

Democratic Renewal in Toronto: Committing to a Process and Timetable



How we reform and renew our democratic institutions is one of the most challenging problems in politics, because those with the power to make changes are the people who have been elected under the current system.

This is why Fair Vote Toronto is calling on the new Council to make an immediate commitment to a substantive democratic renewal process, including a **citizen-driven, expert-supported, review of all options for electing the Council and mayor**. The chapter will now take its campaign directly to recently elected members of council requesting that they commit to the democratic renewal timetable shown on the reverse side of this document.

Recent developments indicate that the time is right for a democratic renewal process. Last December, City Council took the bold step of banning corporate and union contributions to election campaigns. During the same period, a number of civic groups co-sponsored the Better Ballots project to discuss a wide range of ways to improve Toronto elections.

But identifying areas requiring reform – for example, the voting system used to elect our Council – is the easy part. Determining what reforms to implement is not so easy, and requires a process of citizen input, expert discussion, debate and thoughtful consideration of the alternatives.

Why the Urgent Need for a Reform Process?

1. In the recent election, voter turnout was just 52% -- a shockingly low figure for the fifth largest political jurisdiction in Canada and one that leaves approximately 48% of voters casting votes that elected no-one to represent them on Council.
2. Despite being the most multi-cultural city in the world, our Council does not reflect our diversity. Women are still poorly represented and there are no people with disabilities on council.
3. The most serious and difficult problems we face are citywide in scope, yet our electoral system creates a Council comprised solely of neighbourhood ward councillors, when other approaches may be better suited to a major 21st century urban centre.

Our Request to Councillors: Commitment to a Substantive Renewal Process

Democratic reform is an urgent priority for Toronto and Torontonians will welcome and participate in a substantive reform process.

For that reason, we are asking all councillors to make a commitment – not to specific reforms or outcomes– but to a substantive reform process and timetable as described on the reverse side.

Timetable for Democratic Renewal

We are asking councillors to commit to the following democratic renewal timetable:

- ✓ **set up a Council committee to study democratic reform issues (within 6 months of the new council)**
- ✓ **on the issue of voting system reform, within 9 months set up an arms-length process and structure for informed citizen input - e.g., a citizens' jury or assembly, aided by experts, to review municipal voting system alternatives, and provide Council with a recommendation (within 18 months)**
- ✓ **on other democratic reform issues, provide public education and engagement opportunities, including direct deputations to the Council committee and other forms of input (completed within 18 months)**
- ✓ **to have the Council committee make recommendations to the full Council, including identification of any provincial enabling legislation that would be required (within 24 months)**
- ✓ **to have Council debate and adopt appropriate reforms (within 30 months) and then immediately press the province for any necessary enabling legislation to ensure the reforms/changes can be in place for the 2014 municipal election**

Endorsing Democratic Renewal

Fair Vote Canada (Toronto Chapter) will be publishing a list of councillors who support this process and timetable for democratic renewal.

In addition, councillors may wish to display our "democratic renewal" logo on their web sites and promotional materials.



Fair Vote Canada – Toronto Chapter

Fair Vote Canada is a national multi-partisan citizens' campaign for electoral reform. The Toronto chapter represents over 1000 members and supporters living in the City of Toronto).

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