

City Council

Notice of Motion

MM25.15	ACTION			Ward: All
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Empowering Toronto with a City Charter - by Councillor Josh Matlow, seconded by Councillor John Filion

** 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

Councillor Josh Matlow, seconded by Councillor John Filion, recommends that:

1. Council request the Government of Canada to provide a mechanism for the City of Toronto and other municipal governments to establish a City Charter that provides authority over specific municipal issues including, but not limited to, the following:

- a. local public health;
- b. municipal elections and governance;
- c. financial matters; and
- d. land use planning and construction matters.

Summary

Our Country's 19th century constitution, which constrains municipalities as merely "creatures of the province", was enacted when Canada was largely an agrarian society. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it clear that Toronto, and other large cities in Canada, needs a new framework to thrive, and in many facets merely function, in a 21st century context.

Most recently, the Province of Ontario has again meddled in municipal elections by banning Ranked Ballots in an omnibus Bill under the guise of protecting residents from COVID. Viewed in conjunction with cutting Council in the middle of an election, deemed a serious enough breach of local democracy to be reviewed by the Supreme Court, granting autonomy to choose how local residents elect their local officials is necessary to ensure that each level of government remains focussed on their respective purviews during this period of crisis.

Of greater concern is the Province of Ontario's lag in granting Toronto's Medical Officer of Health's recommendation to place a temporary ban on indoor customers in restaurants, bars,

and gyms. Experience from other jurisdictions has demonstrated that, given COVID-19 spreads exponentially, a seven day delay could end up leading to a significant increase in the number of local residents that will contract the virus and our sectors of our economy remaining closed longer than was necessary. Toronto must be granted control of public health to protect our residents during this pandemic.

Toronto is also facing a fiscal crisis. Relying almost entirely on property taxes and unpredictable tools like the land transfer tax has left Toronto in a precarious situation for the past decade. These concerns have grown more acute during the pandemic with the City Manager recently providing a report stating that we are facing a \$1.5 billion shortfall this year due to the pandemic. While the primary support to fill that gap must come from senior levels of government, the City needs new tools now to address our financial shortfall.

Wresting control of land use planning and construction is also a top priority for Torontonians as well. The current Provincial Government has unilaterally vetoed years of staking ill-considered changes to the Planning Act at the expense of local communities. To make matters worse, the province also usurped control of the City's noise by-law by changing the City of Toronto Act to allow major construction projects from early in the morning until 10:00 p.m. during the height of the pandemic's first wave while people were being asked to stay home.

Forced amalgamation and the denial of road tolls are just two previous examples of Queen's Park making decisions without proper consideration for local residents. While Provincial overreaches into the City of Toronto's affairs are certainly not new, the current Provincial Government has demonstrated a particularly reckless disregard for the rights and well-being of Torontonians.

This Motion requests the Government of Canada to grant a charter to the City of Toronto that provides autonomy to make its own decisions in matters regarding local public health, municipal elections, financial matters, and land use planning and construction.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM25.15

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-157777.pdf>