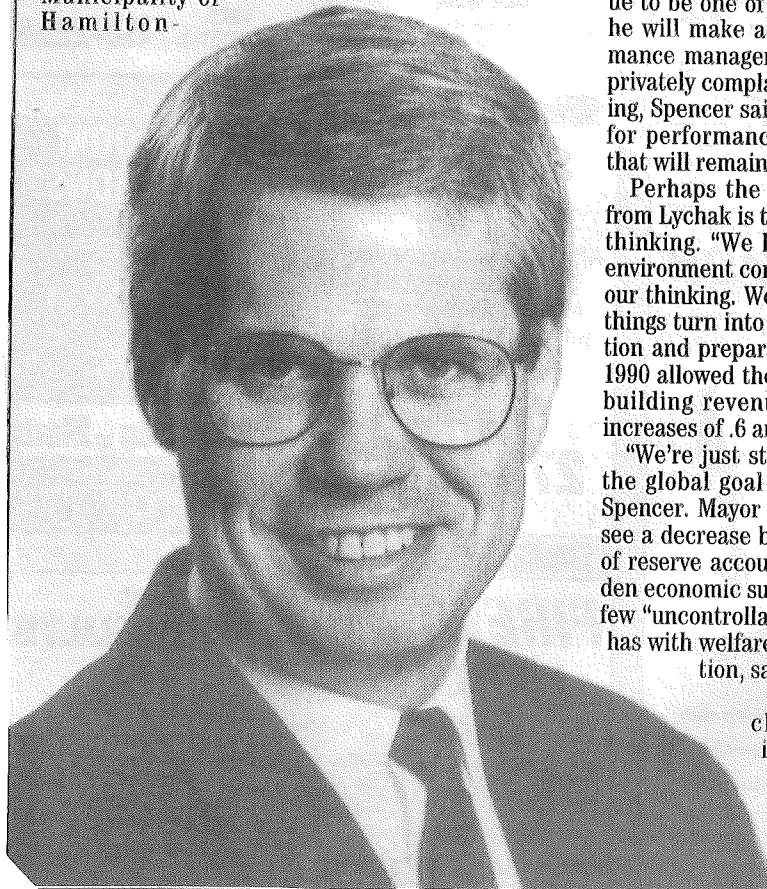


By JOHN STEWART
Staff Reporter

Stan Spencer knows he's got a tough job ahead as Mississauga's city manager, but he's confident he has a couple of excellent role models to rely upon.

Spencer, who was named the City's manager last week, was preceded in the job by Doug Lychak, a administrator many consider the best in Canada. "Doug Lychak was an extremely visionary leader who set out to rewrite the book on how to structure municipal government," the new manager said in an interview. "Doug put in place a lot of the framework and elements and now I'm in the position where I just have to do some fine-tuning."

Both Lychak and Spencer had another important model when they each worked at the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-



Wentworth. Spencer said Cy Armstrong "generally regarded as the model of the CAO (Chief Administrative Officer) in Canada" was a critical influence on his own career. "He was my mentor. He pulled me out of a middle management position and really showed me how you had to look at the whole process of government. He whetted my appetite."

The current administrative structure is a good one, said the engineer, but he wants the senior managers to meet more regularly with council to discuss ongoing issues. The current morale problem at city hall needs to be addressed, largely by better communication from senior managers and by involving all employees more directly in discussions that lead to policy changes.

But Spencer made it clear that change will continue to be one of the few constants at city hall. While he will make additional efforts to simply a performance management program that many employees privately complain is cumbersome and time-consuming, Spencer said performance management and pay for performance are essential management tools that will remain in place.

Perhaps the most important lesson he learned from Lychak is the importance of strategic long-term thinking. "We have to be looking at the business environment constantly and we have to be flexible in our thinking. We have to anticipate and shift before things turn into a catastrophe." The early identification and preparation for the economic downturn in 1990 allowed the City to suffer a \$20 million drop in building revenue and still produce property tax increases of .6 and 0 per cent in the past two years.

"We're just starting the 1993 budget process but the global goal is a zero per cent increase," said Spencer. Mayor Hazel McCallion would even like to see a decrease but that may prove difficult. The use of reserve accounts to provide a buffer against sudden economic surprises and the fact Mississauga has few "uncontrollable" expenses (such as Peel Region has with welfare) means the City is in a sound position, said the new Mississauga resident.

Although non-union staff were told clearly that their 4.5 per cent increase last year was for 1992 and 1993, the City faces negotiations with two unions this year. "That's going to be a challenge," said

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STAN SPENCER

*Our new city manager talks about
the challenges ahead*

Bright future for Spencer

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Spencer.

Some of the other views he expressed include:

- the City must continue to review all of its operations to ensure any unnecessary function or cost is removed;
- there will be little if any increase in staff this year;
- the City should be actively marketing its draft strategic plan to its citizens;
- Mississauga seems to be losing control over several significant areas of jurisdiction because of new provincial policies;
- major projects such as the arts and sports complexes and public gardens will still be coming on stream, but not as early as some had hoped without substantial contributions from the private sector;
- Mississauga should work slowly toward a \$500 million transitway because "we may be creating a

white elephant;"

• economic development will have to shift focus, going directly to the market to find the kind of businesses Mississauga wants to attract rather than waiting for business to come to the City.

Spencer said he's fortunate to be inheriting a sound operation. "We're not perfect, but we generally do things right." He's especially happy that the politicians set policy and stand back to let staff implement it. "You don't mix politics and administration," said the former Hamilton City Engineer, who speaks from bitter experience with that municipality.

The new manager expects to be at the helm in Mississauga for a while and doesn't mind a bit that isn't the least bit concerned that the job only comes with a five-year contract. "That's good because it keeps you on your toes," he said. "This way, you have to keep hitting home runs every night."

City Manager Stan Spencer, 74, 178 17th Ave. Peel Region, 1993