

Berlin, Ontario, in the Age of the ABC

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Article abstract

Between 1890 and 1910, the town of Berlin, Ontario, adopted special-purpose bodies, such as water commissions and park boards, with enthusiasm. Why did Berlin's civic leaders respond to these institutions so enthusiastically? This paper suggests that internal diffusion, fuelled by an argument about municipal capacity, was at work in Berlin at the time. The paper also critically examines two alternative explanations for the town's enthusiasm, one grounded in Wilsonian reform, and the other in elite self-insulation.

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Between 1890 and 1910, the town of Berlin, Ontario, adopted special-purpose bodies, such as water commissions and park boards, with enthusiasm. Why did Berlin's civic leaders respond to these institutions so enthusiastically? This paper suggests that internal diffusion, fuelled by an argument about municipal capacity, was at work in Berlin at the time. The paper also critically examines two alternative explanations for the town's enthusiasm, one grounded in Wilsonian reform, and the other in elite self-insulation.

Entre 1890 et 1910, la ville de Berlin, en Ontario, a instauré avec enthousiasme des organismes spécialisés, tels que la commission des eaux et des parcs. Pour quelles raisons les dirigeants municipaux de Berlin ont-ils réagi de façon si enthousiaste à ces institutions? Cet article suggère qu'un processus de diffusion interne, alimenté par un débat au sujet des compétences municipales, était à l'œuvre dans Berlin à cette époque. L'article examine également deux explications que l'on donne de cet enthousiasme, la première fondée sur la réforme de Wilson, et la deuxième sur le mouvement d'isolation de l'élite.

I

Late on the evening of 12 November 1896, workers at the Hibner Furniture Company in Berlin, Ontario, were cleaning up after a long shift. In the paint shop on the factory's third floor, workers dipped their hands in benzine and began to scrape the evidence of the day's labour from their skin. Gas light illuminated the room. One worker, a boy of fifteen, was irritated by a gas flame near his face, and he reached up absentmindedly to push the flame away.

The boy's hands, still coated in benzine, immediately caught fire. He shook wildly, desperate to extinguish the flames; tiny missiles of burning benzine launched from his hands and streaked across the room. One tiny fireball landed in a bucket of benzine on the floor, which promptly exploded. The room was now in flames.

Six buckets of water sat near the door, along with a box of sand, prepared in advance for just such a scenario. A large tank and a length of hose stood ready for use a few steps away. But the boys in the paint shop, frightened by the intensity of the flames, fled from the room and the fire began to spread.

What followed was a sequence of events so extreme in their accumulated incompetence that it is tempting to picture the scene

in the crackling black-and-white of a Buster Keaton slapstick: the town's alarm bell fails to ring; the fire brigade, when it finally arrives, finds its hoses clogged with mud and dirt; after ten minutes of frantic scraping and poking, the unclogged hoses release a stream of water so impotent that it does little more than to splash meaninglessly upon the factory's superheated walls; the fire brigade, overcome by heat and frustration, finally surrenders the building to the flames, training the sad dribble of their hoses on the surrounding structures as the main building burns to the ground.¹

For a despondent Daniel Hibner, the factory's owner, the fire was the latest in a long list of frustrations. "The winter is upon us," Hibner complained in an interview the next day. "Berlin's shipping facilities are not the best and I may decide to go east."² Inevitably, the vulturine enticements poured in, from Trenton, Brantford, Paris, and beyond. A town outside Montreal kindly offered Hibner a fully equipped woodworking factory, along with a \$15,000 bonus, if he moved his business there.³ Hibner said loudly that he would need at least \$5,000 to rebuild in Berlin. The town's leaders sprang into action and rallied to pass a bylaw providing Hibner with his requested funds.⁴

So Hibner remained in Berlin. But what about the wider concerns? What about the faulty alarm system, the incompetent fire brigade? In a letter to the local newspaper, an anonymous writer proposed a solution: "The Fire and Water Committee will always remain the same as long as it is in the hands of men that have to be elected by the people. If you leave it to the Council the town will burn down. What we want—if it can be had—is a Board of Fire Commissioners with power to act."⁵ The newspaper's editor agreed: "How to deal with the [Fire] problem is the question of the hour. Can the council successfully cope with it? We think not. Experience has taught that what is everybody's business soon becomes nobody's and that such an important department of the public service can be best administered by a board semi-independent of the municipal body."⁶

The Berlin town council quickly took up the cause, asking its solicitor to report on the relevant legislation. The solicitor responded with disappointing news: there was no provision in the provincial statutes for a board of fire commissioners. "When the Legislature again takes down the municipal act for repairs," wrote the editor of the *Berlin Daily Record*, "it should cover over this opening for improvements with a Fire Commissioners patch."⁷

In the end, then, nothing changed. Daniel Hibner stayed in Berlin. Fire protection remained the preserve of a committee of

council. Life moved on. But in the town's immediate reaction to the fire, we have witnessed a peculiar urge, an urge to remove authority from a general-purpose government and to place it in the hands of a separate, semi-independent body. What we have witnessed, in other words, is the urge to create what have come to be known as the ABCs of Canadian local government, the agencies, boards, and commissions that populate the local landscape even to the present.

Once we are awake to the ABC urge in Berlin, we can see it everywhere. By the time of the Hibner fire, responsibility for education, public health, libraries, and parks had already been handed over to special-purpose bodies.⁸ Ten years later, the town had added the water system, the gas and light system, the street railway, the sewer system, and the police force to the list. By the beginning of the First World War, the situation in Berlin resembled the one described by S. M. Baker, who wrote in *Municipal World* in 1917 that the Ontario town council had become "little more than a tax-levying body with little or no control."⁹

Berlin's adoption of special-purpose bodies was not unusual. Towns and cities across the province were doing much the same thing in their own municipal spheres. In one respect, however, Berlin's experience was unique. Among the fifty largest towns and cities in Ontario, just one municipality consistently ranked among the earliest adopters: Berlin. From library boards to water commissions, planning boards to conservation authorities, Berlin was consistently at the front of the pack, among the first (in some cases *the* first) in the province to adopt.¹⁰

For an unassuming town in the heart of Ontario, this is a rather peculiar claim to fame. What made Berlin so enthusiastic about special-purpose bodies? Why was Berlin so eager to adopt? And what can Berlin teach us about the meaning of special-purpose bodies in the age of the ABC?

II

The story begins with envy. In 1890, Berlin's nearest neighbour, Waterloo, became the second municipality in the province to create a board of park management, and in 1893, Waterloo officially opened its magnificent new park, Westside, to widespread acclaim.¹¹ Townsfolk in Berlin, irritated by the flocks of Berlinites migrating to Westside on weekends and holidays, resolved to build a park of their own; the town needed "something after the style of Westside park, only on a larger scale."¹² A group of leading citizens assembled a petition with 264 signatures asking the town council "for the adoption of the Public Parks Act and to pass a by-law to provide for the purchase of [land for the new park]."¹³

Technically speaking, to adopt the Public Parks Act meant nothing more than to transfer responsibility for the town's parks from a committee of council to a special-purpose board. For Berlinites, however, eager to mimic Waterloo's success, it meant something else: a spectacular new park in the heart of town. So when council introduced a bylaw in September 1894 to adopt the Public Parks Act and submitted the bylaw to the people for

a vote, the subsequent debate had more to do with plans for the park than with the relative merits of special-purpose administration. Of foremost concern was a proposal for a large artificial lake in the park, a proposal that some loved and others derided as a "slimy, odoriferous frog pond."¹⁴

Still, over the din of the frog pond controversy, *some* discussion of the potential park board could be heard. A few town councillors, led by Levi Clemens, argued that a park board would be too powerful, and that it was foolish to remove so important an issue from the direct administration of council. J. R. Eden, a prominent supporter of the bylaw, disagreed: "Dr. Clemens has questioned the advisability of putting such a large undertaking in the hands of commissioners, yet the Free Library Board is a good illustration of the way such public matters are conducted by citizens appointed by the council; the Free Library Board have a right to expend a sum equivalent to half a mill on the total assessment yet probably have never taken half that sum."¹⁵

Moreover, Eden argued, even a passing acquaintance with the North American scene made the decision an easy one; the park board "has been adopted in every city and town of any importance in Canada and the United States and gives better satisfaction than where parks are managed by a town Council."¹⁶ At the end of September, after a month of debate, the bylaw was submitted to voters and passed.¹⁷ The first six members of the Berlin Board of Park Management were quickly appointed.

Controversy emerged almost immediately. An important argument in the lead up to the bylaw vote had been that the new board would get started on the park right away, offering employment to Berlin's workers through the autumn and into the winter.¹⁸ Instead, the new board hesitated, divided between those who wanted to fix up an old park and those who wanted a new park close to the downtown. By the winter of 1894, no contracts had been signed and no progress had been made.¹⁹ In letters to the editor, Berlin's residents voiced their impatience, and debate was widespread: the *Berlin News Record* reported that "groups of 'fors' and 'against' were to be seen on King Street, discussing the question."²⁰ Before long, however, advocates of the new park prevailed, and the park board began the business of acquiring land for the new park. For a moment, the anger subsided.²¹

A few months later, controversy flared up again. Two Berlin councillors, angry about the park board's purchases, moved to abolish the board entirely. "If the people repealed the Parks Act," they explained, "it would take the expenditure out of the hands of the Commissioners and put it solely into the hand of Council." The motion carried, but by the time a bylaw was drafted and submitted to council a week later, the mood had changed. The Public Parks Act contained no provision for abolition – a private act from the legislature would be required. Besides, the park board had already signed contracts to purchase the park property, and the legal expenses to extricate the town from those contracts would be considerable. Better to wait, the council decided, until the property had changed hands and the provincial

government had updated the legislation, and to reconsider the matter then.²²

The critics' moment soon passed. The new park was built and quickly became a source of local pride. "We have a park of which every citizen must feel proud," the *Berlin Daily Record* wrote when the park officially opened in 1897. In the years that followed, panoramic photographs of the park would become a staple in promotional materials for the town. It would be decades before the town would again consider abolishing the board.²³

By 1897, when Berlin's new park finally opened, another issue, water, had moved to centre stage. Some years earlier, Berlin's town council had sent a delegation to nearby Guelph to investigate that town's state-of-the-art Holly system and had asked Berlin voters in 1888 to endorse a plan for a municipal water system in Berlin.²⁴ The bylaw had been rejected, and council had instead signed a contract with a private company for a ten-year franchise. In 1896, the Hibner fire had placed the water issue back on the local agenda, and as the end of the ten-year franchise neared, the water question quickly became the issue of the day.²⁵

By May 1898, after months of investigation, Berlin's town council had decided that "the Water Works system is a Klondike for its owners," and introduced a bylaw to Berlin's residents for the purchase of the system.²⁶ The town's leading manufacturers, desperate for a reliable water supply, mobilized in support. When anonymous letters questioned whether leading industrialists would pay for their share of the water, the industrialists signed a public letter pledging never to seek exemptions on their water rates. The town's mayor, himself a major manufacturer, demonstrated his confidence in the profitability of the water system by pledging to purchase the works if the bylaw was defeated. Another group of manufacturers proposed to purchase the works and share half of its profits with the town.²⁷ These performances were apparently convincing: the bylaw passed.

The question of administration, however, remained open. During the municipalization debate, several civic leaders had recommended commission management. George Rumpel, the mayor, had written an open letter to Berlinites outlining his position on the matter: "The water works plant will not be managed by the Council. The only way it can be managed successfully is by a Board of Water Commissioners, who would receive instructions not to grant free water to anyone. This plant would be managed in the same way as Parks are managed by our Park Commissioners, which plan has worked very successfully."²⁸

However, if the water system was to be managed by a commission, another vote was required. Thus, in November 1898, council submitted a water commission bylaw to voters. In a public meeting in the town's uninsulated market shed, ratepayers shivered while Mayor Rumpel expanded upon his earlier points: "If the [water commission] bylaw is not endorsed, the work will fall upon the Fire and Water Committee of the Town Council, who have already all they can do. The Commission

must be composed of fair, economical men, and then the town will be sure to derive a revenue for the works."²⁹

S. J. Williams, a leading manufacturer who had emerged as a popular and feisty orator, added rhetorical heat to the frigid environs: "Lay aside all feelings of popularity in favor of business ability . . . Let us have the works in charge of a Commission, rather than have them buffeted and kicked around by the Council."³⁰

The waterworks system was a paying enterprise, these men argued, and a commission would ensure that it was operated as such. Besides, water commissioners would have just one iron in the fire and could focus their attention on water alone.³¹ For the few citizens who turned out to vote, at least, the arguments were convincing. The bylaw passed, and the town's first water commission was elected in January 1899.

The water commission was immediately and extraordinarily successful. Despite considerable new investments in the system, including major extensions, the commission recorded large profits from the beginning.³² The attempt to keep up with demand would eventually become a struggle, but the commission's early years were marked by optimism and success.³³ Each year, Berlin's residents could expect to see a newspaper headline declaring that the water commission had once again enjoyed a profitable year. Indeed, the only significant debate in the commission's earliest years was the question of who would control the commission's abundant profits.³⁴

With the early difficulties of the park commission now in the distant past, and the glories of the water commission prominent in the newspapers, municipal ownership under special-purpose administration quickly became the order of the day. Local leaders had been calling for municipalization of the gas and light plant for years, and when the private franchise expired in 1903, Berlin's residents voted to purchase the works. When the inevitable light commission bylaw was submitted to voters, its passage was unremarkable. The only curiosity, according to the *Berlin Daily Telegraph*, was the number of votes against the proposition. Some voters, the newspaper surmised, simply vote against everything: "It is not improbable that others voted against it either through failure to comprehend the ballot or through ignorance of the effect of the measure."³⁵ Opposition to special-purpose management as such had become barely comprehensible.

So confident were Berlinites in the merits of special-purpose management that the town decided in 1903 to go on the offensive. Berlin's sewer system had recently begun to encounter major difficulties. The basic problem was simple: unlike most towns, Berlin lacked a body of water into which it could dump its sewage. Its industrial effluent, including the stinking waste of the local tanneries, flowed into local fields and streams instead. In earlier years, Berlin had been proud of its sewage treatment system—a local resident had invented a temporarily effective system of sewage filtration beds—but by 1903, the problem had returned with a vengeance. What was required, of course, was

a special-purpose commission to improve and then manage the system.³⁶

The town soon discovered that there was no provincial provision for a sewer commission. Seven years earlier, when the town had briefly considered a board of fire commissioners, this had been enough to stop the momentum. By 1903, however, commitment and confidence had grown, and a group of local leaders travelled to Toronto to request a private bill. Facing an unexpectedly hostile private bills committee—"There are already too many commissions," one disgruntled member said—Berlin's representatives pressed their case. Perhaps, they asked, the committee could allow sewer commissions exclusively for municipalities with complex filtration systems. The committee finally relented, and Berlin's representatives returned to town in triumph.³⁷

So confident were the town's leaders that the citizens of Berlin would endorse the proposed sewer commission that the vote to create the commission and the vote to elect its first members was held on the same day. "It has been taken for granted," said the newspaper, "that the property-owners will endorse the placing of the sewer farm in the hands of a Commission and, in order to save time and expense, it has been decided to elect a Commission at the same time."³⁸ The prediction was correct. The bylaw passed, and the first sewer commission in Canada was elected in Berlin in January 1904.

After 1904, the frantic pace subsided. Perhaps, with education, health, libraries, parks, water, gas, hydro, and sewers under special-purpose management, little remained to "commisionize." Of course, when the town purchased the street railway system, it too was placed under special-purpose management.³⁹ Only one municipal department remained conspicuously uncommisioned: the police department.

Police commissions had become fairly common in Ontario by the early 1900s, largely because provincial law required them in cities. Towns were free to decide how to administer their police force, and in 1907, Berlin's council decided to transfer its force from a committee to a commission. The decision was controversial—critics argued that a commission was a needless expense for a medium-sized town.⁴⁰ But advocates of a police commission, who argued that "the town should guard against the possibility of interference with its police," ultimately prevailed.⁴¹ In the years that followed, the police commission would be the source of ongoing debate, and two attempts to abolish the commission, on the grounds that it was expensive, unrepresentative, and unelected, nearly succeeded.⁴² By 1910, however, it was clear that Berlin was moving toward cityhood (in which case a commission would be required), and the controversy surrounding the police commission gradually subsided.

III

How can we explain this enthusiasm for special purpose bodies in Berlin? The first answer is also the simplest: diffusion. Once the special-purpose model had been introduced into Berlin's municipal sphere, it quickly spread: the library board supplied

a model for the park board, and the park board a model for the water commission. Once the water commission was established, it was easy to imagine a light commission and a sewer commission as well. At each stage in this process, the most recent body provided the basic template. Appointed bodies were therefore thought to be ideal as long as the library board or the park board supplied the template, but once the water commission was created—it too was to be appointed, following the model of the park board, until Berlin's civic leaders learned to their disappointment that an elected body was required by law—only then did elected bodies become the new model.⁴³ The town's police commission, which broke from the general pattern, provides an exception proving the rule: it was precisely because the police commission was so different from the most recent models—it was unelected, it did not require voter endorsement, its members were unfamiliar and distant—that it provoked such heated controversy.⁴⁴ Internal diffusion was the engine of innovation in Berlin: having discovered an organizational model that worked, Berlinites were inclined to use it again and again, and were decreasingly likely, over time, to make a serious investment in seeking out alternatives.

This simple explanation accounts for the available evidence in Berlin. But there is something unsatisfying about it. Like many other stories of organizational diffusion, it leaves an important question unanswered: why did Berlin's leaders learn *these* lessons from their early encounters with special-purpose bodies? After all, the town's early experience with ABCs was hardly free of controversy. And Berlin's civic leaders were aware from the beginning of the multitudinous administrative tangles into which their new special purpose-bodies inevitably cast them.⁴⁵ Why did they advocate special-purpose bodies again and again, even in the midst of their frustration with the ones that already existed?

The answer lies in what David Strang and John Meyer have called "theorization."⁴⁶ If an organizational innovation is to diffuse successfully, social actors require an adequate *theory* of the innovation, a theory that emphasizes its salient features and allows them to "see through the confusing evidence of others' mixed successes and detect the true factors at work."⁴⁷ In Berlin, what was needed was a theory of special-purpose bodies, one that allowed Berlin's civic leaders and active citizens to articulate the advantages of those bodies while forgetting or explaining away their drawbacks. Put more simply, we need to understand the *arguments* that were deployed by Berlin's social and political actors in defence of special-purpose bodies, the arguments that helped smooth the process of diffusion from one area of municipal administration to another.

To begin our search for these arguments requires that we momentarily step out of Berlin and into the wider scholarly literature on special-purpose bodies in Canada. Although this literature is lamentably sparse, we can extract two possible "theses" from the available sources. The first candidate, which might be called the Wilsonian thesis, emphasizes the role of special-purpose bodies in separating politics from administration. Exhausted

Table 1: Arguments for special-purpose bodies, 1896–1908

	Park	Fire	Water	Light	Sewer	Police	General	Total
Business Principles	2		5	3				10
Neutrality	1		1			5		7
Continuity/specialization	3	2	6	4	7	3		27
Recruitment		2					2	2
Expertise		1		2	2	3		8
Past experience	3	1	4		3	1		12
Assumed			2					2

by patronage and ward-healing, the story goes, local leaders (especially middle-class professionals) insisted that important municipal functions ought to be removed from council and transferred to semi-independent agencies, boards, and commissions.⁴⁸

The second candidate, which we will call the insulation thesis, places more emphasis on the self-interest of local elites than on the ideals of administrative reform. In this view, special-purpose bodies arrived on the scene just as local elites were losing control of their councils. As low-level merchants, workingmen, and even the occasional socialist gained seats on town councils, business elites moved to insulate themselves against a loss of control by carving out, and then taking up positions upon, special-purpose bodies.⁴⁹

We begin, then, with two basic arguments, one “Wilsonian” and the other “insulationist.” Was either of these arguments deployed in Berlin? Let us begin with the Wilsonian thesis. In Berlin’s earliest debates about special-purpose bodies, we find little more than a smattering of remarks along Wilsonian lines. In 1894, for example, a local citizen argued that a park board would mean that “there can be no cry of favoritism”; in 1898, another prominent citizen claimed that a water committee, as opposed to a water commission, would be “kicked around by council.”⁵⁰ But it is not until 1907, when town council took up the question of a police commission, that a Wilsonian argument appears with more clarity: “[A Berlin alderman argued that] the proposed change was in accordance with the civilization of the times, which is governed by the legislative and the administrative. The former bodies, elected by the people, make the laws, and latter, appointed by the government administer and enforce the law. The police belong to the administrative class, and are entitled to protection in the enforcement of their duties.”⁵¹

The Wilsonian thesis, then, was certainly available in Berlin during its period of ABC enthusiasm.⁵² However, as a theoretical candidate, it faced several challenges. First, while partisan politics did occasionally enter the municipal sphere in Berlin, often in the form of coded endorsements of local candidates by known Conservatives or Liberals, the local scene as a whole was already highly depoliticized in partisan terms. Berlin’s two newspapers, while viciously critical of one another on provincial and federal issues, consistently agreed on local matters.

Editorials in support of local reform in the two newspapers were often interchangeable. The basic argument, as in many Canadian municipalities before and since, was simple: local government is an inappropriate arena for partisan politics.⁵³

Patronage in the municipal sphere was also limited in Berlin. It is true that council controlled a handful of plums in the areas of fire services, policing, public works, and assessment. But the steady centralization of the Mowat era, ably documented by S. J. R. Noel, had transferred the choicest fruits into provincial hands, where they would remain. After the Mowat era, the patronage opportunities available to local politicians in midsize municipalities like Berlin were highly circumscribed.⁵⁴

In practice, this meant that a Wilsonian argument, built on a critique of patronage and partisanship, had little purchase in Berlin. In larger cities, where intellectual fashions arrived earlier and problems of patronage were more pronounced, the Wilsonian thesis may have been more attractive.⁵⁵ But table 1, which presents a summary of the public arguments about ABCs in Berlin between 1895 and 1908, suggests that the Wilsonian thesis was rarely deployed in Berlin. Of the sixty-eight arguments for special-purpose bodies recorded in Berlin’s local newspapers between 1895 and 1908, few could be called “Wilsonian”; notice, for instance, the many blank spaces beside “Politics vs. Administration,” the principal Wilsonian category. There is, of course, one exception: in the case of the Berlin police commission, where patronage and enforcement were indeed concerns, the Wilsonian theory became a significant line of argument, with four recorded public arguments.⁵⁶ It was largely absent from other debates.

Let us turn, then, to the insulation thesis, our second candidate. Did Berlin’s business elites believe that special-purpose bodies would cement their dominance during a period of rapid political change? Unlike the Wilsonian thesis, this is not a question that we can answer by referring directly to the arguments in table 1. Even if the insulation thesis did provide the theoretical justification for special-purpose bodies in Berlin, the underlying elitism of the thesis would lead us to suspect that it was rarely articulated in the public arena. We have little access to the smoky backrooms of Berlin’s business elite, so we will have to make our way by seeking more circumstantial clues.

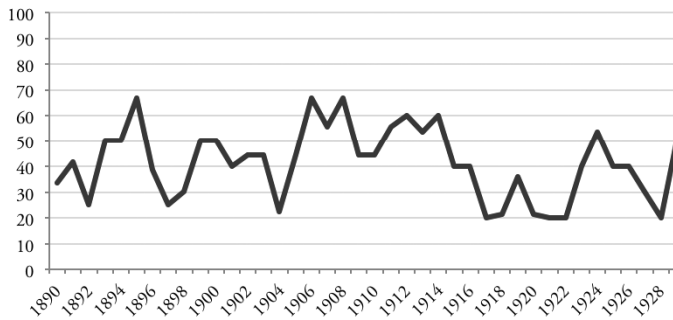


Figure 1: Percentage of town council with board of trade council, by year

To build a case for the insulation thesis, we would first want to show that Berlin's special-purpose bodies were, in fact, dominated in their early years by business elites. If they were not—if business leaders were unable to dominate the new special-purpose bodies—the insulation thesis would hardly have remained compelling. Here the evidence is straightforward enough. In the first year of the park board, the water commission, the light commission, and the sewer commission, fully 83 per cent of those appointed or elected also served at some point on the council of the Berlin Board of Trade, the town's most well known and widely respected organization of local business leaders. If we expand from the first year to the first three years, or even to the first five, the proportion of members with board of trade council experience remains near 80 per cent. In fact, nearly 40 per cent of those appointed or elected to the park, water, light, and sewer boards in their first five years also served on the *executive* of the Berlin Board of Trade, an even more exclusive club.⁵⁷ Given that the board of trade council was composed of between eight and fifteen members each year, and had an executive of just four, these figures illustrate that the presence of Berlin's business leaders on the town's ABCs was highly disproportionate. Berlin's most prominent businessmen visibly dominated the early membership of the town's special-purpose bodies.

A second clue in support of the insulation thesis would be a decline in business prominence in other local spheres, including, most importantly, the town council. Here the evidence is less clear. It is certainly true that Berlin's labouring classes became prominent civic actors around the turn of the century, and that candidates endorsed by the Berlin Trades and Labour Council were frequently elected in the early 1900s.⁵⁸ It is also true, as Elizabeth Bloomfield has shown, that the dominance of "overlapping elites" in Berlin (that is, of residents who were simultaneously elite in business, political, and social spheres) faded quickly as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth. But there are problems of timing here. It was in the late nineteenth century, after all, that the board of park management and the water commission were created, and we have argued above that those bodies provided the basic template for Berlin's later ABCs. And the late nineteenth century, according to Bloomfield, was still a period of considerable overlapping-elite dominance.⁵⁹

The enthusiasm for special-purpose bodies thus appears to have arisen in Berlin before business elites could have felt threatened by the town's labouring class.

Figure 1 illustrates the promise and the perils of the evidence in more detail.⁶⁰ The fluctuating line in the figure marks the percentage of Berlin's town councillors, year by year, who also served on the council of the Berlin Board of Trade—it shows, in other words, a rough approximation of the proportion of town council occupied by prominent businessmen. The line dips into the mid-twenties before 1898, when the water commission was created. There is a similar dip into the low twenties around 1903, when council decided to create the light and sewer commissions. Have we found the smoking gun?

While it might be possible to lean hard on these data and to piece together a just-so story about the shape of the line and the creation of special purpose bodies, to do so would require an over-interpretation of the timing of Berlin's ABCs. The principal reason that the water commission was created in 1898, and the light commission in 1903, has nothing to do with the data in figure 1; it is because those were the years that the relevant ten-year franchises expired. What we would like to see in the figure, if the insulation thesis were plausible, is evidence of a consistent decline in the dominance of town council by businessmen during Berlin's period of ABC enthusiasm. The figure's jagged line, more like a mountain range than a gradual downward slope, provides no such evidence. The early years of the twentieth century were the first years that workers and other non-elites appeared on Berlin's town council, and even, in a few cases, in the mayor's chair. Throughout the period, however, the presence of Berlin's business elites in the Berlin council chamber continued to be disproportionately large.

There is one final point: if the insulation thesis were correct, we might expect to find one additional clue in the historical evidence: opposition to ABCs by organized labour. But in fact the opposite is true. Berlin's trades and labour council consistently endorsed the town's special-purpose bodies. In a referendum on the abolition of the Berlin water commission in 1920—surely late enough for the town's labour leaders to have grown wise to an insulation effect—the trades and labour council strongly endorsed the commission. Perhaps most important, it was the town council, over which Berlin's elites were ostensibly losing control, that wrote and approved the bylaws to create the town's special-purpose bodies.

In the end, then, the circumstantial evidence for the insulation thesis is unpersuasive. Berlin's business leaders appear to have had little reason to find the insulation thesis attractive. And Berlin's labour leaders, who were no fools, consistently supported the town's special-purpose bodies. Instead, what we see in Berlin during the early ABC period is a council still dominated by business elites and a series of special-purpose bodies that mirror and extend that dominance. Table 2 provides a sketch of the basic administrative terrain. Those who served on council or a special-purpose body (not both) served shorter median terms

Table 2: Summary of service on ABC and/or council, and percentage of members with board of trade council experience, 1880–1930^a

	Individuals ^b N (%)	Years ^c N (%)	ABC years ^d (M)	Council years (M)	Board of trade ^e (%)
ABC only ^d	32 (17%)	218 (20%)	3.5		19%
Council only	120 (62%)	346 (32%)		2	18%
ABC + council	42 (22%)	519 (48%)	4.5	4	64%

^a Sources: see note 57

^b Number of distinct individuals in each category, and percentage of total

^c Number of years served by individuals in each category, and percentage of total

^d ABCs include park board, water commission, light commission, sewer commission

^e Percentage of distinct individuals in category with service on board of trade council

and were much less likely to be prominent business leaders than those who did dual service on council and one or more special-purpose bodies. Dual-service politicians comprised just 22 per cent of those who served in Berlin during these years, but filled 48 per cent of the available seats, and many more of them (over 60 per cent) were prominent businessmen. If our goal was to vindicate the insulation thesis, this is not the evidence that we would hope to find. In the end, like the Wilsonian thesis, it too must be set aside.

IV

Our argument thus far has been that successful diffusion requires successful persuasion. But in the case of Berlin's special purpose bodies, we have suggested that the two most likely candidates for such persuasion, the two candidates most prominent in the historical literature, ought to be rejected. However, in making this argument, we have relied on an important unstated assumption about the evidence we would need to vindicate a given theorization. We must now make that assumption explicit, in the hope that it will lead us toward more promising explanatory terrain.

Put simply, we have assumed that a successful argument for diffusion will meet what might be called a condition of *contextual fit*. An argument will “work” only if it is successfully adapted to the empirical and theoretical context of a given social sphere. From the perspective of the relevant audience (which may be large or small), the basic empirical claims of the argument must be seen as reasonable—a spade must be a spade. More importantly, the argument must be of the appropriate *kind*; a theological theory of special-purpose bodies, for instance, would have had little purchase in Berlin. None of this is to deny that social actors can and often do re-describe and reframe their contexts. It is rather to claim, very simply, that they must first place their arguments in *relation* to that context, explaining how their arguments fit within, or offer a compelling challenge to, the relevant context. If this assumption is convincing, we may naturally be led to ask about the kinds of arguments that might have satisfied the condition of contextual fit within Berlin's municipal sphere. If the “fit” of an argument matters for diffusion, then it will be useful to understand the boundaries within

which such arguments operate. Our hope is that by examining the broader context in Berlin—by asking about the context in which the arguments needed to fit—we can better understand why the Wilsonian thesis and the insulation thesis fell on infertile ground, while another thesis was able to flourish in precisely the same soil.

What, then, was the nature of the municipal sphere in Berlin? What was the good at which Berlin's political actors aimed? The answer will hardly surprise those who are familiar with Ontario's urban history: in an extremely competitive, largely unregulated, highly decentralized political economy, municipal government was viewed as an instrument for attracting and maintaining local economic growth. Every policy innovation, from tax reform to park construction to water municipalization, was forced to answer a single underlying query: will it attract new industry and reliable workers to our town, without needlessly disrupting the workers and industries who are already here?

This basic agreement in Berlin was supported by two widely accepted foundational premises.⁶¹ First, it was widely believed in Berlin that the town was in constant competition with neighbouring towns and that a failure to remain attractive would mean their gain and Berlin's loss. This was particularly true in Berlin, it was believed, because of a lack of “natural advantages,” such as waterways, in the town. What Berlin lacked in natural advantages, it would have to make up in raw determination, constant innovation, and, of course, generous financial inducements.⁶² The infantile language of “boosters” and “knockers” would arrive somewhat later, but the basic principle—that excessive criticism of the town would damage its stability and growth—was present from the beginning. The result was predictable. “About the nearest thing to a perpetual motion,” wrote a newspaper in nearby Galt, “is the wagging of a Berliner's tongue in laudation of his town.”⁶³ Berlin was not shy about self-promotion.

The second premise, related to the first, was that a successful municipal government must be administered in accordance with “sound business principles.” In practice, this meant attentiveness to efficiency and economy, and, more concretely, it meant that successful businessmen must be regularly recruited into civic life.⁶⁴ However, even when businessmen were in the

minority on council, the town's commitment to business principles remained strong:

It is sometimes said that a Labour Council is a detriment to a town . . . for the past three years the candidates of the Berlin Trades and Labour Council have been in the majority in the Town Council, for one term holding every seat but two—and these years have been among the most prosperous in Berlin's history. Berlin's working-men seem to have thoroughly grasped the necessity of town building; they also seem to take a practical view of their duty towards all classes, and to be ready to combine with the merchant, manufacturer, and professional man for the one purpose of advancing the interests of the town of which they are all so proud.⁶⁵

If a stable and attractive environment for industry was at the core of the municipal sphere in Berlin, if such an environment was the goal toward which Berlin's political actors were striving, was there anyone who was working to challenge that goal? Were there any challengers at work in the field?⁶⁶ In Berlin, it is difficult even to find a serious challenger during this period. There is, however, one person who might fit the bill: Allen Huber.

Although "challenger" is an adequate descriptor for Allen Huber, a better term for the man is surely *eccentric*. With his dark, wide-brimmed hat and his wild unkempt beard, Huber bestrode his beloved Berlin pronouncing his hatred of the town's business leaders to all who would listen, liberally suing, harassing, speechifying, and disrupting the town's quiet life with whatever means he could dream up.⁶⁷ By a series of exceedingly odd circumstances, Huber was elected mayor of Berlin in 1908 (he had run for the position before and received fourteen votes), and quickly set about to remake his hometown.⁶⁸ Most of Huber's mayoral action can be classified as merely odd—the occasion in which he demanded at a council meeting that the police officer on duty immediately arrest a town councillor may stand as a representative instance—but Huber did occasionally cut more deeply into the heart of the field. At a meeting of the board of trade, for example (with no money to his name, he was an invited guest, not a member),⁶⁹ Huber declared to a stunned audience that he intended to eliminate all tax exemptions for local industries. "The Board of Trade has made Berlin commercially drunk," Huber declared a few weeks later, "and now it has the headache."⁷⁰

What is most telling about Huber, however, is that the result of his many exuberances, beyond the constant irritation of the town's business elites, was essentially nothing. After Huber's bold declaration before the board of trade, the exemptions continued. When Huber demanded the resignation of councillors and commissioners whose private businesses had contracts with the town, they firmly refused. After Huber fired the groundskeeper of the town park, the board of park management quickly reinstated him.⁷¹ On one issue—the question of entrance fees at Victoria Park, a sore spot among townsfolk for years—Huber was successful, forcing the park board to restrict its fees to the park's athletic fields.⁷² Overall, however, Huber's year in office was little more than an entertaining spectacle, and in a speech to Berlin voters at the end of the year, seeking re-election (very

unsuccessfully), Huber's tone illustrated his capitulation to the Berlin municipal sphere: "In addressing the audience," the newspaper wrote, "the Mayor claimed he tried to run the town on business principles but did not receive the support of the council."⁷³ After a year in office, even Allen Huber had some facility in Berlin's native tongue.

V

If our argument above is correct—if Berlin during the age of the ABC can be convincingly characterized as having a stable political culture—then we can begin to understand how the creation of special-purpose bodies operated as a contribution rather than a challenge to that culture. Once we see Berlin's local culture as stable, in other words, we can more easily understand why the most attractive theory of special-purpose bodies in Berlin did not grow out of Wilsonian reform, nor out of elite self-insulation, but was instead an articulation of a determined pursuit of local capacity.

To see what we mean by this, we first need to recognize a few basic features of Berlin's municipal government at the turn of the century. Although the complexity of the municipal sphere had increased substantially, the basic organizational environment remained the same: one-year terms for municipal politicians, regular turnover on council committees, limited staffing, and minimal provincial support. Everything, from major policy initiatives to the width of the town's water pipes, was decided by politicians. A variety of informal institutions had developed to overcome some of these limitations, such as a customary second term for mayors who had served the town well, but the overall capacity limitations of the municipal sphere were a source of constant and unending complaint.⁷⁴

Within this highly circumscribed organizational environment, an opportunity emerged: special-purpose bodies. Unlike councillors, members of special-purpose bodies often served terms of three years or more. Special-purpose bodies were responsible for a single service area, allowing their members to focus effectively and to develop specialized competence in a single sphere. Those who had interests in one area of municipal government, but who had little interest in municipal council, could serve the town on special-purpose bodies. In short, Berlin's leaders argued, special-purpose bodies afforded the town the opportunity to achieve two important outcomes that were difficult to obtain on council: continuity and competence.

If we return briefly to table 1, and take a look at the third item in the list (continuity/specialization), we can see the pervasiveness of this argument. What was attractive about special-purpose bodies, Berlin's leaders consistently argued, was that they allowed their members the time and space they needed to make well-informed decisions about a given policy or service. Local arguments about special-purpose bodies were therefore built on a claim about expertise, but the "causal arrow" in that claim ran in an unfamiliar direction: the continuity afforded by such bodies would make their members *into* specialized experts. In an atmosphere of limited capacity and constant turnover,

special-purpose bodies allowed the town to increase its capacity to carry out the tasks it considered proper to the municipal field.

This emphasis on capacity-building within the municipal field allows us to understand an additional feature of special-purpose bodies in this era, a feature that we have thus far neglected: their instability. We noted above that Berlin's town council came close to abolishing the park board in 1895. What we neglected to mention was that at some point during their early years, council seriously considered the abolition or consolidation of *every one* of the special-purpose bodies it had created: the park board in 1895 and 1912, the water commission in 1907 and 1920, the light commission in 1903, and the street railway division of the light commission in 1909, the police commission in 1908 and 1909, and the sewer commission—successfully—in 1911. The very presence of so many special-purpose bodies created an incomprehensible tangle of problems: jurisdictional squabbles, accountability issues, policy fragmentation, and so on. In 1911, for example, when a series of events called the competence of the Berlin Sewer Commission into question, council pulled out its heavy weaponry and successfully abolished the commission.⁷⁵ In other cases, it threatened to do the same.⁷⁶

Once we grant that Berlin's special-purpose bodies were an extension of, rather than a reform to, its municipal culture, this instability clarifies. When special-purpose bodies failed to provide the promised continuity and competence, they came in for hard questioning. The sewer commission, which faced more serious challenges than the other bodies (including lawsuits and significant technical difficulties) and experienced higher turnover and more controversy about competence, was ultimately eliminated. We might say, then, that the theoretical foundation of Berlin's special-purpose bodies was initially unstable: because they rested on an empirical prediction about continuity and competence, special-purpose bodies were never accepted as being of such overwhelming merit as to brook no dissent. Instead, when promising innovations entered the municipal scene, such as the city manager system or the American commission system, Berlin's municipal leaders seriously considered eliminating their special-purpose bodies, and to the extent that they were legally permitted to do so, moved to adopt the newer organizational structures.⁷⁷

VI

Berlin's enthusiasm for special-purpose bodies at the turn of the twentieth century was built on a foundation of diffusion. Once the administrative structure of the special-purpose body had proven successful in one area, it was enthusiastically applied to others as well. Supporting this diffusion was an argument about special-purpose bodies that made no attempt to challenge the general purposes of municipal government in Berlin. Instead, it offered an instrumental understanding of special-purpose bodies, one that fit comfortably within Berlin's local political culture. The enthusiasm with which special-purpose bodies were

embraced in Berlin was therefore a function of the extraordinary depth to which the basic goals of the municipal field were accepted by all relevant actors, and of the extent to which special-purpose bodies were believed to be capable of providing the means for the town to achieve those goals.

Berlin's experience during these years may have wider implications for the study of urban reform in Canada. Explanations of local special-purpose bodies, like explanations of urban reform more generally, have often run along one of two major tracks, the first Wilsonian, optimistic, and centred on a progressive middle class, the second more insulationist, critical, and focused on a self-interested middle class.⁷⁸ A small but persistent minority has rejected both approaches, arguing that urban historians should "devote less attention to ideas, to rhetoric and to institutional changes and concentrate more upon what actually went on in the cities."⁷⁹ Our study of Berlin's special-purpose bodies suggests that these critics have a point. But we must not forget that even the most pragmatic considerations, even the most mundane municipal debates, require arguments, ideas, persuasion—in short, culture—to lubricate the process of innovation and change. Our attention to the fine grain of municipal administration in Canada need not—it must not—prevent us from understanding the cultural matrix in which all arguments, from the idealistic to the mundane, were forced to operate.

Because the capacity argument for special-purpose bodies in Berlin was primarily instrumental, we have argued that their position remained unstable. When special-purpose bodies failed to provide continuity and competence, the jurisdictional problems that they created surged to the foreground, and they became vulnerable to demands for abolition or consolidation. For as long as they existed, however, special-purpose bodies remained available to political actors, ready to be "theorized" in new and different terms. As new actors entered the municipal sphere, and as debates about the goals of local government evolved, special-purpose bodies would be turned to a variety of purposes. At the turn of the century, however, those newer actors, and the arguments that they carried with them, remained in the unknown future.

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Notes

- 1 This account of the Hibner fire is taken from the *Berlin Daily Record*, especially 13, 16, and 17 November 1896. The fire is also discussed in Elizabeth Bloomfield, "City Building Processes in Berlin/Kitchener and Waterloo, 1870–1930" (PhD diss., University of Guelph, 1981), 215–219; and in Elizabeth Bloomfield and Gerald Bloomfield, *A History of Municipal Water Services in the Region of Waterloo* (Waterloo: Regional Municipality of Waterloo Engineering Department, 1998), 11–12. The boy's age became a

- matter of brief controversy after Hibner was accused of employing too many youths, and Hibner insisted that the boy was nineteen. We believe that the initial report of the boy's age is more reliable. See *Berlin Daily Record*, 13 and 17 November 1896.
- 2 *Berlin Daily Record*, 13 November 1896.
- 3 For reports on these offers, see the *Berlin Daily Record*, 16 November, 12 December 1896.
- 4 Although the bylaw passed on 14 December 1896, it did not receive the provincially mandated two-thirds support. An initial request for provincial exemption was rejected. The town tried again, and the private bills committee eventually relented and approved of the bonus in early 1898. See *Berlin Daily Record*, 15 December 1896; 10 March, 12 July, 29 December 1897; and Bloomfield, "City Building Processess," 217–219.
- 5 *Berlin Daily Record*, 24 November 1896.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 *Berlin Daily Record*, 12 September 1896.
- 8 This is not to suggest that the choice was always voluntary. In the case of education, school boards were required by law; after 1894, boards of health were also mandatory. Even when such boards were required, however, Berlin often enthusiastically adopted new types of the ABCs, as in the case of the Berlin Board of Education in 1911. See W. V. Uttley, *The History of Kitchener* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1937), 222.
- 9 *Municipal World* 27 (1917), quoted in John C. Weaver, "'Tomorrow's Metropolis' Revisited: A Critical Assessment of Urban Reform in Canada, 1890–1920," in *The Canadian City*, ed. Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan F. J. Artibise (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984), 472.
- 10 This claim is based on a dataset constructed by the author. Principal sources for this dataset are municipal financial returns at the Archives of Ontario (RG 19-142), annual reports of the Minister of Education (for library boards), and local biographies. We hope to explore this comparison more fully in future research; for the moment, we can say only that when the adoption dates for library boards, water commissions, hydro commissions, park boards, planning boards, and conservation authorities are divided into tertiles, just one municipality is in the first tertile in every case: Berlin.
- 11 The park is now known as "Waterloo Park." For the early history of Waterloo Park, see Clayton Wells, "A Historical Sketch of the Town of Waterloo, Ontario," *Waterloo Historical Society* 16 (1928): 2267; Margaret Zavaros, "Waterloo Park, 1890–1990," *Waterloo Historical Society* 78 (1990): 8399.
- 12 *Berlin Daily Record*, 25 August 1894. And yes, they called themselves Berlinites.
- 13 *Berlin Daily Record*, 4 September 1894.
- 14 This quotation is from a somewhat later date, but similar sentiments were expressed at the time. See *Berlin Daily Record*, 7 November 1894, for the quotation; for similar sentiments, see *Berlin Daily Record*, 25 and 26 September 1894.
- 15 *Berlin Daily Record*, 26 September 1894.
- 16 *Berlin Daily Record*, 6 September 1894. For a brief if incomplete overview of Ontario's park boards, see J. R. Wright, *Urban Parks in Ontario* (Toronto: Province of Ontario Ministry of Tourism/Recreation, 1983). A broader picture can be obtained, with some effort, from a survey of the municipal financial returns at the Archives of Ontario (RG 14-146), or from the author of this article.
- 17 The result was 510:235. *Berlin Daily Record*, 29 September 1894.
- 18 See *Berlin Daily Record*, 6 and 10 September 1894.
- 19 See Board of Park Management Minutes, 1894 (Kitchener Corporate Archives), along with *Berlin Daily Record*, 24 October 1894.
- 20 *Berlin Daily Record*, 5 November 1894. See also 3 November 1894.
- 21 *Berlin Daily Record*, 27 November 1894.
- 22 *Berlin Daily Record*, 2 and 11 April 1895.
- 23 The controversy lasted until the end of 1895 before finally subsiding. For details, see Charles F. Brown to mayor and Council of Berlin, 2 December 1895, available in the Board of Park Management Fonds (Kitchener Corporate Archives). For the newspaper quotation, see *Berlin Daily Record*, 27 April 1897. For examples of the park in promotional materials, see the "Souvenir of Berlin" series, 1914 and 1916, available online at the University of Waterloo Archives.
- 24 The "Holly" system, invented by Birdsill Holly in the 1860s, used a pumping system to eliminate the need for expensive elevated water reservoirs. See Bloomfield and Bloomfield, *History of Municipal Water Services*, 11.
- 25 See *ibid.* for an excellent overview of the history of Berlin/Kitchener's water system. See also Bloomfield, "City Building Processess," 203–223. For a detailed treatment of wider developments in Waterloo County, which follows Bloomfield closely on the early history in Berlin, see Janice Badgley, "Public Decision Making on Water Supply Planning and Management: A Case Study of the Waterloo Region" (master's thesis, University of Waterloo, 1991).
- 26 *Berlin News Record*, 3 May 1897.
- 27 For the exemption issue, see especially *Berlin News Record*, 13 and 26 May 1898; for Rumpel's offer, see *Berlin News Record*, 19 May 1898, and for the other offer, 26 May 1898.
- 28 *Berlin News Record*, 13 May 1898.
- 29 *Berlin News Record*, 4 November 1898.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 *Berlin News Record*, 9 November 1898.
- 32 Bloomfield, "City Building Processess," 223.
- 33 For the later struggles, see Badgley, "Public Decision Making."
- 34 E.g., *Berlin News Record*, 6 January 1902; *Berlin Daily Telegraph*, 3 February 1903.
- 35 *Berlin Daily Telegraph*, 5 May 1903.
- 36 For the earlier pride, see *Berlin Daily Record*, 29 August 1895; for the difficulties in 1903, see *Berlin Daily Telegraph*, 14 January, 25 June 1903; for commission management, see e.g., *Berlin Daily Telegraph*, 14 February 1903.
- 37 *Berlin Daily Telegraph*, 21 and 22 May 1903.
- 38 *Berlin News Record*, 2 January 1904.
- 39 Management of the street railway in fact moved between council and the light commission. We will return to this instability below.
- 40 *Daily Telegraph*, 17 and 18 March 1907.
- 41 *Berlin News Record*, 19 March 1907.
- 42 *Daily Telegraph*, 4 January, 4, 7, 20 March 1908, 5 December 1908; *Berlin News Record*, 30 December 1908.
- 43 Before Berlin's leaders realized that the water commission would have to be elected, they insisted that it should follow the appointed park-board model. See *Daily Telegraph*, 3 May 1898; *Berlin News Record*, 5 and 13 May, 18 October, 4 November 1898. For evidence that appointed boards were quickly forgotten, see *Daily Telegraph*, 11 June 1903, and especially 22 March 1907.
- 44 See, e.g., *Daily Telegraph*, 20 March, 22 December 1908.
- 45 See table below. See also *Berlin Daily Telegraph*, 12 November 1904, 18 February 1905, 27 June 1908.
- 46 More specifically, we are referring to Strang and Meyer's notion of "theorization of diffusing practices." See Zavaros, "Waterloo Park," 492–495, 497–500.
- 47 Ibid., 499–500.

- 48 For examples of this approach, see Paul Rutherford, "Tomorrow's Metropolis: The Urban Reform Movement in Canada, 1880–1920," in Stelter and Artibise, *Canadian City*, 435–55; Warren Magnusson, "Introduction," in *City Politics in Canada*, ed. Warren Magnusson and Andrew Sancton, 18–19 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983); Katherine Graham and Susan Phillips, *Urban Governance in Canada* (Toronto: Harcourt, 1998), 155–157.
- 49 For a powerful example of this approach, see Weaver, "'Tomorrow's Metropolis' Revisited"; John English and Kenneth McLaughlin briefly suggest that this view applies in Kitchener; see their *Kitchener: An Illustrated History* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996), 113.
- 50 *Berlin Daily Record*, 6 September 1894; *Berlin News Record*, 4 November 1898.
- 51 *Daily Telegraph*, 17 March 1907.
- 52 In 1894, the *Daily Record* reprinted an editorial from a Toronto newspaper advocating a politics–administration separation. But the argument in that editorial was not seen again until 1907 or so. See *Berlin Daily Record*, 10 December 1894.
- 53 See, e.g., *Berlin Daily Record*, 30 December 1895; *Berlin News Record*, 30 August 1897; *Berlin Daily Telegraph*, 3 and 12 December 1908.
- 54 See S. J. R. Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers: Ontario Society and Politics, 1791–1896* (Toronto: Macmillan Canada, 1974), chap. 13; Noel, "Oliver Mowat, Patronage, and Party Building," in *Ontario since Confederation: A Reader*, ed. E. A. Montigny and A. L. Chambers, 94–104 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); J. E. Hodgetts, *From Arm's Length to Hands On: The Formative Years of Ontario's Public Service, 1867–1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).
- 55 See n52. For an interesting account of Toronto's patronage debates, see John C. Weaver, "The Modern City Realized," in *The Usable Urban Past*, ed. Alan F. J. Artibise and Gilbert A. Stelter, 39–72 (Ottawa: Macmillan Canada, 1979).
- 56 For references (with varying degrees of explicitness) to problems of patronage and corruption within the Berlin police force, see *Berlin News Record*, 19 March 1907; *Berlin Daily Telegraph*, 3 January, 4, 7, 20 March 1908. See also John C. Weaver, *Shaping the Canadian City: Essays on Urban Politics and Policy 1890–1920* (Toronto: Institute of Public Administration of Canada, 1977), 2.
- 57 These figures have been compiled from the following sources: the Board of Park Management Fonds, Kitchener Water Commission Fonds, Sewer Commission Minute Books, and the Berlin Council Minute Books (Kitchener Corporate Archives); the Kitchener Chamber of Commerce Fonds and the Kitchener Library Board Minute Books (Kitchener Public Library Local History Archives); the *Berlin News Record* and the *Berlin Daily Telegraph*.
- 58 See, e.g., *Daily Telegraph*, 5 January, 5 April 1904.
- 59 Bloomfield, "City Building Processes"; Elizabeth Bloomfield, "Community Leadership and Decision-Making: Entrepreneurial Elites in Two Ontario Towns, 1870–1930," in *Power and Place*, ed. Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan F. J. Artibise, 92–99 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986).
- 60 Sources for the figure: *Berlin News Record*, *Berlin Daily Telegraph*, Berlin Board of Trade Minute Books (KPL: Kitchener Chamber of Commerce Fonds); Berlin Town Council Minute Books (KCA).
- 61 This account of Berlin's political culture is indebted to the work of Elizabeth Bloomfield, whose outline of Berlin's "urban ethos" can be read in Bloomfield, "City Building Processes," 65–90. Bloomfield outlines seven key features of the urban ethos in Berlin. We have attempted to present a more integrated picture, but we believe that our comments here are consistent with Bloomfield's presentation. See also English and McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History*, 113; *Berlin: Celebration of Cityhood* (Berlin: Sand Hill Books, 1912), esp. 69–74.
- 62 Instances of this competitive ethos can be seen in *Berlin Daily Record*, 28 November 1894, 29 February, 17 March 1896; *Berlin News Record*, 6 January 1898. For discussion of "natural advantages," see *Berlin News Record*, 26 May 1900; *Daily Telegraph*, 13 March 1908; English and McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History*, 67; *Berlin: Celebration of Cityhood*, 69–74.
- 63 Quoted in Paul Tiessen, "Introduction," in *Berlin: Celebration of Cityhood*, 1. See also *Berlin Daily Record*, 27 and 30 March 1896.
- 64 For a representative sample, see *Berlin Daily Record*, 10 August 1894, 1 January, 7 November 1895, 22 February 1896, 5 January 1897; *Berlin News Record*, 30 May, 14 October 1898; *Berlin Daily Telegraph*, 10 January 1903, 3 July 1906, 21 August 1908.
- 65 Article in the *Galt Reporter*, quoted in the *Berlin Daily Telegraph*, 4 April 1904.
- 66 My approach here is indebted to D. McAdam and N. Fligstein, *A Theory of Fields* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- 67 For an overview of Huber's career, see English and McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History*, 104–110; John English and Kenneth McLaughlin, "Allen Huber: Berlin's Strangest Mayor," *Waterloo Historical Society* 69 (1981): 4–12. Amusing examples of Huber's trouble-mongering can be found in the *Berlin Daily Record*, 29 January 1895, 5 May 1898; *Daily Telegraph*, 31 December 1901, 18 February 1903, 4 January 1907, 2 November 1907.
- 68 "Cheer up," a local newspaper wrote, "the Board of Trade has a strong Council anyway" (*Daily Telegraph*, 10 January 1908). For the odd circumstances, see English and McLaughlin, "Allen Huber"; as well as *Daily Telegraph*, 7, 8, 16, 25 January, 3 and 20 February 1908.
- 69 By the end of 1909, Huber was denied the right to vote—not to run for office, but to vote—because he failed to meet the minimum property qualifications for municipal voting. See *Berlin News Record*, 25 November, 9 and 28 December 1909.
- 70 The meeting is discussed in *Daily Telegraph*, 13 March 1908, and the quotation is from *Daily Telegraph*, 14 April 1908. See also Bloomfield, "City Building Processes," 90–91.
- 71 See *Berlin Daily Telegraph*, 16 June 1908.
- 72 English and McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History*, 109. For the earlier sore spot, see *Berlin News Record*, 8 June, 20 July 1898, 29 August 1900. See also "W. H. E. Schmalz" (KPL Oral History Collection).
- 73 *Daily Telegraph*, 29 December 1908. See also *Berlin News Record*, 29 December 1908.
- 74 See, e.g., *Berlin Daily Record*, 29 November, 20 December 1894; *Berlin News Record*, 28 December 1898, 3 November 1902; *Daily Telegraph*, 23 January, 11 May 1903, 7 March 1908.
- 75 See *Berlin News Record*, 19 April, 16 and 17 May, 6 June, 17 July 1911.
- 76 Council was always careful to indicate its support for commissions in general. In the case of the sewer commission, for instance, "the aldermen were careful to place themselves on record as being in favor of the commission form of Government." See *Berlin News Record*, 6 June, 17 July 1911.
- 77 In 1921, for example, Berlin's town council attempted to consolidate a number of special purpose bodies into a single massive commission, effectively creating a Canadian variant of the American commission system, but were prevented from doing so by the Ontario government's private bills committee (a decision that provoked considerable local complaint). See *Berlin Daily Record*, 4, 8, 29, 31 December 1920, 3 January, 7 April 1921.
- 78 See John C. Weaver, "Introduction: Approaches to the History of Urban Reform," *Urban History Review* 5, no. 2 (1976): 3; H. V. Nelles and Christopher Armstrong, "The Great Fight for Clean Government," *Urban History Review* 5, no. 2 (October 1976): 50; as well as nn47–48 above.
- 79 Nelles and Armstrong, "Great Fight for Clean Government," 61; See also Elwood Jones and Douglas McCalla, "Toronto Waterworks, 1840–77," *Canadian Historical Review* 60, no. 3 (1979): 321–323.