

LILY CHENG

Councillor, Ward 18, Willowdale

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May 9, 2025

John Elvidge
City Clerk
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen St. W.
Toronto, ON
M5H 2N2

Re: Requesting a Fair Consultation Process Regarding the North York at the Centre Secondary Plan

Dear Mr. Elvidge,

I am submitting this Administrative Inquiry under Municipal Code Section 27-7.11 for the May 21, 2025 meeting of City Council.

A review of the North York Centre Secondary Plan is underway. As part of this review the City started to engage with the community to land on a vision to help shape the future of this neighbourhood. The engagement started in Nov 2023, with a focus on introducing the project and seeking input on existing conditions, issues, and opportunities for North York Centre.

The North York at the Centre Secondary Plan consultation has prompted a number of concerns from community members regarding the survey, consultation and overall engagement approach. Feedback indicates that the survey was perceived as overly lengthy, technical, and difficult to navigate, with limited accessibility features such as support options or the ability to revise responses- factors that may have contributed to a low completion rate. Residents also expressed that public outreach was limited, and many felt insufficiently informed to participate meaningfully. Concerns were raised about the integrity of the process, including the low number of responses and perceptions of bias toward the City's Emerging Preferred Option (EPO), which some believe does not reflect the priorities of the broader community. Alternative options, particularly Alternative #1, were viewed by some as more aligned with local values but were not given sufficient consideration.

Residents have raised questions about how the Emerging Preferred Option (EPO) was selected and by whom- whether it was the preference of the consultant (WSP), City staff, or the community. Clarification is sought on whether residents were given the opportunity to choose from multiple options and, if the EPO was presented as reflecting resident preferences, what data or methodology was used to support that conclusion.

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There is a call for greater transparency regarding the decision-making process and how public input was incorporated into the selection of the EPO. Residents called for greater involvement in the decision making process by local representatives, such as councillors, to ensure the process reflects genuine community input.

Concerns were raised about loss of livable urban conditions, inadequate infrastructure planning, and the lack of transparency regarding zoning changes, such as in the Central Finch Area.

In light of these concerns, we respectfully request extended consultation, greater transparency through consistent communication, and more inclusive engagement to ensure the process reflects the diverse voices of the community.

Since the impact of the new North York at the Centre Secondary Plan [NYCSP] will significantly increase the density of population along Yonge St and stretching much further to the east and west than our previous secondary plan, it is vital to ensure that the consultation process is fair and fulsome, with excellent communication to the public.

I am asking the following questions to ensure our consultations are genuine and not masked information sessions so that community members' ideas and concerns are woven into the future iteration of the North York at the Centre Secondary Plan.

'Emerging Preferred Option'

1. Who selected the *Emerging Preferred Option* for North York at the Centre Secondary Plan presented to residents for consultation? Was the *Emerging Preferred Option* preferred by the consultant–WSP, City staff or residents?
2. If the *Emerging Preferred Option* was identified as the preference of residents, on the basis of what data was this conclusion drawn?
3. Were residents given the opportunity to choose an *Emerging Preferred Option* from among multiple options?
4. What method was used to capture this option as the preference over other options?
5. How was the Advisory Committee engaged in formulating the EPO? What is the current buy-in of this advisory committee?

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Survey

1. How many survey responses were received?
2. What is an adequate number of survey results to demonstrate a fulsome consultation with Ward 18 constituents who will experience a doubling of their population over the next 30 years?
3. Users found the survey too long, overly technical, and not user-friendly, especially for the average citizen. Was the survey designed following established best practices?
4. Did the survey allow users to revise or revisit their responses while completing it?
5. Many users felt they lacked the necessary information to provide meaningful input. Did the survey offer clear explanations and accessible resources in plain language to help users respond effectively?
6. Many users felt insufficiently informed to provide meaningful input. Did the survey include sufficient explanations, resources in a simple language to support users to answer adequately?
7. Was there any advance notice provided about the estimated time required to complete the survey, given that it reportedly took up to two hours and may have contributed to low completion rates?
8. Was it abundantly clear to residents how they could access multilingual versions of the survey?

In-Person Consultation Meetings

1. Why was the NYCSP in-person consultation conducted in a drop-in format rather than a town hall format where all community members would have the opportunity to hear other community members' questions and staff answers in order to form a deeper and reasoned opinion on the desirability of the new NYCSP for their neighbourhood?
2. What communication strategies were implemented between Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the consultations to keep residents informed, increase their understanding of the plan, and prepare them for Phase 2?
3. What is the policy and process for receiving feedback at in-person meetings? How are the insights and learnings from conversations with constituents captured beyond sticky notes to inform part of the analysis?

Respectfully submitted,

Lily Cheng
City Councillor
Ward 18, Willowdale

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