TECH RESET CANADA

April 29, 2021

Good morning Mayor Tory, Councillor Ainslie, Councillor Bailão, Councillor Crawford, Councillor McKelvie, Councillor Minnan-Wong, Councillor Pasternak, and Councillor Thompson

My name is Bianca Wylie and I'm here on behalf of Tech Reset Canada

Listening to your last conversation about the PayIt deal, I understand that some of you are excited to just get it done. And that doing so is understood as being helpful to residents in this moment. I get that, I truly do.

But we still need to hold that enthusiasm up beside our need to hold each other accountable for the way this City does business through technology procurement. Including how we talk about it in public forums such as this.

Our main point today is that we're operating outside of any digital infrastructure plan. Having been part of an organization that advocated for that process it's hard to watch the complete lack of interest in using it as a meaningful lever for public control of our systems. The way the City is handling this policy file is making some of us cynical about public policy.

There are open source procurement documents and public code models in cities around the world that are available to us to help us build a proactive approach to technology to puts the public firmly in charge. Instead of doing that work, we're letting companies define how we run our core digital infrastructures. This is not how a functional public service works. Staff spending time in contract negotiations is not public policy creation. It might be helpful for you to know that in the same way you feel embarrassed about the City's legacy technology systems when you talk about other cities doing online payment, that's the kind of embarrassment we feel about this City's lack of interest in seizing the moment and changing course.

You can feel it all the way to our vaccine distribution technology. We need to believe in our public technology because the only ones that care deeply about us is us. Instead, today, this is a proposal to throw another spaghetti layer into the mess. The deep and old problems we have in our systems are because we haven't taken a thoughtful approach to them. These problems won't be solved because they look solved to residents on a little cell phone screen. We're doing more of the same here. We're doing the thing that got us here. Can we please believe in ourselves and our systems? We don't have to build it all ourselves but we sure have to be the ones saying what we want and how to build it.

Public procurement has one core tenet. It has to be fair. This process was not fair. I have more to say if you have questions about that.

Bluntly: we cannot, as a government, outsource public accountability to a private software and finance company. It is disturbing as a resident in a democracy to hear a government, with ample public legal staff, repeat marketing claims about moving risk around. Using cloud technology does not remove that

technology from our infrastructural workflows or from our responsibility, from a public administrative perspective.

In the model proposed here, we pay PayIt. Our tax base and resident population become a surface area for a business model. We are the fourth largest city in North America and this business model leans into first-mover advantage to get this company's software on everyone's cell phones. Have fun getting that off there and please stop talking about that problem of lock-in as though it's all legal. It's social. And it's cultural.

This deal proposes that all of us that live here become complicit in this business model and not only customers but as business partners. That we are now going to turn around and export this model to other Canadian cities. It's hard to comprehend that that's a legal thing you can do to us in our name.

PayIt picked Toronto. They approached us, we didn't approach them, as far as I can tell. They submitted an unsolicited proposal, worked with the City extensively outside of any contract. Then staff came to you last year seeking a sole source deal. If you set a precedent that companies are allowed to approach the City for a deal of this size and importance, work outside of contract building up advantage, and then deny that advantage exists, are you not opening us all up to ongoing liability troubles?

When the first sole source attempt was sent back for consideration, the City effectively doubled down on it by using a process we've used three times in our history. All three times for small deals, in the hundreds of thousands. Then the fourth time the City uses this Swiss Challenge approach, it's for a software deal with a low-end value of twenty-million dollars and significant long-term operational impact.

When we rush to try and do what might seem a good thing, we open ourselves up to other trouble. This applies to all rushing in life. There is a graceful way to understand that how we got here was not the best course, even if well-intentioned, and stop it. Then we can start again and pick up the work we need to do to build great public services and figure out how technology fits into that work. That's what we've always needed, that's what we need in crisis, and that's what we need in the future.

Thank you

Tech Reset Canada

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