

Summary notes

Toronto Service Review (TSR) Public Consultation Meeting

Saturday, June 11, 2011, 2 p.m.

City Hall, Committee Room 1

Hosted by: Councillors Fletcher, Pam McConnell, Vaughan and Wong-Tam

Meeting details and format

The meeting was advertised in councillors' newsletters, on social media, and in print publications such as NOW Magazine and The Bulletin.

Roughly 100 residents attended a meeting at City Hall on a beautiful Saturday afternoon to participate in a meeting about the City's Service Review (TSR,) and were encouraged to fill out the online survey afterwards.

The host councillors would like to thank these residents for taking the time to share their vision for the City and its services.

On arrival, residents were given a meeting agenda with a "sticky note" attached, and were encouraged to answer on it "What are your hopes and dreams for Toronto?" Their unedited responses are included in Appendix 1 (page 5) of this document. These principles served as a basis for the subsequent discussion.

Town hall-style discussions were then held on 4 topics:

1. Defining the issues facing Toronto
2. The role of the City in delivering services
3. Spending priorities in delivering services
4. Recreation Service Plan – the role of recreation and how to meet Toronto's needs

The notes taken publicly summarizing the participants' commentary during those discussions is summarized below, and included in their unedited form as Appendix 2 (page 9.)

Concerns about the consultation process

Participants expressed frustration with the TSR survey, deeming it inaccessible, and difficult to understand and complete. Consequently, they were concerned that the results would be skewed towards those who are able to complete it. Specifically, concerns were also raised about the poor quality of translation into other languages, which could alienate entire communities from participation.

Objections were also made about the perceived bias of the survey, specifically that it is prejudiced towards asking what services can be cut, rather than which ones are needed.

Concern was raised about the level of outreach, and awareness of the TSR initiative as well.

No contrary opinions to these objections were expressed.

General themes and summarized comments

Participants were overwhelmingly in favour of maintaining and preserving services, rather than cutting them. They felt strongly that a simple exercise in cutting services is short-sighted and unwise. Overall, they supported city services being delivered by the city, and public assets remaining public assets.

1. What are your hopes and dreams for Toronto? (Taken from sticky notes)

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. Diverse, inclusive, welcoming, humane, and concerned for social justice | f. Waterfront |
| b. Compassionate and caring, with specific reference to seniors and the poor | g. Support for culture and arts |
| c. Infrastructure in good repair | h. Green and environmentally sustainable |
| d. Taxes used effectively | i. Affordable |
| e. More and better TTC | j. Transportation: bike lanes |
| | k. Waterfront |
| | l. Civil, safe |
| | m. Public services |

2. What is your Toronto? Defining the issues facing Toronto

Participants felt the City should be providing more and better services, and are willing to pay for them through their taxes. The need for more and better public transit was, in particular, a recurring theme, as was the need for better transit funding from other orders of government.

- a. More and better services, such as child care, recreation programs, and TTC
- b. Polarization: lack of employment and housing
- c. Manufactured crisis
- d. Not being asked what we need, but what we can do without

- e. Democracy: a number of participants referred to the mayor's election promise of no cuts
- f. Transit costs borne disproportionately by the city, compared to other cities in the OECD
- g. People are willing to pay for better services, including higher taxes

3. How do we deliver your Toronto?

The role of the City in delivering services

The importance of City services was emphasized during the discussion. In particular, the need for the City to support vulnerable communities was raised repeatedly.

Participants felt strongly that the City has a direct responsibility in the provision of its services, and privatization of these services was not supported.

City services and assets were seen as a fundamental part of a livable and successful city.

- a. Incredible work is done by the City, which assists those who need it, such as the homeless and the poor
- b. Quality of life should not be a profit-making exercise
- c. No privatization: public services cannot be provided more cost-effectively this way when profits are figured in
- d. Governments own and manage infrastructure on the public's behalf—they should not be sold off
- e. Support for arts communities
- f. The TSR consultation is based on the premise that we have a spending problem rather than a revenue problem, which may not be the case
- g. The top 5 services account for 68% of the budget. Are staffing levels reasonable? Try reducing the Police budget to improve services such as Shelter, Housing and Support
- h. Find efficiencies
- i. Private sector efficiency is a myth
- j. Some services provide revenue, which should be taken into account
- k. Services for the vulnerable should be improved
- l. Easy to talk about cutting "frills," but if we cut our common assets, we cease to exist as a community
- m. We need taxes to ensure we have the kind of city we want
- n. The City cannot address its structural deficit without other orders of government funding cities and allowing alternative revenues such as Vehicle Registration Tax

4. How do we pay for your Toronto? Spending priorities in delivering services

Increasing revenue rather than cutting services was again emphasized. Comments also urged the City to consider the value it gets for its investment, rather than just the cost. Marginalized and vulnerable groups were specifically mentioned as priorities, as were housing, public transit, and support for newcomers. Other orders of government were called upon to contribute to these priorities.

- a. Don't let the most vulnerable people carry the burden of service cuts
- b. Happy to pay taxes
- c. Look at internal services for cost savings
- d. 2% cut in federal subsidies: we have a revenue problem, not a spending problem
- e. Federal government must fund support for newcomers
- f. Violence prevention makes good sense: \$1 in prevention saves \$7 in other services
- g. The City should continue to support services delivered by community services organizations
- h. How do we increase revenue?

5. Recreation Service Plan

Participants were in strong support of recreation services and felt that they are a crucial part of the community.

- a. Not enough money for the welcome policy; we're denying service to children
- b. Should be no user fees for recreational services
- c. Rec services are a preventive health measure
- d. Support for funding facility improvements
- e. Community centres provide help in emergencies
- f. Most services, including affordable housing, clean air and water, have preventive value that's hard to measure

APPENDIX 1

Our Toronto Is....

Answers to the question: "What are your hopes and dreams for Toronto?"

"I want my Toronto to accept all people from all over the world with open arms. Also to make sure that the residents of Toronto are housed, clothed and fed."

"Make the most of our tax money instead of fumbling around unfocused. Keep the infrastructure of the city in good repair. Senior Services keep medical costs down (e.g. fitness)."

"21st Century transit. Bike Lanes. The waterfront. Public Spaces."

"Stop Rob Ford."

"Where people and culture drive the finances and not the reverse. That will make the city great!"

"children's recreation, art and music. Great services for older Torontonians. TTC like the old days. Vision, leadership and compassion at City Hall. Swimming/All possible opportunities at rec centres; wading pool lessons, handicapped support."

"inclusionary zoning! A congestion charge. An expansive transit system. All electric cars. An all around affordable place to live!"

"A place to live, work and play in. Healthy, efficient, accessible"

"Toronto should become the civilized, energetic, successful and welcoming city it always wanted to be"

"That there be a community "hub" (storefront) within walking distance from every resident as a meeting place and source of information."

"Expanded transit – streetcars, subways, LRT. City operated garbage, parks and all other workers. No privatization of services and infrastructure that city wants and owns."

"My city includes all the services and programs that were created to make Toronto a good place to live. Let's raise the taxes reasonable to keep our city a place we want to live in."

"A city with diversity, is liveable, has compassion, vibrant."

"A city committed to ensuring the rights of all women, youth and children to live their lives free from violence and treatment of fear of violence."

"Transparent and accountable government."

A city that everyone can afford to live in. Lots of green space and trees. Recreation services available for all, and affordable. A mayor who listens to the people (not just to small cliques)."

"Toronto to become a world-class city."

"An equitable, accessible and sustainable city."

"I Hope Mr. Ford lives up to his campaign promise: 'There will be *no cuts!*'"

"A compassionate city that values equity and social justice. Politicians that have vision to plan for future needs and beautiful structures and public transportation and bicycle lanes."

"A liveable city that is known for industry but also great art and entertainment."

"A city with a vibrant economy; people by a civil society that cares for the vulnerable and disadvantaged."

"Passionate, vibrant. Compassionate to all its citizens needs. Sustainable. Well-designed (urban planning)."

"To be a world-class city. To achieve this goal it will first have to honestly recognized it's problems and objectively and openly deal with the issues, such as growth, diversity and cultural interest."

"That the city remains as it was one year ago; it has disadvantages, but all things considered it is one of the best, most diverse, liveable and successful places anywhere."

"Improved services in communities: afterschool programs, small buses going into neighbourhoods frequently to take people to RT, free daycare and improved recreation opportunities for youth."

"A city that is exciting to live in. A city that tourists find worthwhile visiting. A city that is humane to residents in the low income areas, i.e. services for adequate housing, education and other support areas."

"People (political individuals) will stop fighting and work together to make Toronto a meaningful, pleasant place to live."

"A vibrant, diverse, fair, inclusive accessible in all aspects, green, long-term sustainable and liveable city."

"Graffiti free, bike friendly, multi-cultural, first-class public transport."

"I have a dream that black people and white people and even Chinese people would just get along."

"Great public transit to all areas of GTA, reduced poverty and social inequality, no waiting list for public housing, a beautiful city and great waterfront."

"inclusive, accessible, fair, diverse, quality."

"To continue to be a city I can be proud of – that has a visions of how great the city can be and follows through."

"A wonderful large metropolis that is safe and liveable for all. Lots of green space, arts, music open to all. Services for the most vulnerable."

"Selling city properties is a stupid idea, privatization is not the way the city should be run – we must make this city more liveable."

"I would like Toronto to be a city where a high quality of life is accessible to all people – regardless of income. I would also like to see our city become a leader in fighting climate change."

"Healthy, housed, not hungry, happy, has a heart."

"I would like Toronto to be a city with world-class transit, and excellent library system, top notch bicycle infrastructure, and clean air. Also, a stronger commitment to public housing!"

"An identifiable, living organism with a healthy core at its heart; functional extension and one that engenders pride, contribution and reflects growth with care."

"A sustainable pedestrian friendly city, streets that are destinations, not traffic sluices."

"A democracy that represents more sectors of Toronto – geographic, ethnic and ages."

"A city that is compassionate, caring and concerned about all neighbourhoods. A city where development is contributive and for the neighbourhoods where they want to build."

"To go back to being the progressive, compassionate place it used to be, with a strong sense of the common good."

"United as one."

Appendix 2

1. Defining the Issues Facing Toronto

- People are stressed
 - o Manufactured crisis
 - o TTC should be given more
- 3 cities and the divide in the city
 - o Poor get poorer
 - o Tower renewal & Priority neighbourhoods help address
 - o Not asking what more we need
- Told in election that there would be no cuts
 - o Told City Hall no cuts, but cut bus services
 - o Democracy – city needs to listen to people
- City becoming more polarized
 - o Housing issue
 - o Lack of employment opportunities
- Need more diversity in city workforce
- People want more & better city services
 - o More childcare
 - o Recreation programs
 - o Better TTC
- How many OECD cities are paying for transit directly through fare box?
 - o Conversation should be about building base of the city, not what to cut
- TTC: what are we being asked to give up?
 - o We have to get to work, we have to be able to get our kids around, we need more, not less
- 3 cities: poor are becoming poorer, rich are becoming richer, the middle class is diminishing
 - o Transit City, Tower Renewal and priority neighbourhoods are an important way of addressing that
- Democracy: if a person says there are going to be no cuts, there should be no cuts
- In 2008, SPUR magazine (San Francisco) highlighted:
 - o housing issues as an emergent challenge in Toronto
 - o Creative industries
 - o Integrating newcomers
- Malvern consultation emphasized need for Sheppard transit, smaller buses with more frequent service
 - o In a nutshell, they wanted more, better city services, not fewer
 - o Wanted programming for children and youth
 - o Public transit should be like libraries: a public service

- People are willing to pay for better services, including higher taxes; important for our families and communities
- How does Toronto compare to cities within the OECD in terms of transit costs being shouldered by the City?
 - o We talk about cutting services, but not about really reshaping our City

2. The Role of the city in Delivering Services

- TD Bank report has stated that "the city has had a structural deficit for more than 15 years"
- Quality of Life services should not be a profit-making exercise
- Not privatization – how can for-profit businesses be less expensive while treating workers fairly?
- Balanced, *mixed* neighbourhoods = community = *city*
 - o Strengthen local democracy
- Governments need to own infrastructure and assets to *manage* on *our* behalf
- Need to support artistic communities (e.g. Pier 39 in San Francisco)
- Big Picture and details: service -> top 5 = 68% of budget (suggestion: reduce smaller percentage of police budget to shelter)
- EMS, Police and Fire= significant percent of total budget
 - o Are staffing levels reasonable?
 - o How can we best deliver? More than we have now?
 - o Need to find efficiencies
- Must be provided as public service
 - o Common good -> shared assets= community=our city
- Private sector efficiency is a *myth*
- Of the services, some provide income
- Services for vulnerable are an essential priority and need to be improved
- EMS, Police and transit take up the bulk of the city's budget
 - o Is cutting the other services going to go very far in reducing the \$774 million gap
 - o Have to begin with bloat in the "big ticket" items
 - o Maybe there are more efficient ways to deliver out services
- The services provided by the city should be provided as part of the public service
- Easy to say the City should cut "frills," but if we cut our common assets, we cease to exist as a community
- Private sector is not necessarily better or more efficient at providing services, and do not necessarily provide better customer service
- We send out about \$12 billion more in taxes than we get to spend on ourselves
 - o Tax structure should be restructured so more money goes to the City

- 1 F-35 could fund all of our “rockets”
- Some of our services are also income-generating, and we lose that revenue if our services are cuts, e.g. the Zoo
- Incredible work is done by the City, which assists those who need it (homeless and poor)
 - Services can be improved and delivered more efficiently, but we need better information about where and how our money is spent
- Consultations are built on the premise that we have a spending problem, not a revenue problem, but that may not be the case
 - Structural deficit has been around at least 15 years
 - The money the City we can raise will not address the structural deficit
 - We need find a way to find that funding, while relieving the pressure on the property tax base
 - Very frustrating to see revenues such as motor vehicles registration fee
- The services provided are about quality of life, and should be about that rather than profit
- Removing the \$60 VRT was not even the equivalent of a case-and-a-half of beer for most people
 - We need these taxes and these services to make sure we have the kind of city we want
- Privatization is not the way to go
 - Private companies have to make a profit, so can't be cheaper unless they underpay the workers and cut corners on service
 - Don't want underpaid, undervalued employees delivering our services
 - Rescinding VRT was a bad move; if people can afford a car, they can afford the fee
 - A city is a community, and to be democratic, we should get rid of the Ontario Municipal Board
- Privatization of what we built, only to be sold off, amounts to “title theft.”
- The City only holds and manages the assets on behalf of residents, can not sell them off arbitrarily
 - The waterfront used to belong to the City, but is more and more corporate and disconnected from the City
 - Waterfront is not just about eating and drinking, it should reflect the uniqueness of the City of Toronto
- What would be the impact of reducing the Police budget with a commensurate increase in the Shelter, Housing and Support budget?

3. Spending Priorities in delivering services?

- Value -> *don't let the most vulnerable people carry the burden*
- Alternative revenue -> Federal/province – "not enough time"
- *Happy to pay taxes*
- Recession has shrunk economy by 5%, some cuts are inevitable
- How? Look to internal services
- Structural deficit is a serious problem that needs to be addressed
- Have a revenue problem, *not* a spending problem
- %12 Billion goes out to Federal
- Need to re-order tax revenue sharing
- Provincial services
 - o 20% of revenue
 - o 32% of operating costs
- How do we augment *revenue* (why are we eliminated revenue? e.g. VRT, etc.)
- We need taxes and user fees -> Re-instate VRT
- Pressure Federal government
- Mayor should participate in FCM
- *Federal government need to fund support for newcomers*
- Cuts don't solve the problem -> need to look closely at the institutional operations
- Women need to be safe and supported -> every \$1 in prevention saves \$7 in other services
- *The city funds important community services delivered by not-for-profits that = Quality of Life and savings*
- It is extremely important not to make the most vulnerable people take the bulk of the impact
 - o People below the poverty line will be bearing the brunt of cuts
 - o Our neighbourhoods will be less safe
 - o Should be more discussion of alternative revenue streams
 - o Process is insufficient to allow full discussion of impacts and options
 - o Paying taxes is a good thing; it supports our existence in the City
- Economy is about 5% smaller than it was before the recession, so it seems likely that something will have to be cut, but the real question is what can we do to minimize the impact on what we value
 - o Must talk about "how" and priorities
 - o Should look first at internal services at the City of Toronto
 - o e.g. No need to replace computers every 2 years
 - o e.g. TTC spending on next vehicle arrival technology rather than more vehicles
 - o City needs to reduce borrowing
- We have a revenue problem, not a spending problem
 - o 2% cut in federal subsidies

- This is part of an austerity agenda at all levels of government
- Why are we not confronting the challenges associated with supporting newcomers in the city?
 - We must investigate the areas that draw most on the budget
 - We can not run away from housing issues
 - Cutting and cutting is a waste of time and will not solve the problem
 - Wasting money on technology that is not a priority—must prioritize what we're spending on
 - Approach should be constructive rather than just reactive
- All community services matter
 - Violence against women is a leading concern in Toronto
 - Community services that support youth, children and families reduce violence, and saves costs in Legal, Healthcare and other services
 - City should continue partnering with METRAC and other community service organizations
 - Violence prevention makes good economic sense, as it does to support services for marginalized communities
 - We live in a city that fights poverty and discrimination in all its forms
 - All should feel supported and proud to live in the City
- Provincial election should address how the province will support the city

4. Recreation Service Plan - The Role of Recreation and How to Meet Toronto's Needs

- Not enough money for welcome policy and denying services to children -> Should be a priority
- Inequity – cap on welcome policy
- Running out of money partway through the year is unacceptable
- Should be *no user fees* for recreation
- Some facilities are rundown, improvements are required
- Facility improvements -> Should be a priority
- Recreation is part of health -> money could be saved with preventative work/services
- State of repair/disrepair sends a message that you are not valued
- Recreation also impacts safety – why are we spending more on policing that on recreation?
- Registrations are often at capacity; huge line-ups and impossible to contact via phone, etc.
- Demand for services in recreation centres higher than our ability to deliver

- Disproportionate amount of money going to police versus recreation
- Community centres can and do serve/help people during emergencies (e.g a fire, etc.)
- Strengthening neighbourhoods – 2004 survey "Listening to Toronto"

- Toronto survey is impenetrable; difficult to fill out
- How can we engage all councillors?
- Survey has had many issues/problems
 - o How was it developed?
 - o Why is it done by an American Firm?
 - o Seems weighted to get a particular response
 - o Can we write in comments? (Joe Fiorito article)
- *Many find survey weighted*
- *Unable to fill it out online*
- Concerned with the increase in bureaucracy that does not enhance liveability
- Survey (Toronto Service Review) pits people against one another
- *Few people know about the survey*
- *Attendance at a city-run meeting was did not see diversity among attendees*
- *Survey should have been mailed to everyone*
- Toronto is 4th most liveable city in the world; was the 1st – we need to get back to the top
- People in Toronto were caring, we are losing this value
- Need equality in employment
- City should utilize existing workers *before contracting*
- *Improve quality of management and therefore productivity*
- *Look at management positions first*

- *Don't agree with "opinion polls" as a way of making decisions/policy*

- *What is the role of the survey? How will it be used?*
- *There is a growing divisiveness in the public – basing policy on polls is disturbing*
- Should not be duped by ideology versus intelligent planning
- *City must be cleaner, including TTC – once a year cleanup is not enough*

- The Answer to "how to deliver services" is the job of the municipal government
- Mayor campaigned on no service cuts
- Communication between government and residents needs to be improved
- Public needs to be educated

- Not about cutting – need to look at revenue sources
- Appalled at lack of funding for Welcome Policy
 - o We're denying swimming/skating lessons to children who need them
 - o These services should be available to everyone
 - o Makes it an "Unwelcome Policy", and a major inequity
- There should be no user fees for recreational services
 - o The pool at Scadding Court is run down but is intensely used
 - o The voice of those whose first language is not English is often not heard and considered
- Support for funding facility improvements
- Recreation is a preventive health measure, including libraries and money to maintain and repair facilities
 - o State of the facilities is a message to users about how well they are regarded and valued
- Recreation also contributes to safety and well-being of families
 - o Our priority seems to be disproportionately about policing rather than providing places for healthy social development
 - o Programs are always full and hard to access as a result; demand is very high
- Community centres offer help and assistance to those who need it when they need it, i.e. displaced residents after emergencies
- Information from Listening to Toronto, conducted in 2004, should be considered by Council
- Most services, including affordable housing, clean air and water, have preventive value that's hard to measure
- Core Service Review survey is very hard to understand and complete, will affect results
 - o Will surveys filled out "incorrectly" still count?
- How can we access and influence councillors who are considering this item but aren't here?
- Survey seems stacked to produce certain kinds of responses—not unbiased
- Concern about the survey process, privacy concerns about company outside Canada conducting it
- Are handwritten surveys given the same priority as online responses?
- [support in the room for the notion that the survey is biased]
- Increasing regulations for use of holistic services; resources are being disproportionately funnelled into bureaucracy
- The Core Service Review pits people against each other, and is unfair
 - o Council should have had a say on the shape and content of survey

- Survey has not been publicized well—insufficient outreach into communities
- It should have been sent to all residents of Toronto if the City wanted a legitimate result
- Toronto has been called the 4th best city in the world, and we want to maintain it
 - We used to be first, and we don't want to be downgraded continually
 - Must build society to results barriers, misunderstandings and conflicts
 - A “tender care” approach should be applied to complex issues to all can understand them
 - There should be no low-grade jobs in the City
 - All jobs deserve respect and improve the quality of life in Toronto
 - All workers deserve respect and dignity
 - City should utilize existing workers before considering outsourcing
 - If management is not good, then we cannot expect good productivity
 - Must consider management as well as frontline workers
- Opinion polls should not decide public policy; the survey seems to be a tool for powers-that-be to shirk responsibility for their own decisions
 - We can not vote for public priorities when we are dealing with ideology rather than competent planning
- The city should be much cleaner, has been getting progressively dirtier (especially the TTC)—residents will help
- Decisions about how and what to cut should not be made without proper information and communication
 - The real cost of services must be transparent and available for the discussion
 - Funding sources should be looked at rather than what to cut