Performance Indicators for Municipal Performance

The paper investigates, analyzes, and studies the Performance Indicators crafted under the municipal performance measurement Program (MPMP) of the Government of Ontario. The municipal performance measurement is a new initiative of the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. It was designed to provide taxpayers with useful information on service delivery and municipalities with a tool to improve those services over time. Ontario Municipalities are required to report on nine key municipal service areas as follows:

I. Local Government
II. Fire Services
III. Police Services
IV. Road Services
V. Transit Services
VI. Waste Water (sewage) Services
VII. Water Services
VIII. Solid Waste (Garbage) Services
IX. Land use Planning

Municipalities are required to collect data and report them using at least 25 performance indicators across the nine service areas above. The province of Ontario requires these performance results to be reported in the Financial Information Return (FIR) of each city and be published for the information of taxpayers.

The municipal Performance Measurement Program (MPMP) provides a set of good tools to assess how well municipal services are delivered. It has developed consistent, understandable, and relevant benchmarks to reach the objectives of the program. Considering the void prior to the implementation of the program, one wonders if and how service delivery was measured in the past.

The municipal performance indicators encompass two kinds of measurement: financial, and qualitative (non-financial). As a result, they succeed in measuring both cost efficiency in delivering municipal services, quality, effectiveness, and how well various municipalities are doing their job. The requirement to report the results annually to tax payers strengthens the accountability of municipal governments to taxpayers. It also recognizes the fact that taxpayers are entitled to this information. It promotes a greater understanding and sensitivity of municipal government towards taxpayers. On the other hand, taxpayers can use the report to become more involved in discussing service needs and priorities with city councils.

City Councils can use the program not only as a tool to promote accountability but also as a business-planning tool to improve operations. Furthermore, since the measurements apply uniformly to all Ontario municipalities, they provide a standardized and systemic resource that allows municipalities to open up and share beneficial information with their counterpart parts. This allows the adoption of a broader perspective whereby one municipality can learn from another and improve from the successful practices of others. Facilitating the exchange of best municipal practices can only be of benefit to all involved.