



April 5, 2021

12th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2
Attention: Marilyn Toft

RE: MM31.10 Improving Virtual Community Consultation Meetings for Development Applications

Dear Mayor Tory and Members of City Council,

This is to express FoNTRA's *strong support* for Councillor Robinson's Motion to be considered by City Council at its meeting of April 7, 2021:

City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, to review virtual planning consultation meetings, in consultation with members of the public, and report back to Planning and Housing Committee in the second quarter of 2021 with recommendations for improvement, including:

- a. guidelines and practices to ensure that virtual community consultation meetings are consistent and effective;
- b. strategies to improve opportunities for members of the public to participate in virtual community consultation meetings;
- c. best practices related to virtual consultation in other jurisdictions; and
- d. opportunities to improve accessibility for members of the public and, in particular, members of the public participating by phone.

We agree with Councillor Robinson concerning the importance of effective public participation in development applications, and the specific concerns raised regarding the virtual consultation process. In our opinion virtual consultations have resulted in an overall reduced ability of residents to have meaningful participation in the planning process, and effectively influence decision-making. There needs to be a conscious and sustained effort to design and implement processes that overcome the inherent barriers to participation raised by the virtual environment.

Looking ahead to the day when COVID 19 pandemic restrictions are lifted, we would be concerned if there were to be a move to make permanent the virtual consultation (and hearings) processes, absent (in-person) consultation. We believe that in-person meetings should remain a core element of the City Planning's Community Consultation process, but perhaps a "mixed model" should be considered.

We look forward to discussing these matters further.

Yours truly,

Geoff Kettel
Co-Chair, FoNTRA

[Redacted signature block for Geoff Kettel]

Cathie Macdonald
Co-Chair, FoNTRA

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Cc: Gregg Lintern, Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning
Kerri Voumvakis, Director, Strategic Initiatives, City Planning

The Federation of North Toronto Residents' Associations (FoNTRA) is a non-profit, volunteer organization comprised of over 30 member organizations. Its members, all residents' associations, include at least 170,000 Toronto residents within their boundaries. The residents' associations that make up FoNTRA believe that Ontario and Toronto can and should achieve better development. Its central issue is not *whether* Toronto will grow, but *how*. FoNTRA believes that sustainable urban regions are characterized by environmental balance, fiscal viability, infrastructure investment and social renewal.