

GV1.2.15

From: [Heather Marshall](#)
To: [Special Governance](#)
Cc: [Councillor Bailao](#); [Councillor Perks](#); [Councillor Carroll](#); [Councillor Holyday](#); [Councillor Crawford](#)
Subject: GV1.2 Submission from Toronto Environmental Alliance
Date: February 21, 2019 10:00:57 AM
Attachments: [TEA Statement on GV1.2 Public Input on City Council's Governance System for 26 Members.pdf](#)

To the Special Committee on Governance:

Please accept Toronto Environmental Alliance's public comment for today's Special Committee on Governance agenda item, GV1.2 Public Input on City Council's Governance System for 26 Members. It is attached to this email as a PDF.

I'd like to request that the clerk circulate our submission to all of the members of the Committee and add it to the list of communications with a hyperlink to our comment so anyone can read it.

My contact details are provided below.

Thank you very much!

Cheers,
Heather

--

Heather Marshall
Campaigns Director
Toronto Environmental Alliance
30 Duncan St, Suite B1, Toronto, ON M5V 2C3
Office: 416-596-0660 xt 1008
Cell: 416-833-5583
Email: heather@torontoenvironment.org
Website: torontoenvironment.org

TEA Statement on GV1.2: Public Input on City Council's Governance System for 26 Members

Since the abrupt slashing of Toronto's City Council in July, the Toronto Environmental Alliance has been concerned about the impact this restructuring will have on fair access and representation, accountability and civic engagement in decision-making.

The Toronto Environmental Alliance works with tens of thousands of Torontonians to build a greener city for all, and we believe that to achieve this goal, we need a healthy local democracy.

Below are some of our key areas for concern as the Special Committee proceeds in their evaluation of governance structures for Toronto:

Need for ongoing and deeper consultation: Evaluating how the City's governance structure must change to meet the needs of Toronto will be a complex process which requires ongoing analysis, discussion and city-wide consultation. While TEA welcomes all opportunities for public input, the invitation to provide written comments or in-person deputations to the Special Committee on Governance one week before the first meeting - which takes place on a weekday at 9:30 am - is not an example of deep consultation or fair representation. The consultation process should be designed for meaningful public engagement - including opportunities provided with proper notice and times that are accessible to different members of the public. We encourage the Special Committee on Governance to consider similar multi-layered engagement approaches as those used in the development of the TransformTO climate action plan in order to incorporate resident and stakeholder experience and expertise.

Fair access and representation: With most wards doubled in size, Councillors have to deal with wards of twice the population and have expanded their offices and staff. However, our ward-based system requires the elected Councillor to be accountable for solutions to local issues at the end of each day, not their staff. TEA is concerned that residents may see a decline in attention and support that they receive due to the changes made to Council, especially those who may be presenting complex cases.

Accountability: Governing large service delivery systems and implementing city-wide strategies like the TransformTO climate plan and the Poverty Reduction Strategy presents a significant challenge. Agencies and boards like the TTC, Toronto Community Housing Corporation and the Board of Health deliver essential public services to Torontonians and are funded by the City. They are governed by boards that include elected Councillors and often citizen appointees. With fewer Councillors overseeing these services, we are concerned that accountability will be weakened.

Service Levels: We are already seeing the unexpected impacts of this restructuring of our municipal government. For example, the proposed 2019 City Solid Waste Budget based on the same service levels would have cut the number of Community Environment Days from 45 to 26. This cut would reduce opportunities for residents to access important waste diversion services, as well as access to the local Councillor and education about reducing



waste and getting involved in environmental initiatives. This is only one small example of challenges we may see in ensuring that service levels are not reduced for Toronto residents.

Civic engagement: Implementing City-wide strategies to reach our climate change targets, reduce poverty, address racism, improve housing, and support tenants, seniors, youth and newcomers requires complex inter-departmental coordination and ample public consultation and engagement. Strategies are often reviewed by multiple boards or agencies as well as various committees to get it right, keep it on track, maintain funding and ensure it's having an impact on the people it's designed to serve better. Advocates and supporters of these strategies rely on transparent reporting, staff responses to Councillor questions, vote tracking and other tools to make concerns known and engage in the decision making process.

With far fewer committees to address issues and much longer meeting agendas for major portfolios like the new Infrastructure and Environment Committee, we are concerned that the public will have even less access to decision-makers, including time to meet with designated Councillors, speak before committees, or deliver presentations and petitions.