



The City of Ottawa Mid-Term Governance Review

A Discussion Paper by:

People for a Better Ottawa (PBO)

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Background:

The City of Ottawa has adopted a transformation agenda focused on three priorities: Governance, Service Delivery and Sustainable Finances.

The Governance priority will be a focus throughout the current term of Council. The six objectives of this focus (as approved by Council) are attached in appendix A.

Provincial Bill 130 has amended the Municipal Act to allow for significant changes in how Municipalities are structured, how services are delivered and how the process of local government works without any further approvals from the Province.

Staff will be submitting a white paper on Governance in late February 2009 that could well lead to significant changes in how decisions are made and how City services are delivered and how citizens have a say in what happens at City Hall.

The Mayor has recently appointed a task force to advise him on governance matters.

Range of Options:

Bill 130 allows many changes to the status quo. They generally fall into three areas:

1. Changes to the internal processes of decision making including the current standing committee structure (mandate, membership and relationship to Council) the role of Councillors ,the Mayor and the public service.
2. Changes in how services are delivered including delegation of delivery and/or decision making to local boards, municipal service boards and municipal service corporations.
3. Changes in the current methods of citizen engagement and stakeholder input.

The upcoming white paper is expected to explore all three of these option areas.

The Position of PBO:

PBO believes that a Governance Review in light of Bill 130 can be a positive development. PBO is committed to reviewing the details of any proposed changes and make our voice heard.

To assist in this endeavour, PBO has developed a set of goals and principles against which any changes in governance will be assessed.

Goals: Changes in the current governance structure of the City should:

- Promote clear/transparent accountability of elected officials to residents
- Focus council on the strategic issues of the day
- Improve service effectiveness and efficiency
- Enhance democracy through meaningful engagement of the full diversity of residents
- Ensure that the triple bottom line is incorporated into the day to day governance of the City

Principles: Changes in internal decision making processes must ensure:

- A simple and transparent process that is easily understood by residents
- A process that will foster timely decision making without compromising resident input
- A process that enhances the clarity between the roles of elected officials and staff

Principles: Changes resulting in the delegation of service delivery to external boards/corporations must:

- Be based on clear and measurable improvements in service delivery and not solely on cost saving
- Be based on funding for services that respects the full and real ongoing cost of the services delegated
- Be based on the understanding that all boards/corporations delivering delegated services be composed in part by elected Council members
- Be based on a clear and transparent process of appointment of representative residents to each board/corporation with delegated responsibility

Principles: Changes in the methods of resident engagement must:

- Encourage a diversity of opinion
- Maximize input from residents who face societal inequities or barriers.
- Offer simple and varied methods of requesting and receiving input
- Ensure that the triple bottom line aspect of all key policy decisions is reflected in how and when resident input is implemented

Appendix A:

Objective 1: Increase the appropriate delegation of authority to Standing Committees, ward Councillors and staff to improve Council's ability to provide strategic direction and reduce transactional approvals

Objective 2: Enhance the ability of Council to set the strategic direction of the City, including working through Standing Committees to set Term of Council priorities for departmental initiatives and on-going activities

Objective 3: Commit to and develop a democratic, engaging and visible process to maximize input from residents in the work of Council and in policy development, while ensuring that seniors, new Canadians, women and the economically disadvantaged are included

Objective 4: Enhance and develop processes that support the representative role of ward Councillors with respect to City undertakings in their wards.

Objective 5: Enhance and develop processes that support the representative role of members of Council on city-wide initiatives

Objective 6: Establish clarity around conflict of interest and code of conduct policies for elected representatives