



REPORT FOR ACTION

City Hall Council Chamber Modernization Options

Date: November 1, 2019

To: General Government and Licensing Committee

From: Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, and City Clerk

Wards: All

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide information about modernization options for the City Hall Council Chamber requested by the General Government and Licensing Committee at its October meeting. There is a unique opportunity to address a number of issues with the Council Chamber, including achieving compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* prior to the January 1, 2025 deadline, enhance security and life safety requirements, update of Chamber technologies, and meeting the needs of the Members of Council.

A Council Chamber project can be rolled out in phases to minimize disturbance to activities in the Chamber. During the construction phase, City Council would need to meet in an alternate location, as the Chamber would be closed. A contingency plan for off-site meetings is maintained by the City Clerk.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, and the City Clerk recommend that:

1. City Council direct the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, and the City Clerk to undertake a feasibility study for the modernization of the City Hall Council Chamber.
2. City Council direct the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, and the City Clerk, in consultation with the Chief Technology Officer, to report to the Budget Committee during the 2021 Budget process on the capital funding required in 2021 and future years for a detailed design and construction of the City Hall Council Chamber modernization to address accessibility, security, technology, and current needs of the Members of Council.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding for the feasibility study is available in the 2019 Council Approved Capital Budget and 2020-2028 Capital Plan for Facilities, Real Estate, Environment and Energy (FREEE) under capital project (CCA246-02) "Feasibility Study on Special Projects". The estimated cost of the feasibility study is \$400,000. Additional funding required for the subsequent detailed design and construction phases will be submitted through the 2021 budget process as part of Corporate Real Estate Management's budget submission for Council consideration.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its October 7, 2019 meeting, the General Government and Licensing Committee requested staff to report on 1) an update on modernization options for the Council Chamber at Toronto City Hall and 2) the current challenges for the Council Chamber at Toronto City Hall.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.GL8.21>

COMMENTS

There is a unique opportunity to address a number of issues with a Council Chamber modernization project

The original Council Chamber dates to 1965 and has been updated on numerous occasions since then (see Attachment 1 for further details). Most recently, the Council Chamber at City Hall was renovated in 1998 and the floorplan was updated to accommodate a 58-Member Council. No modifications were made to the layout when City Council was reduced to 45 Members in 2000. Attachment 2 shows the current layout of the Council Chamber.

We are required to address accessibility issues by 2024

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* took effect in 2005. Its purpose is to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities by January 1, 2025, which includes a focus on making facilities and buildings accessible. In 2009, City Council endorsed a statement of commitment that the City supports the goals of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. In June 2018, City Council adopted the City of Toronto Corporate Accessibility Policy, which establishes a framework for compliance with the City's commitment to accessibility.

Responding to City Council's directive, the Corporate Real Estate Management division is implementing a Capital Accessibility Program to ensure that City buildings comply with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* by the end of 2024. Wherever possible, the City aims to meet the Council-approved Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines. These guidelines outline higher levels of accessibility than the Ontario Building Code and other accessibility standards, and include criteria for accessible seating areas for persons using mobility aids, ramps for platforms, proper lighting, and modification of doors and entrances. Work plan development, design, permitting and tender preparation are currently underway for the Capital Accessibility Program and will continue through 2024. City Hall, including the Council Chamber, are in the Program's scope, and accessibility upgrades must be completed by the 2025 deadline.

Combining accessibility upgrades with work to modernize City Hall would provide a unique opportunity to address compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* while at the same time creating a lasting design where accessibility is not an afterthought but part of the original concept.

We can address security and life safety

There are at least two areas where the current configuration of the Council Chamber could be addressed in order to enhance security and life safety.

Public washroom access within the secure area

The Council Chamber public washrooms are located in the Council Chamber East Tower elevator landing area which is outside the secure area. With the current location of the walk-through metal detectors, members of the public who have already been screened to enter the Chamber must exit the secure area and therefore must be re-screened to re-enter the Chamber.

It is anticipated that physical changes to reconfigure washroom access could be made which would allow for washroom access to be included within the secure area, thus alleviating the requirement to re-screen visitors leaving the Chamber.

Additional emergency egress

The Council Chamber currently has two main emergency exits for all occupants to use in the event of an emergency evacuation. Staff will consider the addition of emergency exits as a means to enhance the ability to more rapidly evacuate the Council Chamber in the event of an emergency.

We can upgrade the Chamber technology

Most of the audio visual, voting and related systems in the Chamber are at or near end-of-life. Some systems such as the voting and sound system are analog and require updating to more modern digital systems.

A project to replace some of this technology during the Council election break in 2018 was postponed due to the loss of a construction window due to the uncertainty related to Bill 5, *Better Local Government Act, 2018* and the associated appeals.

An integrated approach to renovating the Chamber will allow the incorporation of new, upgraded systems in the design. This approach will also help the City realize some cost efficiencies by completing the work while the Chamber is under construction.

New investments would include the sound system, projector and screen, microphones and cameras, and updated technology infrastructure to support the new system. The voting system will be upgraded and integrated with the Clerk's Toronto Meeting Management Information System to allow for real-time posting of votes online. There will also be investment in the technology used by the Members, the Speaker and the Clerk in meetings. Corporate Real Estate Management, City Clerk's Office and Information Technology staff will review technology solutions as part of the feasibility study to ensure integration with City-wide requirements.

We can address the present-day needs of Members' in the Chamber

The current Council Chamber floorplan was designed for a Council more than twice its current size. The desks are narrow and the seating area is cramped. There is little to no ability to accommodate a Member who has accessibility needs or other assistive device. The desk design predates the modern custom of bringing tablets, notebooks, mobile phones, chargers and other technology in addition to files and personal effects. Furthermore, there is limited seating for City officials who participate in meetings. Unfortunately, the current furniture is fixed and cannot be easily reconfigured.

A renovation would allow Members' desks to be re-sized to give Members more desk space and elbow-room. Larger desks would accommodate newer meeting technology such as touch screens for voting and request-to-speak functions. It would also provide for additional seating for City officials.

A new floor layout would involve modular desks and other components to allow the Chamber to be reconfigured effectively and timely. This will ensure the design is "future-proofed" against future changes in the size of council, and could be easily reconfigured for other events in the Chamber.

We would respect the original architect's vision for the Chamber by using the original floor plan as a guide

A renovation project would be required to have regard for the heritage fabric of the chamber, the reasons for designation of City Hall under the Ontario Heritage Act and the building's status as one of Canada's most iconic buildings.

A renovation presents an opportunity to return the Chamber floor to something resembling the original 1965 layout (see Attachment 1). In that layout, Council Members sat in a circle facing each other instead of the current layout of concentric u-shapes facing the Speaker's dais. City and Metro officials were seated in two halves of a concentric circle behind the Members.

It can be argued that the original layout was more fitting for a place of democratic assembly, especially one in which all members have equal rights and privileges.

Project phases and cost estimates

A full modernization of the Council Chamber would consist of three stages. The first would be a feasibility study to determine whether the project as intended is viable and to present preliminary schematic design options, this phase would require roughly six to nine months. The second phase would be the design and planning stage, which would require approximately 15 to 18 months, to produce a detailed design of the Chamber. The final stage would be construction and commissioning, requiring approximately 18 months.

An order of magnitude cost estimate can be determined through the feasibility study, and the accuracy of this estimate would be improved through the detailed design phase. The feasibility study can be funded through FREEE's current 2019-2028 Council Approved Capital Budget and Plan. Full project cost estimates and cash flow requirements can then be refined and revised through the 2021 Budget process.

Project timeline requirements

The most urgent demand on timelines is the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* compliance requirement by end of year 2024. Regardless of other aspects of the project, accessibility compliance must be achieved by this time.

Project timelines must also take into consideration City Council activities to align reporting, approvals, and budgeting processes with project phases. Should a full modernization be considered, the rough timeline estimates would put the project at completion by the third quarter of 2024.

Council may have to meet elsewhere during construction

In the likely event that construction would conflict with some of its meetings, City Council would need to meet in an alternate location, as the Chamber would be closed.

The City Clerk maintains a contingency plan for off-site meetings such that the facilities and resources can be replicated in another location. The City Clerk would investigate options including other city facilities or hotel or conference facilities in the vicinity of City Hall.

If City Council does not proceed with a full Chamber modernization, the modifications necessary for *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* compliance may require temporary relocation of meetings.

CONTACT

Frank Molinari, P. Eng, Interim Director, Project Management Office, Corporate Real Estate Management, 416-392-1558, frank.molinari@toronto.ca

John D. Elvidge, Deputy City Clerk, Secretariat, 416-392-8641, john.elvidge@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Patrick Matozzo
Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management

Ulli S. Watkiss
City Clerk

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Original Council Chamber Layout
Attachment 2 - Current Council Chamber Layout

Attachment 1 - Original Council Chamber Layout



Toronto City Hall opened in 1965.

The Council Chamber was shared by the City of Toronto and the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto until 1992.

When it opened in 1965 City Council was composed of 12 Members and Metro Council was composed of 24 Members.

Metro Council meetings moved the Council Chamber at Metro Hall in 1992. At that time City Council was composed of 17 Members and Metro Council had 34 Members.

Attachment 2 - Current Council Chamber Layout



1998:

- The amalgamated City Council met at Metro Hall for the first year
- The City Hall Council Chamber was renovated during 1998
- Designed to accommodate 57 members

1999:

- The Council Chamber was expanded to 58 Members when the Province added an additional ward in the former Borough of East York.

2000:

- The Province reduced City Council to 45 members from 58.
- No modifications were made to the Chamber at that time other than decommissioning the voting and request-to-speak functions at the excess desks.

2018:

- In 2018, the Chamber was modified by the removal of screens, voting equipment and request-to-speak panels at the Members' desks made surplus by the reduction in Council from 45 to 26 members.