

Governing Toronto: Bringing Back the City That Worked by Alan Redway

John C. Carter

Volume 107, Number 2, Fall 2015

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1050639ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1050639ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The Ontario Historical Society

ISSN

0030-2953 (print)

2371-4654 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Carter, J. C. (2015). Review of [*Governing Toronto: Bringing Back the City That Worked* by Alan Redway]. *Ontario History*, 107(2), 265–268.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1050639ar>

Free Blacks in Delaware had long been using the courts to address grievances and conduct business, but by the mid nineteenth century, many were becoming increasingly frustrated with lack of opportunity, justice and unrelenting prejudice. At first hesitant to abandon their homeland, some free black families moved to Pennsylvania to access educational and economic opportunities denied them in Delaware. Moving to a free state allowed them to participate more openly in anti-slavery and Underground Railroad activities. When the Fugitive Slave Act was passed, some families, like the Shadds, felt compelled to move to Canada and supported other emigres to join them. Unlike the Shadds, the Andersons supported the Colonization Movement, believing there was only one place where Blacks could feel secure and totally free, and moved to Liberia. The last essay—and second one by Marie Carter—in Part Three brings the reader back to the Dawn Settlement in the Chatham-Kent region, mapping out the distinct places that scholars and the public have long conflated. For anyone researching the history in this region, this essay is well worth reading. The volume ends with a fine epilogue by historian Afua Cooper, whose call for action should motivate many professional scholars and local researchers to continue uncovering this important history, to replace the “feel good” history of the Underground Railroad with the reality of Black life on both

sides of the border.

The interplay between the essays in the first part of the collection and those in the second and third parts show some disconnect between academia and local, avocational researchers and writers. But the strength of the second and third sets of essays highlight the history of individuals and settlements, bringing forth more historical data and adding more depth and nuance to the region’s history, as well as adding dimensions beyond local and national borders. The examination of African-Canadian and African-American kinship, social, and economic networks deeply informed the nature of abolition in Canada, America, and across the Atlantic. These essays also make it clear that the interpretation of the Black experience in this region has been influenced by a web of cultural, historical, and social dynamics and points of view, leading to multiple outcomes. The “Promised Land” was a complex place.

This history, the survival strategies and strategies for freedom practiced and experienced by people of colour within the highly oppressive and segregated eras of slavery and beyond, should be fully integrated into national histories.

Kate Clifford Larson,
Winchester, Massachusetts,
Author, *Bound For the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero*

Governing Toronto *Bringing Back the City That Worked*

By Alan Redway

Toronto: the author (using Friesen Press, Victoria), 2014. 305 pages. \$47.36
hardcover. ISBN 978-1-46025-199-7. \$31.53 paperback. ISBN 978-1-46025-200-
0. \$3.79 eBook. ISBN 978-1-46025-201-7. www.friesenpress.com)

When first reading the sub-title of Alan Redway’s book, one might think that the focus of this work would be on de-amal-

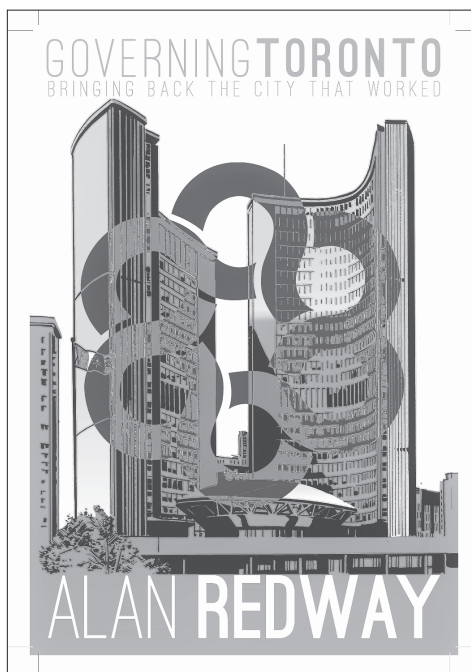
gamation of the Megacity. Such is not the case. For twelve of the fourteen chapters, Redway masterfully weaves personal experi-

ence, interviews, newspaper articles and a wealth of carefully unearthed research data and fascinating archival material, to guide us through the creation and development of Metro Toronto, leading up to the eventual amalgamated city. Four years of work on this project has produced a superb product.

The author, who is a retired lawyer, is well qualified to write this book. Redway was a member of the East York council from 1972-82, that borough's mayor from 1977-82 (during this period also a metro councillor and a member of its executive committee), then for almost ten years an MP, who laterally served as Minister of State (Housing) in the Mulroney federal government. For both non-Toronto and Toronto residents, Redway's book provides an invaluable background to, and a history of, how the current amalgamated City of Toronto came to be. In addition, the author uses his intimate knowledge of municipal politics to explain how and why this happened and, importantly, provides personal insight about manoeuvrings which resulted in amalgamation.

Redway's chronology of municipal history begins in 1834 when Toronto was incorporated as a city. Annexation of surrounding territory occurred from 1859 to 1925. In 1929, thirteen Toronto civic department heads recommended that further annexations stop until it could be shown that "undoubted compensating advantages exist." As the depression continued to deepen in the mid-1930s, ten Toronto area municipalities were bankrupt and something had to be done. The 1935 Plumtre Report dealt with the City of Toronto and its twelve adjacent neighbours. It recommended "a general amalgamation of the municipalities of metropolitan Toronto." Because of negative reaction, the Liberal government of Mitch Hepburn backed off and authorized more study.

Towards the end of, and immediately following, the Second World War, the greater



Toronto area changed dramatically as prosperity returned. The increasing population created housing, transportation, water supply and sewage treatment problems. In 1947, the City of Toronto convened a meeting with the twelve surrounding suburbs to investigate improving the organization of public services for the entire area. In 1949 another report recommended that those twelve communities be united with the city of Toronto. Premier Leslie Frost wanted a solution ensuring a municipal system would meet the needs of the entire population of the region. Early in 1950, the polling of municipal leaders showed that only Mimico and Toronto supported amalgamation, so no changes were made. More study was ordered!

The Cumming Report, issued on 20 January 1953 recommended a federation with the creation of a new Metropolitan Toronto council. The City of Toronto condemned this option, but on 25 February 1953, Premier Frost personally moved the

reading of Bill 80 which recommended the formal establishment of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto. All suburban councils supported this idea, and Frost offered his long-time friend and ally Fred Gardiner, the job as Chair of Metro Council. Gardiner who had initially supported total amalgamation, wrote the premier to say "...that the metropolitan form of government is a more appropriate answer to the problems involved."

What was created became the first metropolitan municipality of its kind in North America. Gardiner's leadership resulted in the establishment of a competent municipal bureaucracy and the implementation of a vast programme of public works. However all were not in agreement. Toronto mayor, Nathan Phillips, continued to press for total amalgamation, and in doing so caused friction between city and suburban council members. In 1956, a start on further integration was made when thirteen individual police departments were merged into one, and thirteen licensing bodies into one, both under control of Metro Council. In a 1958 report, it was found that "...the application of the principle of federation was a sound and practical approach." It was also suggested that there was "...unwillingness to make any drastic change in the existing organization at the present time." Evidence showed that the City of Toronto was still opposed to the federation concept, but suburban municipalities were now even more opposed to amalgamation. By 1960, there was, however, general concern about inequality of representation on Metro Council.

In 1962, John Robarts became the new premier and William Allen was appointed the new Metro Chair. Through Allen's efforts, as well as the building of additional hard services, a new emphasis was put on social services. The province still believed that "... the basic system should remain unchanged," but that another study should be conducted to correct any possible inequities

that might exist. By 1964, the new Toronto mayor, Donald Summerville, was still in favour of total amalgamation, while most of the local municipalities were still supportive of a metropolitan system. On 10 January 1966, Premier Robarts advocated a two-level federated system that consolidated government into six local municipalities, versus the previous thirteen.

In 1986, the Peterson Liberal government established a task force to examine issues of representation, accountability and responsiveness. By 1988, direct election of Metro councillors was approved, whereas originally half represented Toronto and half represented the other municipalities. Alan Redway believes that this move helped to "...drive a nail into the coffin of Metro Toronto," because Metro councillors now had no local responsibilities. This change turned former Toronto mayor David Crombie, previously an advocate of neighbourhoods, into a supporter of total amalgamation. The Rae NDP government was elected in 1990. Another task force chaired by Anne Golden was appointed to recommend potential restructuring of municipal and provincial governments. This report was released in January 1996, after the election of the Mike Harris government. Harris had campaigned on a platform for the reform of local government, and the Burnham Review was ordered to get reaction to the Golden Report and another study put out by four GTA mayors. The Burnham recommendations arrived at different conclusions than the Golden Report did, and tended to mirror findings in the four mayors' report. As a consequence, by October 1996, the Conservative government told local mayors that total amalgamation was in the works. This eventually led to the passing of Bill 103, resulting in the ultimate demise of Metro Toronto and in the creation of the amalgamated Megacity.

The remaining chapters in Alan Red-

way's book deal with citizen opposition to full amalgamation, the impact of disentanglement/off loading, government claims as to the benefits of amalgamation, the utility of small scale government, de-amalgamation, and examples of where de-amalgamation have been attempted or successfully carried out. The author's conclusion investigates where the City of Toronto could go from here. Redway calls for a serious review and re-evaluation of the city's current political state, and suggests a return to the pre-amalgamation form of government. This he believes would bring decision making back to our community councils, which in turn would facilitate improved local government. It is the author's hope that a groundswell of public opinion will show the provincial government that the current form of municipal governance in Toronto is not working very well, and therefore it is time for something

else to be considered. Noting that Kathleen Wynne was opposed to amalgamation before becoming premier, Redway feels it is time that she initiates a review of a drastically centralized Toronto government, which in his opinion has drastically diminished resident/taxpayer access to and participation in municipal decision making.

Redway's work raises some interesting questions to ponder, but also the book itself, in the words of East York journalist Joe Cooper, "...is valuable reading for anyone who wants to understand this city's [Toronto] municipal politics and cares about its future as a working city." I would agree with Cooper's assessment. Do get your own copy of this wonderful book!

Dr. John C. Carter,
Research Associate, School of Humanities,
University of Tasmania

Mission Life in Cree-Ojibwe Country
Memories of a Mother and Son, Elizabeth
Bingham Young and E. Ryerson Young

Edited and with an introduction by Jennifer S.H. Brown

Edmonton: AU Press (Athabasca University), 2014. 316pp. \$29.95 paperback. ISBN 978-1-77199-003-5. Free pdf. ISBN 978-17719-004-2. \$29.95 eBook. ISBN 978-177199-005-9. (www.aupress.ca)

This is a book of many layers, of interest and accessible to diverse audiences. The undergraduate or interested reader searching for the telling anecdote of family and bush life in Canada in the last quarter of the nineteenth century will find much to engage with. These accounts of the hardships and endurance of an Ontario missionary family might offer spiritual sustenance to some, and the reader may even be led to reflections on the institutional role of the United Church of Canada amongst First Nations. Even more importantly, to the people of Lake Winni-

peg, these reminiscences of Elizabeth Bingham Young and her son, E. Ryerson Young, of their years at Norway House and Berens River offer a perspective on the history of their own families—Paupenekis, Ross, Harte and many others—and on the extensive Christian tradition of their communities.

Jennifer Brown, now Professor Emeritus of the University of Winnipeg, is an experienced editor of historical documents. Here she draws on the manuscripts of the Young family now in the United Church Archives in Toronto and the personal collection of her