TORONTO

REPORT FOR ACTION

Supplementary Report: Improving the Usability of Old City Hall to Support the Film Industry and Other Rental Uses

Date: July 28, 2026
To: City Council
From: Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management and General Manager, Economic Development & Culture
Wards: All

SUMMARY

This supplementary report responds to Economic and Community Development Committee item EC30.8, which requested the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, in consultation with the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to report directly to the July 29, 30, and 31, 2026 meeting of City Council with recommendations for necessary amendments to the City of Toronto Municipal Code to authorize the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, or their designate, to support the film industry at Old City Hall.

Old City Hall is one of Toronto's most recognizable heritage buildings and remains a highly sought-after rental location for filming, events, and other temporary uses. Over the past year, Corporate Real Estate Management, in collaboration with Economic Development and Culture, has actively supported steady interest for rentals at Old City Hall, while balancing the building's civic, operational, and heritage requirements. This includes a range of rentals and activations that have helped test concepts to inform the City's long-term vision for the site.

However, the current rental fee framework for Old City Hall limits the City’s ability to respond to opportunities for market competitiveness, or broader economic and cultural benefits. Specific concerns have been identified by stakeholders in Toronto's film sector, and echoed by members of the City's Film, Television and Digital Media Advisory Board.

To address these challenges, this report seeks authority to amend the Municipal Code to improve the usability of Old City Hall as a rental location and support the vitality of a broad range of renters, industries, and economic and community development opportunities. Specifically, this report recommends amending Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 442, Fees and Charges, Administration of, and related delegated authorities to

provide the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, or their designate, with the authority to administer waivers to fees and charges for eligible rentals at Old City Hall.

As the City of Toronto Act, 2006, does not permit the City to provide preferential financial benefits to a specific industry, the authorities sought through this report are intended to support a wide range of eligible rental opportunities at Old City Hall, rather than a single sector.

The standardized waiver framework and eligibility criteria set out in Attachment 1 establish a transparent and consistent approach to administering fee waivers based on the nature and purpose of a rental. Attachment 1 outlines pre-determined waiver percentages for three categories of renters:

- Commercial renters;
- Community Organizations, Registered Charitable, Registered Not-for-Profit Organizations; and
- City of Toronto rentals

While this review was prompted by feedback and inquiries from the film industry, the proposed framework will apply consistently across all eligible renters, ensuring a predictable and transparent process while delivering rental rates that better reflect current market conditions, public benefit considerations, and operational realities. Staff in the film office have initiated consultation with industry stakeholders on these proposed changes, and feedback received to date has been positive.

This report also recommends an administrative amendment to Chapter 213, Real Property, to update the definitions of Director and Manager, Real Estate Services to include those Director(s) and Managers(s) in the Corporate Real Estate Management Division assigned responsibility for approving and implementing real estate transactions and agreements by the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management.

Finally, this report seeks direction to review Old City Hall rental fees and bring forward any required updates to the City of Toronto municipal code to maintain market competitiveness through the 2027 budget process. This review will be led by Corporate Real Estate Management, in consultation with Economic Development and Culture, CreateTO, and key stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management and General Manager, Economic Development and Culture recommend that:

1. City Council authorize the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, or designate, to waive fees and charges for rentals and short-term uses at Old City Hall, in accordance with the Old City Hall Fees and Charges waiver criteria as set out in Attachment 1 and authorize an amendment to Chapter 442, Fees and Charges, Administration of, and any other applicable provisions of the Municipal Code.

2. City Council authorize an amendment to the definitions of Director, Real Estate Services and Manager, Real Estate Services as set out in Municipal Code Chapter 213, Real Property, to include those Director(s) and Managers(s) in the Corporate Real Estate Management Division assigned responsibility for approving and implementing real estate transactions and agreements by the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management from time to time.

3. City Council direct the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, in consultation with the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, CreateTO and other key stakeholders to review and update the Old City Hall fees and charges in Chapter 441, Fees and Charges as needed and bring forward any required updates to maintain market competitiveness, through the 2027 budget process.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Implementation of the recommendations is intended to improve the competitiveness and utilization of Old City Hall by allowing fees and charges to be waived for eligible rentals, to better align with market conditions for rentals and short-term uses. The proposed rental fee waivers will be implemented by City staff immediately upon City Council approval.

The City's approach to rental fee waivers must be applied consistently and equitably across all sectors and renters of Old City Hall. The City of Toronto Act, 2006, S.O. 2006, c. 11, Sched. A does not allow preferential benefits or incentives to be provided to a specific industry. As such, the proposed Old City Hall Fees and Charges waiver criteria apply a standardized waiver framework that is available to all renters meeting the criteria. While this blanket approach supports fairness, transparency, and consistent application of fee waivers, it may result in changes to revenue compared to the original fee application through Chapter 441, Fees and Charges. Since the activation of Old City Hall in August 2025, rental activity generated approximately $0.5 million in rental revenue.

All Old City Hall renters are required to pay 100% of the City's operating costs for each rental, in addition to the rental fee. As such, the standardized waiver framework recommended in this report will not impact the City's abilities to recover operating costs. Direct and incremental operating costs, including security, custodial services, building operations, coordination, technical support and other site-specific requirements, will continue to be recovered on a full cost recovery basis in addition to revenue from short-term uses and rentals.

The proposed waivers of 50% and greater on rental fees may reduce rental revenue on a per-rental basis. However, staff also anticipate that the standardized waiver framework will incentivize and increase rental activity at Old City Hall, which may offset or exceed the impact of applied waivers. To attract greater interest in commercial rentals at Old City Hall, staff will work across divisions to promote the venue through established and new marketing channels. This includes social media, website updates, and industry specific outreach to organizations such as Ontario Creates, the locations library, and regular industry newsletters.

Corporate Real Estate Management's 2026 Operating Budget includes $2.4 million to support Old City Hall building operations only and does not fund programming. The budget also includes $0.5 million in projected rental revenue. Activations and programming are supported through revenue from rentals and other short-term uses. Accordingly, improving the competitiveness of Old City Hall may help support the ongoing operation and activation of the building by increasing opportunities for revenue generation.

The Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, in consultation with the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, CreateTO and other key stakeholders will review the Old City Hall fees and charges in Chapter 441 and waivers in Chapter 442 and bring forward any required updates through the 2027 budget process to ensure they remain competitive and align with market conditions.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of July 14, 2026, the Economic and Community Development Committee considered Item EC30.8, Improving the Usability of Old City Hall as a Filming Location, and amended the recommendation to request that the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, in consultation with the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, report directly to City Council with recommendations for necessary amendments to the Municipal Code to authorize Corporate Real Estate Management to support the film industry at Old City Hall.
Agenda Item History - 2026.EC30.8

At its meeting of June 29, 2026, the Film, Television and Digital Media Advisory Board adopted recommendations requesting a review of fees, accessibility requirements, operational requirements, and other conditions affecting film and television productions at Old City Hall. Agenda Item History - 2026.FB10.4

COMMENTS

Old City Hall is a highly desirable rental venue. Through the City of Toronto Film, Television and Digital Media Advisory Board, industry stakeholders have raised challenges regarding the City's ability to respond efficiently to rental requests and to adapt fees and charges to changing market conditions.

Old City Hall venue rental fees were incorporated into Chapter 441, Fees and Charges, through the 2026 budget process, to align with the building becoming available for short-term rental purposes, following the completion of the move out of Provincial courts. The fees were established based on a market review conducted by Cushman & Wakefield, which assessed comparable public sector, institutional, and private venues.

City staffing fees, also established under Chapter 441, Fees and Charges are applied on a cost-recovery basis at City Council approved overtime rates. Staffing requirements for venue rental activities are determined based on the specific operational needs of each renter.

While the approved fees were established through a market review, further experience with venue rental inquiries and discussions with stakeholders have identified circumstances where the current fee structure may limit the City's competitiveness and reduce the likelihood of securing rentals. In particular, full-building rentals, prep and wrap days, and multi-day bookings can result in total rental costs that are higher than comparable market options, even where there is strong interest in using Old City Hall. These concerns have been highlighted by stakeholders in Toronto's film sector, and echoed by members of the City's Film, Television and Digital Media Advisory Board in Item EC30.8, which was considered by the Economic and Community Development Committee on July 14, 2026.

To address market competitiveness issues, and in response to direction under Item EC30.8, this report recommends that authority be granted to the Executive Director of Corporate Real Estate Management, or designate, to apply waivers in accordance with the Old City Hall Fees and Charges waivers criteria in Attachment 1.

These criteria establish a consistent and equitable approach to administering rental fee waivers based on the nature and purpose of the rental. This approach is aligned with obligations under the City of Toronto Act, 2006, which does not permit preferential benefits or incentives to be provided to a specific industry, while increasing flexibility and improving the City's ability to effectively manage the facility as a competitive rental location.

Under the proposed framework, the criteria establish predetermined waiver percentages for three renter categories:

- Commercial renters;
- Community Organizations, Registered Charitable, Registered Not-for-Profit Organizations; and
- City of Toronto rentals.

The applicable waivers are automatically applied based on the renter category. This approach results in fee waivers that more closely align with market conditions for each category.

Providing delegated authority to the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management or designate will establish clear accountability for the administration of rental fees and charges at Old City Hall and allow staff to:

- administer eligible waivers;
- coordinate operational requirements with Economic Development and Culture and other City divisions;
- better promote the continued use of Old City Hall as a rental facility through established and new marketing channels (e.g., social media, website updates, industry specific outreach), while maintaining appropriate heritage, accessibility, operational, and public safety protections; and

- test a broad range of ideas and potential uses that can inform long-term future uses of Old City Hall.

Chapter 213 Administrative Update

The proposed amendment to Chapter 213 is administrative in nature and reflects Corporate Real Estate Management's current organizational structure. Property Management & Key Assets is a new service line within Corporate Real Estate Management with responsibility for key civic assets, including Old City Hall.

This report recommended changes to Chapter 213 to amend the definitions of Director, Real Estate Services and Manager, Real Estate Services to include those Director(s) and Managers(s) in the Corporate Real Estate Management Division assigned responsibility for approving and implementing real estate transactions and agreements by the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management.

2027 Budget Process Review

Corporate Real Estate Management will review the Old City Hall fee structure as part of the 2027 budget process, in consultation with Economic Development and Culture, CreateTO and other internal stakeholders. This will provide City Council with an opportunity to consider whether the current fees remain appropriate, competitive, and aligned with the City Council direction.

Operating Cost Recovery Reductions

Operating cost recoveries can add a significant charge to the overall cost of renting Old City Hall spaces. Staff are actively examining opportunities to reduce these recoveries where appropriate.

Staffing requirements are being evaluated to determine whether the minimum number of staff for certain operational and maintenance obligations can be reduced. Custodial and Building Operator charges present an opportunity for potential reduction in costs to renters. Although these charges will vary depending on the scale and impact of rentals, staff should seek to minimize recovery costs where such reductions do not compromise the overall operations or stewardship of the property.

Security costs also comprise a significant portion of costs recovered from renters. Corporate Security is currently re-evaluating minimum security requirements based on a range of scenarios. Staff anticipate security costs can be meaningfully reduced, as compared to current charges. Renters may also be required to supply private security services to secure and protect their equipment and assets, to address rental related legislative requirements, and to safeguard staff, clients, stakeholders, and attendees.

Next Steps

Should Council approve the recommendations contained in this report, and upon adoption of the necessary bill, the approved rental fee waiver framework will be implemented by staff with immediate effect. Waivers approved in this report will not be applied retroactively.

Corporate Real Estate Management and Economic Development and Culture divisions will begin a review of current market conditions and rentals fees in chapter 441 of the Municipal Code. As part of this process, a third-party appraiser with relevant experience will be engaged, and consultations with stakeholders will begin, in order to gain feedback, guidance, and strategic input to inform the review of rental fees at Old City Hall. Any proposed changes arising from this review will be considered through the 2027 budget process to help maintain market competitiveness while ensuring alignment with the City's financial objectives.

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: City of Toronto Municipal Code 442 amendment to Delegate Authority for Old City Hall Rental Fees and Charges Waiver Criteria

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The Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, or designate, will waive fees and charges for rentals and short-term uses at Old City Hall, in accordance with the Old City Hall Fees and Charges waiver criteria set out below. The criteria establish pre-set waiver percentages for three categories of renters, generally being Commercial renters, Community and Charitable renters, and rentals for City of Toronto uses. The waivers under each category are applied automatically. The result is waived fees that are closer to the market condition for each renter category.

Category A: Commercial Rental Waiver
Where a commercial renter is approved to rent Old City Hall rental space(s) identified in Chapter 441, Fees and Charges, Schedule 11 for a minimum continuous period of eight (8) hours up to a full Rental Day, the following fee waivers will apply:

- The initial eight (8) hour rental period within the applicable Rental Day will be subject to a fifty percent (50%) waiver of the applicable rental fees.
- Following the initial eight (8) hour rental period, all subsequent consecutive hours remaining within the same Rental Day will be subject to a one hundred percent (100%) waiver of the applicable rental fees.
- Where a Rental Day has been identified and approved as a load-in day immediately preceding approved rental activity, or a load-out day immediately following approved rental activity, a waiver of seventy-five percent (75%) will be applied.
- For greater certainty, a Rental Day shall mean a standard calendar day commencing at 12:00 a.m. and ending at 11:59 p.m., consisting of three (3) consecutive eight (8) hour periods.

Or, Category B: Community Organizations, Registered Charities, Registered Not-for-Profit Organizations Rental Waiver
Where a community organization, registered charity, or incorporated not-for-profit renter is approved to rent Old City Hall rental space(s) identified in Chapter 441, Fees and Charges, Schedule 11 for a minimum continuous period of eight (8) hours up to a full Rental Day, the following fee waivers will apply:

- The initial eight (8) hour rental period within the applicable Rental Day will be subject to a seventy-five percent (75%) waiver of the applicable rental fees.
- Following the initial eight (8) hour rental period, all subsequent consecutive hours remaining within the same Rental Day will be subject to a one hundred percent (100%) waiver of the applicable rental fees.

Or, Category C: City of Toronto Use Rental Waiver
Where a City of Toronto division, agency, board, commission, or elected official renter is approved to rent Old City Hall rental space(s) identified in Chapter 441, Fees and Charges, Schedule 11 for a minimum continuous period of eight (8) hours up to a full Rental Day, the following fee waivers will apply:

- Where the event is not freely open to the public to attend or participate, the initial eight (8) hour rental period within the applicable Rental Day will be subject to a seventy-five percent (75%) waiver of the applicable rental fees.

- Where the event is freely open to the public to attend or participate, the initial eight (8) hour rental period within the applicable Rental Day will be subject to a one hundred percent (100%) waiver of the applicable rental fees.
- Following the initial eight (8) hour rental period, all subsequent consecutive hours remaining within the same Rental Day will be subject to a one hundred percent (100%) waiver of the applicable rental fees.

Terms & Conditions

- Waivers do not constitute an entitlement. Approval may only be granted where the request aligns with the established criteria, is supported by appropriate documentation, and falls within the delegated authority limits set out in this policy. The City reserves the right to request additional supporting information and documents as needed.