



July 10, 2025

Councillor Paula Fletcher  
Chair, Infrastructure and Environment Committee  
City of Toronto, 100 Queen Street West  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

**Subject:** Support for IE23.4 – Establishing a Chief Congestion Officer for the City of Toronto

### Executive Summary of Key Recommendations

To ensure the Chief Congestion Officer (CCO) role delivers measurable impact, the City must:

- **Elevate the role's authority and visibility** by having it report directly to the Mayor or City Manager and empower the CCO to make binding decisions that prioritize congestion relief across all divisions.
- **Broaden the role's scope** to coordinate all public and private actors and activities that impact our transportation network and lane access, including utility work, transit operations, construction, maintenance, and curbside management.
- **Establish outcome-oriented KPIs** that assess both system-wide performance and the CCO's individual effectiveness.

Dear Councillor Fletcher,

As called for in the Toronto Region Board of Trade's [Breaking Gridlock Action Plan](#), the Board strongly emphasizes the necessity of establishing a Chief Congestion Officer (CCO) for the City of Toronto. This is a long-overdue and essential step toward addressing the congestion crisis that continues to seriously impair quality of life and damage our economic competitiveness. [Polling by Ipsos](#) found that an astonishing 53 per cent of Toronto region residents have considered moving out of the region due to traffic and congestion. This is a clear signal that public frustration has reached a breaking point and urgent action is needed.

This role must be much more than symbolic. Reducing congestion must credibly been seen to be one of the City's top priorities and this role must be treated accordingly.

As the City finalizes the scope and structure of this new role, we offer the following feedback to ensure it is positioned to deliver tangible impact.

## **Congestion Must Be Treated Like a Major Project**

The scale and impact of congestion in Toronto demands that it be approached with the same seriousness as a major infrastructure project. [According to CANCEA](#), congestion is already costing the region an estimated \$44.7 billion in lost economic and social activity each year. That cost is expected to rise sharply as regional population growth continues, with more than [500,000 new residents having arrived in the past two years](#) alone and over [3 million more projected by 2051](#). These pressures will be further intensified as Toronto prepares to host FIFA World Cup matches in 2026, placing extraordinary demand on our mobility systems and ability to function as a globally competitive city.

We are pleased that the City recognizes congestion as a cross-divisional challenge requiring coordinated action. However, to succeed, the CCO must be more than a facilitator. This key role must provide executive leadership and function as the City's project manager for a major priority project. The CCO must be empowered not just to convene or work with departments, but to make informed, strategic decisions that optimize network efficiency across the entire city. This includes having the decision-making authority to pause, sequence, or even veto activities that unreasonably compromise road function.

That being said, the staff report, which proposes this role reports into the Deputy City Manager, Infrastructure Services, significantly narrows the scope of the CCO's influence. While Infrastructure Services is a key player, it does not encompass all the divisions and agencies that affect our transportation network. To be effective, this role must operate with a clear mandate from the top with a direct reporting line to the Mayor and City Council, or at the very least to the City Manager. The Mayor should consider invoking her Strong Mayor Powers as this is one of the most consequential appointments the City can make. As we are facing economic uncertainty due to global trade disruption, the efficient movement of goods and people across our city and region is critical to our economic survival.

The success of this role will depend not only on structure, but on the calibre of leadership put in place. The individual selected must have the credentials, cross-sectoral experience, operational expertise, and professional gravitas to influence senior leaders across divisions and drive coordinated action. This person must have the ability to reasonably balance the interest of all parties, while ensuring that congestion management is driven as a city-wide priority project.

## **Close the Gaps in Scope and Oversight**

To deliver its intended outcomes, the CCO must have clear and active oversight over all activities that shape our transportation corridors. While the staff report identifies several key areas, we recommend further clarity in the following areas to ensure a comprehensive and effective mandate:



- **Utility works coordination:** While “infrastructure planning and construction” is referenced, the City must ensure the CCO is fully embedded in the end-to-end coordination of utility permitting and project scheduling across both public and private actors, including transit agencies, telecommunications providers, hydro, natural gas, and water infrastructure.
- **Curbside allocation and on-street parking:** The report refers to “curb lane use” broadly. We recommend explicitly including on-street parking, commercial loading zones, bike lanes, and curbside regulations (e.g. CaféTO) as part of the CCO’s purview.
- **Garbage collection, maintenance, and street sweeping:** These daily operations, though operational in nature, have real and cumulative impacts on the usability of our transportation corridors and should be formally included in the CCO’s scope.
- **Lane closures:** Lane closures are among the most visible and disruptive contributors to congestion. The CCO must have authority to evaluate their impacts on the broader network, minimize high-impact closures during peak hours, promote off-peak and overnight work, and encourage project bundling where possible. Steer’s report commissioned by the Board, [\*Road Blocks: Incentivizing Smarter Road Closures\*](#), highlights that unmanaged closures delay emergency services, disrupt transit and freight, and impose economic costs. Oversight of closures must be centralized and driven by a city-wide congestion management lens.

### Performance Matters – Set Clear KPIs

Establishing this role is a meaningful first step. We are encouraged to see the City commit to developing a comprehensive reporting and analytics framework, including dashboards and KPIs, to monitor road-related activities. This will be essential in holding divisions accountable and supporting a more transparent, data-driven approach to congestion management.

However, what is also needed is a set of KPIs that properly measure the effectiveness of the CCO. Defining clear performance metrics for the CCO is critical to provide policy anchors, ensure accountability and demonstrating that the role is driving measurable improvements across the system.

We recommend that the City publish a dual set of outcome-oriented KPIs.

1. **System-wide KPIs** to monitor impacts such as:
  - Improvements in travel time reliability on key corridors
  - Faster project delivery timelines due to improved coordination
  - Stakeholder satisfaction (e.g., residents, businesses, transit users, emergency services)



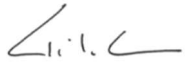
**2. Role-specific KPIs** to assess the CCO's performance in:

- Establishing and enforcing cross-divisional coordination mechanisms
- Reduction in uncoordinated or overlapping road disruptions
- Delivering consistent, timely public reporting on congestion impacts
- Adopting leading-edge solutions, particularly those that leverage technology to accelerate congestion relief

By evaluating both system outcomes and leadership effectiveness, the City can ensure that this role does not become symbolic but instead delivers real measurable results year over year.

The City has taken a commendable step in creating a CCO and has signaled its commitment to more integrated management. The next step is to ensure the role is fully empowered with decision-making authority, comprehensive scope, and measurable outcomes. We look forward to the continued collaboration with City staff and Council to ensure this role is set up for success and meaningful impact.

Sincerely,



**Giles Gherson**

President and CEO

Toronto Region Board of Trade

