

## HARBORD VILLAGE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Box 68522, 360A Bloor St. W.  
Toronto, ON M5S 1X1



To Committee on Governance  
Item 1  
Deputation Oct. 31, 2019.

Two nights ago, on a cold, rainy night, 300 residents attended the downtown Transform Toronto consultation. The crowd was almost entirely younger adults, concerned about the climate emergency and urgent with ideas. One young man spoke eloquently of a Toronto he wanted to be proud of—and the opportunity we all have of creating a City that is known for its ingenuity and moral leadership to heal a dying planet.

The staff report in front of you stands in stark contrast to these visionaries. It is a puzzling document. It finds at least some councillors are having difficulties dealing with the demands of local and city-wide issues, but recommends the status quo. It uncovered ample grounds to recommend a further process, yet concludes further major overhaul of the way our local democracy functions is not warranted. Indeed, it even costs one such study at a price of \$700,000—or 14 cents per capita—and still turns away.

We have a governance problem. It is not a communication problem, it rests in an issue of how effectively government and communities partner.

In Harbord Village, we are actively looking at ways to become a carbon zero community through a district heating pilot programme. Where the councillor's office in the last term would have been the central point of contact, we were set up with Transform TO and are conducting the exploration ourselves. A public realm study that

arose from collaborative work we did on TOCore is also working outside the direct purview of the Councillor. Meetings on our initiative to help realize the City's 40% canopy objectives in our catchment began in April and will not proceed until a full year later.

A city delayed is a city denied.

We have a tale of three cities: staff which seems happy with its lot, an active citizen base which is increasingly exhausted and discouraged, and councillors who are divided between the two. Imbalance in workloads leads to decisions by councillors who have less work (and are in the majority, or close to on committees) leaving their counterparts in the busy Downtown, Midtown and North York wards with resources unable to meet demands. The staff report notes these pressures not only existed prior to the downsize, but also have been aggravated by it. Yet it does not recommend further action.

Instead, the report appears to set consensus as a condition of recommending change. If we can't put forward a fully worked out alternative government structure with a detailed implementation plan, including cost estimates, implications for the existing system, legal implications, that is reason enough that we should not work toward one. To us, it means we haven't yet engaged in reimagining how to redress the democratic deficit.

To stand pat, on the basis of survey responses by 4 councillors and interviews with 11 councillors, less than half the Council, and so far as I have found, no public documentation to allow us to weight their opinions based on geographical distribution is astonishing. If the lack of appetite for doing the hard work of City rebuilding is itself a byproduct of too little councillor time and interest, that is truly dismaying.

Three hundred young people on a cold wet night in October say this must be a time where we can do wonderful things. We see the central issue in City governance is we are a splintered and divided city, by haves and have nots, by geography, by intolerance. Any responsible fix of our governance should ask first how institutional reform might address this.

We endorse the Social Planning Council motions and thank them and the others who have steadily deputed for major change. We ask simply: do not ignore us.



Respectfully,  
Sue Dexter,  
Board,  
Harbord Village Residents' Association.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sue Dexter', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Respectfully,  
Sue Dexter,  
Board,  
Harbord Village Residents' Association.