

Toronto Embarks on Resilient City Status



Interview with
Stewart Dutfield

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Jane Jacobs was an American-born Canadian writer and activist with a primary interest in communities and urban planning. She once said *“Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because and only when they are created by everybody.”* You might say this is the planning approach Elliott Cappell has in mind as Toronto’s first Chief Resilience Officer (CRO).

On June 15 2017, the City of Toronto announced a new partnership with 100 Resilient Cities (**100RC**) and appointed **Elliott Cappell** as Toronto’s first Chief Resilience Officer (CRO). This new position was created to lead city-wide resilience-building efforts to help Toronto prepare for catastrophic events and urban stresses, which are increasingly prevalent in the 21st century, through development and implementation of a comprehensive Resilience Strategy for the city. Mayor John Tory said that *“With his (Elliott Cappell’s) international work experience in climate change strategy and resilience principles, Elliott is the perfect person to guide the City’s participation in 100 Resilient Cities.”*



In exploring this topic from the program management perspective, I had the opportunity to chat with **Stewart Dutfield**, (who I happen to know) who is working with CRO Elliott Cappell on Toronto’s vision to becoming a resilient City. Stewart’s background was in the City’s Environment and Energy Division, with direct involvement in contributing to the 100RC application to the Rockefeller Foundation. This landed him a key role alongside the new CRO in program management. Our paths have crossed many times when addressing the resilience (integrity) and performance of telecommunications infrastructure to meet the challenges of climate change and severe weather.

The severe weather events of 2013 have informed Toronto’s most recent approach to resilience building . With the climate constantly changing, I asked Dutfield about the relationship between community pressure, the 100-RC initiative and the appointment of the CRO’s office, given the potential for continued major weather events; Dutfield said *“The flooding and ice-storm of 2013 are examples of shocks the City of Toronto has had to deal with and will probably have to again in the future. The previous work in response to climate adaptation was a trigger for the City of Toronto to continue this journey and apply to the Rockefeller Foundation to formally declare their vision, participation and contribution to be part of the 100-RC.”*

Any successful program requires a road map to get from where you are to where you want to be. This thinking led me to ask Dutfield about strategy and the overall planning methodology for the City of Toronto to develop its resilience strategy within the 100RC framework. This is a *“learning journey process”* as Dutfield calls it. The plan includes ‘knowledge transfer’ to and from other Canadian and global cities in the 100RC network, a collaborative and inclusive approach to engaging key and diverse stakeholders and building upon the existing work that has been happening at the City and that has been led by those key stakeholders.

Wikipedia defines a **city** as a large human settlement. Cities generally have extensive systems for housing, transportation, sanitation, utilities, land use and communication. Their density facilitates interaction between people, government, organizations and businesses, sometimes benefiting different parties in the process. I would say without doubt that the city of Toronto is a very large settlement with lots of diversity, which makes it one of Canada’s greatest cities.



To set the stage, 100RC defines “resilience” as the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses and systems within a city to survive, adapt, and grow, no matter what kinds of acute shocks and chronic stresses they experience. Shocks are typically single event disasters, such as fires, earthquakes, floods, disease outbreaks and terrorist attacks. Stresses are factors that pressure a city on a daily or recurring basis, such as chronic food and water shortages, an overtaxed transportation system, endemic violence, or high unemployment. City resilience is about making a city better, in both good times and bad, for the benefit of all its citizens, particularly the poor and vulnerable.

According to the Rockefeller Foundation, in profiling a resilient city (URBAN RESILIENCE), they seek seven qualities that allow them to withstand, respond to and adapt more readily to SHOCKS and STRESSES. The seven qualities are: Reflective, Resourceful, Robust, Redundant, Flexible, Inclusive and Integrated.

In June, the City of Toronto began work on its Preliminary Resilience Assessment, which is intended to provide some insight into Toronto’s past shocks and stresses, stakeholders’ perception of the city’s level of resilience and an inventory of existing programs, policies and plans that contribute towards making Toronto a stronger place. Dutfield went on to explain that *“the gap analysis from this assessment will be instrumental for the development of the strategy, which we hope to have signed off and adopted in 2018. The strategy will also explore the required public and private sector partnerships and funding to support its implementation”*

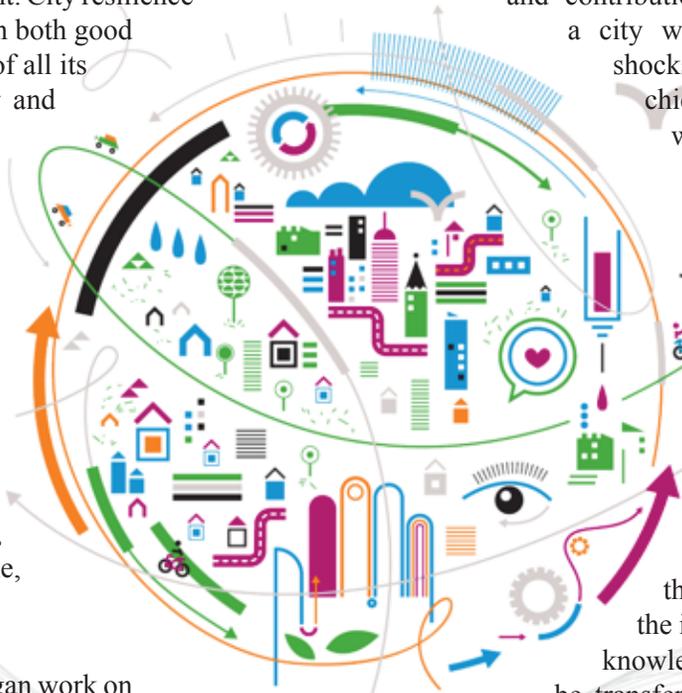
It was clear from the discussion with Dutfield that he sees that a key enabler and success factor for planning for a 100RC must be *“opportunities learned need to focus on neighborhood resilience, which integrates physical and environmental, climate change adaptation and social considerations”*. Dutfield then added *“learning from doing*

will create the information needed and define actions that will have multiple stakeholder benefits.” As I considered Dutfield’s position from my own operational resiliency planning experience and living through past local past shocks and stresses (2013 ice storm and 2017 flooding), it is no surprise that the City of Toronto with Elliott Cappell as the CRO are on the right transformational path.

Corporate partners add the needed value of participation and contribution in ensuring the outcome of a city wishing to be more resilient to shocks and stresses. It is a classic chicken and egg planning scenario which Dutfield plans to address by involving a *“diverse group of stakeholders, which then creates both the opportunity and the challenge. Meetings and mini-consultations will be held to help engage corporate sectors (both for profit and nonprofit) and the philanthropic sector (business endeavours for community good)”*. The plan suggests a targeted approach to the engagement of partnerships for the implementation phase. Again, the knowledge learned from this work will be transferrable to other cities to leverage when strategizing for a 100RC position.

The plan for a resilient Toronto beyond the 2-year Rockefeller initiation period includes seeking more funding to continue the work. Hopefully the City of Toronto can institutionalize the thinking and practice of becoming a resilient city. Such work is not a project with an ending and must continue indefinitely as change will be a constant. Dutfield describes it as *“Toronto being a resilient city is an ongoing journey as we learn more, because the city is a ‘sophisticated environment’.”*

As an operational resiliency practitioner, I can only imagine that the benefits of being part of the Canadian cohort of 100-Resilient Cities working together (Toronto, Montreal, Calgary and Vancouver) and interacting with neighbouring US cities such as New York, Chicago and Boston are invaluable. Dutfield is in a position to meet with his Canadian





100RC counterparts to “standardize the needed consistency to the planning approach including what resilience means to a city.” Personally, Dutfield concluded that “it is great to work with different professionals addressing soft emerging social equality issues, the environment and infrastructure resilience questions. As I see it, the cities are for people and people are central to how we build resilient cities. This work for me alongside both Elliott Cappell and the 100RC team is both challenging and exciting at the same time.”



To follow the vision for a more resilient community for our cities, I suggest you explore an association called ‘Rebuild by Design’ (<http://rebuildbydesign.org/>). The concept is about lessons learned and, in this case, is founded on the response to Hurricane Sandy’s (2012) devastating impact on the cities and regions of the eastern United States. Regrettably, in my experience, we need to use an unfavorable event to secure the required results. Wearing my risk hat, I see this too often in all types of sectors. An unfavorable event occurs, regardless of scale. An after-action report (post mortem) is undertaken with key stakeholders. A work plan to address the concerns falls on deaf ears, due to shortage of funding and resources, eventually, it becomes abandoned altogether. The vision ‘Rebuild by Design’ is promoting a ‘build it right culture’ where we need to reconstruct, even considering next generation solutions to make the communities we live in more resilient. Count me in if we can learn the lessons learned and enforce both physical and social considerations to avoid the same outcomes from similar events in the future.

You can’t predict a disaster, but you can plan for one.

A warm thank you to Stewart Dutfield for this interview. Stewart Dutfield is the Project Lead for Resilience at the City of Toronto. Stewart led Toronto’s application to join the 100 Resilient Cities network and continues to support implementation moving forward. Stewart’s interests lie in better understanding the interdependencies between physical and social infrastructure, working with internal Divisions and external partners. Stewart is interested in the critical role social equity plays in making cities more resilient.

Prior to taking on his current role, Stewart served as a Health Policy Specialist at Toronto Public Health (TPH) where he worked on the development of TPH’s cross-cutting climate change and health strategy. Before joining the City, Stewart was a Program and Communications Manager with Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA). In that capacity he played a key role in the development of the Ontario Climate Consortium (OCC), a partnership of universities, the public, private and NGO sectors whose projects and programs are focused on addressing climate resilience. Stewart has been working on multi-sectoral resilience building projects with various partners since 2009. Stewart holds a Masters in Environmental Studies from York University, and a Bachelors in Environment Design, with a focus on architecture from the University of Manitoba. ■