

## **EX20.7 - Update on the Implementation of a Commercial Parking Levy**

The Toronto & York Region Labour Council is disappointed that the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) is blocking a funding tool desperately needed to support critical public services in our City. The commercial parking levy, a revenue tool for which the Labour Council has advocated for many years, would be a boon to the City's balance sheet, and should continue to be pursued by Council.

For well over a decade, the Labour Council has advocated for the commercial parking levy as an important addition to the City's revenue toolbox. One of the best things about the levy is the more progressive nature through which it collects its funds: from the richest corporate landlords in Toronto. Finally making wealthy corporations pay their fair share could hugely benefit vital City services like the TTC.

But this isn't news to anyone in the city or on Council - the levy has been actively studied by the City for 10 years, and organizations like the Labour Council and our allies have been advocating for it for even longer. While large, wealthy corporations and their lobbyists might decry the levy and try to make it controversial, it's a common tool widely used by municipalities all over the world. It's one we should see in Toronto too - and sooner rather than later.

The report repeatedly states that "should MPAC and the Province support the implementation of a commercial parking levy," staff are committed to presenting a final implementation plan. This bestows significant power on MPAC and the provincial government, perhaps unnecessarily. We recognize the provincial government has repeatedly taken powers away from the City of Toronto, and accordingly the City needs to proceed cautiously. On the other hand, staff also indicate the possibility of proceeding without MPAC. While staff point out the possibility of time and cost implications of seeking an alternative service provider, the time and cost of not proceeding at all would be far greater.

More progressive fundraising tools like the levy must be pursued to fill the widening funding gap. To that end, we urge Council not to indefinitely shelve the levy, but explore ways to continue to push it forward in a thoughtful and considered manner and pace. To walk away at this juncture because of the obstinance of one body not directly elected by Torontonians and potentially not needed to continue, would be a costly mistake for the city.

It is worth adding that another report from staff is recommending the City also walk away from the Stormwater Charge it has been investigating. While there are various rationales provided, one large piece of the rationale for its cancellation is the commercial parking levy itself, which the report seems to count on moving forward. Needless to say, cutting another source of potential revenue from the City while rationalizing it by appealing to another potentially terminally stalled program is nonsensical.

Ultimately, the levy is just one component of a solution to the city's funding needs. What is really needed, is a new deal which gives cities real democratic control over their operations and their purse.

The journey to implement the commercial parking levy in Toronto has been a long one, and the journey to win a new deal for municipalities will likely be longer still. During that time, there have been many diversions and obstacles laid in our path, and they have thankfully been overcome. As we approach the finish line, let's not allow one more hurdle to discourage us and prematurely end this important work. We encourage Council to take time and care to continue judiciously moving the levy forward.

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