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UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

A Practical Blueprint for Change

Final Report of the City Hall Task Force

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Executive Summary

In Fall 2016, the University of Toronto's School of Public Policy and Governance assembled a group of current or former politicians, public servants, academics, journalists, and civic leaders, balancing a range of political perspectives, to form a City Hall Task Force to improve City Council's core decision-making processes and procedures.

This report summarizes the views expressed by Task Force members during four public meetings hosted by the School between November 2016 and April 2017, and presents the collective advice and recommendations of the group. The Task Force's work marks the first general review of Toronto governance in over a decade.

Overall, the Task Force concluded that there is no need to completely overhaul the system. Rather, what is required is sensible, incremental reform centred around six key priorities.

1. SET STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Mayor plays a lead role setting the Council agenda, but the budget and many city-wide initiatives are often held up by local interests. The City needs a mechanism to encourage strategic, long-term decision making focused on the big picture, not ward-level grandstanding.

2. MONITOR THE ABCS

Local agencies, boards, corporations, and commissions (ABCs) make up a large and growing share of the city budget. Yet these bodies are not subject to the same level of Council oversight as general city departments. ABCs should be expected — and where warranted, compelled — to be more open, accessible, transparent, participatory, and accountable.

3. DELEGATE AUTHORITY

Too many matters make it to full Council for debate. Final decision-making authority on certain items should be delegated — the most common suggestion, to Community Councils — so that Council can properly debate the most important issues that affect the city as a whole.

4. STREAMLINE DEBATE

City Council meetings frequently devolve into political theatre, which undermines public confidence. Items are too often amended "on-the-fly" without staff analysis, leading to hasty decisions and wasted time and resources. The rules of debate and voting procedures should be amended to encourage more intelligent deliberation.

MEMBERS OF THE TASK FORCE

Adrienne Batra
Editor-in-Chief of the *Toronto Sun* and former Press Secretary to Mayor Rob Ford

Shirley Hoy
Former City Manager (2001- 2008)

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Former City Councillor (2006-2014) and Deputy Speaker

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5. ENGAGE THE PUBLIC

The City's primary mechanisms for public engagement — formal deputations to committee, budget consultations, and public consultations — need to be rethought, with a focus on encouraging proactive participation from a wider group of residents and stakeholders, and better integrating public input into staff reports and Council debates.

6. SHARE INFORMATION

As a matter of transparency and accountability, the City should adopt enhanced information practices in the spirit of "open government." The City should share more timely and useful data, both among city staff and with members of the public, to improve service delivery and stimulate more informed decision making.

To address these concerns, the Task Force proposed 14 recommendations (summarized in the following section), which reflect two core principles at the heart of the group's deliberations: that City Council must strive, first and foremost, to act strategically and focus on city-wide problems, and second, behave in a more accountable, transparent, and participatory manner.

City Council can act on these recommendations quickly, without provincial intervention, using powers the City already enjoys. Some reforms will require leadership from the Mayor, others changes to the Municipal Code; the path to implementation varies. But fundamentally, each recommendation is politically realistic, capable of drawing support from a diverse group of Council members.

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Summary of Recommendations

SET STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

RECOMMENDATION 1: ANNUAL MAYOR'S ADDRESS

The Mayor should deliver an annual Mayor's Address to Council in early Spring that lays out his or her strategic priorities and public commitments for the coming year and remaining term of Council.

RECOMMENDATION 2: START OF TERM BUDGET CONSULTATIONS

At the start of every Council term following an election, City staff should conduct large-scale public consultations on the City's long-term service priorities to confirm Council's strategic direction for the four-year term.

RECOMMENDATION 3: NEW BUDGET SEQUENCE

The preliminary budget should be presented to the Mayor and Executive Committee first, then referred to Budget Committee, to ensure consistency between the Mayor's public priorities, as well as start of term budget consultations, and the final budget presented to Council.

RECOMMENDATION 4: REQUIRE FINANCIAL OFFSETS

Any motion (or amendment) tabled at Council that generates a financial impact, but does not identify a specific in-year offset, should be automatically referred to Budget Committee in order to ensure that Council decisions are consistent with previously adopted financial plans.

MONITOR THE ABCS

RECOMMENDATION 5: ROLLING ABC REVIEW

City staff should conduct an annual, rolling review of local agencies, boards, corporations, and commissions to ensure that each organization's operations are aligned with the City's strategic priorities.

DELEGATE AUTHORITY

RECOMMENDATION 6: ENHANCED COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Council should delegate further responsibility and decision-making authority to Community Councils so that City Council can focus on city-wide priorities, and direct city staff to identify specific opportunities for delegation that could be in place by the start of the next Council term.

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STREAMLINE DEBATE

RECOMMENDATION 7: STAFF "QUESTION PERIOD"

Councillors' questions to staff should be restricted to a single "question period" at the beginning of each Council session.

RECOMMENDATION 8: CAP MEETING TIMES

The length of Council meetings should be capped at 12 total hours per day (including breaks and interruptions).

RECOMMENDATION 9: ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS

Routine submissions to Council, such as public petitions, requests to hold agenda items, and declarations of conflict should be submitted electronically in advance of Council meetings.

ENGAGE THE PUBLIC

RECOMMENDATION 10: NEW DEPUTATION MODEL

Council should create a more welcoming atmosphere for deputations, including increased information for newcomers, dedicated deputation guides, and posted speaking schedules.

RECOMMENDATION 11: "CITIZEN SUMMARIES"

Staff reports should include plain language materials that explain the context and key issues for debate for a general audience.

SHARE INFORMATION

RECOMMENDATION 12: SHARED DATA STRATEGY

City Council should approve and prioritize a "shared data" strategy concurrent with its Open Data Policy.

RECOMMENDATION 13: OFFICE OF DATA ANALYTICS

The City Manager should create an Office of Data Analytics to pursue pilot projects that demonstrate the benefits of shared data.

RECOMMENDATION 14: SYNCHRONIZED DATA RELEASES

City staff should better synchronize data releases in advance of public consultations or deputations.

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Preface: About The Task Force
A Letter from the Organizers

Ten years have passed since the City of Toronto Act came into effect, in January 2007. Over this time, a narrative has emerged about governance in the newly empowered city. Media reports routinely describe City Council meetings as "dysfunctional," some descending into "chaos."[1]

Headlines, no doubt, are often exaggerated. But if we compare the processes and outcomes of debates at Toronto City Hall to those in other cities, the basic sentiment is valid. It is not a stretch to say, in the words of Mayor John Tory, that parts of the system are "badly broken."[2]

With this in mind, we assembled a group of current or former politicians, public servants, academics, journalists, and civic leaders to form a Task Force to Improve Deliberation and Decision Making at Toronto City Hall — the City Hall Task Force, for short.

Collectively, the group has decades of experience working in, or closely studying, City Hall and offers a unique perspective on how Toronto is governed, and how the system can be improved.

The group is also deliberately independent, convened without any official direction, support, or endorsement from the City, whether from the Mayor's Office, City Council, or City staff.

We have, in a sense, "tasked" ourselves with the challenge of rethinking local governance practices in Toronto, motivated by the reality that City Council is unlikely to act unless proposals for change are distinct from any particular political agenda.

Our goal for the Task Force was deceptively simple: to propose reforms that could improve the quality of decision making at City Hall. All options were on the table, with one important restriction: the Task Force could only propose reforms that City Council could accomplish on its own, without provincial intervention or legislative changes, using powers the City already enjoys.

All too often, debates over local governance in Toronto descend into diatribes against provincial meddling and control. Meanwhile, the shortcomings of the city's own decision- making processes go ignored. If City Council wishes to be treated as a "mature" level of government, it must first demonstrate a capacity for introspection and self-improvement.

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The Task Force debated the prospects for governance reform over the course of four public meetings hosted by the School of Public Policy and Governance between November 2016 and April 2017. Members identified problems in need of repair, and considered alternative approaches to solving these problems, landing on a final package of recommendations.

Ultimately, the group's conclusions may not represent the perspectives of all Torontonians. What we strived for, instead, is a balance of views based on each member's professional expertise and first-hand experience. The result is a practical blueprint for change, a starting point to make deliberation and decision making in Toronto more effective, more efficient, more transparent, and more inclusive.

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Brian F. Kelcey
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Introduction

Across Canada and around the world, public confidence in democratic institutions is in decline. More and more, citizens are worried that their governments are unable to solve urgent problems, that their leaders cannot match rhetoric with results, that their representatives seem out of touch. Torontonians are no different.

The City Hall Task Force reflects the growing frustrations of many Torontonians that their government is not working as well as it could. At a time when legislatures across Canada are reforming long-standing traditions to make themselves more accessible, responsive, and effectual, Council has stood still.

> *Sitting through one meeting and watching how much it damages both our productivity and our reputation because people see us spending an hour to get the agenda agreed upon and spending hours debating things that should either be dealt with somewhere else where there is not 45 people sitting here and all these officials… I would like to initiate some sort of an exercise to review with you, and its our exercise together, how this all kind of works because it is not working, it is not working."*
>
> — **Mayor John Tory,** *February 12, 2015* [3]

Tellingly, Council has made only three serious efforts to reconsider its own governance in the last twenty years. Every effort since has been greeted with suspicion by one political faction or another. It does not have to be this way.

City Council has all the authority it needs to hold meetings that are shorter, more productive, and more decisive, in a system that is more open and welcoming to the public at large. What it needs is a push, and a plan of action.

The Task Force was convened to help Council find common ground toward these ends. Our recommendations have been crafted to garner support from a broad group of Council members from across the political spectrum.

Toronto's city councillors are widely admired for their commitment to their communities, and respected for the diversity of opinions they represent. We offer councillors a chance to build on these virtues and extend their democratic contributions.

Objectives

Improving governance and decision making at Toronto City Hall requires focusing on process, thinking about "what public decision-makers, administrators, and institutions *do*: how open and transparent they are to the public and to organized stakeholders, how they learn and make choices, and how efficiently they make decisions and produce results."[4]

Is decision making at City Hall inclusive? Are city councillors accountable for their decisions? Are these decisions informed by proper evidence, and made without unnecessary delays? These are the types of questions that drove the Task Force's deliberations.

Determining the appropriateness of a specific zoning decision, the technical merits of the latest transit plan, or the service impacts of a poverty reduction strategy is important work, but not of central concern here. Instead, the Task Force investigated both the formal and informal rules that govern how policy

decisions are made and that encourage (or discourage) desirable behaviour at City Council.

The explicit aim of the Task Force was to come up with practical reforms to improve the quality of deliberations and decision making at City Hall. But throughout the group's conversations, larger goals emerged: to foster more intelligent and constructive debate about city-wide issues, to help residents feel respected and heard, and ultimately to improve the public's confidence in their system of local government.

Scope

This report marks the first general review of city governance in Toronto in at least a decade (see sidebar).

Unlike past studies, which assessed the pros and cons of alternative governance structures, including the delegation of new legal and fiscal powers by the province, this report deals only with governance reforms that City Council can institute on its own, without changes to provincial legislation. This focus is intentional, and signals a consensus within the group that there is no need to completely overhaul the system and start from scratch. Rather, what is required is sensible, incremental reform.

This begs the question: what *can* Council do on its own? Despite the persistent

impression that Toronto, like all other Canadian cities, is subservient to its provincial master — a "creature of the province," as the cliché goes — the City in fact enjoys remarkable authority to re-shape its core governance structures and decision-making processes.

For example, Council has near complete authority to: alter the composition and structure of Council and council committees; delegate decision-making authority to committees or local boards; define its own procedures and debate rules; and design the public deputation process and other consultation mechanisms.

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All in all, only four types of reform are prohibited based on existing rules. First, Council cannot create any new forms of taxes or revenue tools.[5] Second, it cannot initiate a "major" municipal restructuring, such as de-amalgamating or re-establishing a two-tier government akin to the former Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto.[6] Third, it cannot establish a municipal party system.[7] Fourth, it cannot institute electoral term limits.[8]

Changes along these lines would require provincial intervention, in the form of legislative amendments or ministerial approval, and thus were not considered by the Task Force. But nearly all other potential reforms are entirely within Council's authority.

In short, if City Council decides it is time for reform, very little would stand in its way.

some of Advisory Panel's recommendations were adopted, among them modest increases in the Mayor's authority and the creation of an Executive Committee.

Council's Formal Powers

The full legislative framework that defines the extent of Council's formal powers includes a variety of provincial statutes, including the *Planning Act*, the *Police Services Act*, and the *Municipal Elections Act*.

Undoubtedly, the most important piece of legislation is the *City of Toronto Act*, which recognizes that City Council must be able to: (a) "determine the appropriate structure for governing the City," and (b) "ensure that the City is accountable to the public and that the process for making decisions is transparent."[9]

The Act places few restrictions on Council to reform its core decision-making processes. For example, Sections 128 and 135 open the door to completely new governance models, including the complete dissolution of the ward system or the establishment of a separate legislative body elected at-large, similar to the former City of Toronto Board of Control, which was abolished in the late 1960s.

Neither of these reforms were thoroughly considered by the Task Force; members did not express strong views as to their potential merits or drawbacks. But they demonstrate the surprising degree of control City Council has at its disposal.

Many of the powers set out in the *City of Toronto Act* are entrenched, and expanded upon, in the City's Municipal Code, a compilation of over a hundred procedural and administrative by-laws.

Chapter 27 of the Code, which deals specifically with "Council Procedures," is particularly important for the purposes of the Task Force. It clarifies that nearly all procedural rules can be modified, refined, abolished, or re-engineered at the discretion of City Council.

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What Needs to Change?

In the lead-up to the Task Force's first meeting in November 2016, two online surveys were conducted — one addressed to targeted stakeholder groups, another open to the public — to solicit the opinions of individuals who work and do business at City Hall, as well as general residents.

A total of 590 invitations were sent out to city councillors and their political staff, senior public servants, lobbyists, journalists, and representatives from business improvement areas (BIAs); 101 individuals responded (17% response rate). An additional 52 members of the public completed an identical, yet anonymous, survey posted on the Task Force project website, producing a total of 153 survey responses.

The sample cannot be taken as representative, and results should not be considered scientific. Nevertheless, our findings illustrate the general sentiment shared by members of the Task Force that City Council is not functioning as well as it could.

FIGURE 1. SURVEY RESULTS

a) Based on your experience, how _____ is City Council? (average score, 0-10)
b) Overall, how would you rate the quality of deliberation and decision making at City Hall? (average score, 0-10)

Legend:
- General Public/Anonymous (n=52)
- City Councillors & Staff (n=31)
- Lobbyists (n=27)
- Civil Servants (n=22)
- Business Improvement Areas (n=19)
- Journalists (n=2)
- All Respondents (n=153)

Categories: Effective, Efficient, Open, Inclusive, Respectful, Orderly, Overall

First, survey respondents were asked to rank the quality of deliberation and decision making at City Hall, on a scale from 0-10, along seven dimensions: effectiveness, efficiency, openness, inclusiveness, respectfulness, orderliness, and overall quality (summarized in Figure 1).

Among all respondents, the average score for overall quality was 4.6 out of 10, with the highest average score reported by BIAs (5.8), and the lowest by journalists (3.0). In general, members of the general public were more critical, while city councillors, political staff, and public servants were less critical in their impressions of City Hall.

The highest average score across all groups (6.2 out of 10) pertained to openness; there appears to be general agreement that City Council is relatively open and transparent. The lowest average score among all groups (4.1 out of 10) concerned efficiency; there is a shared perception across all groups that City Council does not operate in a particularly efficient manner.

The remaining criteria produced considerable variation in responses across different groups. Of particular note, city councillors and political staff reported above average scores for effectiveness, whereas the general public and journalists reported below average scores, indicating a potential divergence of opinion between "insiders" and "outsiders."

The second portion of the survey presented three open-ended questions:

What does City Council do well? What does City Council do poorly? And what changes would you recommend to improve City Council?

Not surprisingly, the answers were diverse and colourful. Some praised City Hall as a "fishbowl" where very few decisions are made in private. Others commended the dedication and professionalism of city staff, and particularly the Clerk's Office for their commitment to public access and information sharing. As one enthusiastic respondent put it, "Toronto City Council has the best, most accessible website of any municipal body I have ever seen."

The majority of comments, however, were far less flattering. Multiple respondents reported that Council "regularly acts without full information," "lacks fiscal maturity and responsibility," "focuses on ward issues versus city-wide issues," shows "little discipline in determining what items are urgent," gets "bogged down on minor issues," and is "overwhelmed by minutiae."

Decision making was described as "cumbersome, lengthy, inefficient, and generally risk averse." Meetings are "consumed with repetitive questions," "grandstanding," and "pontificating." "Councillors feel the need to speak at length on every topic" (this, from a councillor); many speak "just to be heard," are "generally rude," "disrespectful and adversarial to City staff," "don't read the reports," and "have clearly made up their minds before anyone has opened their mouth."

Key Concerns

Many of the frustrations expressed in survey responses were echoed during the Task Force's deliberations. But overall, a consensus emerged that City Council is not beyond repair. Indeed, the group raised many examples of areas where Council functions effectively.

That said, the group also pointed out many practices that warrant thoughtful reform and improvement. Drawing on survey results and their own professional experiences, the Task Force identified six key concerns that require concerted action to improve the quality of debate and decision making at City Hall.

Below, we elaborate on each topic and summarize discussions held by the group. Detailed recommendations are listed in the following chapter.

1. SET STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

City Council spends a considerable amount of time dealing with ward- and neighbourhood-level issues that often distract from, or in the worst cases conflict with, city-wide priorities. The City needs a mechanism to encourage strategic, long-term decision making focused on the big picture, not ward-level grandstanding.

The Task Force's deliberations concentrated on the limited role and authority of the Mayor, and the often-parochial nature of the city budget process.

As the only member of Council elected at-large, Torontonians look to the Mayor for leadership. It is thus reasonable to consider whether the Mayor's authority and responsibilities should be strengthened to match public expectations and ensure that Council remain focused on city-wide concerns and long-term priorities.

This is a long-standing debate, last raised in Toronto in 2005-06, when the *City of Toronto Act* was amended to allow the creation of an Executive Committee comprised of members appointed by the Mayor.

The Task Force considered the merits of strengthening the Mayor's authority

in order to make his or her long-term priorities clearer and offer more consistent leadership. In the end, however, the Task Force agreed not to recommend any formal alteration to the Mayor's existing powers.

There was no consensus among the group on the value of strengthening the Mayor's authority relative to council. The Task Force agreed that councillors serve an important check on the Mayor's authority and help keep Council responsive to local needs.

That said, the Task Force concluded that the Mayor's executive authority should be incrementally enhanced to recognize the importance of the Mayor's role in setting city-wide priorities and strategic direction — a role most apparent during the budget process.

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"STRONG" VS. "WEAK" MAYORS

Toronto is the largest city in North America without a "strong-mayor" system.

Although the Mayor appoints an Executive Committee, comprised of the chairs of council's standing committees, and may designate one or two "key items" for debate at the beginning of a given Council meeting, ultimately, the Mayor is just one vote among forty-five.

By law, the Mayor has very few formal powers to influence the will of council, and instead must rely on powers of persuasion, such as negotiation skills and personal charisma, to drive his or her agenda.

What is often overlooked, however, is that mayoral authority is exercised along not one but two different dimensions: a Mayor's power relative to Council, and a Mayor's power as chief executive (Figure 2).

The tendency in large Canadian cities, such as Vancouver, Montreal, Ottawa, and Winnipeg has been to increase the Mayor's authority relative to Council, as opposed to increasing his or her authority to act as the City's chief executive.

An empowered chief executive, however, could give clearer direction to the public service regarding the development of policy proposals and budget priorities, without diluting Council's oversight authority.

FIGURE 2. "STRONG" VS. "WEAK" MAYORS.

POWER RELATIVE TO COUNCIL

Mayor is merely chair of Council, chosen by Council (Lord Mayor system in smaller UK cities)

Mayor serves as Council chair and City spokesperson on policy issues (Mississauga, Brampton)

Mayor appoints Executive Committee and/or committee chairs, and chairs Executive Committee (Toronto, Ottawa)

Mayor has extra vote or veto power — e.g. "special item" authority (Montreal boroughs)

Mayor has power to form a cabinet, with incentives to operate Council as a quasi-party system (Winnipeg)

WEAK

STRONG

POWER AS CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Mayor is merely "first among equals," a member of city or regional council without any executive authority (Liverpool)

Mayor is nominal Chief Executive, but all effective executive authority flows through City Council and City Manager/Chief Administrative Officer (Toronto)

Mayor has enhanced proposal authority — e.g., works with City Manager and departments to develop budget proposals (Winnipeg)

Mayor has authority to appoint, terminate, or suspend City Manager (Vancouver)

Mayor nominates senior public servants while remaining a member or chair of Council (Chicago)

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Unlike the budget process at other levels of government, the City's budget is announced by city staff, not politicians. Every year, the City Manager presents a preliminary budget (previously referred to as a "staff recommended" budget) to Budget Committee sometime in early Fall following general guidelines from the Mayor and Council.

The public is then asked to comment on these staff proposals through various public meetings, as well as deputations to Budget Committee. Staff then take these comments, refine their original proposals, and submit a "final" recommended budget to the Budget Committee a few months later. The budget then proceeds to Executive Committee and, eventually, full Council for approval.

Although the City Manager and senior staff work closely with the Mayor's Office to develop its preliminary report, the Mayor exerts little direct control over the budget process. The Mayor drafts a mandate letter and gives direction to staff in the form of targets — for example, as we've seen in recent years, a property tax hike in line with inflation, or across-the-board service reductions or efficiency goals — but ultimately, City Council can decide to direct staff to follow different priorities.

The result, as one Task Force member colourfully described it, is "whiplash policy" and "hit-and-run amendments," where councillors introduce (and often convince enough fellow councillors to approve) hastily conceived motions without adequate time or any process to solicit advice on their short- or long-term financial impacts.

On occasion, this leads to chaotic scenes whereby last-minute amendments on the Council floor undo months of staff analysis and public consultation. In one extreme case, witnessed at the most recent special Council meeting on the 2017 budget, a "rogue" amendment can even tip the budget into momentary deficit, sending staff scrambling to come up with new solutions.

To remedy this problem, the Task Force considered a proposal for a "Mayor's Budget" through which the Mayor could formally direct the drafting of the proposed budget, codifying the informal signalling of budget priorities that already takes place between the Mayor's Office, staff, and the chair of the Budget Committee.

While some members strongly supported the idea, others specifically rejected it, favouring the preservation of the existing approach. The group concluded that the budget should remain subject to full debate and approval by Council, but that there are considerable opportunities for the Mayor to set out his or her key priorities with respect to the City's Strategic Plan and long-term fiscal plan, as well as the operating and capital budgets, earlier on in the process.

2. MONITOR THE ABCS

Local agencies, boards, corporations and commissions are semi-autonomous authorities, with limited mandates and powers, that perform specific functions or deliver services on behalf of the City, yet are not subject to the same level of Council oversight as City programs and departments.

The City of Toronto includes a total of 129 different ABCs, ranging from billion-dollar enterprises, such as Toronto Hydro and the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), to service agencies, such as the Toronto Parking Authority and the Toronto Public Library Board, to small-scale, community groups that manage arenas and community centres.

City Council rarely has direct authority to manage these organizations' internal operations, and their governance structures are manifold. Providing consistent oversight is thus an enormous challenge.

Some ABCs, such as the Police Services Board or the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), operate within their own legal and governance structure influenced by internal policies, provincial law, and municipal policy. Some, such as business improvement areas (BIAs), are collections of private or semi-private organizations.

The Task Force unanimously agreed that every ABC should be subject to greater scrutiny and oversight by Council. ABCs should be expected — and where warranted, compelled — to be more open, accessible, transparent, participatory, and accountable.

However, a one-size fits all solution to governing the ABCs is impractical given the diversity of organizations involved. Major structural reforms, such as mergers or reorganization, and other sweeping changes, such as redesigning the public appointment process or the basic composition of local boards, would raise complicated political and legal challenges. Moreover, specific concerns regarding mission creep, financial reporting, and service results apply only to certain bodies.

The group concluded that a more pragmatic approach would be to establish a cyclical review program that allows for case-by-case evaluation methods, as opposed to leaving it up to the discretion of Council or council committees to initiate reviews on an *ad hoc* basis.

"Council has to step back and say, what is the key shareholder direction for all our ABCs?" — **Task Force member**

3. DELEGATE AUTHORITY

Council decision making is overly centralized. Too many matters make it to full Council for debate; items that should reasonably be considered as local matters, which have only minimal impact on the residents and business in other parts of the city, are routinely debated and voted on by City Council as a whole.

Tree removals, parking pads, liquor licences, bike lanes, construction permits, traffic signals, road alterations, heritage designations, community gardens, farmers markets, improvements to local community centres, local environmental assessments — the list of neighbourhood concerns that routinely bog down the Council agenda and distract councillors from more important city-wide priorities seems to grow longer every meeting.[10]

The Task Force agreed that Council's agenda should be pared down, and final decision-making authority delegated — the most common suggestion, to Community Councils — so that Council can properly debate the most important issues that affect the city as a whole.

Currently, the Municipal Code grants Community Councils authority to make final decisions on a relatively small set of local issues, such as exemptions to fence and noise by-laws, and permits for café and restaurant patios and street food

vendors. Many of these items, however, creep back onto the Council agenda for another round of debate.

The Task Force considered the potential benefits of redesigning Community Councils to serve a more useful purpose, not only to rationalize decision-making responsibilities between Council and its committees, but also to serve as a robust mechanism for community feedback that could monitor service standards and report to City Council on how well community needs are being met.

After reviewing experiences in New York, Los Angeles, Winnipeg, Halifax, and Montreal, the group proposed a "made-in-Toronto" approach that delegates further power to Community Councils while retaining Council's ultimate authority to ensure that local preferences do not undermine city-wide interests.

"The list of neighbourhood concerns that routinely bog down the Council agenda and distract councillors from more important city-wide priorities seems to grow longer every meeting."

4. STREAMLINE DEBATE

A first-time visitor to City Hall would likely be surprised by what they see at a City Council meeting: councillors roaming the floor seemingly inattentive to their colleagues' speeches; hours spent dealing with procedural minutiae; aggressive questions of public servants; items amended "on-the-fly" without review; and an occasional shouting match for good measure.

Some of this behaviour serves a useful purpose. Now and then a bit of gamesmanship is necessary to gather votes and push important agenda items forward. In fact, several members of the Task Force noted that certain aspects of Council's "messiness" may actually be a sign of a robust democracy.

But generally speaking, the group agreed that the grandstanding and political antics that take place at Council often lead to hasty decisions and wasted time and resources. Worse, on a cumulative basis, they also begin to tarnish the collective reputation of Council, and diminish the public's confidence in its elected representatives.

Toronto City Council meets between ten to twelve times a year, debates for hundreds of hours, and considers thousands of motions and reports (see sidebar). Countless more items are considered at the committee level, in standing committees, special committees, and Community Councils. Council meetings are long, often stretching late into the night.

All told, the volume of work is overwhelming, even for the most organized and methodical councillor. The strain on city staff, especially the City Clerk

How City Council Spends Its Time

The Manning Centre recently published an quantitative summary of how Toronto City Council spends its time, based on data compiled from official minutes, agendas, and voting records. It concluded that Toronto City Council "goes through substantially more business [at the Council level] and takes longer per item" than other large Canadian cities, such as Calgary.

In nineteen meetings held between December 2014 and June 2016, Council voted on approximately 1,800 items. On average, they considered 96 motions per meeting, and debated each for 9 minutes and 32 seconds. The vast majority of these items, noted the report, were procedural in nature, not policy decisions.

Source: *McCaffrey, Peter. 2016. Council Tracker: Midterm Report, Toronto 2014-2016. Calgary: Manning Centre.*

Secretariat, which manages Council meetings and record keeping, cannot be exaggerated. Any effort to make meetings more orderly and productive would go a long way to fostering more constructive and efficient debate.

The Task Force contemplated whether City Council meetings would be best improved by dramatically revamping the structure of Council meetings, or making simple procedural changes to the rules of debate.

It considered ideas some might consider drastic, such as overhauling the council committee system, enhancing

the enforcement powers of the Council Speaker, increasing the use of special meetings to resolve complex issues, and establishing alternative debate formats, such as seminars, to replace question periods.

It also examined minor procedural adjustments, such as adding hard time limits to reduce extended meetings, minimizing time wasted on inappropriate points of order and points of privilege, automating declarations of conflict and other routine matters, and reducing the number of redundant presentations.

In general, the group did not come to agreement on broader reforms, opting instead to propose a small number of procedural rules to encourage more streamlined, intelligent debate.

"[Council] spends too much time early in the meeting on insignificant items and then rushes through important strategic or policy decisions without much debate so they can finish on time."
— Survey respondent

5. ENGAGE THE PUBLIC

The bulk of the City's public engagement activities can be divided into three regular exercises: formal deputations, budget consultations, and public consultations. Each is uniquely challenging, and all could benefit from thoughtful reform.

Formal Deputations. By law, members of the public are entitled to present formal deputations to committees and sub-committees that report to City Council, including many city agencies and boards, such as the TTC. These presentations serve as one of the few opportunities for residents to speak directly to their elected representatives in a public forum.

Many presenters, however, leave these meetings disappointed, as there is little evidence to suggest that public presentations directly inform or influence final votes. As one Task Force member put it, "No one ever feels good after a deputation."

Meetings are generally scheduled during business hours, and agenda items are not timed, meaning those who can't take time off work, or who have other personal or family responsibilities during those hours, are excluded from the process. As a result, Task Force members noted that "the list of speakers tends to be dominated by familiar faces."

"No one ever feels good after a deputation." **— Task Force member**

Budget Consultations. The City's budget process includes several official forums for public input. Members of the public can make deputations to Budget

and Executive Committees, including budget subcommittee meetings that take place in various civic centres, and also attend budget town halls organized by staff and hosted by local councillors.

However, despite recent efforts by staff to make budget documents more user-friendly, it remains remarkably difficult for most Torontonians to understand the details of the budget, the process by which budget decisions are made, or see

how their input fits into the final budget package.

This undermines what scholars describe as "fiscal trust": the perception that budget consultations are conducted in a fair and open manner, and that Council makes decisions in a transparent, thoughtful way that reflects (or at least respects) the positions expressed by residents and stakeholders.[11]

"Public discussion on the budget is in the wrong sequence for taking the public seriously when considering the budget." **— Survey respondent**

Public Consultations. Public consultation processes are the most frequent engagement activities organized by the City — whether in the form of statutory meetings for environmental assessments and development applications, business roundtables, online surveys, or community planning workshops.

Generally speaking, these are well organized and often produce useful input to the policy process (the City Planning Division's engagement team is a leader in this regard). But there remain many areas for improvement.

One example is the public notification and follow-up process: how residents and stakeholders are invited to initial hearings, updated with ongoing research and staff reports, and notified of upcoming committee and Council meetings when decisions will be taken. In several Australian cities, for instance, residents are able to sign up for email "planning alerts" to stay informed on planning changes in their neighbourhood.[12]

The Task Force debated between two

approaches to better engaging the public: focusing on improvements to existing practices, and the development of new, more robust mechanisms that buck current practice.

The first approach involves, as one example, changes to the location and timing of council committees to encourage greater participation from a more diverse range of participants. Budget meetings could also be reconfigured with a greater emphasis on ensuring that members of the public are provided with clear, plain language materials that explain the context and key issues being debated.

The second approach involves designing more creative ways to reach residents and stakeholders who may not be physically able to participate in formal consultation processes, or may have never thought of getting involved in city issues. For example, the City could experiment with remote deputations using video and social media platforms, partner with "civic tech" community groups to offer budget simulation tools, or create civic education programs to help the public understand

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the most useful points of entry into the decision-making process.

Ultimately, the Task Force arrived at a suite of proposals inspired by the most innovative public engagement tools currently employed in the City Clerk's Office and Planning Division, but specifically focused on the logistical aspects of the deputation process and the sequencing of budget consultations, which in the group's estimation, are often overlooked when discussing efforts to improve public participation and input in city decision making.

6. SHARE INFORMATION

The ideals of open data and open government are meant to apply to all corners of municipal politics and administration. The reality, though, is that information technology and data management practices in Toronto (and admittedly, most other jurisdictions) are still underdeveloped — referred to in the tech community as "technology debt."

According to *Public Sector Digest*'s Open City Index, Toronto ranks as the second most open city in Canada. Council approved an Open Data Policy in late 2011, and the City operates a centralized open data catalogue, managed by the City Clerk's Office and Information & Technology Division, which includes 232 unique datasets for public use.

Close observers, however, have noted that the City's commitment to open data has begun to wane. For instance, the number of datasets published annually has plateaued. The same can be said for the wider movement toward "open government," which is intended to promote a culture of transparency and information sharing across all City departments and agencies.

> *"Information [produced by the City] is not easily consumable by the public... nor remix-able by passionate technical citizens."*
> **— Survey respondent**

There are no easy fixes in the short term that can address all the shortcomings of the current system. A sensible, selective approach is therefore required.

The Task Force debated two alternative paths: one focused inward, the second outward.

Looking inward involves focusing on the city's internal information management practices and policies to improve staff access to new and existing data and performance indicators.

As a start, that means adopting the Open Data Charter, making open data publishing functionality a requirement for any new IT system or system update purchased by the City (procurement reform, see following sidebar), creating better

systems for data sharing internally, and expanding staff training programs.

The alternative, looking outward, involves prioritizing the adoption of user friendly technologies to help data intermediaries (i.e., journalists) and members of the public find, translate, contextualize, and use City data to help residents and stakeholders monitor the quality of city services and community impacts, and participate in the policy process.

This would include building a more robust and open information management system (TMMIS 2.0), improving public access to open data through APIs, and improving the quantity, quality, and granularity of City data, including select cases of historical data.

Ultimately, the Task Force ended its deliberations convinced that there must first be buy-in *inside* government. To this end, the conversation must shift from a technical discussion about open data platforms to a practical discussion about *shared* data.

Data exist on a spectrum, from closed to shared to open.[13] Currently, most City data qualifies as closed, inaccessible not only to the public, but also internally to staff working in various city departments and agencies.

Encouraging departments to share data early and often would help build a culture of transparency that has the potential to yield more informed decision making.

This is particularly important for city projects that require coordination between many units, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Often times, stakeholders working on joint initiatives come together for meetings, then disperse to work on specific tasks. Their work would be better supported if each stakeholder were able to utilize each other's data more seamlessly.

Information sharing is already standard practice *within* divisions; it's now time to share the data *across* divisions, moving things along the data spectrum toward open.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROCUREMENT REFORM

The City of Guelph recently launched a procurement reform program through its Civic Accelerator Initiative, which identifies challenges the city is struggling to resolve.

Rather than prescribe how a given challenge should be approached, the program leaves it up to technology businesses, with frequent and direct input from City staff, to solve the problem, and asks participants to highlight ways that open data could be used in the solution.

The program has been a large success, enabling start-ups a chance to learn how to build better information technology for government, and for government to ensure that the technology it purchases truly suits its needs.
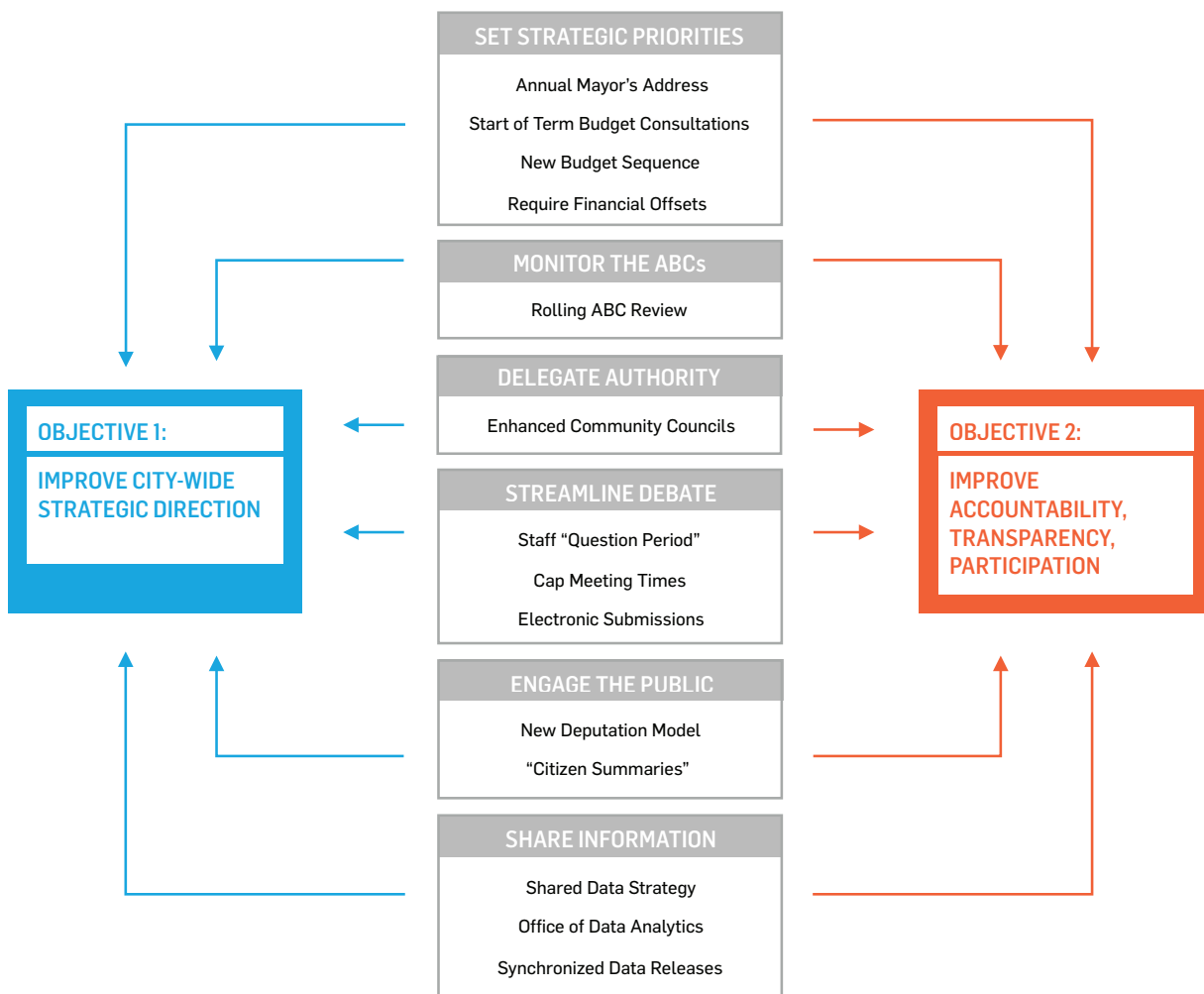
Recommended Reforms

As a starting blueprint for change, the Task Force recommends the following package of reforms to Council processes and procedures.

Each of the 14 recommendations summarized below reflect two core principles at the heart of the Task Force's deliberations: that City Council must strive, first and foremost, to act strategically and focus on city-wide concerns, and second, behave in a more accountable, transparent, and participatory manner.

Perhaps more importantly, each recommendation is entirely feasible under existing legislative and regulatory constraints and, in the collective opinion of the group, also *politically realistic*. The goal is incremental gain, not revolutionary change.

SET STRATEGIC PRIORITIES
- Annual Mayor's Address
- Start of Term Budget Consultations
- New Budget Sequence
- Require Financial Offsets

MONITOR THE ABCs
- Rolling ABC Review

DELEGATE AUTHORITY
- Enhanced Community Councils

STREAMLINE DEBATE
- Staff "Question Period"
- Cap Meeting Times
- Electronic Submissions

ENGAGE THE PUBLIC
- New Deputation Model
- "Citizen Summaries"

SHARE INFORMATION
- Shared Data Strategy
- Office of Data Analytics
- Synchronized Data Releases

OBJECTIVE 1: IMPROVE CITY-WIDE STRATEGIC DIRECTION

OBJECTIVE 2: IMPROVE ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY, PARTICIPATION

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Some of the Task Force's proposed recommendations require changes to the Municipal Code's procedures by-law. Section 27-9 of the Code states that any motion to amend or repeal the procedures by-law requires a two-thirds vote at City Council — a high threshold which demands political leadership from the Mayor, and others, to see changes through. Some require a simple Council resolution adopted by majority vote. And some are strictly administrative matters that can be initiated directly by the City Manager.

Importantly, some recommendations require no formal changes to Council's written rules or by-laws at all, but rather the creation of new political conventions. Canada has a long tradition of governing by convention — specifically, constitutional conventions.[14] Along with the formal Constitution, unwritten conventions form the foundation of the Canadian parliamentary system.

Constitutional conventions are rarely thought to apply to local government in Canada. Few, if any, scholars have ever studied the nature of conventions at the municipal level. But such conventions do exist, and they have great impact on decision making in Toronto.

For example, each year the Mayor sets out budget instructions to staff, including property tax expectations, in a letter delivered to the City Manager. This mandate letter articulates the basic terms under which the City Manager should prepare the preliminary budget, and serves as the central guiding document for subsequent deliberations at Budget Committee.

But no formal by-law or regulation requires the Mayor to follow this administrative protocol; it has simply grown out of common practice and past precedent, and gained general acceptance over time.

Set Strategic Priorities

RECOMMENDATION 1: ANNUAL MAYOR'S ADDRESS

The Mayor should deliver an annual Mayor's Address to Council in early Spring that lays out his or her strategic priorities and public commitments for the coming year and remaining term of Council.

IMPLEMENTATION
No legislative changes necessary. Nothing currently prevents the Mayor from making an annual address to articulate his or her strategic priorities.

At present, the Mayor provides ongoing, yet largely informal and impromptu, direction to staff during the budget process. Toronto should follow the lead of many other North American cities, including New York and Los Angeles, where mayors present a formal "State of the City" address that lays out his or her legislative agenda for the term of Council and the coming year.

As in Ottawa, the speech should be forward-looking, specifying the Mayor's key strategic priorities and public commitments, and presented to Council prior to the start of the budget cycle. In addition, the Mayor should publish the annual mandate letter normally

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delivered privately to the City Manager.

Formalizing the Mayor's priorities in an annual address would improve accountability by making the Mayor clarify, defend, and promote his or her short- and long-term vision for the city on a consistent basis, thereby encouraging councillors to make decisions from a city-wide perspective.

RECOMMENDATION 2: START OF TERM BUDGET CONSULTATIONS

At the start of every Council term following an election, City staff should conduct large-scale public consultations on the City's long-term service priorities to confirm Council's strategic direction for the four-year term.

To assist the Mayor and Council in moving to longer-term, multi-year budget planning, City staff should organize a large-scale public consultation process following the Mayor's inaugural address, completed within the first six months of the election, to gather public feedback on service priorities and service levels and confirm Council's strategic direction for the four-year term.

The results of this consultation should be integrated into the City's Strategic Plan, which guides corporate operations and service delivery. In years following, Community Councils should hold hearings to review service levels in their communities and measure progress against the expectations set out in the Mayor's inaugural address and start of term consultations.

This would provide greater certainty to staff in determining expected service standards, without having to continually return to Council for direction, and encourage Council to make decisions consistent with the City's long-term strategic priorities.

RECOMMENDATION 3: NEW BUDGET SEQUENCE

The preliminary budget should be presented to the Mayor and Executive Committee first, then referred to Budget Committee, to ensure consistency between the Mayor's public priorities, as well as start of term budget consultations, and the final budget presented to Council.

Currently, the City Manager presents the staff-developed preliminary budget to Budget Committee for initial approval, amendment, and public comment, before moving on to Executive Committee, then Council as a whole. This puts the onus of defending budget decisions on the City Manager and staff, rather than elected officials.

Before arriving at City Council, the sequence of events should be reversed. The Executive Committee, selected by the Mayor, should support or amend a budget that is consistent with the Mayor's public priorities, as articulated in the Mayor's Address, and start of term budget consultations (above).

The preliminary budget should therefore be tabled, first, at Executive, to confirm strategic directions, service priorities, and tax guidelines, then referred to Budget Committee for further debate and refinement, including public deputations, and finally

IMPLEMENTATION
Council's current Strategic Plan expires in 2018. City Council should approve a new process for updating and revising the Strategic Plan that establishes broad consultations with the public and key stake-holders timed to the start of the next electoral term. The next Council should reaffirm this process when it approves the annual budget schedule.

IMPLEMENTATION
City Council should approve a 2019 budget schedule that includes a framework for a new 2020 budget process, to be confirmed by the next Council, as follows:
Nov 2018: Elections
Jan 2019: Council approves 2019 budget
Early 2019: Mayor's Address and Start of Term Budget Consultations
Spring 2019: Staff report to Executive Committee on strategic priorities for term
Summer 2019: Council approves strategic priorities
Early Fall 2019: Preliminary 2020 budget presented to Executive Commit-

presented to Council for final approval.

This sequencing is similar to the budget process in Ottawa, where the Mayor presents a formal budget to the Finance and Economic Development committee (Ottawa has no Executive Committee), and Winnipeg, where the Finance Chair presents the initial budget to Executive Committee before it moves to policy committees.

Reversing the current budget sequence would concentrate accountability for political decisions with elected officials rather than staff, and ensure consistency between the Mayor's public priorities, as well as start of term budget consultations, and the final budget presented to Council.

RECOMMENDATION 4: REQUIRE FINANCIAL OFFSETS

Any motion (or amendment) tabled at Council that generates a financial impact, but does not identify a specific in-year offset, should be automatically referred to Budget Committee in order to ensure that Council decisions are consistent with previously adopted financial plans.

As is commonly the case in other jurisdictions, any motion voted on by City Council that generates a financial impact to the City must include a specific in-year offset in order to ensure that decisions are consistent with Council's adopted financial plans. If not, the item should be automatically referred to Budget Committee rather than deemed to be funded.

This would discourage last-minute amendments on the Council floor, particularly those which mislead the public to believe that Council is moving ahead with a particular project or program despite a lack of funding.

City staff should be expected to assist any councillor that tables a new motion with a financial impact identify or quantify a proposed offset if given written notice at least five working days in advance.

Monitor the ABCs

RECOMMENDATION 5: ROLLING ABC REVIEW

City staff should conduct an annual, rolling review of local agencies, boards, corporations, and commissions to ensure that each organization's operations are aligned with the City's strategic priorities.

The governance relationship between the City and its ABCs makes smart, coordinated decision making extraordinarily difficult. Council should increase both political and financial oversight by initiating an annual rolling review, led by staff, that assesses each organization's mandate, governance structure, fiscal position, shareholder direction, and

tee; Budget Committee launches 2020 budget review and hearings
Late Fall 2019: Budget Committee reports to Executive Committee
Jan 2020: Council approves 2020 budget

IMPLEMENTATION
Changes to council procedures require a formal amendment of the procedures by-law. Council should amend Sec. 27-69 and Sec. 27-73 of the Municipal Code that define the admissibility of motions and allowable amendments. It should also revise Sec. 27-66, which states that the Chief Financial Officer has a duty to advise Council of any financial implications of motions under consideration, to include a timetable for providing this information.

IMPLEMENTATION
Section 8(2) of the *City of Toronto Act* authorizes Council to pass by-laws respecting the operations and governance of its ABCs with limited exceptions, such as the Police Services Board, the Board of Health, and Public Library Board, and certain city corporations.

accountability mechanisms.

The comprehensive review should:

- Cover three-to-five ABCs (or cluster of related ABCs) each year, selected by Executive Committee or City Council consistent with strategic priorities confirmed at the beginning of the Council term, or at random, so that every ABC is reviewed at least once every term.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of each agency's mandate, information disclosure and record keeping policies, accessibility and public consultation practices, and information technology standards, and the potential for interagency efficiency and cooperation.

- Ensure shareholder directions reflect the City's updated Strategic Plan and service priorities

- Solicit a broad array of views from agency board members and staff, city councillors, the public, and other relevant stakeholders (including other governments, where appropriate).

- Be presented directly to City Council, which can refer the report to the appropriate committee for further review.

Delegate Authority

RECOMMENDATION 6: ENHANCED COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Council should delegate further responsibility and decision-making authority to Community Councils so that City Council can focus on city-wide priorities, and direct city staff to identify specific opportunities for delegation that could be in place by the start of the next Council term.

Currently, Community Councils are only authorized to make final decisions on a small number of relatively minor neighbourhood-level concerns, such as:

- noise and fence by-law exemptions
- street food vending permits and appeals
- on-street parking permits and restrictions
- local traffic regulations

- café and front-yard parking permits and appeals

- public appointments to arena, community centre, business improvement area, and museum advisory boards

This list should be expanded based on a staff review that identifies specific opportunities for delegation under existing legislation that would allow Council to focus on the big picture, while bringing local decisions closer to affected communities.

Tree removal applications are the most obvious starting point, but other responsibilities prime for delegation include bike lane, traffic signal, and road alteration approvals that have minimal impacts on residents and businesses in other parts of the city.

The review should also determine resources necessary to support Community Councils with expanded mandates, and steps required to balance workloads between Community Councils. For example, the busiest Community Councils, such as Toronto & East York, could, on the advice of staff, refer certain planning applications to the Planning &

City Council should approve a motion directing the City Solicitor and City Manager to specify the list of ABCs subject to direct Council oversight, develop a preliminary schedule for rolling reviews, and propose a general review protocol that can be tailored to different organizational contexts. Although financial audits will be useful in this process, the review should not be led by the Auditor General's Office. Audits are by definition retrospective; the rolling review, by contrast, should be a forward-looking exercise to ensure that ABCs are aligned with the City's strategic objectives.

IMPLEMENTATION
Sections 20 through 24 of the *City of Toronto Act* authorizes Council to delegate decision-making authority to any Council committee on any matter determined to be "minor" in nature. Exceptions include: by-laws related to taxation, adoption of the city budget, creation of municipal corporations, or amendment of official plans or zoning by-laws. All of these decision must be taken by City Council as a whole.

Council should direct Staff to report on opportunities to delegate further decision making to Community Councils. Based on this review, Council should amend Sec. 27-152 of the Municipal Code to expand the number of matters delegated to Community Council by default, and further amend Sec. 27-150

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Growth Standing Committee.

As a check on these newly empowered Community Councils, and to alleviate any fears that decisions taken at Community Council might undermine city-wide policies, City Council should be permitted to declare a city-wide interest and reconsider any item decided at Community Council that contradicts previously approved Council policy via majority vote.

Streamline Debate

RECOMMENDATION 7: STAFF "QUESTION PERIOD"
Councillors' questions to staff should be restricted to a single "question period" at the beginning of each Council session.

A significant amount of Council time is taken up by councillor questions to staff. These extensive question periods are often confrontational, highly politicized, or redundant.

Policing councillors' questions to staff is normally the responsibility of the Speaker. But the task is highly subjective, and even the most skilled and impartial referee cannot reasonably be expected to enforce Council's professional norms of conduct in all cases.

> *In most Canadian cities, it is unusual for city staff to answer questions at a full meeting of Council. In the rare case that this occurs, only the City Manager/Chief Administrator or other high-level executives who report directly to Council (such as the Chief Financial Officer), are typically asked to speak to a specific issue.*

Council should establish a single "question period," conducted at the beginning of each Council session — not, as is currently the case, at the start of each agenda item — to discourage leading, redundant, or politically motivated questions. All questions related to specific agenda items should only be asked during this question period, and not at any other time.

A single question period would motivate councillors to "do their homework" prior to Council meetings, and limit councillors' urge to treat questions to staff as an opportunity for grandstanding or cross-examination.

It would also have the added benefit of freeing up staff time for all but the most senior staff at City Hall to focus on program delivery, rather than forcing them to wait indefinitely for their items to appear at unexpected times on the Council docket.

Councillors would still be permitted to question staff on an item-by-item basis during Committee, as well as pose direct questions to staff in writing at any time.

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RECOMMENDATION 8: CAP MEETING TIMES

The length of Council meetings should be capped at 12 total hours per day (including breaks and interruptions).

Meetings that last late into the night lead to impaired judgment and careless conduct, are not conducive to thoughtful or dignified debate on important public matters, and reduce opportunities for public scrutiny.

As an example, Council recently approved the 2017 Budget at 12:30 a.m. following 15 hours of debate, ending in a chaotic vote that created a $2-million budget hole and required hastily drawing from reserve funds.

Council's habit of holding extended meetings impacts staff performance and morale, and is also inconsistent with more family-friendly legislative schedules followed by other levels of government. Both the House of Commons and the Ontario legislature, for instance, do not typically sit for more than nine hours per day.

Council should follow the lead of other legislatures and set a strict time limit on the length of Council meetings so that councillors debate issues for no more than 12 hours per day. If a meeting begins at 9:30am, then it should end by 9:30pm, and if necessary, continued the next day.

RECOMMENDATION 9: ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS

Routine submissions to Council, such as public petitions, requests to hold agenda items, and declarations of conflict should be submitted electronically in advance of Council meetings.

Currently, every Council meeting begins with presentation of petitions and a review of the Order Paper. Councillors go through a paper agenda line-by-line, noting items they would like to hold for later debate. The custom takes anywhere from thirty minutes to over an hour. During debate, councillors often rise, interrupting discussion of an item, to declare potential conflicts.

All of these tasks should be automated so that councillors can make submissions electronically to the Clerk's Office either before or at the start of Council meetings, saving upwards of ten hours of Council time a year without any reduction in Council's ability to debate public issues.

Engage the Public

RECOMMENDATION 10: NEW DEPUTATION MODEL

Council should create a more welcoming atmosphere for deputations, including increased information for newcomers, dedicated deputation guides, and posted speaking schedules.

The Clerk should make recommendations to Council to build a more welcoming

IMPLEMENTATION
Council should amend Article V of the procedures by-law to establish a principle that specifies conditions for automatic adjournment of Council meetings based on the amount of time spent in session.

IMPLEMENTATION
No legislative changes necessary. Sec. 27-56 of the Municipal Code already allows written requests to hold agenda items in advance of the meeting. In fact, nothing in the Code dictates that these requests should be presented orally. In the case of declarations of conflict, it remains a councillor's individual responsibility to recuse themselves, and note their conflict in the Council minutes, consistent with the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act.

IMPLEMENTATION
No legislative changes necessary. All recommended measures are already within the author-

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atmosphere for deputants, including but not limited to:

- Increased signage and information to direct newcomers
- Dedicated staff guides to welcome and help deputants prepare for their presentations
- Displaying a real-time speaking schedule

- to help deputants plan their time, including a notification system to alert deputants of their place in the queue
- Allowing alternative means of recording support or opposition to a motion, including audio or video presentations, or group petitions

ity of the City Clerk, and could be achieved without any explicit direction from Council.

RECOMMENDATION 11: "CITIZEN SUMMARIES"
Staff reports should include plain language materials that explain the context and key issues for debate for a general audience.

Many staff-generated documents, particularly budget materials, are almost incomprehensible to the lay reader. As a general practice, staff reports should include plain language materials that summarize the basic context and key conclusions to help members of the public (and councillors) understand the nature of the item to be debated.

This could be presented as a simplified "citizen summary" (rather than, or in addition to, an executive summary) section at the outset of the report — common practice in San Francisco and many other US cities to help explain local ballot measures — or at the very least, a glossary of key terms and acronyms.[15]

For instance, budget documents that emphasize year-over-year percentage changes should be "translated" into figures that are relatable to residents and indicate potential service impacts, such as changes in the number of front-line staff, or service schedules. Likewise, planning reports should be inspired by City Planning's recently redesigned community notification and signage guidelines, which clearly communicate the basic features and potential impacts of proposed redevelopments.

IMPLEMENTATION
No legislative changes necessary. Existing report writing guidelines and training programs for staff could be revised by the City Manager in collaboration with the City Clerk.

Share Information

RECOMMENDATION 12: SHARED DATA STRATEGY
City Council should approve and prioritize a "shared data" strategy concurrent with its Open Data Policy.

Sharing data between government divisions encourages collaborative problem-solving, more efficient resource allocation, and improved service delivery. Council should approve a shared data strategy that seeks to ensure that the latest and most complete data is available to City staff across departments.

As an example, the New York Fire Department organizes building inspection records from multiple city agencies through a shared data platform to better anticipate and reduce the number of buildings at risk of serious fire.[16] Similarly, the City of Edmonton

IMPLEMENTATION
A new shared data strategy will require Council approval. But ultimately, its success will depend on uptake by City staff. As a first step, the Chief Information Officer, with input from staff from each division, should conduct a data inventory that reviews currently available, missing, and potentially useful

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rationalized park maintenance operations by utilizing shared datasets and machine learning to optimize equipment routing — lessons that could be applied in other areas, such as road maintenance.[17]

The end goal is to operate on an "open by default" model of information sharing that maximizes the amount of data automatically shared by staff, and where appropriate, supports the release of open data to the public.

RECOMMENDATION 13: OFFICE OF DATA ANALYTICS
The City Manager should create an Office of Data Analytics to pursue pilot projects that demonstrate the benefits of shared data.

An Office of Data Analytics would illustrate the value of shared data in solving city-wide problems by bringing together a small, cross-functional team of policy and technical specialists (i.e., a policy analyst partnered with a data scientist) to work on tightly-defined pilot projects.

The Office should be modelled on the New York Mayor's Office of Data Analytics, or Edmonton's Analytics Centre of Excellence, and housed within, or integrated with, the recently established Civic Innovation Office funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

The Office should work to identify patterns in service delivery or corporate operations using insights from data collected across city divisions. For example, the Office might cross-reference 311 requests with data from the Municipal Licensing and Standards division to identify and publish health violation hotspots in order to optimize inspection schedules.

RECOMMENDATION 14: SYNCHRONIZED DATA RELEASES
City staff should better synchronize data releases in advance of public consultations or deputations.

The City should better synchronize the public release of important data at the earliest stages of public consultation. This would help residents and stakeholders understand the context and trade-offs relevant to the decisions being made, and play a more direct role in policy development, rather than serve as a final stamp of approval.

Data releases should also include a robust description of the methodology used to collect the data, and for large projects (e.g., transit lines) links to related current or historical data sets produced not only by City sources, but also outside organizations, such as academic institutions and relevant vendors (e.g., urban planning firms), to make sure the public has a complete picture of the evidence being used to inform decision making.

Finally, a centralized consultation stakeholder list, organized by ward/neighbourhood, would enable ongoing communications with residents well before the formal start of public consultations, as well as improved notification as issues move through committees to Council.

data for sharing based on different attributes (e.g., size, collection frequency, privacy and security, etc.). Next, ongoing IT system purchases should include data sharing and open data publishing using APIs as a prerequisite.

IMPLEMENTATION
No legislative changes necessary. The project office could be created by the City Manager, without Council approval, by reallocating existing staff resources. However, if inclined, Council could prioritize or dedicate extra resources to the Office in a similar fashion as it did when it created the former Mayor's Tower Renewal program.

IMPLEMENTATION
No legislative changes necessary. The Chief Information Officer should develop and distribute detailed staff guidelines to all city divisions.

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Conclusion

City Hall is not working as well as it could. Yet some Torontonians, including many working within city government, believe that changes to the status quo would lead to more harm than good. The Task Force believes the opposite: that reform is both necessary and worthwhile.

This report marks the first general review of city governance in Toronto in at least a decade. The result is a decidedly realistic package of reforms that would make deliberation and decision making at City Hall more focused, strategic, open, and accountable.

Recommendations are informed by a close understanding of the various organizational cultures, administrative constraints, and political pressures at play within the current system. Most importantly, as a package, they are capable of garnering support from decision makers across the political spectrum.

Dramatic reforms are impractical and tend to distract from improvements that can be taken today. What is needed, instead, are incremental reforms that build on existing processes.

To City leaders: this is your starting blueprint. Let no one say it cannot be done.

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1   Kenneth Kidd, "Why Exactly Would Anyone Want This Job? Mayoral Candidates Beware Herding Cats Might be Easier than Dealing with Dysfunctional City Council," *Toronto Star*, October 4, 2009; Paola Loriggio, "Rob Ford Knocks Down Councillor as Toronto Council Debate Plunges into Chaos," *The Canadian Press*, November 8, 2013.

2   Don Peat, "Council Meeting Process 'Badly Broken': Tory," *Toronto Sun*, February 12, 2015.

3   Don Peat, "Council Meeting Process 'Badly Broken': Tory," *Toronto Sun*, February 12, 2015.

4   Zack Taylor, *Good Governance at the Local Level: Meaning and Measurement* (Toronto: Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance, 2016), pg. 9.

5   *City of Toronto Act, 2006*. Statutes of Ontario 2006, c. 11, Sch A, s. 267-268.

6   *City of Toronto Act, 2006*. Statutes of Ontario 2006, c. 11, Sch A, s. 149.

7   *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*. Statutes of Ontario 1996, c. 32, s. 88.6 and 88.8. Informal electoral or party slates are allowable under current law, but not a formal party system or direct affiliations with provincial and/or federal parties.

8   *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*. Statutes of Ontario 1996, c. 32, s. 6(3).

9   *City of Toronto Act, 2006*. Statutes of Ontario 2006, c. 11, Sch A, s. 2. The means by which Council can achieve these goals are principally laid out in Part II of the Act, which details the general powers of the City, including the power to determine the structure of City Council and local boards, and delegate decision-making authority to council committees, and Part IV, which specifies the role of the Mayor and the general composition of City Council.

10 So much so, in fact, that a special day-long Council meeting was convened in March 2017 to deal only with matters considered urgent community business.

11 Dina Graser and Pamela Robinson, *A Recipe for Fiscal Trust* (Toronto: Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance, 2016).

12 See the "PlanningAlerts" project created by the OpenAustralia Foundation: https://www.planningalerts.org.au

13 See "The Data Spectrum," available on the Open Data Institute website: https://theodi.org/data-spectrum

14 A constitutional convention refers to a social rule that regulates the conduct of government, which, if broken, attracts criticism or pressure to conform. In federal politics, for example, the principle of "responsible government" and the "confidence convention" dictate that the Prime Minister and Cabinet must always maintain the confidence of a majority of the members of the House of Commons. See Jacob Jaconelli, "The Nature of Constitutional Convention," *Legal Studies* 19 (1999): 35.

15 See, for example, the San Francisco Department of Elections' simplified summary of "Proposition R: Neighborhood Crime Unit": http://voterguide.sfelections.org/en/neighborhood-crime-unit. The Task Force thanks Rachel Lissner for bringing the importance of plain language materials to our attention.

16 Brian Heaton, "New York City Fights Fire with Data," *Emergency Management*, May 18, 2015.

17 Elise Stolte, "'The Democratization of Nerdiness': City Staff Discover Efficiencies in Edmonton's Open Data," *Edmonton Journal*, December 7, 2016.

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Appendix: Members of the Task Force

Adrienne Batra is former Press Secretary to Mayor Rob Ford (2010-2011) and current Editor in Chief of the *Toronto Sun* and *24Hrs Toronto*. She is a frequent commentator on city politics on both radio and television, including Newstalk 1010, Global News, and CTV News Channel.

Shirley Hoy served as Toronto City Manager from 2001 to 2008. In other roles, she has served as Assistant Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Chief Executive Officer of the Ontario Housing Corporation, and CEO of the Toronto Lands Corporation. She is currently a Senior Advisor at Strategy Corp and Chair of the Governing Council of University of Toronto.

Sevaun Palvetzian is CEO of CivicAction, a non-partisan organization that brings together senior executives from all sectors to address challenges facing the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. She recently served as a member of the Premier's Community Hubs Advisory Group, the Toronto Police Service Board Transformational Task Force, and Mayor John Tory's Advisory Panel for International Hosting Opportunities.

John Parker is a former Toronto City Councillor (2006-14) and Member of Provincial Parliament Legislature (1995-99). During his time at Council, he served as Deputy Speaker and Vice-Chair of North York Community Council, as well

as on the boards of the Toronto Transit Commission and Toronto Community Housing Corporation.

Joe Pennachetti served as Toronto City Manager from 2008 to 2015, and Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer from 2002-2008. He previously served as Commissioner of Finance and Chief Financial Officer in Peel Region (1995-2002) and York Region (1990-1995). He is currently an Executive Advisor to the Global Cities Institute and World Council on City Data, and Senior Fellow at both the Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance, and School of Public Policy and Governance, at the University of Toronto.

David Soknacki served as City Councillor for Ward 43 Scarborough East from 1999 to 2006. During his tenure, he served as Chair of the Budget Committee (2003-2006) and Chair of the Toronto Atmospheric Fund, among other responsibilities. He was appointed by the federal government as Chair of Downsview Park (2007-2012), was a candidate for Mayor of Toronto in the 2014 election, and is a recent member of the Toronto Police Service Transformational Task Force.

Zack Taylor is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at Western University, where he teaches and researches on urban politics and local public administration and finance. He is Director of Western's new Centre

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for Urban Policy and Local Governance and is a fellow of the Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance at the University of Toronto.

Ange Valentini has worked in all orders of government in Canada – in the public service and as political staff. At Toronto City Hall, she served as Chief of Staff to former Councillor Adam Vaughan (2007-2014) and delivered on an ambitious agenda focused on community engagement, land use planning, a parks renaissance and revitalization of social housing in the ward.

Bianca Wylie is head of the Open Data Institute Toronto and an associate expert for open cities at Open North. She has a professional background in both public consultation and the technology sector. She is a frequent organizer of community tech events and workshops, and is also a guest lecturer and writer on open government, civic technology, and civic engagement.

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Gabriel Eidelman is an Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto's School of Public Policy and Governance, where he teaches classes on urban governance and public policy. His research focuses on cities and urban governance in North America, and has been published in the journals *Cities*, *Urban Affairs Review*, and the *Journal of Urban Affairs*. His work has appeared in news coverage by the *New York Times*, *The Canadian Press*, *Toronto Star*, *Globe and Mail*, and *National Post*.

Brian F. Kelcey is an urban policy consultant and founder of State of the City Inc. In 2004, Brian managed the Winnipeg Mayor's Red Tape Commission and later served as the chief budget advisor to the mayor until 2008. He previously served as a senior political advisor to the Government House Leader at Queen's Park. He is frequently interviewed by local and national media on civic public policy, and his op-eds have been published in the *Toronto Star*, the *Globe and Mail*, the *National Post*, and *Spacing Magazine*.

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