

City Council**Notice of Motion**

MM6.2	ACTION			Ward:All
-------	--------	--	--	----------

The Right to a Healthy Environment: An Environmental Bill of Rights for Toronto - by Councillor Mike Layton, seconded by Councillor Glenn De Baeremaeker

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Mike Layton, seconded by Councillor Glenn De Baeremaeker, recommends that:

1. City Council formally recognize that people are part of the environment, and that a healthy environment is inextricably linked to the well-being of our communities. In doing so, the City declares that all people have the right to live in a healthy environment, including:

- a. the right to breathe clean air;
- b. the right to drink clean water;
- c. the right to consume safe food;
- d. the right to access nature;
- e. the right to know about pollutants and contaminants released into the local environment; and
- f. the right to participate in decision-making that will affect the environment.

2. City Council recognize its responsibility to respect, protect, fulfill, and promote these rights and that where threats of serious or irreversible damage to human health or the environment exist, the City shall take cost effective measures to prevent the degradation of the environment and protect the health of Torontonians.

3. City Council direct the City Manager to include environmental and health impacts when evaluating reasonably foreseeable costs of proposed actions, policies, and programs.

4. City Council and its committees continue their work with residents and other experts to set specific objectives, targets, timelines, and actions that the City will take within its jurisdiction

to fulfill residents' rights to a healthy environment and continue to review and revise those targets, which include:

- a. ensuring an equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens within the municipality, preventing the development of pollution "hot spots";
- b. ensuring infrastructure and development projects protect the environment, including air quality;
- c. addressing climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and implementing adaptation measures;
- d. responsibly increasing density;
- e. prioritizing walking, cycling and public transit as preferred modes of transportation;
- f. ensuring adequate infrastructure for the provision of safe and accessible drinking water;
- g. promoting the availability of safe foods;
- h. reducing solid waste and promote recycling and composting; and
- i. establishing and maintaining accessible green spaces in all residential neighbourhoods.

5. City Council direct the City Manager to send a letter to the Provincial Government calling for a public review of the Ontario Environmental Bill of Rights in order to improve the Act and to include recognition that all people have the right to live in a healthy environment.

6. City Council direct the City Manager to send a letter to the Federal Government calling for the development of federal legislation that recognizes that all people have the right to live in a healthy environment.

Summary

There is an undeniable link between environmental health and human health that the City of Toronto has long recognized. We work hard to prevent smog days, air pollution, and the pollution of our water ways, because we know that they can cause premature death. The World Health Organization estimates environmental contamination, including polluted air and water, causes as many as 36,000 premature deaths annually in Canada.

We have also been working with other cities to get ahead of the storms and extreme weather events that come with climate change, as we saw with the July 8 flood in 2013 and the ice storm that same year. We know all too well that through storms and extreme weather conditions it is the most vulnerable in our city who are primarily affected.

As a municipal government our work in transportation, housing, waste, and water all relates directly to the quality of our environment. The David Suzuki Foundation and its partners have been working with cities across Canada to recognize the right to a healthy environment with the adoption of a municipal declaration of environmental rights. More than 110 governments around the world, including many cities, have recognized their citizens' right to live in a healthy environment. The rights protected include breathing clean air, drinking clean water, consuming safe food, accessing nature, and knowing about pollutants and contaminants released into the local environment.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms does not explicitly protect or address environmental rights, leaving us among the few countries that do not yet recognize the right to a healthy environment. Environmental rights would ensure that our laws and policies protect the basic elements of our survival, such as clean air, safe water, and unpolluted land. Five provinces and territories (Quebec, Ontario, the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut) have some form of environmental rights legislation. Six cities in Canada have passed environmental rights declarations, including Yellowknife, Montreal, and Vancouver.

The recently established Parks and Environment Subcommittee on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, as well as the City's revitalized role in the C40 both demonstrate our strong commitment to building a healthy and sustainable city. A Toronto declaration recognizing the right to a healthy environment would show support for our residents' rights to clean air, water, and safe food, signaling Toronto's continued leadership in building a healthy, sustainable city and drawing attention to the Canadian Charter's unfortunate silence on environmental issues.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM6.2