

Deputation to Toronto Transition Team

Preserving and Enhancing the Environmental Integrity of the New City of Toronto
Toronto City Council Chambers

Presented by

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My name is Paul Muldoon. I am a lawyer with the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA), which is a legal aid clinic operating in Toronto. CELA's mandate is to represent residents in the province who qualify under the Ontario Legal Aid Plan and have some environmental problem. CELA also has a law reform mandate to provide input into the development of the environmental law and policy framework in Ontario.

I would like to make three points tonight relating to environmental issues and the transition to a new municipal structure.

The Principles for Transition

It is important that the Toronto Transition Team adopt general principles to guide and inform the transition to the new municipal structure. With respect to the environment, it is imperative that at least the following principles be followed:

1. ***Environmental Quality Should be Enhanced, Not Diminished:*** At the very least, the net effect of the transition should be to enhance, and not to diminish, the quality of the environment for Toronto. It is essential, therefore, that the transition team understand the current state of the environment and ensure that the new municipal structure will serve to improve the environment, human health and the quality of life for all residents in Toronto.
2. ***Upward Harmonization of Environmental Policies and Programs:*** At the present time, there is a patchwork of environmental policies and programs in the various existing municipalities. Each of these policies and programs were designed to respond to a problem or developed as a means to enhance the quality of the environment for the residents of that municipality. It is an essential principle that these environmental policies and programs are not dismantled as a result of amalgamation. The operative principle should be that, wherever possible, these policies and programs should be harmonized upward so that all residents of the new municipal structure receive the benefits of the policies and programs once enjoyed by only one or the other municipality. One of the tasks of the transition team should be to undertake a detailed inventory of the environmental policies and programs and identify how to

further the principle of upward harmonization.

3. *Citizen Participation in Environmental Decision-Making Is Imperative*: A principle that is held very strongly held by the people of Toronto is the right to have input into environmental decision-making through a fair and effective process. The mechanisms for participation must be accessible and meaningful.

The Need for a Strong Policy Framework for the Environment

While the principles outlined above may serve to guide the transition, one of the significant challenges for both the transition team and the new administration is the development of a comprehensive and innovative policy framework for the environment. The first step in this process should be the undertaking of a detailed inventory of the environmental policies and programs mentioned above. From that inventory, it will be necessary to identify priority areas that would apply across the new municipal structure such as measures to promote water conservation, strategies to reduce smog, programs to improve water quality, priority efforts to enhance public transportation and preserve green areas, along with a whole array of planning policies designed to promote healthy and sustainable communities. It is recommended that consultations start immediately that would lay the groundwork for this enhanced policy framework.

The Need for a Strong Institutional Framework to Protect the Environment

The third element that must be considered in the transition is the need for a strong institutional framework to guide the implementation of policies and programs. Components of this institutional framework can be found in various municipalities.

Hence, while community councils and neighbourhood committees should have an express environmental mandate to be responsive to local issues, the overall institutional and policy framework cannot be overlooked. The new structure should ensure that environmental mandates are incorporated into neighbourhood committees and community councils with other institutions having a mandate to provide coordination and oversight as well as the resources and expertise to assist the local mechanisms. Two examples of institutions that could serve the new municipal structure include the Environmental Protection Office of the City of Toronto and the Toronto Atmospheric Fund. Both of these institutions have served the public well in the delivery of their respective mandates. It is recommended that these institutions be expanded to serve the new municipal structure.

We hope that there are opportunities in the future to provide more detailed input into the transition process as it relates to environmental issues.

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