

Report from the Municipal Autonomy and Effective Local Governance Program Advisory Body

Date: July 7, 2026
To: Executive Committee
From: City Manager
Wards: All

SUMMARY

In February 2025, City Council requested the City Manager to establish a program advisory body on municipal autonomy and effective local governance. The Municipal Autonomy and Effective Local Governance Program Advisory Body (MAPAB) met six times between 2025 and May 2026, with a mandate to provide advice on how to achieve greater municipal autonomy and effective local governance for the City of Toronto and recommendations for the establishment of a city charter for Toronto.

The MAPAB submitted a final report with their research, analysis and recommendations to the City Manager's Office on May 29, 2026. In alignment with the MAPAB's terms of reference, the City Manager is transmitting the final report of the MAPAB to the Executive Committee for consideration. The MAPAB's report is provided as Attachment 1 to this report. In reference to Part 3 of the MAPAB's report, City staff note that the terms of reference for the MAPAB did not include a mandate to provide legal advice to the City but included a consideration of the legislative requirements and constitutional considerations for a city charter. As such, Part 3 is informational in nature and should not be interpreted as constituting legal advice to the City of Toronto.

To support staff's assessment and review of the MAPAB's report, the City Manager recommends that the Executive Committee direct the City Manager, in consultation with the City Solicitor, to report back to the Executive Committee in Q3 2027 with an analysis of the findings and recommendations outlined in the report from the Municipal Autonomy and Effective Local Governance Program Advisory Body included as Attachment 1 to this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Manager recommends that:

1. Executive Committee direct the City Manager, in consultation with the City Solicitor, to report back to the Executive Committee in Q3 2027 with an analysis of the findings and recommendations outlined in the report from the Municipal Autonomy and Effective Local Governance Program Advisory Body included as Attachment 1 to this report.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts arising from this report.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on February 5, 2025, City Council requested the City Manager to establish a program advisory body on municipal autonomy and effective local governance, and to ensure that the membership of the advisory body includes representation from all four Community Council Districts.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.EX20.13>

At its meeting on April 17 and 18, 2024, City Council received the City Manager's report responding to its request for options, methods and budget implications of a public information strategy that could be used to inform the public about recognizing and enshrining City of Toronto authorities within the Canadian Constitution and/or a public consultation strategy that would seek public input on where the City of Toronto should have more power or authorities. Council also authorized the public release of Confidential Attachment 1 to the supplementary report from the City Solicitor on the legal mechanism for amending the Constitution to recognize and enshrine certain City of Toronto authorities.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.EX13.9>

At its meeting on June 14 and 15, 2023, City Council directed the City Manager to report to City Council by the end of 2023 with a proposal to provide the public with information on recognizing and enshrining City of Toronto authorities within the Canadian Constitution, and a public engagement proposal to seek public input on which powers City Council should have more control over such as planning, taxation, and elections that directly affect the City's ability to deliver services to its residents. City Council also directed the City Solicitor to report to City Council by the end of 2023 on the legal mechanism for making an amendment to the Canadian Constitution that would recognize and enshrine certain City of Toronto authorities.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.MM7.23>

At its meeting on November 26 and 27, 2019, City Council requested the City Manager to report to the Executive Committee in the second quarter of 2020 on options for the City of Toronto to have additional autonomy from senior levels of government, including a City Charter protected through a single-province constitutional amendment, that provides authority over "municipal issues".

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2019.MM12.12>

COMMENTS

Municipal Autonomy and Effective Local Governance Program Advisory Body

In February 2025, City Council requested the City Manager to establish a program advisory body on municipal autonomy and effective local governance. The terms of reference for the Municipal Autonomy and Effective Local Governance Program Advisory Body (MAPAB) were developed in alignment with Council's direction and to support advice to the City on key matters related to municipal autonomy and effective local governance for Toronto.

In alignment with the MAPAB's terms of reference, the City Manager is transmitting the final report of the MAPAB to the Executive Committee for consideration. The MAPAB's report is provided as Attachment 1 to this report. The MAPAB's terms of reference are also included as Attachment 2 to this report.

Mandate

As outlined in the terms of reference, the mandate of the MAPAB is to provide advice to the City Manager and City Council on how to achieve greater municipal autonomy and effective local governance for the City of Toronto and recommendations for the establishment of a city charter for Toronto, including:

- Outlining the potential sharing and/or exclusive jurisdiction between the City and other levels of government;
- Considering the legislative requirements and constitutional considerations for a city charter;
- Identifying opportunities to establish broad, long-term, stable, City-controlled revenue sources that will enhance the City's financial position and autonomy; and
- Other potential recommendations related to a city charter and greater municipal autonomy.

Membership

The City Manager's Office undertook a public recruitment process to identify up to 12 members, including:

- 4 members of the public representing geographic parts of the City (one each who lives in the Community Council Districts of Scarborough, North York, Etobicoke/York and Toronto/East York)

- 2 representatives of the Charter City Toronto organization
- 4 to 6 subject matter experts in municipal finance, governance, constitutional law, public engagement, Indigenous knowledge and expertise or other relevant fields

In alignment with the terms of reference, 11 members of the public were appointed as members to the MAPAB by the City Manager. A full list of MAPAB members is outlined in the MAPAB's final report included as Attachment 1 to this report.

Meetings

The MAPAB met six times between late 2025 and May 2026. Additionally, the MAPAB engaged in discussions through ad-hoc working groups between meetings.

Report from the Municipal Autonomy and Effective Local Governance Program Advisory Body

The MAPAB submitted a final report to the City Manager's Office on May 29, 2026. The MAPAB's report is organized in four parts:

- Part 1: Defining the Problem
- Part 2: Current State of Municipal Autonomy
- Part 3: Legal Issues
- Part 4: A Democratic Path Forward: Public Participation and Charter Stewardship

In reference to Part 3 of the MAPAB's report, City staff note that the terms of reference for the MAPAB did not include a mandate to provide legal advice to the City but included a consideration of the legislative requirements and constitutional considerations for a city charter. As such, Part 3 is informational in nature and should not be interpreted as constituting legal advice to the City of Toronto. Full details on the MAPAB's research, analysis and recommendations can be found in the MAPAB's report included as Attachment 1 to this report.

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SIGNATURE

Paul Johnson
City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Report from the Municipal Autonomy and Effective Local Governance Program Advisory Body

Attachment 2: Terms of Reference for the Municipal Autonomy and Effective Local Governance Program Advisory Body