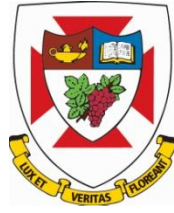


Evaluating Winnipeg's Unicity: Scholarly and Practical Perspectives

By Philip H. Wichern
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The Institute of Urban Studies





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WINNIPEG

FOR INFORMATION:

The Institute of Urban Studies

The University of Winnipeg
599 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg
phone: 204.982.1140
fax: 204.943.4695
general email: ius@uwinnipeg.ca

Mailing Address:

The Institute of Urban Studies

The University of Winnipeg
515 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 2E9

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EVALUATING WINNIPEG'S UNICITY: SCHOLARLY AND PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVES

A paper prepared by Dr. Philip H. Wichern, Associate Professor, Department of Political Studies, University of Manitoba, written at St. Paul's College, June-July, 1985.

Winnipeg's unique form of municipal government is now over thirteen years old. It has been the subject of extensive scholarly evaluation in books, articles, and papers which have appeared throughout this period. In terms of practical evaluation, the second of two provincially appointed Review Committees is deliberating on what recommendations to make after hearing over 200 public submissions, holding numerous private consultations, and undertaking various research projects. This paper attempts to summarize and evaluate the contributions of significant scholarly and practical perspectives, as well as the research which the author is conducting on this subject.

The approach followed here is "academic" in what the author believes to be the best sense of the word: evaluating the nature and methods of evaluation, with explicit recognition of the conceptual and empirical limitations of the ways in which we evaluate a subject such as this. While the limitations of this approach will probably be quite obvious, it is hoped that such an analysis will be of interest and value not only to those interested in Winnipeg's UniCity government, but also to those who are interested in improving our ability to evaluate public institutions, as well as others interested in the relationship between what we (think we) know as scholars, and what actually is (or was) happening "out there" in the "real world" of practical government and politics. In other words, this may be viewed as a case study of the interactions between scholarly and practical perspectives used in evaluating government institutions.

Therefore, the basic research questions which will be addressed here are the following: What is being evaluated, how? What are the contributions and limitations of various intellectual frameworks which have been, or should have been, used in evaluating Unicity? How do the perspectives generated by these frameworks compare with the practical "realities" of UniCity government and politics? And finally, what is the scholarly and practical significance of the answers to these questions?

1. Foundations of Evaluation: UniCity and Evaluation Literature

Winnipeg's UniCity municipal government, officially "The City of Winnipeg", came into formal legal existence on January 1, 1972, replacing twelve municipalities and the Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg (but not the ten independent public school divisions operating in the same geographical space). UniCity has been the subject of an extensive body of research and literature devoted to evaluating it (reviewed in Wichern, 1984a), as well as two Provincial Review Committee inquiries, the first of which reported in 1976 (Committee of Review, 1976), the second of which is scheduled to make its report at the end of August, 1985 (The City of Winnipeg Act Review Committee, 1984:2). However, virtually none of this work discusses the limitations and significance of its approaches to evaluation--on the level of its conceptual frameworks or with regard to what types of data may have been excluded or ignored in its data-gathering activities. In other words, this work is not sophisticated in terms of "epistemic cognition" or in terms of research methodology.

This is not surprising, given both the practical and intellectual contexts in which those evaluations have been made. The practical contexts have been mostly political, while most evaluation research literature is devoted to development of evaluations of policies, programmes, techniques, or the quality of public management (The Institute of Public Administration In Canada, 1981; Levine, Solomon, Hellstern, and Wollmann, 1981; Woley, 1983). There is much less work devoted development of the systematic evaluation of government institutions, especially those operating at the local levels, such as municipalities and school divisions. Both the scholarly and the governmental evaluations of metropolitan government reforms have tended to be descriptive and prescriptive to the exclusion of any self-conscious attempt to develop rigorous standards for evaluation (Gunlicks, 1981; Horan and Taylor, 1977; Rowat, 1980). Therefore, the past evaluations of Winnipeg have not had better models to draw from, and have mostly tended to follow the patterns already established--based on metropolitan reform assumptions and opinions offered in public hearings and private discussions.

This is not simply an intellectual preoccupation. It was one of the basic practical challenges facing the current City of Winnipeg Act Review Committee, and it was to these subjects that the author directed attention in a research report published by the Institute of Urban Studies last year (Wichern, 1984a). The following paragraphs draw and expand on the work reported in that publication.

2. The Basic Evaluation Question: What is being evaluated?

One basic question that should be asked is "what is being

evaluated?". As we shall see, it is also important to ask "what is not being evaluated?"

2.1 The evaluations by provincial Review Committees have been framed by, and primarily directed toward, evaluation of the City of Winnipeg Act, under which the City functions, as well as experiences with and attitudes toward various facets of UniCity operations. One of the key questions from this perspective is "what were the impacts of the original nature of the Act, and of post-1971 changes to the Act (and especially the major changes of 1977)?" Even a cursory examination suggests that the original Act was a "cut and paste" combination of provisions from the old City of Winnipeg Act, the Metropolitan Corporation Act, and new provisions (some of them quite hastily drafted). All of these were subjected to a torturous process of revision in the process of passing the new Act (described in Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983:Chapters 3-4). In 1977 alone, the Provincial Government which had introduced the original legislation proceeded to pass 140 amendments to it. Relatively few of the original sections of the Act remain in their original form. Therefore, inclusion of the Act in evaluation would seem to suggest the need for specialized attention to the adequacy of its draftsmanship (Wichern, 1984a:6), especially now in French as well as English.

2.2 Furthermore, it would seem to be important to evaluate the reaction and response to existing wording in terms of compliance (and non-compliance) with the Act's various provisions (Wichern, 1984a:6-8). This focus reminds us of the often assumed, but not necessarily realized, impact of laws on behaviour--in this case, especially whether local public officials acted as the Act required them to act. As this author noted, several important provisions of the Act-- including those on assessment, Community Committee responsibilities, community plans preparation, and services in French--have simply not been followed by City officials, with impunity and minimal change (Wichern, 1984a:7). What does this mean for the operation, impact, and importance of the Act as a legal instrument in fashioning local government operations? What is the significance of citizens having to go to the Supreme Court of Canada to force the City to enforce its own zoning bylaw (against a building and development company)? These remain outside the scope of past evaluations.

2.3 What provides at least some explanation in answer to these questions is what the provincial Review Committees have not been instructed to evaluate, and what most of the evaluations tend to neglect: the nature of actual decision-making in Winnipeg local politics. There are numerous dimensions of this politics which may not be subject to change by provincial legislation--especially how local politicians perceive and perform their public duties. Current research by the author indicates local political system "pattern

maintenance": continuation of pre-UniCity patterns of practical local politics and of handling City "business", which were documented in the author's research on UniCity operations a decade ago (Wichern, 1974). These historically developed "ways of doing things" can be viewed as elements in Winnipeg's local political system--along with the patterns of intergovernmental relations and political economy discussed in the following paragraphs. This behavioural "system" remains virtually unchanged by the City of Winnipeg Act--and that is most probably a major reason why certain provisions of the Act are not obeyed. These patterns include organizational procedures and processes of handling local public business, patterns of actual communications and "office" politics, as well as patterns of relating to individuals, groups, and interests in UniCity's "organizational environment" (Wichern, forthcoming, a).

2.4 In answer to the question "what is being evaluated?", there are two dimensions of intergovernmental relations whose significance, though mostly neglected in evaluations, has become increasingly clear: the on-going nature of the City's relationship with the provincial government (the most important of the City's "vertical" intergovernmental relations), and the relationship of the City to other public organizations in the Winnipeg urban region (its "horizontal" or local intergovernmental relations).

2.4.1 Regarding the former, it has become clear that creation of UniCity and the provincial Department of Urban Affairs did not solve the problem of provincial-City relations. City politicians, especially the Mayor, employ the myth of "local autonomy" extensively, and use various provincial-local issues to embarrass the Provincial Government not of their political persuasion, but complain about the "benign neglect" of the Provincial Government that was of their persuasion and did little for the City. On the other hand, it is demonstrable that any major urban government achievement in the Winnipeg area has been a result of provincial-local co-operation, most often with the leadership and financing of the federal government (in the 1970's especially through the work of Liberal Lloyd Axworthy, resulting in the Core Area Initiative, the North of Portage urban renewal, and the A.R.C. riverbank development project). On the other hand, conflict between City and Provincial governments held up approval of the official development plan, Plan Winnipeg, from 1983 to 1985, during which period both governments constantly bickered about each other's stances, particularly on the Plan's "urban limit line".

2.4.2 On the other dimension ("horizontal" or local) intergovernmental relations, most evaluations have also been silent, treating UniCity as if it were the only local public service provider, and as if UniCity politics were the politics of

the greater Winnipeg region. This is obviously not the case in the "real world" of Winnipeg politics, and the current Review Committee must at least deal with one aspect of this dimension: the problems of Winnipeg's relationship to rural municipalities and urban development in its "Additional Zone". This is an area of extended jurisdiction over planning and urban fringe land development, which originally was set at five miles beyond the service boundaries of the Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg, created in 1961. Several of the Rural Municipalities which had only small areas within the Zone opted out in 1967, but UniCity inherited control over most of the Zone and identification by the 1968 Metropolitan Development Plan of the Zone as a non-urban/agricultural "no urban expansion" area, except around the existing villages (Rosnoski, 1984:2). The Rural Municipalities were required to submit proposals for urban development to the City's Environment Committee, sitting with three members from the seven Rural Municipalities' Councils, as the "Designated Committee". Although 68 square miles was designated for urban development in 1973, the policy of limited urban expansion was followed under UniCity. However, in 1976 the Province adopted a Provincial Planning Act which allowed the municipalities to withdraw from the Additional Zone, in order to form or join another Planning District. Three Rural Municipalities did so in the early 1980's, and as this is written there continue City-Municipality battles over urban development and over the provision of City services (for example, with the City threatening to withdraw, or markedly increase the price of, ambulance service to areas outside its boundaries). This is one of the problems on which the Province has asked the current Review Committee to make recommendations.

2.4.3 But UniCity is also not the only local government within its own boundaries. At this writing it continues a battle fought since 1981 with the central city school board (Winnipeg Division #1), about which local government should pay for school crossing patrols (Winnipeg Free Press, January 15, 1985, p.3). While a prominent City Councillor says the safety of school children is not the City's responsibility (Free Press, January 17, 1985, p.3), a Trustee wants the Board to take the City to Court to force it to pay for school crossing guards (Free Press, June 5, 1985, p.11), and School Board also claims it has been "shut out" of core area and downtown development. Whether the relationship of UniCity to school boards will be considered by the current Review Committee remains to be seen. However, it is clearly a significant dimension of practical local politics in Winnipeg which good evaluation cannot ignore.

2.4.4 The point to be made is that the City is but one organizational actor amongst 10 independent school divisions, and many other quasi-independent public and private agencies interacting to provide local public services. If what we are

evaluating is the provision of local public services, it is clear that virtually all the past evaluations have failed to come to grips with the nature, dynamics, and problems of this urban political ecology, especially as it is part of UniCity's organizational environment. The solution to this challenge can most probably come through strong Provincial leadership in developing procedures and processes (not necessarily new institutions) which guarantee more co-operative and co-ordinated local problem-solving than has been experienced the present arrangement (Written and oral testimony before the Review Committee, January 11, 1985).

2.5 Rather than these foci, both the practical and scholarly evaluations of UniCity have tended to adopt an intellectual framework of metropolitan reform which focuses on UniCity as an institutional solution to local problem-solving (Wichern, 1984a:12-15; Wichern, forthcoming,b). It evaluates UniCity legislation and operations in terms of approximation to the ideas of the originators of the UniCity ideas (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983) and "liberal democratic" ideals (Axworthy, 1980a,b,c). It concludes UniCity is a "largely a failure" (Proudfoot summarizing Axworthy, 1980c:178), and mostly blames the provincial government for not having promulgated, adequately supported, and assured implementation of the original Act (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983:173, 180). Aside from the focus on the overall structure of UniCity--decentralized Community Committee-Resident Advisory operations with centralized decision-making and administration--most attention has been directed toward the structure of its central legislative and executive functions. The key question has been whether the Mayor should be directly elected or be chosen by the Council in a manner designed to encourage local decision-making by party politics (what the 1976 Review Committee formulated as "modified parliamentary urban government"). In both the case of the original Act and of the amendments to it since then, the provincial governments (the original New Democratic, a Progressive Conservative government from 1978 to 1981, and the present New Democratic) have refused to abandon popular election of the mayor, or to implant formal party politics into UniCity's organizational structure. This practical political stance has created a chasm between intellectual reform perspectives favoring the institutionalization of local party politics, and the practical perspectives of both provincial and local power holders, who oppose any such legal or institutional provisions. The present political circumstances do not suggest any change in this political stance, whatever the perceived benefits by those reformers who still believe that the UniCity system can only properly operate in such a local context.

3. Evaluation by comparisons with other Cities

Another fundamental question for evaluating UniCity is, "to what degree, in what ways, can UniCity be evaluated by comparing it to other cities?" Though scholarly evaluation should include national and even cross-national comparisons, particularly with other reforms; recognition of UniCity as a unique urban government creation innovated in an urban area with a unique local political history immediately raises questions about the appropriateness of practical institutional comparisons, or of comparisons--and prescriptions based on comparisons--of Winnipeg's practical local politics with those found in other cities. The author submits that the original ideas for UniCity were suggested in this context (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983), and that the basic reason for Cabinet and Legislative Party rejection of certain of them was that they did not in fact "fit" the traditions and patterns of politics which characterized Winnipeg's unique local political history (Wichern, 1976). Not recognizing this problem, the first Committee of Review identified UniCity's main weakness as the failure to institutionalize local party government, based on its comparison of Winnipeg with the (incorrectly) perceived "success" of local party politics in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal (Committee of Review..., 1976:15-16). Neither the broad idea or the specific changes in the Act predicated solely on the idea were included in the changes made the next year by the Provincial Government to whom the Committee reported, nor have the changes been seriously considered by provincial governments in Manitoba since then. A basic conclusion would seem to be that what is done in practical reform terms must be seen to be acceptable in the unique context of Winnipeg's tradition and history of local politics. The strongly supported traditions appear to include popular election of the Mayor and non-institutionalization of local party politics or parliamentary government as practiced at the senior levels. The recommendations of the current Review Committee will be interesting to evaluate in these terms.

4. Evaluation Based on Metropolitan Reform Perspectives

The author has elsewhere outlined the scholarly and practical histories of metropolitan reform in Canada and the United States (Wichern, forthcoming,b), and will not duplicate that discussion here. The important facts for evaluation are that: UniCity is the closest approximation to the American reformers ideals/rhetoric--total amalgamation of municipal governments and other local governing bodies, excluding school boards. Interest in Canadian metropolitan reforms continues to focus on Toronto, not Winnipeg. The closest American counterpart to Winnipeg is probably the Indianapolis "Unigov", the only State Legislature-mandated City-County consolidation in the United States. (The author will be examining the potential for comparisons with Winnipeg in forthcoming research.)

But UniCity went beyond the American metropolitan reform ideals and any proposed American reform by explicitly equalizing taxes across the whole metropolitan area placed under the jurisdiction of the new City. Thus, Winnipeg becomes a test not only for the traditional metropolitan reform ideals, but also for the attempt to use metropolitan reform to correct inequalities of local taxes and services. Though this dimension of UniCity's operations awaits adequate research, what evidence exists suggests that a simple conclusion that the suburbs benefited at the expense of central city residents (Axworthy, 1980b:114) is as questionable as maintaining that UniCity effectively ended inner city-suburban competition for development by gaining Council support for downtown development schemes (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983:170-1). A key fact is the failure of UniCity's assessors to comply with assessment provisions of the Act, producing low assessments of suburban (especially shopping malls') property in comparison to older inner city residential and downtown (especially "north of Portage") properties (Artibise, 1984). This non-compliance appears to have produced gross inequalities in local property taxation patterns. Further research will examine the patterns of City expenditures as well.

The overall evaluation by reform-oriented observers, such as Brownstone and Plunkett (1983) and Axworthy (1980a,b,c) is that UniCity is a metropolitan reform failure. Perhaps the most logical extension of this type of evaluation appears in a article which entitles its section on UniCity "...THE ILLUSION OF STRUCTURAL REFORM" (Kiernan and Walker, 1983:229). All of these evaluations are variations on the point that neither the Government-passed City of Winnipeg Act nor UniCity's actual operations have lived up to the expectations of various reformers who originated it or now evaluate it. Unfortunately, these reformers do not question their reform framework or expectations, take into consideration the actual record of UniCity as a practical metropolitan government innovation, or base their evaluations on primary data from after 1974 (Wichern, 1984a: 13-15). They are therefore deficient in providing criteria for practical evaluation--especially of what UniCity has done--as well as lacking sufficient empirical data to provide more than scanty support for their simplistic opinions which say little or nothing about what UniCity has actually been and done.

5. Evaluation from Counter-Reform Perspectives: Public And Political Economy

As early as 1961 some political scientists had begun to challenge the traditional metropolitan reform thinking in the United States (Ostrum, Tiebout, and Warren, 1961). This critique suggested that the multiplicity of local government jurisdictions be viewed as a "polycentric political system" which operates to provide public goods and services most efficiently, effectively,

and economically--ie., as a "natural" public market. This approach was reflected in the extensive cost/benefit analysis produced by the staff of the (Manitoba) Local Government Boundaries Commission which was studying alternatives for governing the Winnipeg region when the Schreyer Government was elected in 1968. The new Government allowed the Commission to continue to operate while UniCity was formulated quite separately (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983:33ff). This study appeared as Appendix B (240 of 347 pages) of the Commission's Provisional Plan, whose release the Schreyer Government allowed only a few weeks before its own White Paper, which ofcourse received then and since virtually all the (practical and scholarly) attention.

5.1 Urban Public Economy Perspectives

Just about the time UniCity was instituted, the most attention in North American urban political science was being given to several significant formulations of this "urban public economy" approach which effectively "buried" the conceptual and empirical claims for adopting metropolitan reform prescriptions (Bish, 1971; Ostrom, 1972; Bish and Ostrum, 1973). This approach championed the viability of multiple sources of local public services, public and private, leading to extensive research regarding what public services would be best provided by what configuration of subnational government and businesses, with what degree/type of centralization and/or decentralization and citizen participation (Bish, 1979). Although the "public choice" framework has been applied to urban public finances in Canada (as "a political economy perspective" by Bird and Slack, 1983:37), it has neither been considered or applied to UniCity in past evaluations. While the author is working on such an evaluation, the results are not available for use in this paper.

5.2 Urban Political Economy Perspectives

The other major framework for evaluation which burgeoned in the 1970's was Marxist and neo-marxist "critical analysis", or what is more commonly referred to as "urban political economy" (Bradley, 1979). In viewing metropolitan reforms from this perspective, the most significant recent contribution has been made by Magnusson (1981), who argues that socialists have been "...mistaken in associating metropolitan reform with advanced or state capitalism." Rather, "...metropolitan government is a product of early capitalism, and there are reasons for thinking it is an archaic form of political and administrative organization...." (Magnusson, 1981: 558-559). While UniCity is not mentioned, one assumes that it is--a priori--most properly evaluated as "archaic"; of practical value only as it "...is mainly concerned with extending and improving the regional infrastructure.....and to a lesser extent with controlling the worst effects of urban sprawl.....as a necessary complement to

capitalist enterprise."(571). Also, "To the extent that it then uses its powers to eliminate the ill-effects of capitalist development, it legitimates the socioeconomic system itself."(572). How UniCity's record would be evaluated from this perspective remains to be determined. One approach is exemplified by the authors who have contended that UniCity is "the illusion of reform", arguing that: "Major institutional reform has not even been attempted in Winnipeg..(but its)reforms are probably as radical as any that the Canadian political culture is capable of digesting...(which)..suggests rather clearly the bankruptcy of institutional change as an agent of political change."(Kiernan and Walker, 1983:234). Suitable practical application of this perspective beyond these scholarly platitudes is anticipated by the author in the near future in a publication dealing with both public and political economy issues. As with public economy, results are not available for inclusion in this paper.

6. Unicity's Unwritten Record And New Perspectives

All of the scholarly perspectives which have been reviewed and the results of the two Review committees leave one huge lacunae: the practical record and experience of UniCity since approximately 1974. In order to evaluate it, we should start with the question, "what has been its record as an innovated City government (organization)?" It is to answering this question which the author's research has been, and will continue to be directed.

To the date of this writing, evidence has been gathered on citizen participation (Wichern, 1984a), and on UniCity's development as an innovated city government from an "organizational ecology" perspective. Work is also being carried forward on the evolution of local Winnipeg politics (local political history), and of UniCity in terms of that evolution; as well as on the public and political economies of UniCity. Some of the more important conclusions and evidence for them are as follows:

1. Though mostly neglected by the scholarly evaluations, UniCity has been accepted by even its harshest local critics as a "given" in Winnipeg local politics. In over two hundred presentations to the current Review Committee there were no demands to dismantle UniCity, to return to "the Metro years", or to adopt forms of City government found in other Canadian (or other cities). Although the Committee did not agree with the author's proposal to repeat his public opinion survey of a decade ago, what limited calling has been undertaken indicates broad public acceptance and a "taking for granted" of the UniCity system. If measured by acceptance and attempts to abolish it, or to shift to some other system, UniCity appears to be a success.

2. UniCity is demonstration that it is possible to effectively innovate amalgamation of local and regional government institutions into a combined system of central and decentralized operations. UniCity's organizational ecology may be traced from the provincial "drawing boards" to operational reality through the efforts of many individuals, often with great difficulty and great expenditures of time and effort to make UniCity "work"--sometimes, as in the case of Deputy Mayor Dick Wankling, at considerable personal sacrifice. The strength of this organizational innovation effort, especially during the period 1972-1976, may be observed in the fact that subsequent "loosening" of the legislation to allow Council to re-structure both committees and the administration, has not led to any significant changes. At the same time that services were being amalgamated, major services were organized in regional and decentralized units (six districts); these units serving as a basis for subsequent (1977) Provincial Government reduction of Communities (and thus, Community Committees and Resident Advisory Groups) to six areas with similar boundaries to the districts. Again, one finds almost unanimous praise for UniCity's handling of services' amalgamation and subsequent additions such as unified City ambulance service; and none of those appearing before the current Review Committee suggested a return to pre-Unicity service practices (though there is debate about the extent of City "contracting out"). Therefore, from an "organizational development" perspective, UniCity appears to have developed successfully through a birth and early maturation period to a current state of being a mature and stable organization. In this sense also, it appears to be a success.

3. Although citizen participation levels have not matched the optimistic expectations of the originators and reformers who claimed that the Community Committee-Resident Advisory Group decentralization would inaugurate a new era of public involvement, this author's collection of data (Wichern, 1984b) indicates that general participation--though declining greatly since UniCity's early years (1972-1974)--has been greater than it was before Unicity, and greater than it probably would have been without it. As with the operation of the centralized legislative, executive, and administrative operations, there is much room for improvements and positive modifications to encourage more effective and accountable decentralized operations. But the abolition of Community Committees and Resident Advisory Groups is no longer seriously suggested. Rather, the question is how to strengthen them.

4. The problems cited in most studies and presentations to the current Committee are related to internal structuring and details of UniCity's operations, as well as to the broader questions of "urban government ecology": how should the greater (expanding)

Winnipeg urban area--including non-UniCity areas, governed now by rural municipalities, some of which have successfully opted out of the five-mile zone of UniCity land-use regulation--be governed? (By expanding UniCity's boundaries? By a new regional government? If the latter, how should it be constituted?) And what should be the structure of the relationship of the Province to the City and other area local governments?

7. The Framework of the Current Review Committee: "Back to Basics"?

A final approach to evaluation appears to be that taken by the current Review Committee: a return to an attempt to measure UniCity's performance against rational evaluative criteria of "good city government" (The City of Winnipeg Act Review Committee, 1984:10). The Committee understands this phrase to mean that a city government "...should have authority, autonomy, and well-defined responsibilities"; as well as "...a structure that produces accountability". To that end it "should be simple, easily-understood, predictable, and fair". Also it "...should be responsive and representative", "effective", "efficient and economical", "flexible and adaptable". It "should act in a coordinated and coherent fashion", and "should have (sic) local involvement, accessibility, and openness." (*Ibid.*, 10-11). It remains to be seen whether the Committee actually applies these twenty criteria, or proceeds to respond to the immediate problems and issues which it lists in the rest of its issues paper, to which it asks the public to respond, and about which it has been directed to report to the Province. At this writing it is not clear that the practical record cited above will be any more recognized by this evaluation than it was by those preceding it.

CONCLUSIONS

1. All of the scholarly and practical perspectives used to evaluate UniCity have serious deficiencies, especially in their exclusion of relevant research data and the actual, practical experiences of people who participate in, and are affected by, UniCity government. These deficiencies appear to have created a perceptual chasm between what evaluators view as UniCity, and what those having actual experience of it understand to be its record and status.

2. It appears to be especially important to note exactly the nature of what is being evaluated, and what the limitations of provincial actions, especially through provincial legislation, may be on what is being evaluated.

3. Whatever is done with the City of Winnipeg Act and Provincial-local and local intergovernmental relations by the Province will be only of limited influence on Winnipeg's local politics ("political system"). Other significant factors in the ecology of this local politics are the following:

(1) the ecological dynamics of UniCity politics: the on-going evolution of local partisan and non-partisan electoral politics, (individual and group) participatory politics, internal organizational politics, and the politics of various policies and issues (each of which carries its own history, present, and future);

(2) the ecological dynamics of urban public and political economy in Winnipeg: the on-going evolution of relationships, power, and influence between UniCity politics and: (a) several dozen other local, Provincial, Federal government agencies interacting to provide public goods and services in the Winnipeg area, (b) several dozen private non-profit organizations similarly operating, (c) hundreds of businesses and individuals providing, or having an interest in providing, such services. All of these, including UniCity are affected particularly by economic conditions--international, national, regional, and local; they all interact in terms of various concentrations of public and private political and economic resources (often conceptualized as "power structures". It is not clear that these dynamics are adequately specified by existing public and political economy perspectives, and therefore a new theory linking micro and macro dimensions is probably necessary in order to properly evaluate this ecology in Winnipeg and other urban regions.

(3) the ecological interactions of these ecologies with the natural and built environments that are the geo-physical realities of human settlement. In this context "local political ecology" the "ecological dynamics" refers not only to the on-going evolution between individuals, organizations, and more or less scarce resources of the above two general types, but also "political ecology" refers to the relationship of these two types of politics, continuously interacting with local physical and social environments (influencing the natural environments, for example, by "developing" them into "built" urban environments; similarly influencing both individuals and groups--geographical groups such as neighbourhoods, economic groups (behaviourally or conceptually defined), and cultural groups (ethnic and functional--handicapped, homosexuals, etc.).

The author would like to suggest that much more work is needed on developing the type of "public institutional evaluation" of which this is just one example, and ~~one~~ the facets of local politics identified in this paper as being ignored or neglected.

Such work should also be directed
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toward closing the gap between ^{scholarly} perspectives and the practical experience -- the "minutes" of urban politics, government and

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