

## **Toward Municipal Autonomy and Effective Local Governance**

**Date:** January 7, 2025  
**To:** Executive Committee  
**From:** City Council  
**Wards:** All

### **CITY COUNCIL DECISION**

---

City Council on December 17 and 18, 2024, referred Motion MM24.15 to the Executive Committee for consideration.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

---

Councillor Josh Matlow, seconded by Councillor Jamaal Myers, recommends that:

1. City Council request the City Manager to establish a Program Advisory Body on Municipal Autonomy and Effective Local Governance.

### **SUMMARY**

---

Doug Ford's latest overreach into municipal jurisdiction is another reminder that Canada's constitution was written when our country was largely an agrarian society. Large cities like Toronto are now responsible for delivering, and funding a large share of, transit, roads, social housing, recreation, and other services residents rely on every day. Yet the province can overturn any of our considered and debated decisions on a whim.

Constant provincial meddling in municipal affairs undercuts local democracy and threatens civic engagement. We risk Torontonians tuning out our public meetings and consultations if the sentiment that the province will just overturn Council decisions takes root.

Whether Torontonians agree with a Council decision regarding a development plan, how elections are conducted, or a bike lane, the level of government making the decision should be accountable. Toronto needs a new arrangement with senior levels of

government that ensures we have the independence necessary for 21st century cities to thrive and achieve results for residents. Common in the United States and elsewhere, Charter Cities have supreme authority over “municipal affairs.” Also referred to as “Home Rule”, a Charter City’s law concerning a municipal affair will trump a state law governing the same topic.

It's time for Canada's largest city to have the tools it needs to effectively chart its own course to decide how we grow, get around, support each other, and improve our quality of life. A City Charter will also assist in making the division of roles and responsibilities between senior levels of government and City Hall more transparent and therefore more accountable to the public.

No one can be under any illusion that a Charter is possible at present given such a move would require support from the provincial government. However, it is important to start work on how greater independence could be structured and communicate the benefits to Torontonians, other municipalities, and senior levels of government. That’s why this motion requests the City Manager to establish a Program Advisory Body that would serve as a task force on Municipal Autonomy and Effective Local Governance that would include local advocates and governance experts.

### **Background Information (City Council)**

Member Motion MM24.15

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-251514.pdf>

### **Communications (City Council)**

(December 14, 2024) E-mail from Matthew Freedlander (MM.Supp)

(December 14, 2024) E-mail from Hamish Wilson (MM.Supp)

(December 15, 2024) Letter from Geoff Kettel and Cathie Macdonald, Co-Chairs, FoNTRA (MM.Supp)

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/mm/comm/communicationfile-185523.pdf>