

Ref: 2008-MM22.5

June 27, 2008

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

City Council on June 23 and 24, 2008, referred the following Motion to the Executive Committee:

MM22.5 Plebiscite Question on More Powers for the Mayor
*Moved by Councillor Lee, seconded by Councillor Walker***SUMMARY:**

Gathering public opinion via plebiscite furthers open and transparent government. The current administration of City Council, lead by the Mayor, says it prides itself on upholding the principles of transparency and accountability.

Many world class Cities hold plebiscites regularly on issues of importance to their citizens.

The cost of a plebiscite can be minimized when conducted simultaneously with a scheduled election. Toronto has a scheduled Municipal Election in November 2010.

The most important and pressing issue of this term of City Council is whether the powers delegated to the Office of Mayor should be increased. The public discussion on this issue was not generated by the public and the idea did not originate from the public; it has been generated by the Mayor himself, the Premier of Ontario, members of the Executive Committee and members of various hand-picked, blue-ribbon panels.

If more power is delegated to the Office of Mayor, all residents and all taxpayers in Toronto will be directly affected by unilateral decisions the Mayor makes on such issues as new taxes; his Executive Committee meeting and voting in private; personally hiring and firing senior bureaucrats; further control on budget issues; \$30,000 extra-pay for his Executive Committee members; and so on, instead of City Council making the decision as a whole. This change would be a drastic re-definition of local democracy as Torontonians know it and have come to rely on.

Since the position of Mayor is elected at-large (City-wide), this is an issue of importance for every citizen of Toronto. Therefore, the question of the Mayor's additional powers needs to be put to the people for their decision. The best way to gather City-wide public opinion on this issue is via a plebiscite question on the election ballot for the upcoming 2010 Municipal Election in Toronto.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That Toronto City Council commit to holding a City-wide plebiscite on whether to support increasing the clearly defined powers delegated to the Office of Mayor of the City of Toronto.
2. That Toronto City Council petition the provincial government (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing) to place a plebiscite question seeking public input and public consent regarding the powers delegated to the Office of Mayor of the City of Toronto on the ballot of the November 13, 2010 Municipal Election and City staff conduct a comprehensive, City-wide public education campaign regarding this question.
3. That the appropriate City officials be requested to take any action necessary to give effect to the foregoing, including the introduction in Council of any Bills that may be required.

Council also considered a Financial Impact Statement (June 24, 2008) from the Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer.

for City Clerk

M. Toft/cd

Attach.