

To find out more about what we do and how we could work together, call us or send an email.

We work with clients and the public to find common ground and solve complex issues.

We are reinventing public consultation.

MASS LBP

The MASS LBP Parable

With an election less than a year away, a group of developers walks into the Mayor's office with a deal. They want to build a Convention Centre. Biggest in the region.

"Oh great!" says the Mayor.

Then he realizes that the developers want to plop it right next to the Heritage District.

"Oh no!" he says. He now has a problem on his hands.

The Mayor speaks to his Advisors. Two say: "Jim, you've got to do this. It will be great for the economy and just think of the jobs. In an election year to boot!"

"Are you out of your mind?" say the other two. "We just spent three years creating that Heritage District. If you so much as think about doing this, there'll be a public outcry. You'll be sunk."

The Mayor doesn't know what to do. So he talks to his Councillors. Half love it. Half hate it. He's still no further ahead.

"What to do?" he sighs to himself before deciding to do what any public official who doesn't know what the heck he or she should do does. "I'll commission a poll," he says. "Find out what my public wants."

A week later, the results come in: 46% of the people love the idea. And, well, 54% hate it. "Rats," says the Mayor. "I can't make a decision. The numbers are too close. And public opinion could change overnight."

Besides, maybe the question was wrong or the respondents didn't really understand the issue. He decides to throw the dice a second time.

The Mayor hires a public relations firm to convene a focus group. Volunteers are found and after several hours of discussion, the results come back. But they're inconclusive. Some people like the idea. Others still hate it. It's another tie game.

The Mayor thinks about what to do next. And while he thinks, word starts to slip out about the Convention Centre. The town's buzzing. Questions are being asked.

The Mayor really wants to know what people want, so he holds a series of town hall meetings. He takes to the podium. Explains the pros and cons of the situation. Then he agrees to take questions and soon realizes the discussion is going nowhere. "How dare he build a Convention Centre near the Heritage District!" one woman tsk-tsk's. "How dare he even think of funding big business," another man sputters, "when there are other issues at stake."

The Councillors are getting edgy. The Mayor feels that they are beginning to lose faith in his leadership.

"Have patience," says the Mayor. "I'm studying the issue. I want to make sure I do the right thing."

"The answer is so obvious. Can't he see it?" whispers one Councillor to another.

The Major Opinion Maker in the local newspaper accuses the Mayor of poor leadership. "He should be the Mayor of Springfield," she says. "He can't make a decision to save his life."

"If you don't take action soon, Jim," warns another Councillor, "you could be toast at the next election."

The Mayor knows that this is a big decision, but he worries that it's become a high-stakes, win-lose game and he's still not sure which side is which. "What I need isn't just an answer, but the *right* answer," he says.

So he does what his Advisors tell him is the best thing to do: He bites the bullet and hires a Major Management Consultancy Firm. Big Wigs from a big city with experience and clout.

"We need six months and \$600,000," say the Big Wigs.

The Mayor gulps, signs a cheque and gets out of the way.

Six Consultants come to town in neat pinstriped suits. They measure the potential increase in tourist dollars. They count hotel rooms and taxis. They pore over the census data and ask questions about the economy. They count and count, jotting down numbers all the way. And then, they leave.

Six months later, six thick binders arrive. Over the next six nights the Mayor works his way through the piles of tables, appendices and graphs. He reads the Tourism Assessment, the Traffic Impact Statement, the Economic Evaluation. He compares case studies and reads long lists counting up costs and cancelling out benefits.

And there it is. On the last page, an answer. The answer.

"Aha!" says the Mayor. "I've got my answer. I now know what to do."

Or so he thinks. He's got his answer, sure. But the thing he doesn't have is a way to explain to the public that this really is the best thing for the City to do.

The Mayor has read each table, pored over every graph, but no one else, not one Councillor, not one member of the public, has even taken a look at the data. More importantly, most don't feel they've had a say. "But if I were to make the documents public," says the Mayor, "I doubt anyone would bother to read them. The nay-sayers would simply ignore it, dig in their heels and decide not to agree."

Time is ticking. The Mayor has spent his money. He's got his answer. So he does what any public official who knows he or she has the right answer does: without any further public consultation or debate, he sets on to complete what seems like a thankless task – convincing everyone else that he's right.

Postscript:

The Convention Centre clearly presented the Mayor with a major problem. What at first looked like an easy win turned out to be a lot more complicated – and costly – than anticipated. When the Mayor ran into opposition, he discovered that the mechanisms he had available to solicit informed input and to build public agreement were inadequate. The real problem wasn't making the 'right' decision. It was including his constituents in the process in a viable way, so that both their voices and the information that the Mayor had gleaned were heard.

MASS LBP addresses these and other intractable problems that are part of modern leadership. We believe that better public processes make it possible to turn losing situations into winning ones that enjoy greater legitimacy, new perspectives and better options. Ultimately, we work to create processes in which more people feel heard and understand what's at stake.

Peter MacLeod

Principal and co-founder

Peter MacLeod has worked with leading organizations in North America and Europe, including *Fast Company* magazine, Britain's Demos think tank and the Kaospilots, a Danish school for business design and social innovation. In 2001, he launched The Planning Desk, an innovative studio for public systems design. In 2004, he travelled across Canada visiting nearly 100 federal constituency offices as the basis for his dissertation on democratic renewal at the London School of Economics.

George Gosbee

Co-founder

George Gosbee is the founder and CEO of Tristone Capital Inc. Prior to Tristone, George was Managing Director at Newcrest Capital Inc., a Canadian national investment firm. In 2004, he was named by the *Globe and Mail's Report on Business Magazine* as one of Canada's Top 40 Under 40.

Chi Nguyen

Director, Participation and process

Chi Nguyen has worked with the Citizenship Foundation, the National Association of Women and the Law, the Toronto Women's City Alliance and as political staff to Dr. Carolyn Bennett, MP. Chi holds an MSc from the London School of Economics in Health, Community and Development.

John Grant

Director, Research and learning

John Grant holds a PhD in political theory from the University of London. He has a special interest in participative research methodologies and has recently begun to explore how political principles affect social order and transformation. His research on theories of public action has been presented at international conferences in Canada, the United States and Britain.

Amy Lang

Policy and process

Amy Lang works to strengthen public participation in governance, with the goal of increasing citizen empowerment and improving public policy. An expert on the Citizens' Assembly process, Amy is writing a book outlining the strengths of this model for citizen engagement. She has a PhD in political sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is currently a Research Fellow at the University of British Columbia's Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions.

Michael MacKenzie

Policy and process

Michael MacKenzie is a doctoral candidate in political science at the University of British Columbia and recently served as a policy analyst for the Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. He also holds an MA in politics from McGill University.

MASS LBP Associates

Catherine Fieschi is the Director of the London think tank Demos and the author of *In the Shadow of Democracy*.

Jonathan Rose is an Associate Professor of Political Studies at Queen's University and served as the Academic Director of the Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

Karen Born is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Health Policy, Management & Evaluation at the University of Toronto and has worked for the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Beth Kapusta is a Toronto-based architect, critic and author. She is a contributing editor at *Azure* magazine, and has published over 100 articles on architecture and design.

David Zussman is the Jarislowsky Chair for Public Sector Management at the University of Ottawa and has led a distinguished career in government, the private sector and academia.

Caitlin Hayward has worked for the House of Commons and Privy Council Office, and was recently a facilitator for the Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. She is currently completing her doctorate in political science at the University of Western Ontario.

David Hume has worked with the United Nations, OECD and the governments of Canada and New Zealand. He is an expert on issues related to online consultation, governance and citizen-centred design of policy and services.

A seat
at the table.

A hand
at the wheel.

A turn
at the mic.

We help
governments,
public
agencies and
corpora-
tions make
decisions and
set priorities
that enjoy
public under-
standing
and popular
support.

Speak
our
language.

More engaging
than polling.

More powerful
than focus
groups.

More effective
than public
forums.

We design
impartial and
fully trans-
parent public
learning
processes
that build
awareness,
consensus
and insight.

MASS LBP provides an unparalleled range of consultation and engagement services. From conception to execution to evaluation, MASS LBP delivers highly innovative engagement strategies that increase public understanding, legitimacy and support.

We also speak regularly to audiences about our work on the future of responsible government, public systems design and civic engagement. We offer seminars and related programming for clients on many of these themes.

Inspired by Canada's first Citizens' Assemblies, MASS LBP was founded in 2007 by Peter MacLeod and George Gosbee to extend this model and reinvent public consultation.

MASS LBP is based in Toronto with staff in Vancouver, Ottawa and London, UK and is allied with the British think tank Demos.

Our services include:

- Comprehensive process design and delivery – from 20 to 200+ participants
- Strategic advice, analysis and recommendations concerning effective public engagement and stakeholder consultation
- Corporate and public needs assessment
- Program evaluation and analysis
- Custom research and dissemination
- Facilitation and training
- Public communications and curriculum development
- Event coordination and logistics

MASS LBP is a new kind of company that works with visionary governments, public agencies and corporations to deepen and improve public consultation and engagement. We exist because people want a say and our clients want to make decisions that enjoy high levels of public understanding and support.

Where polling, focus groups and other consultation processes are insufficient and where quantitative analysis and outside expertise often neglect the intangibles that can sabotage an initiative, MASS LBP offers a comprehensive set of public processes for identifying options, exchanging knowledge and agreeing to the path ahead.

By developing effective public processes that create legitimacy for difficult decisions, leaders can take action with newfound clarity and confidence.

The four phases of any MASS LBP process:

1. Civic lottery
2. Learning
3. Citizen-to-citizen consultation
4. Deliberation and recommendation

Public learning processes

MASS LBP designs public learning processes. We think of our work this way because it puts an emphasis on what we feel is most important: creating opportunities for members of the public to learn about policy issues from multiple perspectives and develop an informed view.

Democratic fitness

Unlike 'civic literacy,' which refers to a citizen's ability to appreciate and use political and historical knowledge, 'democratic fitness' relates to the readiness and capacity of all people to play an active role in the governance and life of their community. We believe good democratic processes are essential to achieving democratic fitness, and that good government should work to maximize the democratic fitness of its citizens.

Democratic dividend

A democratic dividend is the value created as a result of participating in a well-designed process. For individuals, the dividend paid includes greater confidence and knowledge, and an improved sense of agency and inclusion. For a public, the dividend includes a heightened sense of trust, mutual awareness and cohesion.

Public judgement

American pollster Daniel Yankelovich popularized the phrase 'public judgement' in his landmark book, *Coming to Public Judgement: Making Democracy Work in a Complex World*. We refer to it frequently and recommend it to many of our clients. Ultimately our work builds on Yankelovich's theories of how we move from public opinion — which is often an aggregate of prejudice and misinformation — to a richer kind of informed public judgement.

Devolving out

Governments tend to think that decision-making authority travels on a single axis: up towards a strong central executive or down to a local and possibly more diffuse council. We think there's a second, equally important but undeveloped political axis that allows public authorities, whether high or low, to reach out to the public and 'devolve out' responsibility for developing policy recommendations that enjoy high levels of consensus and support.

Civic lottery

We use civic lotteries to allocate places in our public learning processes through a largely random, representative selection protocol. We invite a randomly generated list of citizens to opt into a pool of potential participants. From this pool, members are blindly selected until a given number of demographic attributes such as sex, age or geography are satisfied.

Representation and recognition

Despite being enfranchised and represented by elected officials, many people don't feel heard by their representatives or their government. This paradox of representative democracy has led us to draw a distinction between representation and recognition. We argue that political legitimacy is as much a consequence of informal efforts to recognize individual voices as it is to secure mandates from formal mechanisms such as elections.