

The 3 R's

Erin and Ben Napier from Laurel, Mississippi inspired my remarks here today. They ask their clients to consider the 3 R's (**REDECORATE, RENOVATE, REBUILD**) when they determine what kind of house they want to own, to live in, to pay for, and to raise their families in.

I would like to recommend those same 3 R's as you begin to consider the kind of city that people will elect you to lead, the kind of city that the people of Toronto want to live in, to pay for, to do business in, and to raise their families in.

My comments are about process rather than content - though, truth be told, I have a more than a few thoughts about that as well. The people speaking here today and thousands and thousands of their neighbours have their own views on the governance of this city. They will ask that you give them careful consideration.

However, I believe that you (and we) need to draw up some good plans before picking up a paintbrush, hammering a nail, or digging out a basement.

Every four years, after local elections are held across Ontario, the province is mandated to do a review of the Municipal Elections Act. Committee meetings are held, deputations are received, and people involved in local politics in Ontario submit their ideas and suggestions on improving local democracy and the election process in their cities, towns, and villages.



Not all of those ideas and suggestions find their way into the Act. It is after all a political process and the government of the day generally makes those changes that are either popular or expedient. And then the next election cycle happens and the mandated review begins again.

I think a one-time review of our governance is insufficient for the reality of life in Toronto.

This review needs, as the MEA is, to be mandated and to happen regularly, every four years. That does not mean that only for a few months do we spend time discussing governance and modernisation. The process should be a thoughtful and continual one with changes, as needed and desired, happening in the first year of a new Council.

So, back to the 3 R's. **REDECORATE, RENOVATE, REBUILD**

If you consider these actions, you will see they only differ in degree. The scope of the problem, the planning involved, the cost, the time needed, the level of expertise required, and the support that will be called upon.

REDECORATE

You have begun some of this already. You have remodeled your offices, added to your office staff, rethought the committee structure with a 25 + 1 City Council. You have looked at involving more citizen appointees on the ABC's in your stead.



There are many minor or cosmetic changes that could be made to support a 25+1 City Council. Such changes would see City Hall operating much as it is today with wide-spread gapping, declining services, crumbling infrastructure, and your workload and responsibilities more than doubling. That would not serve any of us particularly well.

RENOVATE

You should consider more involved changes in our governance. In Greater London, there are 33 boroughs, ranging in population between 150,000 and 300,000. There are about 50 councillors in each borough. They do not receive a formal salary. Should Toronto consider something similar? Neighbourhood councils?

The City of Toronto had a three-year pilot project on participatory budgeting. The staff report made two recommendations but it was the third recommendation that it did not make that was revealing. Staff left out that we not continue participatory budgeting across the city. Staff missed the point of the pilot seeing PB as simply another means of engagement akin to public meetings, surveys, or town halls.

The City of Chicago spends \$50m a year on PB; Madrid has allocated over 100m Euros in the past three years on hundreds of projects. They built a technology platform to manage PB that is now being used across the world.

Can Toronto emulate best practices from other global cities and improve our governance, improve the city itself? Of course.



REBUILD

Finally, should Toronto consider becoming a Charter City? We do not have a constitutional right to vote in municipal elections. Canadian cities are "creatures of a province" due to the Baldwin Act of 1849.

Is this idea far fetched? 20 years ago, people in Toronto like Jane Jacobs, David Crombie, John Sewell, Enid Slack, and Richard Joy wondered aloud if the GTA should become a province. The City of Toronto Act resulted.

Charter City status would allow Toronto new governance and financial arrangements more appropriate to the task of governing Canada's largest and most complex city.

I urge you to make the Committee more than a temporary review of how the reduction in the size of Council has impacted, or may impact, the City's governance; more than a one-time forum for suggestions for changes to modernising the City's governance structure.

I urge you to make democracy in Toronto more participatory.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully submitted,

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