

RETHINKING TORONTO'S GOVERNANCE

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1. STARTING POINTS

- After 12 years, I believe that AMALGAMATION EXISTS ONLY ON PAPER NOT IN REALITY
- Toronto has rethought its' governance model on two occasions since 1998
- in 1999 just after amalgamation with 6 Community Councils
- in December, 2005 when the Governing Toronto Advisory Panel developed a report called "The City we Want, the City we Need"
- Current governance model of 44 councillors, an Executive Committee of 13 members, 7 Standing Committees and 4 Community Councils was based on the recommendations of a June 7, 2006 report from the City Manager "Implementation of a New Governance Model for the Next Term of Council" (See MAPS 1 and 2 and CHART)
- It was the product of an extensive public consultation process and the "Governance Implementation Working Group" chaired by Councillor Brian Ashton
- Two recommendations were not adopted and are the FOCUS OF MY THINKING
- 1st. that the "number of Community Councils be increased up to 8 with the City Manager and City Clerk to report in the first quarter of 2007 on options for the number, boundaries and operational issues required"
- 2nd. that the City "launch a community dialogue in the new term on reconnecting people with City government that considers processes and structures at the neighbourhood, ward and city wide levels and improve public participation in the decision making process and the civic engagement role of Council, the Mayor, Committees, Community Councils and advisory bodies"
- My ideas try to provide answers to these two outstanding matters are based on simple concepts that I believe can MAKE AMALGAMATION WORK MORE EFFECTIVELY

2. WHAT IS WRONG NOW?

- Council manages instead of governing with a local ward focus often at the expense of city-wide matters
- Torontonians do not feel connected to their local government or that civic engagement is meaningful
- The prevailing governance, civic engagement and planning culture is viewed as sacred by councillors who are reluctant to make any changes to the current system

3. CORE PRINCIPLES FOR TORONTO

- Keep governance reform simple, easy to understand and capable of being implemented without major legislative changes without adding another layer
- Achieve a balance between local and city-wide matters
- Encourage more visionary and courageous decision making by politicians and hold them accountable for their actions
- Break the city down into bite sized pieces that people can relate to by unleashing the potential of all Torontonians, citizens and non-citizens alike and by bringing them into the city hall governance tent
- Give the civic bureaucracy the freedom to implement Council policy decisions and hold them accountable for their actions

4. BIG CITY EXPERIENCE WITH AMALGAMATION AND GOVERNANCE

- NEW YORK CITY was amalgamated over 100 years ago
- 51 councillors, 8.4 million people or 165,000 per ward
- 5 Boroughs
- 59 Community Boards of non-elected representatives from all community interests that are a key part of governance and are embedded into the New York City Charter (See Map of 59 Community Districts/ 140,000 in each)
- 1 City wide Planning Commission comprised of 13 non-elected members
- Development applications are first considered by Community Boards
- Specific time limits for processing development applications at the Community Board, City Planning Commission and Council levels
- (see Bedford, Paul, “City Planning in the Big Apple”, Ontario Planning Journal, May/June 2010, Vol. 25, No. 3)
- The system works!

- MONTREAL was amalgamated in 2000 then partially de-amalgamated in January 2006 (See Map of new governance model)
- 64 City councillors, local political parties, 20 separate administrations (a Central city and 19 Boroughs each with a Mayor and Council)
- A new Agglomeration Council was also established in 2006 consisting of 31 members including the Mayor of Montreal, 15 Montreal councilors and 14 Mayors from the reconstituted municipalities
- Fragmented, complicated, costly and confusing
- The system doesn't work!

5. A MADE IN TORONTO MODEL

a) Keep it Simple

- 44 councillors
- 22 elected from new wards (same as existing provincial and federal ridings of approximately 120,000 each)
- 22 elected on an at large by district basis according to population (5 in the East and West with 6 in the North and South districts)
- District At Large Councillors to sit on city wide committees and be the primary liason with the GTHA region on regional issues
- A 3 term limit or a maximum of 12 years
- 11 councillors to sit on Executive Committee
- Neighbourhood Advisory Committees (NAC'S) of non-elected representatives from communities of approximately 125,000-250,000 based on existing neighbourhood and ward boundaries
- Civic departments realigned to provide staff support to NAC'S
- Retention of 4 Community Councils optional
- Formation of City of Toronto Planning Board optional
- Adoption of Development System optional

b) Neighbourhood Advisory Committees

- Recognize that mature civic engagement is a huge asset for Toronto
- Need to unleash the potential of proactive civic engagement and capture the existing civic muscle exhibited by communities across the city
- 11-22 Neighbourhood Advisory Committees (NAC'S) comprised of non-elected representatives of ALL VOICES including residents, business, commercial, industrial and other diverse communities of interest within a defined geographic area
- Depending on the number, each NAC to encompass 125,000-250,000 people or about the size of Barrie (128,000), Burlington (164,000) or Vaughan (238,000)
- 11 NAC's @ 245,000, 18 NAC'S @150,000, 22 NAC'S @ 122,000 based on an estimated Toronto population of 2.7 million
- Area councillors to sit on NAC's as non voting members
- Members to be appointed upon the recommendation of community organizations and area councillors with revolving terms
- Boundaries to be determined but based on population, natural, man made features and historic communities
- NAC's to be a forum for proactive discussion and NOT a forum for frustrated NIMBY'S
- To be a vehicle for making good city building decisions by being the first point of contact for development applications

- NAC'S be required to contribute in the annual cycle of Budget preparation and be considered a vital part of the civic governance machinery
- Encourage direct participation of citizens and non citizens and provide a voice for Priority Neighbourhoods
- An excellent training ground for new political blood
- REINVENT THE CIVIC BUREAUCRACY to provide STAFF RESOURCES to NAC'S by appointing a department manager and support staff in strategically located libraries, community centres, schools or other civic properties located within each NAC
- City hall staff to take ownership of and responsibility for geographic areas
- EMBRACE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES that are already happening and encourage staff to foster and welcome new experiments
- Recommendations of NAC's regarding development applications sent to City of Toronto Planning Board
- Introduction of specific time lines for consideration of planning applications at NAC'S, Planning Board and Council

c) Major Change

- 44 councillors with 33 elected from new local wards and 11 elected from districts according to population
- District At Large Councillors to sit on city wide committees and be the primary liason to the GTHA region
- A 3 term limit or a maximum of 12 years
- new ward boundaries would be drawn up that have no similarity with existing provincial or federal ridings
- Boundaries would be based on historic communities, natural, man made barriers such as ravines, rivers, major highways, roads and railways
- new boundaries would break free from former municipal boundaries in existence prior to amalgamation
- 11 councillors to sit on Executive Committee primarily from District At Large Councillors
- 11-22 NAC's with boundaries depending on decision to adopt new wards
- 11 member CITY OF TORONTO PLANNING BOARD comprised of elected and /or non-elected people that meets bi-weekly with District At Large members
- 2/3 Council vote needed to overturn recommendations of the Planning Board
- Introduction of time lines for consideration of development applications at NAC'S, Planning Board and Council
- Elimination of all Community Councils and the Planning and Growth Management Standing Committee
- Adoption of DEVELOPMENT PERMIT SYSTEM as provided by Section 70.2 of Ontario Planning Act to control land use development in a way

that allows for the potential consolidation of zoning and site plan control matters and the imposition of conditions to be agreed upon before a development permit is issued

- Development Permit System also allows for the delegation of approval to city officials or to a Committee of Council provided conditions are met which would remove many small scale development matters from a formal Planning Board and City Council agenda
- Focus a BUSINESS CASE APPROACH to the processing of development applications by city planning to highlight savings from the avoidance of costly and time consuming Ontario Municipal Board hearings
- Chief City Planner to report directly to Council and not through two layers of senior management
- All Department Heads and senior city staff to be required to live within the City of Toronto

6. MOVING FORWARD

- AMALGAMATION EXISTS ONLY ON PAPER NOT IN REALITY
- We now have 1 Official Plan and 1 Zoning By-law
- Under the City of Toronto Act, council has the power to alter or dissolve wards and can create Neighbourhood Advisory Committees
- The Planning Act allows municipalities to adopt a Development Permit System
- The Municipal act allows for the election of councillors by ward, at large or any combination thereof
- 12 years is enough time to know that more of the same is not the right answer
- It is time to open up city hall and embrace the positive engagement of Torontonians at both the community and city-wide level and change the prevailing culture of municipal governance
- I hope that these thoughts will stimulate discussion during this election campaign and get people to think ahead for 2014
- The newly elected Mayor needs to set a process in motion to study these ideas in detail and establish a timeline for action
- THERE ARE NO EXCUSES FOR NOT MOVING FORWARD!

