

Toronto Embarks on Resilient City Status



Interview with
Stewart Dutfield

Written by Vito Mangialardi AFBCI, CBCP, PMP

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.



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. ■