

To the Economic and Community Development Committee

Oct.23, 2024

Dear Councillors,

Studying the ten-year “**Action Plan for Toronto’s Economy**” brings to mind Jane Jacobs’ advice to city government:

“A city has to be responsible for keeping its own society endlessly involved with maintaining a city its own people can feel at home in and be proud of.....The more that cities can make of their own ordinary people’s capacities for economic and social invention and experiment, the more useful and valuable cities become – not only for their own people but also for their nations.”

The Action Plan seems to have involved a fair number of discussions or at least interviews with “ordinary people,” that is, people who are not city employees, reporting that these people would like city government to let them use their “*capacities for economic and social invention and experiment.*” **From the APTE report:**

- *(EAP) delivered clear guidance on the urgent need for Toronto to reduce regulatory and administrative burdens....*
- *The EAP suggests...[i]dentifying and addressing barriers to inclusivity....*
- *The EAP highlighted the urgent need for Toronto to amplify its efforts to foster labour participation among Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities.*
- *The Indigenous Economic Roundtable Session: would like to see the city “shifting from reconciliation to actionable efforts.”*

But can the city government work in partnership with its citizens to make things work better? Approaches coming from beyond city hall are called *unsolicited proposals*. These are the rules about such *unsolicited partnership proposals*:

1.4 Staff Guidelines

....Division staff are precluded from engaging in the following activities:



- i. acting as “sounding boards” for quotations or proposals;**
- ii. delivering advice on project design;**
- iii. advising on the selection of resources;**
- iv. coordinating or participating in the collection and/or analysis of data;**
- v. helping to refine quotations or proposals; and**
- vi. participating in the preparation of any documentation**

Really? City staff are hamstrung, in other words, unable to support unplanned approaches from outside their own circle.

Our group will submit a “case study” of the difficulties of this approach, including five examples with an economic focus, to the ECDC at its November meeting when the Inclusive Economic Development report returns for discussion. For now, we’d like to point out that with rules and policies of this kind – and there are many – it’s much less likely that city government will be able to do what the APTE recommends: “foster small businesses, improve infrastructure, and create vibrant, inclusive communities.... [unlock] Toronto’s latent economic potential....unlock new opportunities for meaningful employment and entrepreneurship, ultimately enhancing socioeconomic mobility and reducing urban inequities.”

Not without opening the doors a lot wider.

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