



Attention: Special Committee on Governance

RE: GV 1.2 Public Input on City Council's Governance System for 26 Members, February 21, 2019

Dear Members of Special Committee on Governance:

On behalf of the Scarborough Civic Action Network or SCAN, I would like to offer suggestions for changes to the City's governance structure, including modernizing governance, following the reduction in the size of Council.

SCAN is a non-partisan, community-driven network whose aim is to help mobilize a civic voice for Scarborough, one that is inclusive of marginalized and underrepresented communities and reflective of the diversity of its community members. SCAN is made up of 14 community-serving agencies across Scarborough along with neighbourhood groups and resident leaders. SCAN is governed by its issue-focused action mandate which is shaped by broad community input. For 2018-19, Scarborough residents identified affordable housing, public transit and community safety as its three priority areas.

Firstly, we need to ensure our city council is governed in such a way that ensures **regional** and **local** representation. We need a city government that is responsive to the needs of all regions that make up the City of Toronto. For Scarborough, this means a city government that has an engagement infrastructure that strives to include the voices of the more than 625,000 residents of Scarborough, including people living in Malvern, in Kingston-Galloway, in Oakridge, in Birchcliff, in Steeles L'Amoreaux, in Victoria Village, in Dorset Park, in the East Steeles nexus, in Ionview, Scarborough Village and more – in short, all neighbourhoods across Scarborough. This could be done by leveraging our community councils to play a larger role in engaging the broader public and giving a platform to resident voices. Another idea is to ensure all city council committees have regional representation.

Second, the City of Toronto needs a governance structure that integrates **local community engagement** from the outset. Local public input is not only a fundamental part of democracy but it is also a critical part of ensuring good governance. Residents need a space to voice community needs and priorities to their government. Residents need a space to understand government decision-making. Through SCAN, we know that many residents are concerned about a wide range of issues affecting their communities but many are disconnected from political processes. This lack of engagement can mean missing the target when making political decisions. It would be better for the city to build an engagement infrastructure that is inclusive and accessible to all residents – and not just residents who already have the resources and know-how to connect with government - so that we can get the input we need in a timely and localized way.

A developed local community engagement infrastructure would help us to measure the need for more affordable decent housing especially for low-income tenants. It would help us gauge who is being impacted by rising housing costs and to what extent. It would allow our city council to know that measures like the Housing Now Initiative are long overdue and where we need to focus our energies in terms of affordable housing. It may also point to the need to have a committee solely devoted to addressing the wide range of housing issues faced not only by Scarborough residents but also across the city.

A developed local community engagement infrastructure that is integrated with governance would help to measure and address the racialization of poverty which is a Scarborough issue as 73% of Scarborough's population is racialized.

A developed local community engagement infrastructure would help to raise awareness that more efforts are needed to improve traffic safety for pedestrians. In 2018, more than 46 per cent (or 19 of 41) of pedestrian deaths occurred in Scarborough. Residents would be able to share concerns with their representatives and inform our city government that cars are running through stop signs, racing down side streets, and speeding through red lights. Such an infrastructure would also allow us to co-create solutions that work for our neighbourhoods.



Finally, a governance structure that has a robust, integrated community engagement infrastructure would help with our transit planning. Residents need to be able provide input on better bus services which Scarborough residents are highly dependent on. We also need to have a say in the development of our transit network. We need to fund transit infrastructure that benefits all of Scarborough and reaches residents across the whole region especially those living in transit deserts like Malvern and Kingston-Galloway.

A governance structure that includes a community engagement infrastructure that is inclusive, local and resident-centered will also help people to be better connected to their city council and better informed about issues facing neighbourhoods, the region and the entire city. This in turn will make us more capable of working together to improve the quality of life of all Toronto residents and build a city for all.

How to build this community engagement infrastructure? By asking for public input of course which could be done by leveraging local resources such as libraries, community centers, non-profit organizations, settlement agencies, schools, daycares, networks, and so on. And looking to models used elsewhere in cities such as New York.

Finally, a propos to the ideas put forward here, we also highly encourage this Special Committee on Governance to **extend the time for public input** as we believe many other community networks, neighbourhood associations, groups and individuals would like to have a say in our governance structure and they need more time and notice to prepare.

Sincerely,

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