after their response has been contributed so
that they will be able to follow the progress of the paper to its
conclusion.