Clause embodied in Report No. 4 of the Policy and Finance Committee, which was before the Council of the City of Toronto at its meeting held on April 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and its special meeting held on April 30, May 1 and 2, 2001.

8

Request to Federal Government to Establish a Ministry of Urban Affairs

(City Council at its regular meeting held on April 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and its special meeting held on April 30, May 1 and 2, 2001, deferred consideration of this Clause to the next regular meeting of City Council scheduled to be held on May 30, 2001.)

The Policy and Finance Committee recommends the adoption of the following report (March 22, 2001) from the Chief Administrative Officer:

Purpose:

This report comments on a Notice of Motion relating to the federal government's role in urban affairs that was considered at the City Council meeting on March 6-8, 2001. The report reviews the motion in the context of existing Council positions and recent discussions at meetings of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the FCM's Big City Mayors' caucus.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

The recommendations in this report have no direct financial impact.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

(1) the Notice of Motion by Councillor Cho and seconded by Councillor Berardinetti, respecting the establishment of a Minister and Ministry of Urban Affairs within the federal government, be received;

(2) the City of Toronto request the Federal Government to establish a Cabinet Committee on Urban Affairs in order to ensure that all ministers with responsibility for key urban issues focus on a national urban agenda;

(3) the City of Toronto support the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and its Big City Mayors’ caucus in their efforts to lobby the federal government to establish a Cabinet Committee on Urban Affairs;

(4) the Mayor invite the Federal Liberal Toronto Caucus to meet with the members of Toronto City Council to engage in a dialogue on key urban issues and the federal agenda;
(5) copies of this report be sent to the Prime Minister, the federal minister with responsibility for the Greater Toronto Area, the President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Big City Mayors’ caucus; and

(6) the appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

At the meeting on March 6-8, 2001 City Council had before it Notice of Motion J(12) by Councillor Cho, seconded by Councillor Berardinetti, recommending that:

(a) the City of Toronto request the federal government to establish a Ministry of Urban Affairs to develop and implement a national urban agenda; and

(b) the Federal government appoint a Minister of Urban Affairs who will be responsible for working with municipal representatives in the development of the urban agenda and its implementation.

The Motion was referred to the Policy and Finance Committee for consideration, and the Chief Administrative Officer was requested to review the Motion, in consultation with the City of Toronto's Federation of Canadian Municipalities Board representatives, and report thereon to the Policy and Finance Committee.

Councillors Layton, Moscoe and Shaw, who represent the City of Toronto on the FCM Board of Directors, were consulted during the preparation of this report and concur with its recommendations.

Comments:

On July 4-6, 2000, Toronto City Council adopted Policy and Finance Committee Clause No. 1 of Report No. 9, entitled “Provincial Local Services Realignment - Making it Work and Towards a New Relationship with Ontario and Canada”. The report was intended to initiate a dialogue with the provincial and federal governments about new relationships between the City of Toronto and the other orders of government. These relationships would be enshrined in a legal framework that recognizes Toronto as a responsible and accountable order of government with rights and responsibilities.

As envisaged in the report of July 2000, the province would provide Toronto with a new legislative framework, through the enactment of a City Charter, that grants the City broad powers to act on local matters. A new legislative framework would also have the effect of broadening the City’s revenue base to ensure that financial resources match the City’s responsibilities. These changes would help to bring long-term financial sustainability to the City government and would position Toronto to compete successfully with cities in North America and elsewhere.

The report also proposed that, in a new relationship, the federal government would formally recognize the importance of Toronto and other large urban centres in Canada through the
development of a national urban agenda. Such an agenda would spell out actions required to maintain the social, economic and environmental sustainability of Canada’s largest urban centres. In a new relationship, Toronto would be able to deal directly with the federal government on matters of mutual interest and where federal policies or actions are likely to impact the City.

On August 13, 2000, the Board of Directors of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) unanimously adopted a resolution to support the City of Toronto’s Charter initiative in principle. The principles underlying the City’s initiative are consistent with AMO’s own positions concerning the needs and status of municipal government as articulated in AMO’s 1994 position paper entitled “Ontario Charter: A Proposed Bill of Rights for Local Government”.

On September 9, 2000, the FCM Board of Directors adopted a resolution to “endorse the City of Toronto’s Charter initiative in principle, which is in keeping with FCM’s policy of achieving the recognition of municipal government as an independent order of government”. The Board directed FCM staff to “work in coordination with the City of Toronto to this end.”

On September 22, 2000, the Mayor sent a letter and an information package about the City’s Charter initiative to federal and provincial politicians, municipal leaders in the GTA and across Canada, FCM, AMO and other municipal associations across Canada.

On October 3-12, 2000, City Council adopted Policy and Finance Committee Clause No. 1 of Report No. 11, which outlined an “Implementation Strategy and Citizen Engagement Process to Establish a New Relationship With Ontario and Canada”. Since then, staff have been developing a communications strategy, including short and long-term goals, target audiences, messages and communications products. Work has also commenced on fleshing out the content of what a City Charter might look like. Staff expect to be in a position to roll out the first phase of the communications strategy this spring.

Recently, momentum has been building within Ontario and nationally to achieve positive changes to the status, powers and resources of municipal governments. Between November and January, AMO led a team of municipal officials in a series of meetings with Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing staff to discuss reform of Ontario’s “Municipal Act”. City of Toronto staff participated in these meetings at AMO’s invitation. While it remains to be seen whether the province will introduce meaningful reforms to the legislation, the concepts of a municipal order of government, clearly defined broad spheres of municipal power, notice and consultation were all discussed seriously in these meetings.

Nationally, there is evidence of a renewed federal government interest in the condition of Canada’s major cities. In the Speech from the Throne in February 2001, the federal government announced its intention to launch an “urban dialogue”. The government is in the process of preparing a framework for this initiative and has been consulting with key municipal contacts across the country including FCM and FCM’s Big City Mayors’ caucus, which represents Canada’s largest cities.

On February 26, 2001, the Big City Mayors’ caucus initiated a campaign to create a national dialogue aimed at giving municipal governments the fiscal and legislative powers they need to
remain competitive in increasingly integrated North American and global markets. The Big City Mayors’ initiative will include the development of mechanisms such as a model city government charter, development of a framework for municipal/provincial/federal agreements and activities leading to a national conference on Canadian cities, their governments and global competitiveness. The Big City Mayors’ plans complement the City of Toronto’s Charter agenda well.

In light of the federal government’s commitment to an urban dialogue, it is timely to consider what mechanisms and structures within the federal government will best facilitate the articulation of a national agenda on urban issues and coordination of actions in support of the agenda. This matter was discussed at the Big City Mayors’ meeting in February and at the FCM Board of Directors meeting in March.

Neither the FCM nor its Big City Mayors’ caucus supports the establishment of a Minister with Responsibility for Urban Affairs. Instead, there is a consensus that the creation of a Cabinet Committee on Urban Affairs would be a preferable course of action.

There is general consensus that a Minister for Urban Affairs would have to be a Minister of State, a junior Minister with no department and resources. While such a Ministry would provide some focus for urban issues, there is concern that it could also create a bottleneck, blocking the municipal sector's access to more senior ministers with responsibility for urban issues such as the Minister of Transportation, Minister of the Environment, Minister of Finance, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, etc.

To avoid marginalizing the urban issues portfolio at the federal level, a Cabinet Committee on Urban Affairs would ensure that all relevant ministers with decision-making responsibility for key urban issues would focus as a group on the urban agenda. Given the importance of Canada’s major cities to the national economy and the critical issues relating to their fiscal sustainability, it may be appropriate to have a Cabinet Committee integrate these issues under the leadership of the Minister of Finance.

Conclusions:

Toronto City Council has adopted positions in support of recognition of the City government as a responsible and accountable order of government with commensurate rights and responsibilities. These positions are consistent with principles respecting the role of municipal government provincially and nationally that have been adopted by AMO and FCM.

Toronto City Council is also in support of the development of a national agenda on urban issues by the federal government. FCM and its Big City Mayors’ caucus believe that the creation of a Cabinet Committee on Urban Affairs would be a more effective and stronger means to further a national urban agenda than the creation of a Minister responsible for Urban Affairs, which would likely be a junior, unresourced ministry. City Council should not support the creation of such a ministry at this time.

It is therefore recommended that the Notice of Motion by Councillor Cho and seconded by Councillor Berardinetti, respecting the establishment of a Minister and Ministry of Urban Affairs
within the federal government, be received. It is further recommended that the City of Toronto request the federal government to establish a Cabinet Committee on Urban Affairs in order to ensure that all ministers with responsibility for key urban issues focus on a national urban agenda. It is also recommended that the City of Toronto support the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and its Big Cities Mayors’ caucus in their efforts to lobby the federal government to establish a Cabinet Committee on Urban Affairs.

It is recommended that the Mayor invite the Federal Liberal Toronto Caucus to meet with the members of Toronto City Council to engage in a dialogue on key urban issues and the federal agenda. It is further recommended that copies of this report be sent to the Prime Minister, the Federal Minister with responsibility for the Greater Toronto Area, the President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Big City Mayors’ caucus.

Contact:

Phillip Abrahams, Strategic and Corporate Policy Division, Tel.: 416-392-8102, Fax: (416) 696-3645; e-mail: pabraham@city.toronto.on.ca

The Policy and Finance Committee also submits the following communication (March 14, 2001) from the City Clerk:

City Council, at its meeting held on March 6, 7 and 8, 2001, referred the following Motion to the Policy and Finance Committee for consideration, and the Chief Administrative Officer was requested to review such Motion, in consultation with the City of Toronto’s Federation of Canadian Municipalities Board representatives, and report thereon to the Policy and Finance Committee:

(12) Request to Federal Government to establish Ministry of Urban Affairs

Moved by: Councillor Cho

Seconded by: Councillor Berardinetti

“Whereas the City of Toronto has many reasons to have ongoing relations with the Federal Government on a variety of issues; and

Whereas the City of Toronto and other large urban centres in Canada are impacted by many of the decisions of the Federal Government; and

Whereas there is no available structure to approach the Federal Government on urban issues; and

Whereas it is essential that the Federal Government, and the City of Toronto and other Urban Centres work together co-operatively and efficiently; and

Whereas our cities continue to grow through the movement of people from rural areas to urban centres and external immigration; and
Whereas major urban centres throughout the world are in competition with each other; and

Whereas the needs of municipal governments have grown extensively over the years and will continue to grow in areas of social housing, children’s services, homelessness, taxation, transportation, and other vital services; and

Whereas there previously existed a Federal Ministry of Urban Affairs;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved That the City of Toronto request the Federal Government to establish a Ministry of Urban Affairs to develop and implement a national urban agenda;

And Be It Further Resolved That the Federal government appoint a Minister of Urban Affairs that will be responsible for working with municipal representatives in the development of the urban agenda and its implementation.”