

## Hail to Hoy, perhaps last of her kind

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**ROYSON JAMES**

A mellow throng of bureaucrats and politicians of current and past vintage said farewell Thursday night to Shirley Hoy, the last of a now extinct breed of senior management at Toronto City Hall.

There they were at the Design Exchange on Bay St. to mark a civic life deftly discharged, a woman whose reach positively exceeded her tiny grasp and whose impact outweighed and will outlast her diminutive size.

There was Bob Richards, former CAO of the Metro government, the guy who brought Hoy back to the local civic government in 1996 after five years at the province.

Maureen Prinsloo, the councillor from Scarborough who headed up the police services board for a few years, and her sidekick, Carol Ruddell-Foster, who ran the licensing commission, were present; as was Eric Gam of social services and Joe Halstead, long the highest-ranking black civil servant in these parts.

The others, from the provincial, Metro and various city bureaucracies are too numerous to list.

They convened because Hoy, leaving the city but not retiring at 57, was a unifying force, a quiet, steady leader whose calm outward demeanour betrayed a steely will.

It must be told that Hoy didn't stage many public battles with her political masters. But she won several private ones. She served under Metro chairs Paul Godfrey, Dennis Flynn and Alan Tonks; and mayors Mel Lastman and David Miller. To navigate this collection of egos and personalities and leave standing tall is no mean feat.

She was there when the tectonic report Suburbs in Transition awakened the city to the reality of poverty in the suburbs. She was on the implementation team for the amalgamation, community services commissioner post-amalgamation, and then was leaned on to clean up the aftermath of the computer leasing scandal that threw the civil service into disrepute.

With quiet diligence and a decided lack of flair, Hoy brought the workforce back from the

brink – a job started by her predecessor, Mike Garrett. But where Hoy's name might be remembered in history will probably be her leadership role in landing the City of Toronto Act, legislation that finally allows the city to grow up.

Ironically, the act gives or allows the mayor to assume so much power that this imbalance, minus checks like a political party or official opposition, will end the independence of the civic workforce.

A mayor didn't hand-pick Hoy and then railroad the selection through council. He had the largest say in the choice, but there was a subtlety and a due process that gave some comfort to a city manager who valued independence.

Hoy was such a city manager. She'll be the last.

In the old days, staff gave their recommendations secure in the thought that they advised and the politicians decided. When an opinion or policy position was presented, it sprang from a defensible position without the undue influence of the political master. Mayors could still push to get the manager ousted, but that often required a bloody execution, one most would avoid unless the offence was egregious and the punishment just.

Consider how Hoy was replaced by the likeable and capable Joe Pennachetti. Mayor David Miller, in announcing Hoy's departure, had hand-picked Pennachetti to replace her. No corporate search. No advertising the job. It's not the norm. It's the way of the future.

Skeptics rightly wonder if Joe P will ever feel as independent as Hoy, Richards, or Metro's first CAO, John Kruger, and Ray Bremner at the City of Toronto.

No. Never.

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