
City Council**Notice of Motion**

MM22.21	ACTION			Ward: All
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Breaking the Log Jam: Addressing the Post-COVID-19 Committee of Adjustment Backlog and Creating Immediate and Real Jobs - by Deputy Mayor Denzil Minnan-Wong, seconded by Councillor Michael Thompson

** 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

Deputy Mayor Denzil Minnan-Wong, seconded by Councillor Michael Thompson, recommends that:

1. City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to consult with staff and Committee of Adjustment chairs immediately on a plan to clear the application backlog by the end of the end of 2020; the plan, including financial impacts, should also identify steps in the application review process where backlogs occur, and identify measures to resolve them.
2. To support the clearing of the application backlog by the end of 2020, City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to report to City Council, through the Planning and Housing Committee in September 2020, on increasing the capacity of the Committee of Adjustment by:
 - a. increasing the staff complement for processing and/or reviewing applications; and
 - b. appointing additional Committee of Adjustment members in order to create either additional panels or expand existing panels, enabling them to meet more frequently.
3. City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to identify and expedite the implementation of action items from the "End-to-End Review of the Development Review Process" that will have immediate and near-term impact in improving capacity for processing Committee of Adjustment applications.
4. City Council direct that Committee of Adjustment Chairs be invited to speak to the Planning and Housing Committee when the Chief Planner and Executive Director's report is before the Committee.

Summary

Construction is a critical industry in Toronto. It creates jobs, with many corollary benefits that are part of a strong economy. Without exaggeration, now more than ever it is critical to make sure our construction industry can thrive as we begin the post-COVID-19 recovery period.

For the duration of the COVID-19 shutdown no new Committee of Adjustment applications were accepted or approved. Committee of Adjustment meetings resumed on June 3, 2020, but at a reduced capacity. There are currently 1,250 active Committee of Adjustment applications, which can only be expected to increase now that property owners and developers can submit applications again. Typically, each Committee of Adjustment panel reviews an average of 40 applications per hearing, meeting twice per month. Currently this capacity is reduced to 20 applications, with plans to bring it up to 30, as the system for virtual hearings is refined. With current capacity, and facing a deluge of applications that couldn't be submitted from March through to the start of June, we are facing a growing backlog.

According to the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD), Toronto will lose 10,000 jobs per year due to reduced construction activity and intensity in the multi-family sector. BILD reports that financial implications in construction from the impact of COVID-19 include a loss or delay beyond 2021 of approximately \$850 million in government revenues, including \$52.5 million in lost municipal Land Transfer Tax revenues.

There are three major causes of the building slowdown: COVID-19 related disruptions to the supply chain, worksite slowdowns relating to COVID-19 safety protocols, and the suspension of planning and building applications by municipalities.

The City can support the resumption of the construction industry, and all of the economic benefits it brings to Toronto by finding ways to increase our capacity for processing and approving applications.

The review of Planning Applications at the City is done on a full cost recovery basis. Therefore, with no increase in expenses we can scale up all operations that support the application process, from preliminary consultations to the Committee of Adjustment approval. This is a high-impact, practical measure to support Toronto's economy as we enter the Recovery and Rebuild period.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM22.21